

New England Canoe Polo Kayak Polo Quick Start

Welcome to kayak polo! Here are the basic rules you need to know. The most important rules have to do with safety; when in doubt, use your common sense. Please ask if you have any questions.

Polo Basics

- There are 5 players on each team.
- There's a goal at each end of the "pitch" (court).
- The object of the game is to score more goals than the opposing team.
- Each goal counts for 1 point.
- Official games consist of two 10-minute halves (20 min total) with a 1-3 minute break between halves.

Possession

- You can only keep possession of the ball for 5 seconds.
- You have possession if you're holding the ball or if it's on the water within your arm's reach.
- Within the 5 seconds you must dispose of the ball by passing it, dribbling it, or moving it out of arms' reach.

Advancing the Ball

- To move the ball around the pitch, you may pass the ball to another player on your team or dribble.
- To dribble, throw the ball just in front of your boat, paddle 2-3 strokes up to it, pick it up, and throw it again.
- You can't paddle with the ball resting on your sprayskirt or carry the ball in your lap.

Paddle Use

- You can use your paddle to block a pass or shot, or retrieve a ball floating on the water.
- It is an illegal "paddle foul" to:
 - Strike any part of an opponent's body with your paddle.
 - Throw the paddle.
 - "Wind up" and swing at the ball with the paddle
 - Retrieve a floating ball with your paddle if someone is also reaching for it with their hands
 - Block within arm's reach of a player who has the ball (so that their hand could strike your paddle when throwing).
 - Push or brace off of another player's boat with your paddle or hands (even to stop yourself from flipping, although we are more casual about this rule for new players).
 - In general use the paddle in such a way that you might hit someone with it.

- When in doubt, play the ball with your hands.

Hand-tackling

- You can hand-tackle (push over) a player who is in possession of the ball.
- You hand-tackle by pushing the other person with your open hand on the side, back, or upper arm.
- It is illegal to:
 - Hand-tackle someone who doesn't have possession of the ball.
 - Push someone onto another boat, the side of the pool, or another obstruction.
 - Pull someone towards you.
 - Fend off someone trying to hand-tackle you by pushing back with your hand, arm, or elbow.
 - Grab an opponent's body, gear, or boat to stop them from moving.
 - Prevent someone from rolling or otherwise righting themselves after a flip.

Kayak tackling

- You can "kayak tackle" an opposing player by ramming or pushing their boat with your boat.
- You may kayak tackle:
 - Any opposing player who has the ball
 - An opposing player within the defensive zone when you are set up on defense, whether or not they have the ball.
- It is illegal to:
 - Hit another player's body or cockpit with your boat
 - Hit another player's boat dead-on at a 90-degree angle.

Goalies

- The goalie sits in the front of the goal and blocks shots with his or her paddle.
- It is an illegal "goalie foul" to:
 - Push or touch the opposing goalie
 - Push another player (of either team) into the opposing goalie.
- Try to avoid touching your own goalie too, since it will knock them out of position.

Game Play

Sprints

- At the start of each half a referee throws the ball into the center of the pitch, and one player from each team sprints for it.

Fouls

- When a player commits a foul, the opposing team generally gets the ball.
- Generally the player who was fouled takes the ball from where the foul occurred.
- Some serious fouls (e.g. when a player is fouled while taking a shot on goal) result in a free shot on goal.

Goal Restarts

- After a goal is scored, the team that did not score brings the ball to the center line of the pitch and play restarts from there.
- Every player must be on his or her own side of the pitch when play restarts.

Out of Bounds

- If you are the last person to touch the ball (with your hand, paddle or boat) before it goes out of bounds, the other team gets the ball.
- The other team takes the ball from the boundary line nearest where it went out.
- Exception: if the ball goes out on the goal line.
 - Example 1: The offense shoots the ball at the goal and misses, and the goalie never touches it. The offense was the last to touch the ball, so the defense takes the ball from the goal line. This is a “goal line throw.”
 - Example 2: The offense shoots the ball at the goal. The goalie blocks it, and the ball lands out of bounds. The defense was the last to touch it, so the offense takes the ball from one of the corners of the goal line. This is a “corner.”

Presenting the Ball

- When restarting the ball after a foul, out of bounds, or other break in play, you must signal the restart of play by holding the ball at arm’s length above your head (“presenting”).

Substitutions

- If there are more than 5 players on a team, the “extra” players wait behind the goal line of the goal they are defending.
- One of the players on the pitch can “sub out” and one of the waiting players “sub in” in their place.
- Substitutions may happen at any time, including in the middle of play, but it is generally best to sub when your team is moving forward on offense (if you sub while on defense, you leave holes in the defense).
- When subbing in, you must wait until the entire boat of the player coming off the pitch has passed over the goal line before any part of your boat enters the pitch.
- When subbing out, paddle hard off the pitch so that the other player can sub in as quickly as possible.

Basic Strategy

Offense

- Generally all 5 players on a team go forward to play offense.
- The basic idea is that the offense drives in to try to break up the defense and create holes so that their teammates can get close to the goal and shoot.
- It is much easier to shoot the ball when you have built up momentum by driving, so keep moving!
- We run several different types of offensive strategies, which are easiest to cover in person.

Defense Positions

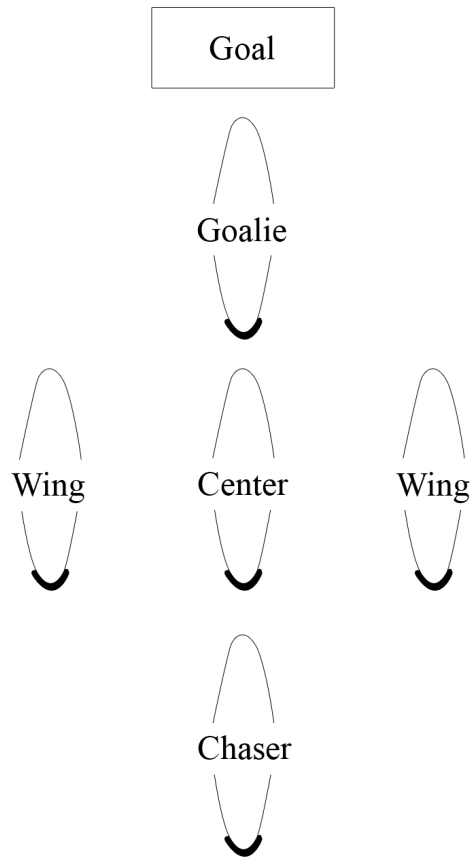
There are several popular zone defense strategies, which all share some common positions.

- **Goalie**
 - The goalie maintains position in front of the goal and blocks shots with his or her paddle.
 - Since the goalie has a good view of the entire game, the goalie may also call instructions to the rest of the defense.
- **Wing**
 - Wings play slightly in front and to one side of the goalie.
 - The wings prevent opposing players from getting close enough to shoot, generally by kayak tackling them to block them or turn them aside.
- **Center**
 - In defenses that have a center, the center plays directly in front of the goalie.
 - The center attempts to maintain position in front of the goal and prevent opposing players from getting into the dangerous shooting position directly in front of the goal.
 - The center also watches the offensive strategy as a whole and calls instructions to the wings to coordinate the defense.
- **Chaser**
 - Chasers put aggressive pressure on the offense, trying to force them to make a bad pass so that the defense can regain the ball.
 - Depending on the number of chasers and the defense strategy, a chaser may attack the person who currently has the ball and/or the player who is his or her easiest next pass to try to force the offense to fumble the ball or make a more difficult pass.

Zone Defense Strategies

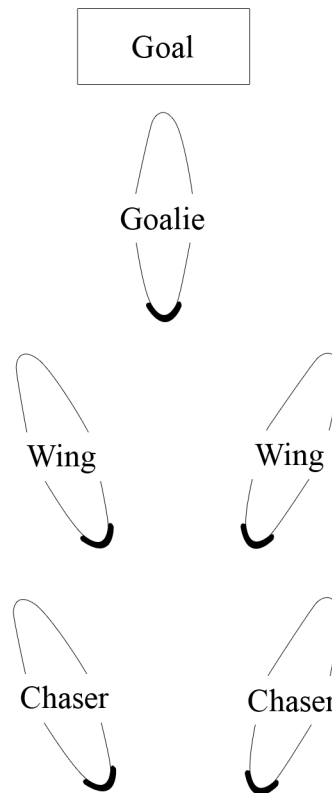
1-3-1 (aka 3-1)

- In a 1-3-1, there is one chaser, a defensive line consisting of two wings and a center, and a goalie.



2-2-1 (aka 2-1)

- In a 2-2-1 there are two chasers, two wings (with no center), and a goalie.



5-out (aka "man on" or "press")

- In 5-out each player chooses a player on the opposing team to shadow.
- 5-out is an aggressive defensive strategy. The overall goal is to force a turnover by pressuring the opposing team into fumbling the ball or making a bad pass.
- When playing 5-out, you generally want to stay between the player you are shadowing and the goal you are defending.