**Everything You Need to Know About Gaga Ball (And Some Things You Don’t)**

*What is it?*

Gaga Ball, sometimes known as Israeli dodgeball, Octo-Ball, and Panda Ball (for unknown reasons), is a fun game for all ages. Played in an octagonal (sometimes hexagonal) “pit,” Gaga Ball consists of trying to hit your opponent(s) below the knees with a ball.

When Gaga Ball was invented is unknown, as is its original inventor. All we know is that it originated in Israel (hence the name “Israeli dodgeball”), and was introduced to the rest of the world sometime in the 1960s, in Australia.

*How do you play?*

The rules of Gaga Ball appear to be simple, and they mostly are. The basic rules are to get your opponent(s) out by hitting them below the knees (or waist, depending which version you play) with a ball, that cannot be thrown, whilst trying to avoid getting hit yourself. Below, you’ll find a copy of the more specific rules, dealing with specific situations in the game.

1. *The game starts after the ball has been tossed into the pit, and has bounced three times, each bounce being marked with a syllable of the phrase “Gaga Ball” Until the game begins, players must keep their backs on the wall.*
2. *A player cannot "hit" the ball twice in a row unless it bounces off a wall or another person.*
3. *When a player is hit, he/she leaves the game.*
4. *A player who hits or knocks the ball out of the pit is also out, unless it hits another person first (see Rule 11)*
5. *If a player catches the ball in the air, the last person to hit the ball is out.*
6. *You can hit the ball with your hands, but picking up the ball and throwing it at a player is not allowed. Also no scooping. In some games, only open hand hits are allowed to prevent striking injury to small children and also allowing better control of the ball to keep it low and prevent head shots.*
7. *If the ball touches a player anywhere on or below the knee (in some versions, below the ankle or waist), that player is eliminated from the game.*
8. *If a player pops the ball up into the air you can hit it down to keep it in the game or let it go.*
9. *The player cannot kick the ball. (As this is touching the ball below the knee.)*
10. *Wall jumping is not allowed (holding onto the wall while jumping).*
11. *If a player hits the ball out of the arena and hits another person the person who touches it last is out.*
12. *No double tapping. You are allowed to hit it against the wall to keep it in play but no more than 3 times.*
13. *Make sure to step out of the pit to show you're out.*

*Did you know?*

* Gaga Ball is believed to have been introduced to America by Israeli counselors working at Jewish summer camps.
* The first Gaga European Championship was held in Lisbon, Spain, in 2000. 36 countries participate each year.
* Gaga Ball is popular mostly with kids, who delight in teaching a new sport to their parents, instead of vice versa.