



SAFETY DIRECTOR BULLETIN



GAGA BALL BEST PRACTICES

Gaga Ball is a fast-paced, high-energy sport played with any number of players in an octagonal pit. The game originated in Israel and got its name from the Israeli word for "hit" or "touch" – ga. Dubbed a kinder, gentler version of dodgeball, the game is played by players hitting a soft foam ball with an open hand or fist, trying to hit opponents with a ball below the knees. The game combines dodging, striking, running, and jumping.

Gaga Ball is a game that incorporates the skills necessary for sports success and athletic development but is conducted in a fun and easy way that everyone can enjoy. Games last only minutes, so eliminated players quickly reenter the pit for the next game.

Due to its growing popularity and presence among our members, the following best practices should be used when including this activity as part of your recreation program.

1. The ball – use only a foam ball designated for Gaga. Do not permit other balls to be used.
2. The pit – the average Gaga pit is between 20 and 26 feet across. It is recommended purchasing a pit from a reputable recreation equipment supplier. This provides engineering immunity to your agency. Commercially available pits can be made of plastic, netting or tarps, transparent panels, or wood. If the agency chooses to build its own, questions about the materials used, construction methods, and maintenance can be raised.
3. Pits should be inspected periodically. Follow the manufacturer's guidelines.
4. Participants – while one of the main advantages of Gaga Ball is that all children, regardless of their athletic skill level, participants should be grouped according to age. A two-year age span is a good rule of thumb.
5. An option is only to allow striking the ball with the open hand, not a closed or clenched fist.
6. Signage at the playing area is recommended and should include the game's rules and the agency, along with a phone number for questions or concerns.
7. The playing surface – the surface should be level. Recommended surfaces include sand or grass for outdoor settings and wood or plastic floors for indoor settings. Commercial flooring is also available for both indoor and outdoor settings. Loose materials such as pebbles, shredded or wood chunks, or sand can present an eye hazard.
8. Supervision – An adult should referee the game.
9. The agency should pass an ordinance setting forth the site, equipment, and signage for permanent pits.