



**AMERICAN CORNHOLE  
ORGANIZATION**

# **OFFICIAL RULES**

FOR THE SPORT OF  
**CORNHOLE**



**GAME ON!**



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# CHAPTER 1

## CORNHOLE PLAYING EQUIPMENT

The ACO recognizes two types of equipment: ACO Certified and ACO Approved.

### 1.1 ACO CERTIFIED EQUIPMENT

Unless otherwise noted in advance, ACO Certified Equipment will be used at all ACO Major tournaments during ACO Season XII (September 2016-May 2017) and at the ACO World Championships of Cornhole XII.

#### AT THIS TIME, ACO CERTIFIED EQUIPMENT IS LIMITED TO:

- ACO 0153 "Star Logo" Tournaments Series Boards
- ACO 01531 Blank Tournaments Series Boards
- ACO-PRO 450 Bags

ACO Certified boards and bags can be found at [AmericanCornhole.com](http://AmericanCornhole.com)

### 1.2 ACO APPROVED EQUIPMENT

Not limited to ACO branded equipment – In order to be classified as ACO Approved, equipment must comply with the criteria below. ACO Approved Equipment may be used for the coordination of ACO Regional tournament during ACO Season XII

#### ACO APPROVED BOARDS:

1. Hardwood plywood playing surface measuring 47.5" to 48" x 23.5" to 24".
2. The playing surface has a minimum thickness of 1/2" with cross-section backing, or 3/4" with or without cross-section backing.
3. Each Board in a set should weigh no less than 25 lbs.
4. Each hole is 6" diameter, centered 9" from the top of the board and centered from each side edge.
5. The front of the board is 3" to 4" from the ground to the top of the playing surface.
6. The back of the board is 12" from the ground to the top of the playing surface.
7. The playing surface should be finished - sanded to a very smooth texture. There should be little to no blemishes in the wood surface that may disrupt or distort play.
8. The playing surface can be painted with a high gloss latex paint or varnish. The surface should allow bags to slide when thrown, but not be so slippery that the bags slide back down the platform.

#### ACO APPROVED BAGS

- Each bag is made from two fabric squares with double-stitched seaming.
- The bags should be made from a durable fabric like canvas, twill, or synthetic suede.
- Each bag measures roughly 6" by 6" and weighs 15 to 16 ounces.



# CHAPTER 2

## CORNHOLE COURT LAYOUT

### 2.1 CORNHOLE COURT LAYOUT

#### CORNHOLE COURT:

A regulation size cornhole court is 8 feet wide and 40 feet long with a recommended vertical clearance of twelve (12) feet. If a tournament court has a clearance of less than 12 feet, it must be noted in the tourney listing prior to the event.

#### THIS COURT CONSISTS OF TWO (2) PLAYER'S LANES:

**Lane 1:** Designated pitchers boxes, on the left side of the board when your back is to the scoring tower

**Lane 2:** Designated pitchers boxes, on the right side of the board when your back is to the scoring tower

**Cornhole Boards:** Boards are positioned 27' from the front edge to front edge of the board.

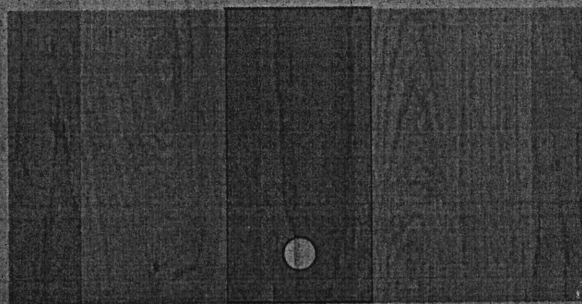
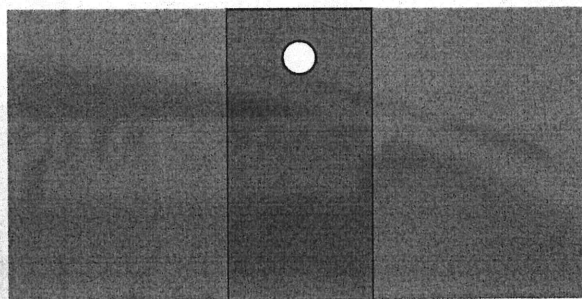
**Cornhole Pitchers Boxes:** A designated pitchers box is a 4' x 3' area at each end of the court and on both sides of each board; (4) boxes in all.

**Cornhole Foul Lines:** The front edge of the cornhole board is the foul line.

### 2.2 CORNHOLE COURT PREPARATION AND MAINTENANCE

Every effort shall be made to keep the cornhole playing surface in perfect playing condition. Players are responsible for making sure the court is in good playing condition prior to starting the match.

- No foreign substance (such as Pledge®, talc powder, baby powder, silicone sprays) may be applied to the playing surface or bags by an individual player before or during cornhole play.
- A dry clean cloth may be used to wipe down the boards prior to the start of the game.





# CHAPTER 3

## CORNHOLE SCORING

### 3.1 LENGTH OF GAMES

**TRADITIONAL 21** The game shall be played to the pre-determined number of twenty-one (21) points. The first player/team to reach (or exceed) that amount at the conclusion of a frame is the winner.

### 3.2 CORNHOLE SCORING – BAG TERMS

#### WOODY

Refers to any cornhole bag that has been pitched and remains on the cornhole board playing surface at the conclusion of the frame.

#### CORNHOLE

Refers to any cornhole bag that has been pitched and passes through the cornhole board hole at any time within the frame.

#### FOUL BAGS

Refers to any cornhole bag that has not been determined as a “woody” or “cornhole”, or was designated a foul bag as the result of rules violation.

### 3.3 DESIGNATED FOUL BAGS

- Any bag pitched without at least one foot or appendage completely inside the pitcher’s box at the time of release.
- Any bag not pitched within the 15 second time limit.
- A bag pitched from a different pitcher’s box than their designated pitcher’s box.
- Any bag that contacted the court or the ground before coming to rest on the playing surface.
- Any bag that comes to rest touching the ground and the board.
- Any bag which struck a previously defined object such as a tree limb, wire, indoor court ceiling, etc.

### 3.4 METHODS OF SCORING

#### CANCELLATION SCORING

The approved method of scoring for the sport of cornhole is “cancellation” scoring. In cancellation scoring, the points of one player cancel out the points of their opponent. Using this method, only one player/team can score in each frame.

#### WOODY

Each woody is worth one (1) point

#### CORNHOLE

Each cornhole is worth three (3) points

*Example:*

*Red achieves one (1) woody and two (2) cornholes during the frame (7 total pts)*

*Blue achieves two (2) woodies and zero (0) cornholes during the frame (2 total pts)*

*7 points – 2 points = Red scores 5 points for that frame*

### 3.5 RECORDING THE SCORE

No cornhole bags shall be moved before the scoring is determined. If this decision is in doubt, a Certified Official shall be called to determine the scoring for the frame in question.

#### RECORDING THE SCORE

Players are encouraged to pay close attention to the score at all times. Players are required to update their score on the score tower at the conclusion of each frame. Players may call upon the Certified Official between frames if any discrepancy occurs regarding the correct score.

#### CALLING THE SCORE

When a third party is being used to manage the score tower, it is the responsibility of the player/ team who scores in each frame to call out the score to the score keeper. It is the responsibility of the players/teams to ensure the score is represented correctly on the score tower at the conclusion of each frame before moving to the next frame.



# CHAPTER 4

## PLAY OF THE CORNHOLE GAME

### 4.1 OVERVIEW OF SINGLES AND DOUBLES PLAY

#### SINGLES PLAY

- Player A competes against Player B.
- Both players stay in their designated lane for the whole game.
- Players start the game at the headboard and will alternate pitching bags until each player has pitched all (4) of his/her bags.
- Players then walk to the end of their lane to the other court, take score, and resume pitching back to the other cornhole board.

#### DOUBLES PLAY

- Team A competes against Team B – each team is comprised of two (2) people.
- Each team will stay in their designated lane for the whole game.
- Players at the headboard will alternate pitching bags until each player has pitched all (4) of his/her bags.
- Players at the footboard will take score and resume pitching back to the other cornhole board.

### 4.2 PITCHING ROTATION, LANE ASSIGNMENTS, AND BAG COLOR

The First Pitch, Lane Assignments, and Bag Color: The format of the tournament will help determine first pitch, lane assignments and bag color.

#### SEEDED TOURNAMENTS

The player/team with the higher seed has their choice of bag color.

The player/team with the higher seed pitches first.

In singles play, the player with the higher seed chooses lane assignments.

**In doubles play, the higher seeded team chooses one of the following options:**

*Choose lane assignments*

*Choose their opponent to pitch against (head-to-head)*

If option #1 is selected, the higher seed chooses their lane and takes their positions in the Pitcher's boxes, then the lower seeded team chooses their own Pitcher's boxes to determine head-to-head match-ups.

If option #2 is selected, the lower seed chooses their lane and takes their positions in the Pitcher's boxes, then the higher seeded team will choose their own Pitcher's boxes to determine head-to-head match-ups.

If playing best 2 out of 3 matches, the First Pitch and Pre-Match options go to the higher seed in game #1 and to the lower seed in game #2. If a third game option return to the higher seed

#### RANDOMLY SEEDED TOURNAMENTS

The player/team winning the coin-toss chooses their bag color.

The player/team winning the coin-toss pitches first.

**In singles play, the player winning the coin toss chooses their lane assignment.**

**In doubles play, a coin-toss is used to determine which player/team selects one of the following options:**

*1 Choose the lane assignments*

*2 Choose their opponent to pitch against (head-to-head)*

If option #1 is selected, the coin toss winner chooses their lane and takes their positions in the Pitcher's boxes, then the opposing team chooses their own Pitcher's boxes to determine head-to-head match-ups.

If option #2 is selected, the coin toss loser chooses their lane and takes their positions in the Pitcher's boxes, then the coin toss winner will choose their own Pitcher's boxes to determine head-to-head match-ups.

If playing best 2 out of 3 matches, the First Pitch and Pre-Match option choices go to the coin toss loser in the second game. If a third game is necessary, another coin toss will decide who has the options





## 4.3 PITCHING CORNHOLE BAGS

### PITCHING

Players alternate pitching bags (one player at a time) until each player has pitched all (4) of his/her bags.

A player must pitch all (4) cornhole bags from their designated cornhole pitchers box.

Players must deliver the bag with an under-hand release.

One foot or appendage must be completely within the pitchers box at the time of releasing the bag.

When pitching a bag, players must release the bag before any part of the player's body touches the ground on or beyond the foul line.

### PITCHING THE NEXT FRAME

The player/team who scored in the preceding frame shall pitch first in the next frame. If neither player/team scores, the player/team who pitched first in the preceding frame shall retain first pitch in the next frame.

### ACCIDENTAL RELEASE

Any cornhole bag that leaves a player's hand once the final step (if taken) and final forward swing of the delivery process has started, shall count as a pitched bag.

A cornhole bag that is accidentally dropped by a player before the final step (if taken) and final forward swing has started, shall not be considered a foul bag and may be picked up and pitched.

### PITCHING OUT OF TURN

If a player pitches out of turn at any time during a frame, their pitch will be considered a Foul Bag and swept from the playing surface.

If the out-of-turn bag affects any bags in play, their opponent has the option of returning all cornhole bags to their original position on the playing surface or leaving all bags as they are.

If the error is not discovered until after two (2) cornhole bags have been pitched, the frame shall continue and be scored accordingly.

If no agreement can be reached, a Certified Official shall be called. The Certified Official shall either determine the scoring or void the inning and order it to be repitched.

### TOUCHING BAGS BEFORE FRAME IS COMPLETE

If any bags in scoring positions (woodies or cornholes) are touched by a player, whether intentionally or unintentionally, before all bags during the frame are pitched, the frame is over.

The offending team (team who touches the bags) forfeits all remaining bags and tallies the score for the bags they have already thrown during the frame.

The non-offending team tallies 12 points as if they had thrown 4 cornholes during the frame.

*IMPORTANT NOTE: 12 pts are NOT automatically added the overall score (scoreboard). The 12 pts are only used within this specific frame before cancellation.*

### EXAMPLE:

- Red has thrown 3 bags equaling 5 points to this point in the frame
- Blue has thrown 3 bags equaling 8 points to this point in the frame
- Blue accidentally reaches down and grabs the bags
- The frame is over
- Blue's remaining bag is declared dead and their previous points are tallied
- Red tallies 12 points for the frame, as if they had thrown cornholes
- 12 Red points - 8 Blue points
- Red scores 4 points for that frame

### TIME LIMITS – PITCHING AND SCORING

**Pitching** – A player must pitch each cornhole bag within fifteen (15) seconds of their opponent's bag coming to rest.

In Singles play, once the final bag comes to a rest, each player has 30 seconds to walk to the other end, pick up their bags, and ready themselves to pitch.

*\* Exceptions may be made by the Certified Official considering any physical disabilities or difficulties*

**Scoring** – The frame will be scored 5 seconds after the last bag is pitched, comes to rest, and all bags on the playing surface have stopped moving. Any bag that moves in position after 5 seconds will be scored based on its previous position.

If timing cannot be agreed on, the Certified Official will score or negate the frame.



## OTHER GENERAL RULES

### Moving Cornhole Boards and Bags:

A player can only straighten cornhole boards in between frames and with the approval of their opponent. A Certified Official may be called to determine replacement if a discrepancy is in question.

**A player may only cross the foul line and approach the opposite board during a frame under three (3) circumstances:**

1. A timeout has been called
2. To Rake bags piled inside the cornhole board hole
3. To Sweep bags (that are considered foul bags) from the playing surface

### TIMEOUTS

Each player or team is allowed two 1 minute time outs per game.

A player may only call a time out when it is his/her turn to pitch.

Both players may walk to the other boards to examine bag position during the time out.

Players may not touch the cornhole bags or boards during a timeout.

*IMPORTANT NOTE: Official time outs may be granted in the case of a busted cornhole bag, equipment malfunctions, or other circumstances at the discretion of the Certified Official. A player will not be charged for time out.*

**Raking Cornhole Bags** If bags become piled inside the cornhole board hole and may interfere or obstruct

with the next pitch or if there is question as to whether a cornhole bag would have naturally fallen through the hole, a player may request to "rake" the cornhole bags that have fallen inside the hole. To request a rake, the player must audibly

- One or both players may walk to the other board and rake the bags from under the board (one player raking and one player watching.)
- A spectator may be called to rake the bags if both players agree.
- A certified official may be called to rake the bags if a discrepancy is in question.
- Anytime 4 cornhole bags have entered the hole or piled bags are visible in the hole a player may request a "rake" and will not be charged a time-out.

*IMPORTANT NOTE: During raking, all efforts should be made to leave bags on the playing surface undisturbed, in their natural state, and to leave bags that may hang on the rim of the hole from falling inside the hole unnaturally. If a bag is resting on a piled bag, and unavoidably falls into the hole as a result of raking, then it shall be counted as a "cornhole."*

### SWEEPING CORNHOLE BAGS

If a foul bag lands on the playing surface or comes to rest touching the ground and the board, it must be removed immediately.

If a player pitches a foul bag which affects any bags in play, their opponent has the option of returning all cornhole bags to their original position on the playing surface or leaving all bags as they are.





# CHAPTER 5

## PLAYER CONDUCT

### 5.1 PLAYER CONDUCT

#### ON THE COURTS

A cornhole player/team while in competition, shall make no disturbing noises or movements that would distract the opponent or players on surrounding courts. Other inappropriate behavior would include profanity, abusive language, obscene gestures, flipping bags, etc.

#### PENALTIES

A player may call on a Certified Official to enforce a rule at any time. If the Certified Official deems action is required:

- The first offense shall call for a warning from the Certified Official.
- A second offense shall call for a second and final warning.
- A third offense shall call for forfeiture of the game being played.
- Any further offenses may call for disqualification from the Tournament/Event.

#### SPORTSMANSHIP

Any cornhole player who indulges in heckling or unfair rooting, uses profanity or abusive language, makes obscene gestures, or exhibits any other form of unsportsmanlike conduct toward other players, Certified Officials/Tournament/League Officials, or others who are in the area of the courts, shall be subject to expulsion from the Tournament/Event and from the event site.

#### GIVING/RECEIVING PLAYER ADVICE

It is legal for a teammate or spectator to provide advice on bag position and/or next pitch recommendation.

#### DRESS CODE

Participants competing in Masters Series Majors and the World Championships of Cornhole will be expected to abide by the ACO Dress Code below:

- Shirts cannot be sleeveless; cut-offs are not permitted
- ACO or non-branded apparel must be worn\*
- Closed-toe shoes must be worn

- Further dress code restrictions may be imposed by ACO Corporate if all entrants are notified no later than the 2 weeks before the event date.

- An ACO-PRO Jersey will be required at all ACO-PRO Invitationals, and encouraged at all other ACO tournaments.

Contestants that do not comply may not be allowed to participate in the event.

#### ALCOHOL, TOBACCO PRODUCTS, AND ILLEGAL CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES:

- Illegal Controlled Substances are not permitted at an ACO Event
- Venue permitting, players can drink alcoholic/non-alcoholic beverages while playing, but drinks must be placed outside the live court area, in a safe zone, or on a drink stand/holder.
- The use of alcohol or any form of tobacco while in the confines of the courts may be prohibited for all contestants, officials, and scorekeepers at the discretion of ACO Corporate. This rule may be enforced at any tournament, if announced in advance by the Certified Officials/ACO Corporate. Violations may result in the forfeiture of games.

#### CELL PHONES

- The use of cell phones while in the confines of the courts may be prohibited for all contestants, officials, and scorekeepers at the discretion of ACO Corporate.

This rule may be enforced at any tournament, if announced in advance by the Certified Officials/ACO Corporate. Violations may result in the forfeiture of games.

#### AUDIO & VISUAL

- The use of audio and visual equipment in the confines of the event premises may be used by the ACO. Your presence in the filming/photography area constitutes consent to be recorded/photographed.



# GAMES ON!

