

The Great Northwest Basketball League

2025 Rules

3rd & 4th Grade Non-Competitive League

Purpose of the 3rd & 4th Grade Non-Competitive League. The 3rd and 4th Grade Non-Competitive League is intended to be an opportunity to develop beginning basketball players by teaching them basic skills and an understanding of the game, so they can effectively compete when they begin full-scale traveling basketball. The focus will be on teaching, rather than simply coaching, with **both** coaches trying to help the players on **both** teams improve. At times, hearing a coach other than their own make a point will leave a lasting impression on players, as well as confirming their coach's viewpoint. By not keeping score (officially or unofficially), we allow the less accomplished players and teams to improve in an environment where they need not be embarrassed. If we as coaches all do our jobs well, all of these players, when they start playing in regular League meets, will be able to dribble a ball without looking at it, not travel excessively, know how to shoot with proper form, use a pivot foot, know how to set a screen, understand proper defensive and rebounding position, demonstrate good sportsmanship and, above all, enjoy playing the game more than when they started.

Divisions. There are separate playing divisions for 3rd and 4th graders.

- Games for 3rd grade teams will be played on 8' baskets;
- Games for 4th grade teams will be played on 10' baskets.
- 3rd graders can play "up" in the 4th Grade Division, but 4th graders cannot play "down" in the 3rd Grade Division.
- 3rd grade teams that prefer playing games on 10' baskets may play "up" together as a team in the 4th Grade Division.

Communities are not required to field both a 4th and a 3rd grade team to play in the League. Basketball programs that do not participate in at least one grade in the competitive 5th through 8th grade in the Great Northwest League, are **not** eligible to play in the 3rd and 4th grade Non-Competitive League (the boys and girls programs in each community are considered to be two separate programs, even if both are part of the same basketball club). The Non-Competitive League **is subsidized by the enrollment fees** received from teams at the older grade levels, so it would not be fair to member participants to have non-member teams benefit from this program.

Team Composition. Communities may, but are not required to, form specific teams, with separate rosters for each. They may also adjust their rosters each week to accommodate the different availability of players. Communities are strongly encouraged, but not absolutely required, to bring between eight and ten players to each mini-meet. With less than eight, players may get too tired. However, more than ten will make substitutions difficult. Players of this age will lose focus on the sideline, and the additional mass substitutions will slow the progress of each game.

Hosting. Every community participating in the Non-competitive League will ideally **host at least once**, and twice if fielding a large number of teams with a relatively large number of play dates each.

Each team hosting will hold a "mini-meet" which consists of four teams playing in a round robin format. The mini-meets are 2½ hours long, and communities will be able to host one, two or three groups on each host date. Communities typically host a combination of boys and girls events on the same Saturday. When hosting three mini-meets on a Saturday, the first will be from 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.; the next from 11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.; and the third from 2:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. As an example, a community could host 4th grade girls from 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., 3rd grade boys from 11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and 3rd grade girls from 2:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

When hosting, a community needs **two** playing surfaces, preferably with baskets that can be adjusted from 10' to 8' and back to 10'. Communities that do not have adjustable baskets will only be able to host in the 4th grade Division (which means if they have a team in the 3rd grade Division, that team will have no home meets).

The goal is to have each participating community host enough to provide as many (or more) playing spots as they use. We will make an exception for those communities fielding only a 3rd grade team where that community does not have adjustable baskets (that team will not be required to host at the 3rd grade level). Each time a team hosts they are creating four spots. Holding two or three mini-meets on a Saturday creates eight or twelve spots respectively.

Here are examples of the hosting commitment based on the number of meets each team requests playing:

- Community A has one 4th Grade Division girls team and one 3rd grade Division girls team and each wants to play six dates. They are using 12 spots ($2 \times 6 = 12$) and would need to host one date with three groups of four teams ($3 \times 4 = 12$) to meet their hosting obligation.
- Community B has two 4th Grade Division teams (one boys and one girls) and two 3rd grade Division teams (one boys and one girls) and each wants to play five dates. They are using 20 spots ($4 \times 5 = 20$) and would need to host two dates with three groups of four teams [$2 \times (3 \times 4) = 24$] to cover these spots.
- Community C has only one 4th Grade Division boys team, wanting to play five dates. Even though they are playing in only five spots ($1 \times 5 = 5$), they may be asked to host in two time slots to fully cover the space they use.
- Community D has two teams (one 4th grade boys and one 3rd grade boys), each wanting to play four meets. However, Community D does not have adjustable baskets. In this case, since Community D can't host 3rd grade Division games, it will likely be asked to host two 4th grade Division groups back-to-back on the same day.

Format. Each four-team mini-meet is set up with this format:

- 30 minutes of practice time
- 30 minute running clock game against first opponent
- 15 minute rest period/instructional time
- 30 minute game against a second opponent
- 15 minute rest period/instructional time
- 30 minute game against a third opponent

The schedule for a Saturday with three mini-meets (this is the most common scenario), will be as follows:

Mini-meet 1

9:00 – 9:30 a.m.	Practice time	
9:30 – 10:00 a.m.	Teams 1 v 2	Teams 3 v 4
10:00 – 10:15 a.m.	Rest or practice time	
10:15 – 10:45 a.m.	Teams 1 v 3	Teams 2 v 4
10:45 – 11:00 a.m.	Rest or practice time	
11:00 – 11:30 a.m.	Teams 1 v 4	Teams 2 v 3

Mini-meet 2

11:30 – Noon	Practice time	
Noon – 12:30 p.m.	Teams 5 v 6	Teams 7 v 8
12:30 – 12:45 p.m.	Rest or practice time	
12:45 – 1:15 p.m.	Teams 5 v 7	Teams 6 v 8
1:15 – 1:30 p.m.	Rest or practice time	
1:30 – 2:00 p.m.	Teams 5 v 8	Teams 6 v 7

Mini-meet 3

2:00 – 2:30 p.m. Practice time	
2:30 – 3:00 p.m. Teams 9 v 10	Teams 11 v 12
3:00 – 3:15 p.m. Rest or practice time	
3:15 – 3:45 p.m. Teams 9 v 11	Teams 10 v 12
3:45 – 4:00 p.m. Rest or practice time	
4:00 – 4:30 p.m. Teams 9 v 12	Teams 10 v 11

The opening 30-minute practice time is provided at each meet for several reasons:

- Many teams may have a difficult time getting gym space during some weeks in their hometown.
- Players at this age are likely to be better prepared to get the most out of each game if they have a refresher before taking the court.
- For those communities that do not have adjustable baskets, this may be one of the few practice opportunities that 3rd grade players have to shoot at an 8' basket.

During the practice time, each team will be able to use one basket (half of one of the two courts). Teams not wishing to use the practice time can show up a little later, but must be on time for their first game. Each game will start and end precisely at the posted time.

For each game, the five starting players from each team will be on the court and ready for the jump ball at the exact time the game is posted to begin. A 9:30 a.m. start time doesn't mean that the coach begins to organize their players for the first game at 9:30 a.m.; but that they are on the court, ready to begin at 9:30 a.m.

When host communities host only one or two mini-meets on a specific Saturday, the first mini-meet will generally start at **9:30 a.m.** (instead of 9:00 a.m.). Start times will also be adjusted on a case-by-case basis to accommodate local gym availability and related scheduling issues.

No Score/Scorekeepers. There will be no scorekeepers or scoreboard functioning. The purpose of these games is to give young players court time; not to determine who has won or lost. Coaches should refrain from, and discourage parents and players from, keeping track of the score in some other way.

No Clock/ Clock Operators. There will be no scoreboard clock and, therefore, no clock operator. Each game will be 30 minutes of running time in length.

Referees/Officiating. There will be no official referees. **Each team will provide one coach to referee (each must have a whistle).** While there will be no "official" referees on the court wearing a striped shirt, it is critical that the coach from each team who is officiating be very knowledgeable about the rules of the game. Given the relative inexperience of these players, most infractions (for example, traveling, three seconds, over and back) should not be called closely. Players should be given warnings and, even on a whistled infraction, the coaches should tell all 10 players (plus those on the sidelines), not just their players, why the whistle was blown. Each stoppage of time is an opportunity to teach. Make a point in 10-15 seconds and move on – don't lecture to the point that the players are getting more lecture time than playing time. Be judicious in blowing the whistle. At this age level, one could blow the whistle every five seconds. Let them play, even with some infractions; blow the whistle when something stands out that is so noticeable that you'd be concerned some of the players will begin developing bad habits, or get confused about the rules, unless the incorrect actions are addressed.

Treat these games as a controlled scrimmage. Be positive and encouraging, teach when making corrections, and focus on the big issues. Coaches who are officiating should use higher standards in the 4th grade Division than in the 3rd grade games; and expect more from all players later in the season than early on.

Each team should have one coach as an official on the court, but no more. If each team has two adults on the court, it gets too congested. When officiating, coaches should position themselves much as certified officials do – one under the basket, the other at half court. Both officials need to stay out of the way so as not to impede a player's path during the game.

The biggest points of contention at 3rd and 4th grade games usually occur when one coach on the floor wants to call the game very closely and another wants to ignore most infractions. This usually happens where one team is significantly more developed than the other, with the coach of the stronger team arguing that they don't want their team to develop bad habits. In these cases, the coaches need to **privately** reach a middle ground consensus about how close to call the game and not argue in front of their players, or bring parents on the sideline into the debate. The League prefers that games be called more closely than too loosely. While inexperienced players will travel, double dribble and set illegal picks (probably the three most common violations), teams should be addressing these issues in practice.

Scheduling. On most Saturdays, there will be two or more venues in each Division to allow teams from some distance apart to play each other. For instance, when Prescott hosts, the League would try to have the other venues be communities like New Richmond and Menomonie, so that no team would have too long a trip.

Meets will be scheduled on these seven Saturdays: October 18, October 25, November 1, November 8, November 15, December 6 and December 13. While no team will be forced to play more dates than they want, all teams will be expected to be reasonably flexible within that time period and be available on as many of those Saturdays as possible.

Cost. There is no charge to play in the Non-Competitive League. There will be no awards or referees to pay. If there is a facility charge for gym rental or janitorial services, the host team must bear that expense directly. The 3rd and 4th Grade Non-Competitive League is subsidized by teams playing in 5th-8th grade of The Great Northwest Basketball League, which is the reason only GNBL member communities are allowed to participate.

Rosters, Liability Waivers and Concussion Agreements. All teams must submit rosters and completed waiver/concussion forms **absolutely no later than November 1.**

All teams must submit the following information.

- A roster for your team. Rosters can be submitted on the "roster form" posted on the website (or a word-processed document with all of the information) and must contain each player's first and last name, jersey number (if available), home address, school and grade during the 2025-2026 school year. If you have a large number of players and plan to bring a slightly different group to each meet or you have two (or more) teams at a given grade level and plan to mix and match players on the teams, please send one overall roster with information for all players. Rosters can be returned via regular mail (GNBL, P O Box 506, Hudson, WI 54016), by email to jen@gnbl.org or by fax to 715-796-2872.
- A "Consent for Medical Treatment and Voluntary Release, Acknowledgement and Acceptance of Risks Indemnity Agreement" (hereafter "Liability Waiver/Concussion Agreement"). The Liability Waiver, the "Parent and Athlete Concussion Law Agreement" and the coach's Concussion Agreement are combined into one document to simplify the paperwork for coaches and associations. The Liability Waiver/Concussion Agreement provides legal protection to you as a coach, your school and your referees, not just those parties organizing the League. We strongly urge you to take this process seriously.

To submit Liability Waiver/Concussion forms online, for each player on the team have the parent/legal guardian visit our website at gnbl.org, then click on "Waiver/Concussion Info" in the top menu bar. From there they can follow the online instructions. Parents (guardians) must complete this process once each season (even if they filled it out last season, we need a new

waiver submitted for the 2025 season). If you have questions during the process, please contact Jen Myer at jen@gnbl.org.

Pre-Meet Contact. Each team coach/contact **must confirm their participation** in each meet by contacting Tracie via email at tracie@gnbl.org or by phone at 715-749-9048, **absolutely no later than the Saturday one week before each meet at 10 p.m.** When confirming your team's attendance, include the **team name and grade level** (for example, "I'm confirming the Chippewa Falls Red 3rd grade boys will be at the November 9 meet in Elk Mound"). If a scheduled team is not planning to attend, the League will arrange a replacement and notify the host team of that fact. Teams that consistently do not confirm their attendance risk being removed from mini-meets late in the season or in the future.

Here are the deadlines for each date meets will be held:

- **October 18 meets.** Confirm by October 11 at 10 p.m.
- **October 25 meets.** Confirm by October 18 at 10 p.m.
- **November 1 meets.** Confirm by October 25 at 10 p.m.
- **November 8 meets.** Confirm by November 1 at 10 p.m.
- **November 15 meets.** Confirm by November 8 at 10 p.m.
- **December 6 meets.** Confirm by November 29 at 10 p.m.
- **December 13 meets.** Confirm by December 6 at 10 p.m.

Basketballs. The host team should provide a quality game ball at each court. Game balls must be an official 28.5" leather ball of good quality and properly inflated.

Each team participating in a meet must bring their own warm up balls.

Concessions. Host communities are **not required** to run a concession stand and are discouraged from doing so, to keep this League simple. Since most players and parents will be there for only 2½ hours, there's no need to eat a meal, and game time beverages can be brought in by each team. If a host has a strong desire to run a concession stand, it can do so, but should not count on heavy sales.

Attire. Numbered jerseys or t-shirts are required. Jerseys or t-shirts should have a number on both front and back. Fouls will be called in games, but not tracked, so that no player will foul out of a game. Attire from the waist up must be all of the same color for a given team.

Since there will be times when both teams will have the same color regular t-shirt or jersey, each team must have one of the following: an alternate color t-shirt, a regular shirt or jersey that is reversible, or a practice mesh vest (pinnies) that can be slipped over the top of the regular jersey or t-shirt. The latter is probably the least expensive in the long run (you can re-use for many years).

Substitutions. Players at this age need a lot of direction and instructions on what to do when going into a game. Each team should try (although it's not required) to have two coaches at each meet, so one can help officiate the game and the other manage substitutions. Before each game, coaches from the two teams about to play should confer as to how often they want to make substitutions, so that both teams make substitutions at the same time. This will cut down on the amount of substitution time in each half-hour game and will maximize playing time.

Time-Outs. There will be no stoppage of play for "halftime" and no time-outs. If a player is tired, ill, or injured, this should be handled with a simple substitution. Since informal instruction is being provided by the coaches each time there is a blown whistle or a substitution, formal time-outs are not needed.

Fouls. As noted above, fouls will be called, but will not be tracked, so that no players can foul out of a game. As with other infractions (traveling, double dribble), fouls should not be called as closely as in regular games for more experienced players. However, we do not want players learning bad habits when it comes to untoward intentional contact with opposing players. Therefore, fouls should be called

more closely than most infractions. While a player cannot foul out, coaches should use common sense and pull a player out of a game for a period of instruction and contemplation if guilty of overly-aggressive, overly-rough or intentional contacts.

When a foul is called, whether it is in the act of shooting or not, the team being fouled can choose where they want to take the ball out of bounds – we do **not** shoot free throws, even when fouled in the act of shooting. Most teams will want to take it out directly under the basket at which they are shooting. The reason for this rule is to create some negative impact to committing a foul. If the fouled team has to take the ball out wherever fouled, the fouled team is actually being disadvantaged, since successfully inbound the ball at this age level can be one of the more difficult tasks. The coach for the fouled team who is helping officiate the game should immediately decide in each instance where to inbound the ball and proceed to that part of the floor, to give their player the ball to inbound.

Jump Ball. Since there is no clock operator/scorekeeper, there will be no possession arrow. Where one player from each team has mutual possession of the ball, the ball will be awarded to the team in the defensive zone – the team that is furthest away from the basket at which it is shooting will get the ball out of bounds in the case of a jump ball. The only actual “jump ball” will be at the start of the game.

Defense. Only person-to-person defenses will be allowed (no zones) with no pressure defense before half-court. In games that become one-sided after several possessions, or where one team consistently has the ball stolen from them after crossing half-court, the stronger team will be instructed by both referees to not pick up the offensive players above the free throw line extended.

Cancellations. Consistent with The Great Northwest Basketball League’s rules on non-weather related cancellations, teams that fail to show at a scheduled meet with insufficient notice to find a replacement, for any reason other than bad weather, risk being removed from the remainder of their schedule and possibly have that team or coach excluded from participation in League meets the next season.

If one team fails to show for a meet, whether for weather-related or other reasons, that meet will be re-formatted as follows (for purposes of this example, we will use the 9:00 time slot):

9:00 – 9:30	All three teams practice.
9:30 – 9:50	Team A v Team B, Team C rests or practices.
9:50 – 10:10	Team B v Team C, Team A rests or practices.
10:10 – 10:30	Team A v Team C, Team B rests or practices.
10:30 – 10:50	Team A v Team B, Team C rests or practices.
10:50 – 11:10	Team B v Team C, Team A rests or practices.
11:10 – 11:30	Team A v Team C, Team B rests or practices.

Team A will be whichever team has the fewest players (Team A has to play back-to-back only once). If the host team is not Team A, the host team shall be Team C.