



2026 SPRING SEASON

8U Regular Season Playing Rules & Guidelines

Fast-pitch softball skill development will continue in this division. Emphasis will be placed on teaching the fundamentals of the game. These fundamentals are taught and skills developed during practice and games to provide an element of healthy competition. All managers, coaches, and parents should stress good sportsmanship, safety, and having fun at all times throughout the season.

1. SEASON BREAKDOWN

The season may consist of 2 halves. Coach Pitch, Defensive Coaching and Run Limit rules may change in April. Each league will individually evaluate the appropriate rules for the second half of the season.

2. HOME TEAM & DUGOUTS

The team listed first on the schedule will be the Home team and will occupy the 3rd Base dugout. Teams playing a double header may remain in the same dugout.

3. FIELD PREP & UMPIRE FEES

The host city and teams will be solely responsible for providing field prep and for compensating umpires according to their own internal procedures.

4. BASE AND PITCHING DISTANCES

The distance between bases and the pitching plate shall comply with USA Softball requirements. Currently, the distance between bases is 60 feet and the pitching distance is set at 30 feet.

5. GAME LENGTH

All games in the 8U division will be six (6) innings or one hour and twenty minutes (1:20), finish the batter.

6. STANDINGS

There are no standings.

7. SCOREKEEPING

- a. Each team shall have an official team scorekeeper. The scorekeeper must enter each player's first and last names (and # if possible – NO nicknames) into the team scoring system for each game played so that player participation may be tracked.



- b. Coaches may, but are not required to, submit formal lineups to each other or with the umpire, but scorekeepers should communicate and verify rosters and lineups with the other team. Late arriving players shall be entered at the end of the lineup upon arrival.
- c. Paper scorebooks, GameChanger or any other similar application is acceptable.
- d. The Home team will be the official scorekeeper and will assist with game administration.
- e. Defensive positioning does not need to be recorded, other than for pitching limits.

8. EQUIPMENT

- a. All players must have the proper equipment to take the field including cleats and glove. Only appropriate baseball/softball cleats may be worn to practices or games. No tennis shoes. No metal cleats. All jerseys shall be tucked in.
- b. Catchers must wear protective equipment including helmet, mask, chest protector, and shin guards.
- c. All batters, runners, players in the on-deck circle and/or players acting as a base coach must wear a batting helmet.
- d. Helmets must include chinstrap and approved softball face guard.
- e. All bats must be approved USA Softball fastpitch bats with logo.
- f. Fielders' mask requirements will be left to each individual league for their own teams, regardless of the game location.
- g. A USA Softball approved; regulation 10" RIF 1 softball will be used.
- h. The Home team will provide one (1) new game ball and the Away team will provide one (1) new or game-worthy used ball to the umpire prior to each game.

9. PLAYER MINIMUMS

Every attempt should be made to play. In the event a team is unable to field a minimum of eight (8) players, the game may still be played with the agreement of both coaches. The opposing team is encouraged to provide additional defensive players. No outs will be recorded for vacant spots in the lineup for a team with fewer than 8 players.

10. RUN LIMIT

- a. First Half (ends March 29): Each half-inning will be limited to 3 outs or **four (4)** runs; whichever occurs first.



- b. Second Half (Begins April 1): Each half-inning will be limited to 3 outs or **three (3)** runs; whichever occurs first.

11. RUN AHEAD RULE

None.

12. TIME OUTS

Time will be 'out' when the ball is returned to the pitcher's circle with the intent, based on the umpire's judgment, of returning the ball to the pitcher. The pitcher does not have to be in control of the ball. All runners at that point will immediately return to the previous base or advance to the next base as per USA Softball rules.

- The ball must actually get to the pitcher/circle, or go past the pitcher/circle (on a dropped catch or an overthrow/reasonably close bad throw) and must be thrown in the direction of the circle
- The pitcher must be within or in close proximity to the circle (within 2 steps)
 - A pitcher may go retrieve a short thrown ball or wildly thrown ball, but must then return to the circle to trigger the runner's progress
- Examples (Including but not limited to):
 - Merely the release of the ball in the direction of the pitcher does **NOT** stop the play.
 - Throwing a ball from the OF towards a pitcher that gets half-way to the pitcher does **NOT** stop the play.
 - A wildly errant throw that goes nowhere near the Pitcher/Circle does **NOT** stop the play
 - A Pitcher wandering and far out of position far from the circle and/or playing free-safety (half-way to second base, etc.) does not count and does **NOT** stop the play
- If these criteria are met, and if the runner is not half-way, the runner(s) shall be returned to the previous base, otherwise they will be free to continue running, but only to the next base. This applies only to a runner who has rounded a base and is already headed in the direction of the next base.
- Runners will always be allowed the next base from where they started regardless of the half-way rule:
 - For example, Runner on 3B. Ground Ball to the pitcher. Pitcher holds the ball in the circle instead of trying to make a throw to "Stop the Play". The runner will be allowed to score regardless if they made it half-way when the pitcher got control of the ball.



➤ **Umpire Protocol:**

- Benefit of the doubt goes to the Defense in the intent and execution of the ball being thrown to the pitcher and if it is close enough to trigger the runner's progress
- Benefit of the doubt goes to the Offense in judging whether a runner is half-way or not. If it is not clearly short of half-way, the runner will be allowed to advance to the next base.
- "Obstruction" (delayed Dead Ball) overrides everything else and can place the runner on the next base if warranted.

13. DEFENSIVE PLAYERS

- a. Each team shall use four (4) outfielders for a total of ten (10) defensive positions. The outfielders must use normal outfield positions in left field, left center, right center and right field.
- b. No roving players. All outfielders must play at least 10' beyond the base path until the ball is hit.
- c. No player may sit on the bench more than one (1) inning in any game until all other players on their team have sat one (1) inning.
- d. Each player must play at least one (1) inning of infield by the completion of the 3rd inning. If the game is less than three (3) complete innings, the player must start the next game at an infield position.
- e. Up to two coaches may be in the outfield to help direct players for the first half of the season only.

Note: The participation rules are designed to get all players involved in infield positions if they do not create a safety hazard.

14. PLAYER RE-ENTRY

Unlimited defensive substitution is allowed (modified for pitchers and subject to the rules and guidelines above in 13-c & 13-d). Substitute players may be entered at the beginning of innings or whenever the umpire calls time out.

15. INFIELD FLY AND DROPPED THIRD STRIKE

The dropped third strike rule will **NOT** be in effect per USA Softball rules. The infield fly rule will **NOT** be in effect.

16. BATTING

- a. All teams will bat round robin for players present at the start of the game.



- b. Late arriving players must be added to the bottom of the lineup. The opposing team must be notified of any additions when the player enters the game.
- c. The batting order will remain fixed throughout the game; with the exception of any late arriving players.
- d. Bunting is only allowed when facing a player pitcher. There is **NO** bunting when a coach is pitching. A foul ball while bunting with two (2) strikes will be an out.
- e. Injured players or players otherwise forced to leave the game shall be reported to both the umpire and the opposing team. If a player leaves a game, there is no penalty. Any player leaving a game for any reason may not return to the same game.
- f. No out will be taken for injured players unable to take their turn at bat.
- g. A thrown bat is an automatic out for that player after one (1) warning.

17. BASE RUNNING

- a. Stealing is allowed during player pitch. Home will be CLOSED. Stealing is **NOT** allowed during coach pitch. Base runners starting at first or second base will be entitled to steal one base only per pitch with liability to be put out. If a ball goes out of play, the ball is dead and the umpire will award the base runners the appropriate base(s), including home.
- b. Base runners may leave a base when the ball leaves the pitcher's hand. Base runners who step off the base and/or lead off the base prior to the pitch or before the ball leaving the pitcher's hand will be called out. All other base runners will be returned to their previous base.
- c. Base runners may advance on batted balls and may take only one base on an overthrow at their own risk, even if the ball remains in play. Base runners must stop advancing on batted balls when the ball is returned to the pitchers' circle or thrown through the circle, whether or not the pitcher catches the ball. (Runners must be over halfway to the next base in order to be awarded that base).
- d. Base runners may not advance past first base on a walk.
- e. It is the responsibility of the base runner to avoid any collision with a defensive player. Base runners can slide, slow down, change directions, stop entirely or even run around a defensive player.
- f. Sliding is encouraged in this division. All players should be properly outfitted with sliding shorts (or pants) and sliding pads for the knees.

18. PITCHING RULES



The pitching distance is 30 feet. The umpire will keep track of balls and strikes. A coach from the defensive team is recommended to be behind the catcher to help retrieve passed balls to speed up play. Defensive plays may not be made against any runner(s) if the coach behind the plate touches the ball.

- a. Pitching Limits -- A pitcher may pitch a maximum of two (2) innings in a game. The innings do not have to be consecutive. One pitch to a batter constitutes an inning pitched.
- b. Pitchers Substitution -- A pitcher removed from pitching by the coach may return to the game only once to pitch keeping in mind the pitching limit rule above. A pitcher removed during an inning may not return to pitch in that same inning.
- c. Coach Pitch – First Half (ends March 29)
 - i. Batters will continue to hit after a walk or hit by pitch (while attempting to avoid the pitch). In the event the player pitcher pitches four balls to a batter or hits the batter with a pitch, an adult coach from the offensive team will enter the game to pitch to his/her own team.
 - ii. The strike count on the batter will remain the same after a walk and will revert to zero (0) on a hit by pitch. The coach pitcher will continue to pitch until the batter hits the ball in fair territory, strikes out or is called out when the coach pitches a maximum of four (4) pitches.
 - iii. If the coach pitcher pitches four (4) pitches and the batter fails to hit the ball into fair territory, the batter is out. If the batter fouls off the 4th pitch, her at bat continues until she either misses the next pitch or until she puts the ball in play, whichever occurs first. A batter cannot strike out on a foul ball, regardless of the number of pitches she receives.
 - iv. Umpires will not call balls or strikes on coach pitch. Strikes will only be called on coach pitch by the umpire when a batter hits a foul ball or on a swinging strike.
 - v. The coach pitcher must have at least one foot in contact with the pitcher's plate for the entire pitching motion and until the ball has left the coach pitcher's hand.
 - vi. The player pitcher shall remain in the pitching circle/cylinder (both feet inside the circle/cylinder) while the coach pitcher is pitching and must play no closer to the batter than the pitcher's plate until the ball is hit.
 - vii. The coach pitcher must make every reasonable effort to get out of the way of the ball and/or defensive players. If a batted ball hits the coach



pitcher, the ball is live and the batter and runners can attempt to advance.

- viii. If the coach pitcher interferes intentionally with the play, as judged by the umpire, the umpire will call the batter out for offensive interference.
- d. Coach Pitch – Second Half (Begins April 1)
 - i. Pitchers will be allowed to walk batters, but may not walk in any runs.
 - ii. Batters hit by a pitch (while attempting to avoid the pitch) will be given the option to continue batting or take their base. If the batter is unable to continue batting, they will be awarded first base. If the hit batter is unable to advance to first base, a courtesy runner is allowed. The batter does not have to advance to first base for the courtesy runner to take the batter's place on base.
 - iii. Coach Pitch rule, as described above, will be used after four (4) balls/HBP with the bases loaded.

19. COURTESY RUNNERS

Courtesy runners will be allowed for the pitcher and catcher of record. The runner shall be the player making the last recorded out. In the case that no outs have been recorded in the game, the runner shall be the last batter listed in the roster.

20. SAFETY BASE

A safety base (double base) must be used at first base. If a field is not equipped with a safety base, the umpire has the option to continue the game utilizing an imaginary safety base and batter runners will be instructed to run through as though a safety base is present. All determination of safe or out per an imaginary safety base is at the sole discretion of the umpire.

21. SPORTSMANSHIP

No derogatory cheers will be allowed. No deliberate attempt to distract the pitcher and/or the catcher by the offensive team shall be tolerated. We will follow the General Policies of the league and/or USA Softball rules for unsportsmanlike conduct. If a manager, coach, or parent is ejected from a game, the associated league will be contacted with a report from the umpire as to the reason for the ejection. Each league will handle their own disciplinary process that could include suspension from games.

22. JEWELRY

No jewelry of any kind will be permitted in accordance with USA Softball rules.