

**MAJOR LEAGUE SOFTBALL  
2022 RULES**

**1. PITCHING**

- A. There are no pitching limits.
- B. Only five warm up pitches per inning per pitcher are allowed.
- C. During an intentional walk, the pitcher shall be required to throw all four balls. No automatic passes will be allowed.
- D. The pitching rubber distance from home plate will be 40'.

**2. GAME LENGTH**

- A. Seven innings per game.
- B. A game is considered complete and final if four full innings have been completed or if three and a half innings are completed and the home team has the lead and is at bat.
- C. If less than four innings have been completed and the game is called, then the game shall be suspended and played at a later date starting exactly where the game left off. Scorekeepers for both teams should compare books at the end of the suspended game to confirm the score, inning, batting lineup, and substitutes used and left.

**3. COURTESY RUNNERS**

- A. A courtesy runner may be used for the pitcher and catcher.
- B. The use of a courtesy runner is optional.
- C. The courtesy runner must be the last player who made an out.
- D. Entering the game as a courtesy runner does not count towards mandatory innings required as stated in 7A.

**4. TIME LIMITS**

- A. The umpire has sole discretion to determine when a game is to be called for darkness.
- B. No time limits will be used for weekday games (Monday thru Friday). A 1 hour and 45 minute time limit will be imposed on Saturday games. This means no new inning may begin after 1 hour and 45 minutes has elapsed. If an inning begins **before** 1 hour and 45 minutes has expired, that inning alone may be completed. A game **may not be called** by the umpire for time if both teams **have not completed their at bat** (assuming the home team needs to bat) and the **inning began before** 1 hour and 45 minutes. The umpire will declare the start time at the beginning of the game and is considered the official timekeeper.
- C. If a game is called for time on Saturday regardless of the number of innings played, the game is considered an official game.

**5. DUGOUT CONTROL**

- A. Only the manager, two assistant coaches, and the official team scorekeeper are allowed in the dugout during a game.
  - These names are to be listed on the line-up card and checked by the umpire before the start of the game.
- B. No food, sunflower seeds, tobacco products, or drinks are allowed in the dugout during games.
  - Only water provided by the park or Gatorade are to present in the dugouts during games.
- C. Players must obtain permission of the manager or an assistant coach to leave the dugout during a game.

**6. INCLEMENT WEATHER**

- A. Upon the first sound of thunder or first sight of lightning during a game, the umpire will stop the game immediately and start timing for 15 minutes. Every instance of lightning or thunder thereafter restarts the 15 minute wait.
- B. This same rule will be enforced by managers and/or assistant coaches during practices.

**7. MANDATORY PLAY**

- A. Every player shall play a minimum of two innings on defense (six outs), and shall bat at least one time in each game.
- B. **If this rule is violated for any reason**, the player will start the next game she is present and play a minimum of three innings on defense and bat at least one time.
- C. If this rule is violated, the offending manager is responsible for reporting the violation to the league.

**8. SLAUGHTER RULE**

- A. If one team is ahead by 15 runs after 4 innings, the game will be called if the losing team has batted four times.

**9. HITTING**

- A. All players present will bat.
- B. If a player is forced to leave the game for any reason, the team may continue with the remaining players. The vacancy in the batting lineup caused by the absence of said player **shall not** be considered an out during the hitting rotation.
- C. Running on a dropped third strike is allowed.

**10. PLAYERS**

- A. If eight players are present, a game will start at the designated time.
- B. If less than eight players are present, there will be a fifteen-minute delay. If after fifteen minutes an eighth player has not arrived the offending team will forfeit that game.
- C. Any player who arrives after a game has started must go to the bottom of the lineup for that team.
- D. A team with only eight players available for a game may notify the League in advance and request the use of an additional player for the game. The League will use its discretion in locating the additional player.
- E. Do not ask to reschedule a game if you have enough players to field a team.

**11. STEALING**

- A. Stealing is allowed and encouraged.
- B. A runner is not allowed to leave the bag to steal until the ball has been released from the pitchers hand. If the runner leaves the bag early, she will be called out by the umpire.

**12. SLIDING**

- A. No head first sliding is allowed. Once a runner has advanced to a base, she may dive headfirst back into the base to avoid a tag.
- B. When a play at the plate is imminent, the runner shall slide feet first. This is required to avoid a collision with the catcher. A runner who does not slide at all in a close play at the plate may be called out if there is contact. A runner who slides head first, or in any manner which causes or attempts to cause a collision with the catcher, shall be called out, and may be ejected from the game.
- C. No defensive player, with emphasis on the catcher, shall block the runner's path in route to a base unless the defensive player has possession of the ball or possession is imminent.
- D. When a defensive player has possession of the ball and is attempting to tag out a runner, the runner shall either slide feet first into the base being protected by the defensive player, or the runner shall attempt to return to the previous base. This rule is designed to avoid headfirst collisions between runners and defensive players. A runner who causes or attempts to cause a collision with a defensive player shall be called out and may be ejected from the game.
- E. Runners are strongly encouraged to slide into any base any time a play may be imminent.

**13. HELMETS**

- A. All bat boys/girls are required to wear helmets while retrieving bats from the field.
- B. All batters and runners must keep helmets on when:
  - (1) in the batters box, (2) on the bases and base paths, (3) the ball is in play, (4) after crossing home plate and returning to the dugout.
- C. Any player who throws a helmet, bat, glove, or ball to show anger or disapproval with the call of an umpire, performance of his/her teammates or coaches, will automatically be ejected from the game. Such player may be subjected to further disciplinary action by the League.
- D. A player may wear a cap or visor under a helmet.

**14. RE-ENTRY RULE**

- A. Unlimited defensive substitutions may be used.
- B. A starting pitcher may re-enter the game as a pitcher.
- C. A non-starting pitcher may not return to the rubber once removed.

**15. PROTEST**

- A. Protests shall be considered only when based on the interpretation or violation of a playing rule or the use of an ineligible player. No protest shall be allowed based on the decision of an umpire's judgment.
- B. Only the acting head coach or manager shall have the right to protest a game.
- C. The protesting manager or head coach shall immediately, and before the next pitch is thrown, notify the chief umpire that the game is being played under protest.
- D. Following the notice of protest, the chief umpire shall consult with the associate umpires, and if it is determined that the decision is in conflict with the rules, then the decision shall be overturned. If, however, after consultation, the chief umpire is convinced the decision is not in conflict with the rules, then the decision shall stand and the chief umpire shall announce that the game is being played under protest.
- E. Within 24 hours, a written report of the protest shall be filed by both the protesting manager or head coach, and the chief umpire, with the League office.
- F. A Protest Committee shall consider the protest and issue a prompt decision.

**16. EJECTIONS**

- A. All ejections should be reported to a league official immediately.
- B. Any player or coach ejected from a game may serve a next game suspension after the Board reviews the offense.
- C. Players and/or coaches may be subject to further game suspensions if the Board deems necessary.

**17. MISCELLANEOUS**

- A. Managers and assistant coaches are encouraged to warm-up their pitchers between innings if the catcher is not ready.
- B. Between pitches, every player shall keep one foot in the box.
- C. A manager may call time and walk to the pitcher's circle to talk to his/her pitcher. On the third trip to the circle in a game to the same pitcher, the pitcher must be pulled. A manager/coach may make a pitching change without being charged a visit if they do so without crossing the foul line.
- D. All protective equipment not issued by the park must be approved by the League before it can be used in games and/or practices. This change in policy is due to new insurance regulations. This includes any catching equipment and batting helmets (must have a face mask).
- E. No jewelry may be worn by players during games or practices. This includes earrings, necklaces, rings, and watches. It should not be up to the umpire to inspect for jewelry. Check your players before games and practices. This rule has been implemented for the safety of the players.
- F. Only uniforms (shirts, visors, shorts, and socks) issued by the park may be worn during games. If a player forgets a piece of his/her uniform the

park will try to issue a substitute for that one game only. If the park cannot provide something for the player, he/she should borrow the item from a teammate when possible, but the player is expected to be in proper uniform for the next game. A player who willfully violates this rule will not be permitted to play.

G. Disciplinary Rule: Coaches may remove a player from a game for disciplinary reasons. If there are substitutes who have not entered the game yet they may be used. If all substitutes have been used when the disciplinary problem occurs, the manager is to inform the opposing coach of the situation and the opposing manager may select a player to enter the game.

H. All rules not covered in this handout will defer to the National Federation High School Rulebook.

**18. NINE RUN RULE:**

A. No more than nine runs may score in any one inning.

B. Number of outs does not take precedence. If nine runs score with zero, one, or two outs the inning will be considered over.

C. This rule is not to be confused with the ninth batter rule. An unlimited number of batters may hit in any one inning as long as no more than nine runs are scored.

D. The intention of this rule is to speed up games.