

2023 8U 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 – 50-55 feet; Pitcher’s Rubber – 28 feet.
2. An orange safety base is required at 1st base.
3. An 11” optic yellow soft training softball will be used.
4. Batting helmets must include a mask and may not be removed until a player is behind the fence in foul territory.
5. Batter’s safety lines need to be drawn on both sides of home plate, either in chalk or in the dirt. The lines will be placed parallel to and 6 inches away from home plate running a distance of 3 feet in front and 3 feet in back of the plate. Players must stay behind these lines while batting.
6. A 16-foot pitcher’s circle drawn around the pitcher’s rubber either in chalk or in the dirt is required.
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 shall set up the diamond including the bases and pitching rubber.
2. Home team shall supply 2 balls in great condition and a batting tee.
3. Both managers must discuss ground rules prior to the start of the game.
4. 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.
5. The home team will occupy the third base dugout.
6. 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.

C. GAME STRUCTURE

1. Game length – 4 innings
2. Games will have a 1-hour and 30-minute time limit. No new inning will begin after 1-hour

and 15-minutes from the start of the game. The minimum number of players to start a game is 6. If a team does not have 6 players, players may be shared between teams.

3. A continuous batting order will be used. Once a team bats through its entire roster or gets three outs, whichever comes first, the side shall retire.
4. Players arriving late shall be inserted in the last position in the batting order. Players may be inserted at any time they arrive. There is no penalty for players arriving late or leaving early.
5. No score shall be kept during the games.
6. Two defensive coaches will be allowed in the outfield. They may not stand closer to the infield than an outfield player.
7. An adult offensive coach will stand on the field behind the pitcher when a player is pitching.
8. An adult offensive coach will remain behind home plate while their team is at bat. The catcher may give them each pitched ball to return to the coach pitcher on the field.
9. The 1st and 3rd base coaches, coach pitcher, home plate coach and defensive coaches in the outfield will make calls on the bases. The coach closest to the base where the call is made will have the final say. At no time will a call be argued.

D. GAME RULES

1. All players must play a minimum of 1 inning in the infield and 1 inning in the outfield within the first 3 innings of the game. A player may not play more than 2 innings at the same position per game.
2. Players must play their own position. They may back up other positions or move when fielding a ball but must return to their original positions with each pitch.
3. A catcher will play in the proper catching position for all pitched balls. She will move back to the backstop when a player is hitting off the tee.
4. Rolling the ball in an effort to record an out at any base will not be allowed.
5. The base path must be kept clear of defensive players except when they are attempting to make a play.
6. Outfielder's must be at least 10 feet behind the baseline and cannot cover a base to accept a throw for an out.
7. Outfielders must throw the ball to a base or to an infielder; they may not run the ball in from the outfield in an attempt to make an out or establish infield control.
8. On a hit to the outfield, play will stop when the ball is in the infield and in the possession of an infield player "infield control". If between bases, the batter-runner/baserunner may continue to the base they were actively running to as long as they were at least halfway there before there was infield control. The runner can be put out by the defense.

9. The pitcher may not make a force out at any base, including home, by touching the base herself, unless she has fielded the ball ahead of the batter or runner. The pitcher may not chase a batter or runner to a base in an attempt to tag her out. She must throw the ball to the appropriate baseman, unless she has fielded the ball ahead of the batter or runner and then may tag out the batter or runner as they advance towards her.
10. The infield fly rule is not in effect. Runners may advance at their own risk.
11. Bunting is allowed off live player pitching only. Fake bunting and swinging is illegal.
12. A batter that is struck by a pitch, will complete her at bat (No walks). If a batter is injured and cannot complete her turn at bat, she will return to the dugout and the next batter in the roster will bat.
13. There is no stealing allowed.
14. Runners must wait for the ball to cross home plate before leaving their base. They must return to the base once the ball is dead or when a ball is thrown in an attempt to tag them out.
15. If a runner leaves early and the ball is hit, the runner who left early will return to the previously held base. If the previous base is now occupied by the batter, the ball will be declared dead and the batter will replay the last pitch at bat.
16. For balls hit off live pitching, Base runners may advance an unlimited number of bases. There is a two-base limit for balls hit off a tee.
17. Runners may not advance on an infield overthrow; the ball is dead. They may continue to the base they were actively running to when the defensive player threw the ball as long as they were at least halfway there. They must stop when reaching the base.

E. PITCHING RULES

1. Pitcher must start with both feet on pitcher's plate. Each batter will receive 4 live pitches during each at bat. If contact is not made after 4 total pitches or if the 4th pitch results in a foul ball, the ball will then be placed on a tee and the batter will have one chances to hit the ball in fair territory before retiring.
2. For the first 4 weeks of the season, player-pitchers are not required to pitch. Week 5 and until the end of the season a player pitcher is required to pitch the first 2 pitches to each batter.
3. After the player pitcher pitches 2 pitches, if the ball has not been batted into play a coach pitcher will throw the next two pitches. If after the 2 pitches thrown buy the coach pitcher the ball has not been batted into play a batting tee will be set up. The batter will be allowed one chance to hit the ball off of the tee. If after these 5 attempts if the batter has not batted the ball into fair territory the batter will retire to the dugout.
4. Player Pitchers
 - a Pitchers must start with both feet touching the rubber, may take one step with delivery of the pitch and drag one foot. They must use a windmill motion.

- b A pitcher shall have 5 warm-up pitches between innings.
 - c A player may pitch a maximum of 2 innings per game. The innings do not need to be in consecutive order.
5. Coach Pitchers
- a Coach pitchers must throw the ball in an underhand motion. They may move forward up to the edge of the pitcher's circle (22 feet from home plate) and pitch.
 - b The coach pitcher will remain on the field and be ready to pitch during the entire inning. The coach pitcher may not interfere physically or verbally after a ball is in play. If interference occurs the ball will be dead and all runners will return to the last base occupied. Coaches will be removed for repeated interference.

F. PARTICIPANT and FAN CONDUCT

1. Players should remain in the dugout with their team during the game. Parents should remain outside the dugout area.
2. Parents and fans may not stand or sit behind the backstop.
3. All players, coaches, parents and spectators are expected to demonstrate good sportsmanship at all times.
4. Managers are responsible for the conduct of their team and fans.
5. Cheering by players, even though directed at their teammates, should not be timed in such a manner to disrupt the pitcher during her delivery.
6. A player, coach, parent or spectator may be ejected from the game if their behavior is interpreted by the league as "Conduct detrimental to the best interest of the players and the league". The ejected individual has 5 minutes to leave the field or park.
7. Ejection from the game is subject to suspension for 1 or more games as voted on by the league officers. Unless the ejected individual requests a hearing, the league officers will elect to conduct or not to conduct a hearing and vote on the question of suspension. Suspension shall be served as specifically directed by the league officers. 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.