

September 2026

[USBC Playing Rules Book](#)

Last month, we discussed league start up and the responsibilities of the various league officer positions. We are happy to announce there are no rules changes for the 2026-2027 season. However, there is one change to the Equipment Specification regarding ball serial numbers that takes effect on **Jan. 1, 2027**, and will be explained below.

If you missed last month's Rules Extra, please click [here](#).

This month, we will discuss:

- Absentee and vacancy scores
- Prize lists
- Tools available to assist in your league operations

If you are no longer a league officer, please forward Rules Extra to newly elected officers if you have their email address so that they will be more knowledgeable in their new role.

Please forward Rules Extra via email to your fellow officers and league members.



LEAGUE RESOURCES

Absentee Score or Vacancy Score

The Rules team receives many calls about what score to use if a bowler on the roster is absent the first week of the schedule. Many believe you cannot use the absentee scores of a bowler until the person has bowled in the league; however, that is contrary to [USBC Rule 112](#). The absentee score of a player on the roster is used unless league rules require the vacancy score be used. [See more about absentee and vacancy scores.](#)

Prize lists

The president must appoint a prize committee and ensure the committee provides the league with at least one prize list for consideration by Week 5 ([Rule 106a](#)).

Bowlers often believe they must vote for one of the prize lists even if they do not agree with any of the choices. This causes many bowlers to vote for the prize list they can live with or not to vote at all. In order to allow bowlers to vote without settling for a prize list they do not like, each prize list presented by the committee should have a column for yes and no votes.

[Learn more about prize lists.](#)

League Tools from Rules

The [League Resources Page](#) of BOWL.com is full of valuable information that Rules has produced to help your league operations run more smoothly. Here are some of the things that you will find on the [League Resources Page](#):

[League Operations Handbook](#)
[How to Run Meetings](#)
[Election Guidelines](#)
[Audit Worksheets](#)
[League Officer Duties](#)
[How to Handle Protests](#)
[League Finance Basics](#)
[League Finance Verification Sheet](#)

Bookmark [this page](#) for quick access to these valuable tools to assist you in your role as a league officer.



HOT TOPICS

Change Coming to Bowling Ball Serial Numbers Specifications (Effective Jan. 1, 2027)

Each ball must have the original brand name/logo, original ball name and some form of serial number (the serial number may be re-engraved). **Effective Jan. 1, 2027, ball markings required for identification purposes may not be re-engraved. Balls with re-engraved or unidentifiable serial numbers are not allowed in certified competitions.**



ATHLETE SAFETY/RVP

Athlete Safety/RVP

The Registered Volunteer Program is designed to create awareness about emotional, physical and sexual abuse through education and prevention policies.

All league officers must be RVP compliant if they are operating an **Adult/Youth** or a **Youth** league. These consist of any league in which a minor (17 years of age or younger) is allowed to participate.

If you conduct a youth league or adult/youth league as a league officer, you must be a Registered Volunteer. You will need to successfully complete SafeSport training and a background screen through NCSI. In addition, you must follow all policies in the Athlete Safety/RVP Handbook when your competition allows bowlers under the age of 18 to participate.

By certifying an event, you are responsible for adherence to USBC's policies and procedures as found in the USBC Playing Rules book, Athlete Safety & RVP Handbook and all other policies and procedures. Failing to do so could result in USBC removing the certification status.

To learn more about the Athlete Safety/RVP Handbook, click [here](#).

To become a Registered Volunteer, click [here](#).



DO YOUR BOWLERS KNOW?

Do your bowlers know...lane courtesy? You can print copies of the [Etiquette Guidelines](#) to hand out to your bowlers.

Do your bowlers know...about online membership? Memberships can be purchased online through [Join USBC](#) on BOWL.com prior to leagues starting.



Mythbusters

Busted, plausible, or confirmed:

Myth #30: A team or individual can pre-bowl for the first league session.

Myth #34: Once adopted, all league rules are final.

Myth #45: A bowler must bowl before their absentee score can be used.

Myth #47: I should not vote if I do not like any of the prize lists.

[Get the answers to these and other bowling myths.](#)

Want to be part of Mythbusters? Send your bowling myth to Rules@bowl.com.