

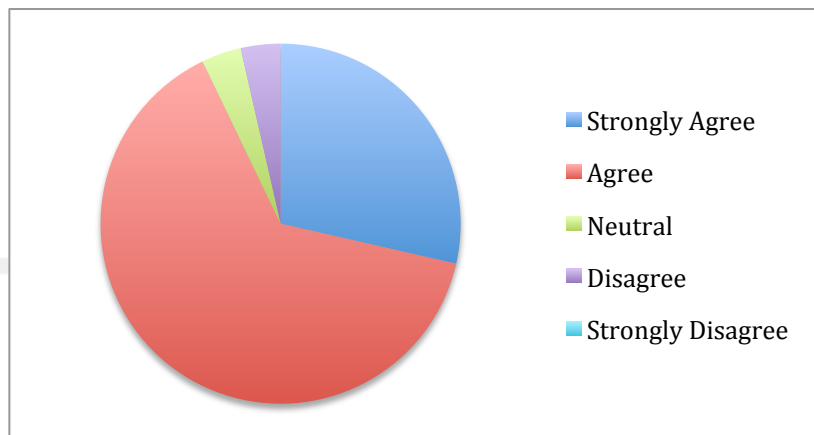


Survey Results: Rules you would change

Whether civic laws or rules in sport, rules try to be black and white but ultimately fall into a grey area. This, of course, leads to many arguments directed at officials who are regularly required to “call the book as it is written” even with a large amount of grey area.

This challenge led to some interesting questions that asked officials about hockey’s rule book and what rules they would change.

Officials completed the “rules you would change” survey late in the 2017-2018 season with a variety of questions to probe experience and opinion. One question



asked “Agree or Disagree? Overall, the Hockey Canada Rule Book generally helps me keep games fair and safe.” The results are pictured to the left and suggest that 93% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed.

However, this strong agreement did not

mean that referees unanimously liked all the rules with 44% saying there are rules they do not like and would change. Here is a sample of those responses:

Neck guards. Either remove the rule, or enforce it.	Create a penalty for blindsides hits.
Take the face-off to offending team’s end after a penalty. (implemented in '18-'19)	Add “Unintentional Referee Abuse” punishable under Rule 9.6.
Add a Minor for a CFB without a GM to make it easier to call.	Give linesman increased ability to call minor penalties behind the play.
Require an injured player to take a 10-minute break to discourage faking; I saw this in a Christmas tournament...	In a close game, do not cut the clock using the Hockey Winnipeg rule (4-3-2 Rule).
Provide the referee with the option of calling a lesser or no head contact penalty if the other player ducks.	Change the penalty shot signal from arms crossed above head to point at center ice.
Remove the GM assessed if a player appears to have sustained an injury on a play with a penalty.	Remove a penalty for TMM if it doesn't effect the game...just stop the play and have a faceoff.
Allow an offside goal if the offside had nothing to do with the play.	If a team killing a 5-3 the penalty cancelled should always move to 5-4 regardless of order penalties called.

Most of these responses (with two not falling into any specific category) can fall into three categories: improving safety by giving the referee more tools (yellow), changes to increase scoring (blue), and making a rule more fair (pink).

Interestingly, two response categories responses reflect the referee's job to keep the game fair and safe within the rules of the game. Take a look at the yellow items. These changes may give a referee more options and tools by making new rules (blind side hits) or giving the referee more options (do not assess a game misconduct or get help from linesman). The pink items fit an idea of fairness. For example, if a player is injured and the other team receives a game misconduct then the injured player should take a break.

Ultimately, how we call the game (and calling the game by the rule book) is meant to improve communication. Rules are designed to help us communicate what is fair and safe in a hockey game. Some rule changes would weaken our ability to communicate.

For example, one suggestion was to assess a lesser or no penalty if head contact occurs due to a player ducking. As the rule is currently written, it clearly communicates "no matter what, do not hit another player in the head". If this rule changed and officials could assess a lesser or no penalty for a

player ducking there would be a loop-hole that weakens what is communicated; an offending player could argue "but he ducked" and be supported by the rule book making the communication of what is and what is not allowed less clear.

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Other changes could strengthen what is communicated. For example, if the first faceoff after a penalty is in the offending team's zone (as is the case in 2018-19) then the impact of taking a penalty is greater. This addition of face-off location would say two things: 1) taking a penalty is really a disadvantage and 2) hockey wants more scoring. In this case, both 1) and 2) are true and something that the game wants (fair/safe play and more goals).

So, where does this leave officials? About half of respondents wanted to change a rule in the book. From experience, most officials probably know of a situation where an official tweaked a rule (rightly or wrongly) in the name of "game management." Although officials should call the game by-the-book, tweaks will happen. Anytime an official is faced with making a call that they are tempted to tweak for the sake of fairness or safety, ask "how does tweaking this rule effect what I am communicating with the rink? Will I be communicating what I want to make clear?"