

# OFFICIAL CORNHOLE RULES FOR ACA TOURNAMENTS

These are the official Cornhole rules and regulations of the American Cornhole Association (ACA). The Cornhole rules and regulations have been developed and ratified by a majority of ACA members for ACA-sanctioned tournament play. The Cornhole rules are not a mandate, but rather a guideline to promote consistent and standard Cornhole (also called Corn Hole and Bean Bag Toss) play, whether you're playing in a tournament or just for fun in your backyard.

## RULE 1 – COURT LAYOUT



### Section A. Dimensions

A Cornhole court shall be a level rectangular area 10 ft wide and a minimum of 45 ft long. The court should consist of 2 Cornhole boards, designated pitchers boxes and foul lines. A north-south setting is recommended for outdoor courts to minimize the effects of the sun.

### Section B. Pitcher's Box

The pitcher's box is the rectangle 4 ft by 3 ft at each end of the court, parallel and on both sides of Cornhole boards. Each contestant must remain in the pitchers box while pitching the Cornhole bag.

### Section C. Multiple Courts

To eliminate distraction and safely separate activity, Cornhole courts adjacent to each other shall be a minimum of 10 feet apart. A greater distance (at least 12 feet) is preferable.

### Section D. Foul Lines

There are 2 sets of foul lines: (1) open adult play and (2) junior play. The open adult play foul lines shall be defined as an imaginary line 30 ft. from the beginning of the hole in the opposite Cornhole board. For Cornhole sets that meet ACA specifications, this foul line will be parallel to the front of the Cornhole board. The junior play foul lines shall be defined as an imaginary line 21 ft. from the beginning of the hole in the opposite Cornhole board. See the diagram below.

### **Section E. Covered Or Indoor Courts**

The regulations for covered and indoor Cornhole courts are exactly the same with the additional stipulation that they shall have a minimum 12 foot vertical clearance to the lowest possible obstruction.

## **RULE 2 – EQUIPMENT (CORNHOLE BOARDS & BAGS)**

### **Section A. Equipment Standards**

The ACA has adopted the following equipment specifications and standards for Cornhole:

1. Each Cornhole board shall be a 48" x 24" rectangle made of half inch plywood. ACA sanctioned cornhole tournaments should only be played with wooden Cornhole boards as there is significant variance in play between wooden and plastic or other surfaces.
2. The hole in the Cornhole board shall be six inches in diameter and be centered nine inches from the top and 12 inches from each side of the Cornhole board edges.
3. The front of the Cornhole board shall be 4" inches from bottom to top and be at near a 90-degree angle to the deck face.
4. The back of the Cornhole board shall be 12" inches from ground to the highest point of the deck at a 90-degree angle to the deck face.
5. The Cornhole board should have solid wood sides with the only opening to the underside of the Cornhole board being through the hole in the Cornhole board. Although portable fold-down boards are acceptable (with open sides), boards with solid wooden sides are preferred for ACA-sanctioned tournament play as it is sometimes difficult (especially late in the day) to determine if a Cornhole bag was pitched into the hole or came to rest under the Cornhole board by being pitched through the open sides in a Cornhole board.
6. The Cornhole board shall be finish sanded to a very smooth texture and there shall not be any blemishes in the wood surface that might disrupt or distort play.
7. The Cornhole board shall be painted with a semi gloss exterior latex paint resulting in a surface that allows Cornhole bags to slide but is not so slippery that it allows the bags to slide back down the board. The preferable color is white, but any easy to see color is acceptable for tournament play.

8. The [Cornhole bags](#) shall be made from 2 fabric squares 6-1/4" inches square with a quarter inch double stitched seam on all 4 sides. The Cornhole bags should be made from 10 oz / sq yd duck canvas and may be any color that is easy to see during Cornhole play. Each bag shall be filled with approximately 2 cups of feedcorn and finished bags should be a minimum of 6" X 6" inches square and weigh between 14 and 16 ounces. Due to the recent shortage of feedcorn, we will allow the use of plastic pellets ([All Weather Cornhole Bags](#)) in lieu of feed corn.

## **RULE 3 – PITCHING DISTANCES**

### **Section A. Adults**

All open adult contestants shall pitch from the pitcher's box behind the 30 foot foul lines. Physically impaired adults or seniors may, if agreed by all contestants, observe the 21 foot foul lines.

### **Section B. Juniors**

Junior contestants may pitch from any place, but must observe the 21 foot foul lines.

## **RULE 4 – CORNHOLE COURT PREPARATION AND MAINTENANCE**

### **Section A. Court Maintenance**

Every effort shall be made to keep the Cornhole play surface in perfect playing condition. Cornhole courts should be free of anything that might distract a contestant during play. Each contestant is responsible for making sure the court is in good playing condition prior to starting the match. During a match, a contestant shall not be allowed to alter the Cornhole court in any manner without the consent of the opponent or a tournament official.

### **Section B. Distractions During Play**

Every effort shall be made to keep from distracting contestants during Cornhole play. Drinks and other personal belongings should be placed behind the Cornhole board in designated beverage holders or other secure locations to keep from distracting contestants.

## **RULE 5 – PLAY OF THE GAME**

### **Section A. Singles Or Doubles Play**

Cornhole can be played as doubles or singles. In doubles play 2 contestants are partners against another team of 2 contestants; in singles play a contestant competes against another contestant. In doubles play, 1 member of each team pitches from 1 Cornhole board and the other members

pitch from the other Cornhole board. In singles play, both contestants pitch from the same Cornhole board. All other Cornhole rules are basically the same for doubles or singles play.

## **Section B. Innings**

Every Cornhole match is broken down into innings of play. During each inning of play each contestant must pitch all 4 Cornhole bags.

In singles play, the top of an inning is completed when the first contestant pitches all 4 Cornhole bags; the bottom of the inning is completed when the remaining contestant pitches all 4 bags.

In doubles play, the top of an inning is completed when both contestants pitching from the first Cornhole board pitch all 4 Cornhole bags; the bottom of the inning is completed when the remaining contestants (pitching from the other Cornhole board) pitch all 4 bags.

An inning is never completed until all contestants pitch all 4 bags.

## **Section C. Value Of The Cornhole Bag**

1. Cornhole Bag In-The-Hole – A Cornhole bag in-the-hole (or Hole-In) is a bag which is thrown through the hole in the Cornhole board or otherwise comes to rest inside the Cornhole board (knocked in by another player or an act of God). A Cornhole bag in-the-hole has a value of 3 points.
2. Cornhole Bag In-The-Count – A Cornhole bag that is not in-the-hole but lands with any portion of the bag resting on the Cornhole board is in-the-count (sometimes called on-the-board). A bag in-the-count has a value of 1 point. For a bag to be in-the-count, it must not touch the ground or any other portion of the court prior to coming to rest on the Cornhole board. If a bag touches the ground before coming to rest on the Cornhole board, it is a foul and must be removed from the Cornhole board prior to the continuation of play.
3. Cornhole Bag Out-Of-The-Count – A Cornhole bag which comes to rest anywhere except in-the-count or in-the-hole is out-of-the-count and has no scoring value. A bag which is declared to be a foul is considered to be out-of-the-count (no matter where it comes to rest) and must be removed from the Cornhole surface prior to the continuation of play.

## **Section D. Delivery Of Cornhole Bags During Play**

1. In doubles play, the first side of contestants alternate pitching Cornhole bags until they have thrown all 4 bags, then the remaining contestant (pitching from the other Cornhole board) continue to alternate in the same manner until all 4 bags are delivered and the inning completed. Delivery in singles play is handled in the same manner (but from the same board) with each of the 2 contestants alternating their pitching of Cornhole bags until all 4 bags have been pitched completing the inning.

2. A contestant may deliver the Cornhole bag from either the left or right pitchers box (see above) but, in any 1 inning, all bags must be delivered from the same pitcher's box. A contestant shall pitch the entire tournament with the same hand or arm, except in the case of a medical emergency.

3. Each individual contestant shall deliver the Cornhole bag within 20 seconds. The time shall start when the contestant steps onto the pitcher's box with the intention of pitching.

#### **Section E. Pitching Rotation During The Game**

The contestant who scored in the preceding inning shall pitch first in the next inning. If neither pitcher scores, the contestant who pitched second (last) in the preceding inning shall pitch first in the next inning.

#### **Section F. Position Of Contestants During Delivery**

1. The pitcher must maintain constant contact with the designated pitcher's box (See diagram above) during the entire address and release of the Cornhole bag. The only exception is for junior and physically challenged contestants, who must simply remain completely behind the 21 ft. foul line when the bag is released. The opponent, while not pitching, shall stand behind the Cornhole board at least 2 feet to the rear of the contestant who is pitching. After a short distance contestant (junior or physically challenged) pitches first they must return to the Cornhole board if the opponent or any contestant on an adjacent court is a full distance pitcher.

2. If both contestants use the same pitchers box to deliver their Cornhole bags, the contestant pitching first should cross over to the other pitchers box in front of the Cornhole board and then move to the proper position. (see #1 above) As the first contestant is crossing in front the second contestant should be crossing over in back and mounting the pitchers box from the rear. If both contestants use opposite pitchers boxes, the contestant who pitches first should step directly back to the proper position described in #1 of this section.

#### **Section G. Foul Cornhole Bags**

A foul Cornhole bag is a bag which was delivered in non-compliance with one of the Cornhole rules of the game. It scores as a bag out of the count and is to be removed from the Cornhole court before any more bags are pitched. Cornhole bags already in the court that have been knocked into foul territory by a foul bag should be returned to the scoring area. Additionally, bags that are in the count, but are knocked into the hole by a foul bag must be returned to their original scoring position.

1. The following are rule violations that must be spotted and called by an contestant or assigned judge. The penalty is to declare the Cornhole bag a foul bag which requires the bags to be removed from the court prior to resuming play.

(a) Any Cornhole bag pitched when the contestant has made contact with or crossed over the foul line before the bag is released.

- (b) Except as provided above, any Cornhole bag pitched when the contestant has started or stepped completely outside the pitching box before releasing the bag.
- (c) Any Cornhole bag not delivered within the twenty second time limit.
- (d) A Cornhole bag pitched from a different pitchers box than the first bag.
- (e) Any Cornhole bag that contacted the court or the ground before coming to rest on the Cornhole board.
- (f) Any Cornhole bag which struck a previously defined object such as a tree limb, wire, indoor court ceiling, etc.
- (g) Any Cornhole bag that leaves a contestant's hand once the final forward swing of the delivery process has started shall count as a pitched bag. A bag that is accidentally dropped by a contestant before the final forward swing has started shall not be considered foul and may be picked up and pitched.

2. A contestant's Cornhole bags shall be called foul if the contestant removes any bag before the scoring of that bag has been agreed upon. A judge shall be called if a decision cannot be reached. The judge shall determine the scoring for the inning.

Section H. Protests – If a contestant desires to make a protest, the protest shall be made to the judge or tournament official at the time the problem occurs. The tournament judge shall make the final ruling on all protests.

## **RULE 6 – LENGTH OF THE GAME**

### **Section A. Point Limits**

The Cornhole match shall be played until the first team of contestants reaches (or exceeds) 21 points at the completion of an inning. The winning team does not need to win by 2 or more points.

### **Section B. The Inning Must Be finished**

The Cornhole match can never end in the middle of an inning. Thus, if a team that pitches first reaches or exceeds 21 points, the game can not end until the other side is allowed to pitch all of their bags and the inning is completed.

### **Section C. Ties At The End Of An Inning**

If the Cornhole match is tied at 21 or more at the end of an inning, play continues until one team or the other achieves a higher score at the end of an inning and wins the match.

### **Section D. Skunks**

The game shall be played to 21 unless a team scores 7 or more points at the end of an inning before their opponents score any points. In this case the game is a skunk and the team that scores 7 or more points wins the match.

## **RULE 7 – SCORING**

### **Section A. Simple Scoring**

In simple scoring the points are totaled at the end of each  $\frac{1}{2}$  inning and the smaller score is subtracted from the larger score and the difference in points is awarded to the team scoring the most points that  $\frac{1}{2}$  inning. In this scoring method only one team can score per  $\frac{1}{2}$  inning.

### **Section B. Cancellation Scoring**

In cancellation scoring, Cornhole bags in-the-hole and bags in-the-count pitched by opponents during an inning (in singles play) or half of an inning (in doubles play) cancel each other out. Only non-canceled bags are counted in the score for the inning.

1. Cornhole Bags In-The-Hole: Hole-ins (HI's) cancel each other. A bag in-the-hole of one contestant shall cancel a bag in-the-hole of his competitor and those bags shall not score any points. Any non cancelled bag in-the-hole scores 3 points.
2. Cornhole Bags In-The-Count: Bags in-the-count cancel each other. A bag in-the-count of one contestant shall cancel a bags in-the-count of the opponent and those bags shall not score any points. Any non cancelled bags in-the-count score 1 point each.

### **Section C. Score Calculation:**

Cancellation scoring may be easily calculated as follows:

1. The points of both contestants are calculated for hole-ins and in-the-count Cornhole bags.
2. The points of the lowest scoring contestant for hole-in bags are subtracted from the points of the highest scoring contestant for hole-in bags. The result is the hole-in score for the highest scoring contestant. The hole-in score for the lowest scoring contestant is zero.
3. The points of the lowest scoring contestant for in-the-count bags are subtracted from the points of the highest scoring contestant for in-the-count bags. The result is the in-the-count score for the highest scoring contestant. The in-the-count score for the lowest scoring contestant is zero.
4. The hole-in score for each contestant is added to the in-the-count score for each contestant to derive the recorded score for the inning.
5. In this manner hole-in and in-the-count Cornhole bags from each contestant or team of contestants are cancelled out and only non-canceled bags are counted in the score.

#### **Section D. Individual Hole-In Percentage Scoring (HI%)**

For purposes of calculating individual Cornhole Hole-In percentages (see Rule 9 below) that is reported to ACA by members for purposes of ACA ranking and awards, ALL Cornhole bags pitched in-the-hole are included in the total used to derive these percentages including those that would be eliminated under cancellation scoring rules. Only bags determined to be foul would be excluded from the individual statistical scoring.

#### **Section E. Recording The Score**

In tournament play, the score sheet shall be the official record of the game and will be used to submit the Official Tournament Scoring Summaries to the ACA (see Rule 9 below). Contestants are encouraged to pay close attention to the score at all times. It is highly recommended that visible scoreboard (that all contestants can review and verify for accuracy) be used to keep score during tournament play. If a question or discrepancy occurs regarding the correct score, the contestant(s) may approach the scorer between innings to rectify the situation. If the discrepancy cannot be corrected to the satisfaction of both contestants, a tournament judge shall be called to make the final decision.

### **RULE 8 – APPROPRIATE ACA MEMBER CONDUCT**

#### **Section A. On The Courts**

An ACA member, while in competition, shall make no disturbing noises or movements that would distract the opponent or competitors on adjacent courts. The first offense shall call for a warning from the judge or tournament official. A second offense shall call for a forfeiture of the game being played. Any further offenses shall call for a forfeiture of all games.

#### **Section B. Off The Courts**

Any ACA member who indulges in heckling, unfair rooting, or any other form of unsportsmanlike conduct toward any ACA member or tournament official, shall be subject to expulsion from the tournament and the tournament site. This covers any inappropriate behavior (including profane or abusive language) in, or around, the court area. The member shall also be subject to a 1 year suspension from the ACA.

### **RULE 9 – ACA RANKING AND AWARDS**

#### **Section A. ACA Rankings And Awards**

The ACA shall track and report the Cornhole results of all members that report their scores from ACA-sanctioned tournaments. From these statistical results, the ACA shall select and sponsor the Cornholer of the Year award to be presented to the best ACA member Cornhole player relative to all other members around the country.

## **Section B. Basis For ACA Rankings And Awards**

The ACA uses the Hole-In Percentage (HI%) as a basis for comparative rankings and awards.

The Hole-In percentage is calculated as follows:

# Cornhole bags in the hole / (# Innings Pitched \* 4)

The ACA Cornholer of the Year will be selected and posted on the ACA web site each Labor Day base on play for the previous 12 months.

## **Section C. Reporting To The ACA**

Members hosting ACA-sanctioned tournaments will be responsible for submitting ACA Official Tournament Scoring Summaries to the ACA at the completion of every ACA-sanctioned tournament. The scoring summaries set forth the names and ACA membership ID numbers for each contestant, the number of innings pitched and the number of hole-ins pitched for the tournament.

## **Section D. Updating And Reporting**

The official rankings will be updated and published on a monthly basis. Monthly and cumulative to date HI% statistics will be reported for each ACA member that authorizes the release of this information in their membership application. ACA Official Statistical Reporting Summaries received by the 25th of each month will be included in that months updated results. Scoring summaries received after that date will be included in the next months results.

# **RULE 10 – ACA-sanctioned TOURNAMENT PLAY**

## **Section A. Hosting An ACA-sanctioned Tournament**

1. Any member of the ACA may host an ACA-sanctioned Cornhole tournament.
2. Responsibilities Of Hosting. The ACA hosting member is responsible for making sure that the equipment meets all ACA standards and that ACA Cornhole rules of play are enforced during the tournament. The hosting member should also act as judge in resolving any ruling issues at the tournament.
3. Reporting Results. The Hosting member is required to submit the ACA Official Statistical Reporting Summary for all ACA members competing in the tournament within 2 weeks of the completion of play.

## **Section B. Tournament Play**

The standard method of play for an ACA-sanctioned tournament is double elimination seated bracket style tournament play. For smaller tournaments round-robin play may be used where

each contestant plays every other contestant. At the end of round-robin play, winners shall be determined by win-loss records or hole-in percentage. If ties occur, they shall be settled by playoff, who-beat-whom or one of the other methods that was not used to determine the winner.

### **Section C. Publicity For Your Tournament**

All ACA-sanctioned Cornhole tournaments will be posted on our up-coming tournaments list on the ACA web site. The ACA will also post your results, pictures and comments requested by any ACA member.

### **Section D. Handicapping**

Handicapping may be used in open tournaments and league play. The amount of the handicap shall be determined by the tournament host or judge.

## **VIRTUAL CORNHOLE MATCH**

The virtual Cornhole match starts with contestants or teams of contestants tossing a coin to determine the order of play. The winner of the coin toss chooses to pitch their Cornhole bags first or second.

In doubles play a member from each team pitches from one Cornhole board and the remaining contestants pitch from the other Cornhole board.

The side that plays first alternates pitching their Cornhole bags until all 4 bags are pitched by each contestant. The contestants playing from the other Cornhole board then alternate pitching until all 4 bags are pitched by each contestant and the inning is completed.

Cornhole is always played in complete innings. For doubles an inning is complete when the contestants pitching from both Cornhole boards have pitched all of their Cornhole bags.

After each side of an inning (doubles play) or each inning (singles play), the contestants examine the location of their Cornhole bags and record the score. The points for each team and the innings played are generally recorded on a scoreboard or other device that all contestants can easily see and review for accuracy.

ACA members that are keeping a record of their individual results for ACA ranking purposes would also note the number of bags that they pitched in the hole.

A Cornhole bag in the hole (hole-in) is worth 3 points and a bag on the Cornhole board is worth 1 point (in-the-count or on-the-board). Play continues in this manner until a team has 21 or more points at the end of an inning.

Cancellation scoring is generally used in Official Cornhole Tournament play. This method of scoring requires that opponents hole-in Cornhole bags and in-the-count bags cancel each other out and no score is recorded.

To illustrate, if the first contestant lands 2 Cornhole bags in-the hole and 2 bags in-the-count and the second contestant lands 2 bags in-the-hole and 2 in-the-count, the score for both contestants would be zero as both bags in-the-hole and bags in-the-count cancel each other out.

To further illustrate, if the first contestant lands 1 Cornhole bag in the hole and 1 bag in-the-count and the second contestant lands 1 bag in-the count, the score for the first contestant would be 3 and the score for the second contestant would be zero as the bag in-the-hole would count and the 2 bags in-the-count (1 from each team) cancel each other out.

Alternatively, if the first contestant lands no Cornhole bags in-the-hole or in-the-count and the second contestant lands 2 bags in-the count, the score for the first contestant would be 0 and the score for the second contestant would be 2 as only bags from the second contestant landed on the Cornhole board and there is no cancellation.

Lastly, if the first contestant lands 1 Cornhole bag in-the-hole and none in-the-count and the second contestant lands 2 bags in-the count, the score for the first contestant would be 3 and the score for the second contestant would be 2 as only bags from the first contestant landed in-the-hole and only bags from the second contestant landed in-the-count and there is no cancellation.

Cornhole bags in-the-count may be knocked off the Cornhole board or in-the-hole by an opponent or by that contestants other bags. Where the bag ultimately lands determines the scoring.

The contestant or team of contestants that score 21 points at the end of an inning are declared the winners of the match. There is no requirement to win by 2 or more points. The match, however, is never over until the inning is complete and both contestants or teams of contestants have pitched all their bags.

The match can never end in a tie and play continues at or above 21 points until one contestant or team of contestants has a higher score at the end of the inning.

If a contestant or team of contestants scores 7 points at the end of an inning before their opponents score any points, the match is declared a skunk and the contestant or team of contestant with the points wins the match.

For recording individual statistics for ACA ranking purposes, all Cornhole bags in-the-hole are counted even if they are cancelled by an opponent's bag. It is the responsibility of each ACA member reporting their statistics to keep track of their individual results.