



2026

# U12/U14/U16/U18

## COMPETITOR'S GUIDE

# **2026 JUNIOR GOLD CHAMPIONSHIPS U18/U16/U14/U12 OFFICIAL RULES AND REGULATIONS**

The official rules and regulations of the Junior Gold Program govern competition, membership, policies and procedures for the Junior Gold Championships.

All rules and regulations contained herein are at the tournament manager's discretion. Bowlers have the right to appeal a tournament manager's decision to the Senior Director Short Duration Tournaments and Collegiate Bowling.

This tournament is certified by the United States Bowling Congress (#5204) and shall be governed by USBC rules.

## **RULE 1 - MEMBERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS**

Entry is open to USBC Junior Gold Program members who have qualified for the Junior Gold Championships. To be eligible, participants must meet all the rules governing competition from league or tournament level to the National Championships and be confirmed as a National Championships finalist by USBC. USBC reserves the right to accept or reject any participant.

Participants 18 years of age or older as of July 11, 2026, will be required to be current with SafeSport training to compete in the tournament. To be current with SafeSport training, one needs to have completed either the initial core SafeSport training module or one of the refresher courses on or after July 12, 2025.

Canadian and other foreign USBC Youth members are encouraged to participate and are eligible to be USBC Junior Gold Program members and compete in the National Championships and earn scholarships. However, they are unable to become USBC Junior Team USA™ members.

## **RULE 2 - CONDITIONS OF MEMBERSHIP**

### **USBC Youth Membership**

The Junior Gold Championships recognizes the USBC as the national governing body of bowling. All Junior Gold members and tournament competitors must be USBC members in good standing. Individuals who have qualified for the Junior Gold tournament must maintain USBC Youth status (Rule 400).

If an individual qualifies for Junior Gold, violates USBC Rule 400 and is deemed ineligible by USBC, they are immediately ineligible to compete in Junior Gold and will be removed from the tournament.

An individual who violates Rule 400 and is removed from the tournament can requalify for the tournament once their Youth Membership status is reinstated by USBC.

## **RULE 3 - TOURNAMENT ENTRY AND COMMITMENT**

### **Entry Deadline**

Entries close on May 1, 2026 (unless extended). Members of USBC Junior Team USA™ 2025 will be automatically entered into the 2026 Junior Gold Championships. Entry fee for a U18-only qualifier event is \$250 (\$150 lineage/expenses and \$75 scholarships), entry fee for a U16-only qualifier event is \$250 (\$150 lineage/expenses and \$75 scholarships), entry fee for a U14-only qualifier event is \$200 (\$125 lineage/expenses and \$75 scholarships), and entry fee for U12-only qualifier event is \$150 (\$75 lineage/expenses and \$75 scholarships). The entry fee will be submitted by the event coordinator for an advancing athlete. All of the scholarship fees will be returned at 100%.

Finalists must agree to bowl in the National Championships, or, failing to do so, agree to waive all rights. If a finalist declines their spot in the tournament, a replacement will be selected based on the order of finish at their league or tournament qualifying event.

### **Right to Refuse Entry**

In accordance with the rules of the sport of bowling as defined by the United States Bowling Congress, the Junior Gold staff reserves the right to refuse or reject any entry prior to the time of bowling. Any individual who is refused entry into the Junior Gold Championships can appeal the decision to USBC, attention Rules, within 180 days of the decision or prior to the start of the tournament, whichever occurs first.

### **Passes**

All competitors entered in a Junior Gold event are issued a player pass. Participants must have the player pass on them at all times when entering and leaving the center. The pass will be used when checking the participant in at registration and on all competition days.

## **RULE 4 - WITHDRAWAL FROM A TOURNAMENT**

### **Withdrawal Prior To Start**

Competitors may withdraw from the Junior Gold Championships prior to the start of competition. Participants should contact the Junior Gold office to notify staff of intent to withdraw. Participants who withdraw from the event can be replaced until June 1 of the current bowling season.

### **Substitution Procedures**

The alternate player may enter the tournament in place of a match-play finalist at the discretion of the tournament director in the case of injury, sickness or emergency, subject to the following procedures:

When the alternate enters the tournament, the alternate must bring their own qualifying total into play. Each player retains their own actual pinfall and match-play record for statistical purposes.

In the case of a tie for the alternate position for match play, the player with the highest qualifying game will be given the alternate position. If there is a tie for a high game, each subsequent high game will be used until the tie is broken.

The player finishing in the alternate position must inform the tournament director within 15 minutes of the announcement that they will accept the alternate position. The alternate must be present at all roll calls and remain on the premises through all frames of match-play competition and be prepared to bowl if required. The alternate must be dressed in bowling attire and ready to bowl at all times during match play.

If a player voluntarily declines to serve as alternate, the alternate shall relinquish any rights to the additional scholarship earned and be replaced by the next available player, based upon finish position.

### **Alternate for Television Finals**

There will be no alternate to TV finals in Junior Gold tournaments.

### **Practice When Entering**

If the format calls for an alternate, the alternate entering match play will not receive any practice shots.

## **RULE 5 - TOURNAMENT SCHEDULING**

### **Squad Scheduling**

Registration for squads will open January 12, 2026, and close June 1, 2026 (unless extended). Participants are responsible for logging in and registering for their squads. Individual requests for specific squads will not be accepted. After June 1, participants who have not selected a squad will be assigned one by tournament staff, and this squad will not be changed. There will be no changes to squad assignments after June 1. **Individual requests for specific squads will not be granted.**

### **Check-In for Qualifying and Match Play**

Participants will check-in for the squad approximately one hour before the squad begins. Participants will need their player pass to check-in. Participants in the U12 division will be allowed to have one adult with a spectator pass accompany them during the registration and check-in process at the trade show and bowling center. The U14, U16, and U18 divisions will be required to check-in without assistance from a parent/guardian.

### **Check-In for Television**

Bowlers who are to compete in TV finals are required to be on the premises at least two hours prior to the scheduled finals for a roll-call meeting, unless an alternate time is specified by the tournament director.

### **Penalties for Late Arrival**

Competitors arriving late shall begin competition with the frame in progress. Frames missed or competitors not present to bowl when it is their turn will receive zero for that frame.

### **Official Starting Time**

Official starting time for competition shall be those published on the tournament schedule. The time listed on the schedule will be the start of competition for scoring.

### **Schedule Changes**

Any scheduling changes pertaining to the tournament will be posted on BOWL.com and in each bowling center.

## **RULE 6 – TOURNAMENT FORMAT**

### **U18/U16/U14 Divisions**

Qualifying competition for the U14, U16, and U18 divisions shall consist of four four-game blocks. Total pinfall for the 16 qualifying games will decide who will advance, with a maximum 1:7 ratio in each division determining the number of advancers in the first cut. After five additional games, there will be a second cut, with a maximum of 64 advancers in each division. All players who make the second cut will bowl an additional five-game block to determine the final

advancers for each division. Total pinfall will not be dropped until the match-play bracket finals.

### **U12 Division**

Qualifying competition for the U12 division shall consist of four four-game blocks. Total pinfall for the 16 qualifying games will decide who will advance, with a minimum 1:7 ratio in each division determining the number of advancers in the first cut. After four additional games, there will be a second cut to the top eight. Total pinfall will not be dropped until the match-play bracket finals.

### **Match-Play Bracket**

Match play for each division will consist of a double-elimination bracket format until the TV finals. Each match will consist of two games, with total pinfall determining the winner. The higher seed will have starting lane choice for the first game. The player starting on the left lane will start the match.

### **Television Finals**

The television finals will be a single-game stepladder format, conducted with the top three individuals in each division. These are single-elimination matches. The higher seed will have starting lane choice for the match. The player starting on the left lane will start the match. If the stepladder finals are not televised and the No. 1 seed loses the first game in the championship match, they will bowl a second game to determine the champion. If there is a change in the television format, notice will be posted in the tournament office and participants will be notified prior to the start of the tournament.

## **RULE 7 - BOWLING BALLS**

- A. All bowling balls must meet USBC specifications, be included on the list of USBC-approved balls posted on BOWL.com and not be included in the list below:
  - 1. For the qualifying and advancer rounds all slow oil-absorbing high-performance bowling balls (Urethane) must be at least 78 hardness including high performance balls produced prior to Aug. 1, 2022. For a list of the ineligible balls, see the National Tournament Ineligible Ball List - 78D Slow Oil Allowed on BOWL.com
  - 2. Beginning with match play and through the finals, no slow oil-absorbing high-performance balls (regardless of hardness) will be allowed. For a list of the additional ineligible balls, see the National Tournament Ineligible Ball List - No Slow Oil Allowed on BOWL.com.
  - 3. The following bowling balls are prohibited for use: 900 Global Altered Reality, 900 Global Wolverine, Roto Grip UFO Alert, Storm Electrify Solid, Storm Phaze 4, Storm Trend 2
- B. It is the player's responsibility to ensure all equipment is eligible for competition.
  - 1. Any bowler may request to have their bowling balls checked prior to competition.
  - 2. Plugged bowling balls are allowed.
- C. If a competitor uses a bowling ball not on the list of USBC-approved balls or one that does not meet USBC specification, the bowler is subject to disqualification from the tournament.

### **Damaged Equipment**

In the event a player's bowling ball is damaged during tournament play in such a fashion that it will not meet USBC specifications, the player must notify the tournament director and the ball must be immediately taken out of play. Tournament staff will determine if the participant can replace the ball on the ball card or if it can be fixed.

### **Use of Abrasives on Ball Surface**

Altering the surface of a bowling ball by the use of abrasives, cleaners or polish is prohibited during competition, including the warmup session prior to your squad. In addition, no substance may be placed on the outer surface of the bowling ball. The outer surface of the bowling ball may only be cleaned with a dry towel once the bowler has started competition.

Once competition has started, all sanding products must be removed from the settee area (i.e., Abralon, sandpaper, etc.).

Penalty for first offense: Warning and removal of any altered bowling ball for the remainder of current block or match-

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play round  
Penalty for second offense: Disqualification

## **RULE 8 - REGISTRATION OF EQUIPMENT**

### **Registration of Balls Used in Competition**

Participants will be allowed to list a maximum of five bowling balls on the Equipment Registration Form. Athletes will turn in the completed Equipment Registration Form when they check-in for their first squad on the first day of competition at their designated center and again prior to the start of match play. After the ball card is submitted, a new bowling ball purchased from one of the host center's pro shops (provided the pro shop verifies that the new bowling ball meets USBC specifications) can be added if the limit of five has not been reached, or a bowling ball has been deemed unusable by tournament management. In addition, once a ball is listed on the Equipment Registration Form, it cannot be swapped out with another ball, unless a ball has been deemed unusable by tournament management.

The serial number of all bowling balls used during any frames of competition must be recorded on the player's scoring recap form. Each ball must be described accurately by the player using said equipment, including make and serial number.

Only USBC approved bowling balls will be allowed and MUST have the manufacturer's name, product name and serial number clearly visible at all times for identification purposes. Balls and drilling must meet all USBC specifications. All bowling balls may be checked for compliance with USBC equipment specifications.

Individuals who violate this rule are subject to disqualification from the tournament.

## **RULE 9 - BOWLING BALL INSPECTION PROCEDURES**

### **Equipment Verification**

During the entire event, tournament management reserves the right to perform random checks on equipment at any time to verify the equipment meets specifications and is on the bowler's Equipment Registration Form.

### **Illegal Equipment**

Any bowling ball recorded on the player's scoring recap form which does not comply with all USBC bowling ball specifications shall result in the disqualification of the player from the tournament.

## **RULE 10 - PRACTICE SESSIONS**

### **Practice Session**

Participants will be assigned a specific time for practice. The practice session will be complimentary. The ball limit for the practice session will be waived. The dress code for all practice sessions will be relaxed. Participants will need their player pass or USBC Membership to check-in for the practice session. Participants can only practice during their assigned practice time.

### **Competition Practice**

Practice before each round will consist of 10 minutes on the starting pair of lanes immediately prior to the start of each round. Participants will need their player pass to check-in for competition each day.

### **Match Play**

Practice before each round of match-play competition will consist of five minutes on the designated pair of lanes immediately prior to the start of each round.

### **Televised Finals**

During the televised finals, players will follow the television practice procedures provided during tournament competition.

## **RULE 11 – DELAYS AND MECHANICAL BREAKDOWNS**

### **Mechanical Breakdown**

If a delay or mechanical breakdown of 10 minutes or longer occurs during competition, tournament management will authorize two (2) warmup shots prior to the restarting of competition. Timing will begin the moment the tournament

director is notified of the breakdown. Two (2) shots will be awarded on the lane opposite of where the competitor will throw their next shot for score.

If a breakdown requires competitors to move to an alternate pair not previously used in the tournament, each competitor required to move will receive two (2) warmup shots on each lane. Subsequent incoming bowlers may receive warmup shots at the discretion of tournament management.

If the pair is repaired, it will remain out of play for all squads unless a re-oil occurs. The pair may be brought back in to play if needed due to additional breakdowns.

### **Interrupted Tournament**

Should events occur at the host bowling centers which significantly delay the tournament, every effort will be made to complete the tournament in its entirety. Format and times may be adjusted by the tournament director if necessary. Under these circumstances, the tournament director's decision shall be final.

## **RULE 12 – DEAD BALL SITUATIONS**

The tournament director must be called and will make all decisions regarding dead ball situations.

### **Bowling on the Wrong Lane**

Bowling on the wrong lane constitutes a potential dead ball situation, provided it is protested before the offending competitor (or the opponent in match play) bowls again. If a competitor rolls a strike on the wrong lane, the competitor must bowl again on the correct lane. If the competitor does not strike, the pin count will stand, and the competitor must shoot the spare on the same lane.

### **Bowling Out of Turn**

Bowling out of turn constitutes a potential dead ball situation, provided it is protested before the offending competitor (or the opponent in match play) bowls again. If a competitor rolls a strike out of turn, the competitor must bowl again in the correct order of play. If the competitor does not strike, the pin count will stand, and the competitor must shoot the spare.

### **Dead Wood**

If a pin is in the channel, a competitor must consult the competitors on the pair to determine if it is in play. If any other competitor feels the pin is in play, it must be removed before a shot is thrown. If the competitor attempts a spare conversion while a pin is in play, and the ball contacts the dead wood before leaving the lane surface, the competitor shall receive zero for the shot. If the competitor attempts a spare conversion while a pin is in play, and any pin after coming in contact with the dead wood knocks down one or more pins, the competitor shall receive zero for the shot.

### **Missing Pins**

A competitor must re-bowl the frame if it is determined that any pins were missing from the rack at which the competitor shot.

## **RULE 13 - FOULS**

### **Fouls**

USBC rules regarding fouls will be followed. Should at any time during the shot the foul light flash, it must be scored as a foul. If the player wishes to protest the foul, a ruling by the tournament director must be called for by the end of the game. The tournament director's decision shall be final.

### **Intentional Fouls**

In the event of an intentional foul, the tournament director must be immediately notified. The player shall receive no pinfall for that delivery and shall receive no additional deliveries in that frame. An intentional foul is a foul caused by anything unnatural to a normal delivery and intentionally done, such as kicking at the foul line. If in the act of intentionally fouling the player's action is deemed conduct unbecoming, the competitor will be subject to the penalties provided for this offense.

## **RULE 14 – SETTEE AREA**

**Authorized Personnel**

Only authorized personnel will be permitted in the settee area during competition. Coaches and parents are never permitted in the settee area.

Players not scheduled on that squad will not be permitted in the settee area. Players on the oncoming squad are not permitted to enter the settee area until their starting pair and the adjacent pairs have completed their competition.

**RULE 15 – RE-RACKS**

Players will be allowed a maximum of two re-racks per game during qualifying and match play without permission from tournament staff. Additional re-racks may be requested from the tournament director. The tournament director will grant additional re-racks if the tournament director feels the rack is not properly spotted. Any player who takes additional re-racks during a game without permission from the tournament director will be given zero for the frame.

Players are required to place a check mark on their own scoring recap form for each re-rack taken next to the game number and notify other bowlers on the pair for verification.

In the television finals, one re-rack is allowed per game, with more granted at the discretion of the tournament director after permission of the re-rack is requested.

**Rule 16 - TIES****Qualifying**

If a tie exists at the conclusion of the qualifying rounds, all athletes tied for the final advancing position to Advancers Round I (U14/U16/U18) or Final Advancers Round (U12) will compete in the next round of competition.

**Advancers Round I (U14/U16/U18)**

If a tie exists at the conclusion of Advancers Round I (U14/U16/U18), all athletes tied for the final advancing position to Final Advancers Round will compete in the next round of competition.

**Final Advancers Round (U12/U14/U16/U18)**

If a tie exists at the conclusion of the Final Advancers Round, all athletes tied for the final advancing position to match play will compete in a one-game roll-off. The roll-off will take place on a pair of lanes decided by the tournament director. Should a tie still exist, a one-ball roll-off will be bowled on the same pair of lanes to break the tie. A coin flip shall determine starting lane and order for the roll-off. Both competitors will begin the roll-off on the same lane. The competitors will alternate lanes in the same bowling order until the tie is broken.

**Match Play**

Seeding for position in the match-play bracket will be determined by the highest game bowled for the tournament. If there is a tie for a high game, each subsequent high game will be used until the tie is broken.

If a tie exists at the conclusion of a two-game match, a one-ball roll-off will be bowled on the same pair of lanes to break the tie. The highest-seeded competitor shall determine starting lane and order for the roll-off. Both competitors will begin the roll-off on the same lane. The competitors will alternate lanes in the same bowling order until the tie is broken.

**Television Finals**

If a tie exists at the conclusion of a one-game match during the television finals, a one-ball roll-off will be bowled on the same pair of lanes to break the tie. The highest-seeded competitor shall determine starting lane and order for the roll-off. Both competitors will begin the roll-off on the same lane. The competitors will alternate lanes in the same bowling order until the tie is broken.

**Rule 17 - Scholarships****Scholarship Distribution**

Distribution of prize scholarship will be as published on-site. An appropriate trophy shall be awarded to the champion. All scholarships will be placed in the recipient's SMART account within 30 days of the final date of competition.

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Scholarships will be awarded based on the number of paid entries received in each division (minimum 1:7) and on the position after the final competition. The athletes will receive scholarships based on performance after the match-play finals. A scholarship also will be awarded to the semifinalists who do not advance to match-play competition. One scholarship per person based on place of finish in the tournament. All scholarships will be held in SMART #12523.

### **Split of Tie Position**

In the event of a tie for any position, the scholarship shall be equally divided for the positions tied, except for positions which specifically call for a roll-off.

## **Rule 18 - CONDUCT OF TOURNAMENT PLAYERS**

### **Governing Conduct At All Times**

All tournament bowlers must, at all times, conduct themselves in a professional manner, not only in Junior Gold events, but in all other tournaments and appearances on behalf of Junior Gold.

### **Complaints**

All complaints must be registered in writing to the Senior Director of Short Duration Tournaments..

## **Rule 19 – Lane Courtesy**

### **Lane Courtesy**

To maintain a consistent pace of play, all bowlers are required to observe one-lane courtesy and deliver the ball in a reasonable amount of time. Individuals who are found in violation of this rule will:

First Offense: Receive a warning

Second Offense: Will receive a zero for all remaining frames in the game

Third Offense: Disqualified from the tournament

## **Rule 20 – Participant Uniform**

Tournament management will determine if the uniform worn by the participant is acceptable. If the uniform is deemed unacceptable, the participant will be required to immediately change the uniform. If the participant is unable to change into a compliant uniform, they will be removed from the competition for that day.

### **Shirts**

Competitors shall provide their own bowling shirt with a collared, V-neck, rib-lined or banded neckline. Mock collars must be a minimum of three-quarters of one inch. All shirts must have finished sleeves for all competition. Females may wear a sleeveless shirt with a butterfly collar only if the sleeves are finished.

It is **recommended** that participants have their names on their shirts, but it is not required. If the participant has chosen to have a name on the back, it is recommended that the participant wears their last names (first and last name is recommended) in lettering a minimum of one-inch high, with a maximum height of three inches, on the back of shirts during all tournament play. Hand-printed lettering is not permitted.

Lettering should be in contrasting color to backing (light on dark, or dark on light material) so it can be easily read from a distance.

### **Pants**

Male participants are required to wear slacks. Slacks must not contain drawstring waists or elastic bottoms. Slacks must have a zipper and a button to be eligible. Jeans are not permitted.

Female participants are required to wear slacks, skirts, capris, skorts or walking shorts. All skirts, capris, skorts or walking shorts must be **below the competitor's fingertips** when they are standing with their arms hanging loosely at their side. Jeans and yoga pants are not permitted.

### **Headgear**

No covering or sunglasses can be worn while practicing or competing (hats, caps or bandanas, etc.). Male participants cannot wear any headgear while practicing or competing, unless a request is made in writing and approved prior to

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the event for medical or religious reasons only.

### **Television Finals**

All TV finalists will be provided a shirt to be worn on television. This shirt must be worn at all times during the TV show and also worn in the official championship photos.

## **RULE 21- SCORING**

### **Score Sheet**

Each player is responsible for their own score sheet. Players must sign their own score sheet at the conclusion of each block.

### **No Score**

If a score is not filled in on a player's score sheet, and is not retrievable by computer or manually, the player shall receive a score of zero for that game.

## **RULE 22 - LANE MAINTENANCE**

A fair, equitable and uniform lane condition for all tournament lanes is the primary objective of the Junior Gold lane conditioning program. The tournament staff will not disclose any of the pattern information until after the entire event has concluded.

It is prohibited to discuss lane maintenance procedures with lane maintenance personnel at any time during a tournament. Any complaint regarding lane maintenance must be made to the tournament director.

## **RULE 23 - JUNIOR TEAM USA**

Junior Team USA spots will be awarded based on the current Junior Team USA Selection Criteria.

## **EVENT TERMINATION/RELEASE CLAUSE**

To the Executive Director of the United States Bowling Congress: I and my guardian hereby make application to participate in this Junior Gold Championships event listed and tender the entry fees required. I warrant that I am a USBC Youth member and a Junior Gold member. I and my guardian agree to abide by all tournament playing rules and regulations prescribed by USBC, including all provisions set forth on this form. I and my guardian specifically agree for myself and any replacement chosen by me or for me that if I am not eligible for participation and/or cannot bowl in the event, then my prize, bowling and expense fees shall be forfeited, and all sums tendered by me as prize, bowling and expense fee may be retained by USBC as liquidated damages. The entrant whose name appears hereon or my authorized replacement hereby agrees that the USBC, its officers and agents shall be liable only to the extent of returning entry fees, less expenses, if and when that entrant shall be prevented from bowling any event in the tournament through premature termination of the tournament, which may be brought about by war, national emergency or emergencies or causes relating thereto resulting therefrom, fires, labor difficulties, terrorism or threats of terrorism or other causes beyond the control of USBC. I further agree that USBC may use my name and likenesses (including video) for promotional purposes at no cost to me and with no fees being paid to me.