



2025/2026 Junior Gold Championships Key Points and Frequently Asked Questions

Updates for the 2025/2026 USBC Junior Gold Season

The USBC Junior Gold program continues to evolve the experience for young athletes. As we prepare for the 2025/2026 season, we are implementing some adjustments to the divisions, fees and schedule.

- **Updated Age Divisions**

- Beginning with the 2025/26 season, Junior Gold divisions will be adjusted to U12, U14, U16, and U18. This change is designed to create better peer-to-peer competition, allowing athletes to compete within more balanced age groups.

- **Membership & Entry Fee Adjustments**

- Over the past 27 years, membership and entry fees for the Junior Gold Championships have remained largely unchanged, with only minimal adjustments based on new age divisions. Starting in the 2025/2026 season, pricing will be updated as follows:

DIVISION	CURRENT MEMBERSHIP	FUTURE MEMBERSHIP	CURRENT ENTRY FEE	FUTURE ENTRY FEE
U12	\$10	\$25	\$100	\$150
U14	\$30	\$40	\$150	\$200
U16	\$30	\$50	\$200	\$250
U18	\$30	\$50	\$200	\$250

These adjustments help cover inflation and rising lineage expenses, which Junior Gold has absorbed to support our dedicated host centers.

- **Practice Session Modifications**

- To optimize scheduling and enhance competition readiness, practice sessions will be modified:
 - Sessions will be reduced from 45 minutes to 30 minutes.
 - Practice will be available on Saturday and Sunday, with Friday squads eliminated.
 - Athletes will still bowl in all four practice sessions, ensuring ample preparation time.

- **Equipment Rule Update**

- Athletes will be permitted to alter the surface of their equipment during the warm-up session in the advancer rounds and match play. This adjustment provides players with greater flexibility to prepare equipment based on the lane conditions they did not see during practice sessions.

- **Updated Junior Gold Qualifying Window**

- Starting in the 2025/2026 season, the Junior Gold qualifying period will run from July 1 to May 1, which was previously May 1 of the current year to May 15 of the following year. This update will impact only a small number of events while maintaining key competition opportunities and ensuring a smooth transition for all athletes. In addition, this will eliminate the confusion of two seasons overlapping.



We appreciate the continued support of our athletes, families, and host centers in making the Junior Gold Championships an incredible experience. These updates are designed to enhance fairness, sustainability, and overall competition quality, ensuring a bright future for youth bowling.

For more details, please see our frequently asked questions.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. **What was the process and who was involved in making improvements to the 2025/2026 Junior Gold season?** USBC values input from those with a vested interest in the Junior Gold Championships. We invited a working group to give us feedback on possible adjustments.

The group consisted of experienced Junior Gold tournament coordinators, USBC Youth Advisory Group Members, and individuals who volunteer at the Junior Gold Championships national event. Similar groups in the past have played a key role in shaping the tournament, including the introduction of the U15 and U12 divisions and refining competition formats and rules.

In December 2024, a new group was assembled to review the current state of the Junior Gold Championships. Using survey data and direct participant feedback, the group made recommendations aimed at improving the event. Following a subsequent meeting with tournament staff, adjustments were implemented based on what was deemed best for the tournament's continued success.

2. **What are the updated Junior Gold divisions for the upcoming tournament, and how do they compare to the 2024 tournament structure?** Starting with the 2025/2026 season, the Junior Gold divisions will be organized into four groups: U12, U14, U16, and U18. This updated structure reinforces a commitment to peer-to-peer competition by grouping bowlers more closely by age and creating smaller, more balanced fields within each division.

In comparison to the 2024 format, which featured U12, U15, and U18 divisions, the new approach replaces the broader U15 division with two more focused groups — U14 and U16.

These changes are intended to foster more equitable competition, ensuring that bowlers are competing against others at similar stages in their development. Here's what that looks like based on the 2024 tournament data:

Division	Boys	Girls
U12	262	153
U15	763	356
U18	1684	664

Division	Boys	Girls
U12	262	153
U14	369	169
U16	843	380
U18	1234	472

3. **How will the price increases for membership and entries improve the experience for Junior Gold athletes and their families?** USBC remains committed to enhancing



the Junior Gold experience, and the recent adjustments to membership and entry fees directly support those improvements. Over the past several years, we've expanded the event with additions like the Opening Ceremony, Party in the Park, and upgraded venues for the Trade Show and Registration, creating a more memorable and engaging experience for athletes and families alike.

A portion of the tournament entry fee increase will help offset rising lineage costs, allowing USBC to continue working with high-quality bowling centers. Combined with the updated age division structure, this also opens the door to bringing the Junior Gold Championships to more cities and venues across the country.

Since the 2022/2023 season, all Junior Gold members have received a subscription to *Bowlers Journal* as part of their membership, providing access to inspiring stories, coaching tips, and a deeper connection to the sport. The cost of providing this benefit has been largely supported by membership revenue.

Looking ahead, beginning with the 2025/2026 season, USBC plans to reintroduce an additional Junior Gold membership gift, continuing to add value for our members alongside the ongoing *Bowlers Journal* subscription.

4. **How will the changes to practice impact the schedule?** Beginning at the 2026 national tournament, practice sessions will be limited to 30 minutes. This adjustment allows all practice to be scheduled exclusively on Saturdays and Sundays, resulting in a one-day reduction to the overall event schedule.

This change offers greater flexibility for families, potentially saving a day of travel, and opens the door for increased participation, as it creates space for additional squads in the *Bowling.com Youth Open*.

5. **Why is USBC allowing surface adjustments in the later rounds, but not during qualifying?** During qualifying, all athletes have access to official practice sessions that use the same lane patterns featured in competition. This allows bowlers to evaluate lane conditions in advance and make any necessary surface adjustments to their equipment beforehand.

In the later rounds, however, a new lane pattern is introduced without a dedicated practice session. To ensure a fair playing field, starting with the 2026 national tournament, athletes will be allowed to adjust their ball surfaces prior to competing on the newly introduced pattern.

6. **How does the qualifying season change help improve Junior Gold?** The revised qualifying season helps improve Junior Gold by streamlining the schedule and reducing confusion for athletes, parents, and event organizers. In recent years, the number of events held in May and June has steadily declined, making the overlap between seasons less effective.

By eliminating this overlap, the new schedule creates a clearer transition from one season to the next, ensuring a more organized and consistent experience for Junior Gold members.

7. **What should we do if we have an event already scheduled during May and/or**



June? You can still hold your scheduled event in May or June; however, it will no longer be eligible to serve as a Junior Gold Qualifier. That said, you are encouraged to continue running the event and offering scholarships to participants. This still provides meaningful competitive opportunities for youth athletes, even outside the Junior Gold qualifying season.

8. **When will Junior Gold memberships be available for purchase?** Junior Gold memberships for the 2025/2026 season will be available for purchase starting July 1, 2025.