

2023 12U SOFTBALL RULES

The National Federation of State High School Association's Rule Book will be the source of regulations governing play. However, these special rules override those rules when/if there is a conflict of rules.

A. FIELD DIMENSIONS and REQUIRED EQUIPMENT

1. Diamond dimensions shall be: Bases – 60 feet; Pitcher's Rubber – 40 feet.
2. 16' diameter pitcher's circle should be chalked around the pitcher's rubber. It should be noted that even if the circle is not chalked onto the ground the pitcher's circle is always present.
3. An orange safety base is required at 1st base.
4. A 12" non-padded yellow softball will be used.
5. Batting helmets must include a mask.
6. Metal cleats are not allowed.
7. Any girl playing the pitcher position must wear a fielder's protective mask. It is recommended that all fielders wear one, especially infielders, but only required for the pitcher.

B. MANAGER DUTIES and RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The home team manager shall set up the diamond including the bases and the pitching rubber.
2. Home team shall supply two game balls, one new ball and one in good condition
3. Line-ups should be exchanged 10 minutes prior to start time.
4. Both managers and the umpire must discuss ground rules prior to the start of the game. The discussion should include, but is not limited to, the following: strike zone, out of play territory, number of runs allowed per inning, determination of last inning, three minutes between innings rule, game time limit, stealing rules, overthrow rules, and pitcher removal and return rules.
5. Managers are expected to know the rules and assist the umpires when necessary. Managers are expected to have a copy of the rules at every game.
6. The home team will get the playing field for practice first. The visiting team will be given the field for warm up at least 15 minutes prior to the scheduled game time. If the field is late in being set up, the home team warm up time is penalized accordingly. The visiting team should always be given 15 minutes to warm up.
7. The home team is the official scorekeeper and will occupy the third base dugout. It is recommended that after each inning both teams check scores with each other.

8. The winning team's manager, or a representative of, is responsible for submitting the results of the game on the QuickScores website. The home team is also responsible for reporting postponed or cancelled games.
9. Managers shall contact the opposing team manager when questionable weather or field conditions exists. The home team manager will decide if the game will be played or cancelled. The decision to cancel the game should be made one hour prior to the start time to allow for the opposing manager to contact his/her players.
10. Home team manager is responsible for rescheduling cancelled or postponed games. Games should be rescheduled within 5 days. League coordinators will reschedule in the event that managers cannot agree on a makeup date.
11. All league commissioners are required to turn in a roster for each team playing in their program before the season starts. Team roster must include full name, player number, age, if a player is also playing on a travel team or is playing down a level. TP = Travel player and PD= Playing down a level.

C. GAME STRUCTURE

1. Game length = 6 Innings
2. Complete Game: 4 innings constitutes a complete game (3 ½ innings if the home team is ahead). A game called after 4 complete innings, or 3 ½ innings if the home team is ahead, will not be replayed or continued. Regular season games that are tied will remain ties and will not be replayed or continued.
3. Games stopped prior to completion (see above) will be replayed from the beginning. Umpire's judgment shall be used to suspend the game.
4. A slaughter rule is in effect. If after 4 innings or 3 ½ innings if the home team is ahead, one team has a lead of 15 runs or more, the manager of the team with the least runs must concede the victory to the opposing team. If a team takes a lead of larger than 15 runs in the top of an inning after the 4th inning then the home team will get to bat in the bottom of the inning.
5. Unless otherwise noted, all games begin at 6:00 P.M.
6. Games on weekends and under the lights are *TBA*
7. Forfeit time is 15 minutes after the scheduled start time. All forfeited games will be scored 7-0.
8. No full inning can be started later than 7:45 P.M. You can finish an inning, but you cannot start a new inning (8:00 P.M. starting May 14th).
9. If a game has a 2-hour time limit then no new inning may be started after 1 hour and 45 minutes.
10. Games under the lights, or weekend day games that do not have a game following, do not have a time limit and will be played until completed.

11. A starting lineup should consist of 9 players but teams may play with 8 players without penalty.
12. If a team has less than 8 players to start or at any time during the game, they will forfeit the game.
13. A continuous batting order will be used and all girls must play a minimum of 3 defensive innings.
14. There will be no penalty for line-up scratches due to illness, injury or other absence.
15. Players arriving late may be added to end of the batting order. Players arriving after the completion of the second inning may not play.
16. Calls ups from lower levels are allowed for regular season games and playoff games, but the call up player may not pitch, must bat at the end of the order, and cannot play more defensive innings than a player on the roster. Call up players must wear their own team's uniform.
17. Girls may play up but may not play down a level unless granted permission by the league commissioners. Girls allowed by the league to play down cannot pitch or catch
18. In order to deter anyone from 'loading a team', you must run your draft to split up the talent of your players as equally as possible. If loading a team occurs, the commissioners can vote to censure a team(s) from post season play. On issues of review, the commissioner of the team in question will not be notified until a decision has been rendered by the league.
19. Players must participate in 50% of their regular season games (total games played, not scheduled game) to be eligible to play during the playoffs. An injury exception is allowed but the manager must inform their league commissioner / coordinator of the injury.
20. Call ups are allowed for the playoffs, but only in order for a team to have nine players in its lineup. If one or more girls are called up for a playoff game, but a rostered player or players unexpectedly show up, the call up(s) will not be allowed to play if their inclusion would make a team's lineup more than nine girls (*unlike a regular season game, when call ups would be allowed to play and the team could have more than nine girls its lineup*).

D. GAME RULES

1. Only umpires may call a time out during a game. Only managers, field coaches, and players in the game may request a time out.
2. Only managers may discuss rules or decisions with the umpires (no coaches). Judgement calls by umpires are not subject to protest. However, if an umpire misinterprets a rule, a team has the option of protesting the game. Each scorebook should be marked at the point of the protest, in the event the game must be replayed from that point. If the protesting team wins the game, the protest will be deemed moot.

3. Umpire conference will always be with both managers.
4. No lead offs are allowed. Runners must wait for the ball to leave the pitcher's hand before leaving their base. If a runner leaves early, she will be called out. If runner leaves early and the ball is hit, then the runner who left early will be called out and the batter will be allowed the number of bases they have advanced.
5. The "Look Back" rule will be in effect. The look back rule stipulates that when the pitcher is in control of the ball inside the pitcher's circle and provided that she is not threatening to make a throw or fake it, the following must be observed:

1. Any runner standing on a base must remain on the base.

2. Any runner who is not on the base must either go back to the previous base or must advance towards the next one. Either action should be done without any hesitation. Otherwise, any attempt made by the runner to change direction or stop or dance around, can be a valid ground for her to be called out.

The look back rule is actually implemented in order to cut to the chase and prevent the pitcher and runner from unnecessary playing "cat and mouse" with each other.

6. Stealing after a walk is allowed. Once the player rounds first, she must continue to the next base until a play is made on her. If she doesn't continue, the umpire will call her out.
7. Stealing home is allowed.
8. The batter may advance to 1st base on a dropped third strike when first base is unoccupied or when there are 2 outs. In the case when a dropped third strike goes into foul territory on the first base side and there's a play at first base, it is permissible for the 1st baseman to use the orange safety base while receiving the throw to record the out.
9. Base runners will be awarded one base on an overthrow into unplayable territory.
10. A courtesy runner is mandatory for the catcher if she is on base and there are 2 outs. The courtesy runner must be the last player to be called out in the inning.
11. Intentional walks are not allowed.
12. Bunting is allowed.
13. Fake bunting and swinging are illegal. A batter will be called out if she fakes a bunt and then swings away. A player may fake a bunt and pull the bat back.
14. A batter that is struck by a pitch while in the batter's box will be awarded first base without exception. This includes pitches that hit the ground or rolling on the ground.
15. If a base runner does not slide, she must avoid contact with a defensive player or be called out. Incidental contact is at the discretion of the umpire. No runner will intentionally run over the defensive player. The penalty for intentional running over a runner will be ejection.

16. The infield fly rule applies whenever there are runners on first and second (or all three bases) with less than two outs and the batter hits a fly ball (not a line drive or bunt) into fair territory which can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort. The umpire must invoke the rule - if no umpire calls "infield fly," the rule is not invoked. It is a judgment call.
17. A six-run maximum per half inning rule will apply except for the last inning.
18. The last inning will be unlimited runs. This includes innings that are called the last inning due to light or time limits.
19. The last inning may be called prior to the sixth inning and must be called prior to the start of the inning. The umpire may call an inning the last inning if he/she believes that another inning will not be started due to time constraints.
20. There will be a time limit of three minutes between half innings. Once the final out of the half inning is made, the next pitch should be made no more than three minutes later.

E. PITCHING RULES

1. Pitcher must start with both feet on the pitcher's rubber or in a start back position where the back foot (stride foot) can now start off the pitching rubber.
2. Pitcher may take one foot off pitcher's plate with pitch and may drag one foot.
3. Pitcher must use windmill pitching motion.
4. Sling shot or side arm pitching is not allowed.
5. No player may pitch more than 4 innings in any one game. One pitch constitutes an inning. There are no exceptions.
6. A pitcher may return one time after being removed and replaced by another pitcher, regardless if it occurs in mid-inning or at the end of an inning.
7. If a pitcher hits two batters in one inning, then she must be pulled but may return unless she has re-entered as a pitcher once already.
8. If a pitcher hits four batters in a game, then she must be pulled and may not return as a pitcher for the rest of the game.
9. An injured pitcher may be removed and returned with no penalty provided she returns to the game as a pitcher immediately upon being able to continue play.
10. Each team will be given one warning for an illegal pitch. After a warning has been issued, an illegal pitch will be ruled a ball unless the batter swings at the pitch. No base advancement will be allowed on an illegal pitch that is not hit.

11. If a manager goes to the mound twice in one inning or a third time during the pitcher's stay on the mound, the pitcher must be removed.
12. A pitcher's stay on the mound is over when replaced and starts again if the pitcher returns to the mound.
13. A pitcher may have 5 warm-ups when beginning an inning. A relief pitcher may have 8 warm-ups when coming in to pitch in mid-inning.

F. PARTICIPANT and FAN CONDUCT

1. The manager is responsible for the conduct of his or her team and fans. Managers should assist umpires in keeping parents and fans from behind the backstop. No taunting of opposing team players will be allowed. Cheering by players, even though directed at their teammates, should not be timed in such a manner to disrupt the pitcher during her delivery.
2. The umpire may eject a player, coach, manager, or spectator from the game. The person or persons ejected has 5 minutes to leave the field or park. Ejection from the game is interpreted by the league officers as "Conduct detrimental to the best interest of the players and the league". The ejected individual is subject to suspension for 1 or more games as voted by the league officers. Unless the ejected individual requests a hearing, the league officers will elect to conduct or not conduct a hearing and vote on the question of suspension. Suspension shall be served as specifically directed by the league officers.
3. Managers are reminded that they may be permanently removed for just cause after a fair hearing and with a majority vote of the league officers.