

Addition of new “overthrow” rule for 7-8 baseball and softball:

Added Under 2.13

If the ball is overthrown from an infield position in an attempt to acquire an out at first, the runner is awarded second base only. Any runners already on base may advance until stopped.

Catawba County Optimist Softball 2026

Local Rules Rookie league (7/8)

This manual is an addendum to the official rule book. It is meant to emphasize, clarify and modify some rules for regular season play.

Section 1. Eligibility

1. January 1st is the cutoff date for determining in which league a player is eligible to compete. The age of the player on January 1st is the official age of the player for that season. For example, if a player turns 9 on January 1st that player is still eligible to play Rookie league ball.
2. There will be no exceptions to the eligibility rule.
3. Players should play in the Optimist program closest to their current residence. If a player wishes to switch Optimist programs within the Catawba county league, then that player must obtain a written release from the Optimist program in which they played the previous year.
4. Optimist clubs, members, or coaches should not actively recruit players from other clubs.

Section 2. Playing Rules

1. Each team may have ten (10) defensive players on the field. There are to be 6 infielders and 4 outfielders. The outfielders have to be positioned behind the base paths prior to the ball being hit.
2. Each team will bat its full roster.
3. Each team will have a five (5) run limit in innings 1/2/3/4/5. The 6th inning will have no limit.
4. Each coach will pitch to his or her own team.
5. The restricted pitching area will be a 10 x 5 box with the front line at 35' and the back line at 40'. The coach must pitch from inside this box. The defensive pitcher must line up behind the box, but within the 10' area. A minimum of one foot must be in the box until the ball is struck by the bat.
6. If a batted ball strikes the pitcher, the ball is declared dead, and all runners would return to their respective base. The pitch counts as one of the batters 5 pitches but is not recorded as a strike or foul.
7. Each batter will get a maximum of five (5) pitches. The batter either:
 - Puts the ball into play
 - Strikes out
 - Is called out due to pitch count
 - In case of a foul ball on the last pitch, or if the ball hits the offensive pitcher, the batter will receive another pitch (unless the foul ball is caught for an out).
8. Base length of 60'.
9. Bunting is not allowed.

10. The Umpire may call time, in his judgment, when the lead runner stops advancing. The Umpire controls the game. The defensive player with the ball may request time when he has stopped the advancement of the lead runner. The Umpire will signal time out. The ball must be on the infield and in control of the defensive player in fair territory for the Umpire to signal time out. Time out cannot be called in order to stop the advancement of a runner. Trailing runners will be placed accordingly. If an Umpire calls time and a trailing runner has not acquired the next base, he/she will be sent back to the previous base. There is no half way rule. A runner acquires a base when he/she touches it. Time out is not until the Umpire says "TIME OUT" or "TIME".

11. Defensive coaches are allowed in foul territory of the outfield to coach his/her players. One on the right field and one on the left field foul lines.

12. Infield fly rule is not in effect.

13. If a runner steps off the base before the ball is hit the team will be warned one time. A second offense by any player on that team will result in the runner being called out.

14. If two runners occupy the same base, the trailing runner will be called out.

15. If a trailing runner passes a lead runner on the base path, the trailing runner will be called out.

16. If a coach assists a runner by touching him in any way the runner is out.

17. Any player throwing a bat in the act of swinging will be given one warning and will be called out on the second infraction.

18. The small circumference ball (11") will be used.

19. Batting helmet with attached face mask is mandatory for anyone batting, on deck, or on base.

20. For safety considerations, players at the pitcher position must wear a protective face mask on defense

21. A team must have at least eight (8) players to begin a game. An out will be counted for the ninth (9) place batter only. If the 9th and 10th player(s) show up, they will bat in that respective position in the batting order.

22. In the event a team is short players for a game, they may pick up players from a younger team in their organization to play, i.e., a U-8 team may pick up players from a U-6 team if they do not have 10 players available.

Section 3. Playing Time Rules

1. Mandatory playing time of at least two (2) innings in the field. Penalty for the infraction of the playing time rule is forfeiture of the game.

2. The coach has the final authority on playing time for a player regarding attitude, practice attendance, and general conduct. The coach must notify the opposing coach, scorekeeper, and umpire prior to the start of a game as the reason a player who is present does and in uniform is not being allowed to play.

3. If a player does not arrive before the beginning of the third inning, the coach is not obligated to adhere to rule 1 above.

4. If a player has to leave a game (injury, sickness, prior commitment, etc.) an out will be recorded when that player's time at bat occurs.

Section 4. Protests

1. All protests must be made by the head coach or designated coach who is filling in for the head coach. No protests are allowed on an umpire's judgment call. The umpire's word is final on all judgment calls.
2. The only legal protest is one that involves:
 - A violation of playing rules
 - The use of ineligible players
 - Infraction of the playing time rule
3. Protests for ineligible players and playing time infractions must be filed within fifteen minutes after completion of the game
4. Protest for playing rules violation will be made at the time of the rule in question. The head coach will notify the umpire before the next pitch. The umpires will try to work out the ruling to prevent a protest. If this is not possible, the umpire will announce that the game is being played under protest.
5. Protests will be handled by a protest committee consisting of the league administrator from each member group not involved in the protest.
6. All coaches should strive to keep from protesting games by trying to reach an agreement with the umpires and opposing coaches
7. The committee's ruling will be the final authority of all protests.

Section 5. Time Limit of Games

1. Game length is 6 innings. No new inning will be started after (80) minutes of play.
2. A new inning is considered started immediately after the third out of the last inning. For example, if the third out in the bottom of an inning occurs at (79) minutes, then the next inning would proceed as normal.
3. The start time of the game begins when the Umpire concludes the pregame meeting with coaches. Umpire should tell both teams and the scoreboard keeper if applicable, the start time. The umpire is the official time keeper and has the final ruling on when the time limit is reached.
4. If the umpire believes a team is purposely delaying the game to prevent another inning from being played (excessive timeouts, unnecessary substitutions, etc.) then the umpire can allow another inning to be played.
5. If all 6 innings have been completed with the game tied, and the time limit is not up, the game will continue until the time limit has expired or a winner has been determined. If time expires with the game still tied, the game will be extended for one (1) extra inning. If the game is still tied, it will be declared a "suspended" game and will be finished at the end of a season if necessary, to decide the year-end standings.
6. The time limit is not a drop-dead type limit. If time expires, finish the inning under normal softball rules.
7. A game will be called due to mercy rule if a team is leading by 20 runs or more following the conclusion of the 4th inning.

Section 6. Discipline

1. Any player ejected from the game is suspended for the rest of the game and the following game. A second offense would carry the same penalty.

2. Any coach who is ejected from a game will be suspended for the rest of the game plus the following:

- 1st offense – one game suspension immediately following the ejection
- 2nd offense – one game suspension immediately following the ejection
- 3rd offense – suspended for the rest of the regular season and league tournament.

A coach may make one (1) appeal to a committee consisting of the local league administrators. (If the appeal is ruled in favor of the coach, he will not be charged with an ejection for the game.)

Catawba County Softball 2026

Local Rules Minor League (9/10)

This manual is an addendum to the official Rulebook. It is meant to emphasize, clarify, and modify some rules for season play.

Section 1. Eligibility

1. January 1st is the cutoff date for determining in which league a player is eligible to compete. The age of the player on January 1st is the official age of the player for that season.

For example if a player turns 11 on January 1st that player is still eligible to play minor league ball.

2. There will be no exceptions to the eligibility rule.

3. Players should play in the Optimist program nearest their current residence. If a player wishes to switch Optimist programs within the Catawba County League, then that player must obtain a written release from the Optimist program in which they played the previous year.

4. Optimist clubs, members, or coaches should not actively recruit players from other clubs.

Section 2. Playing Rules

1. The small circumference ball (11") will be used.

2. Base length of 60'.

3. Pitching distance is 35' from the back of home plate.

4. There is no required pitching style (the pitcher does not have to use a wind up). The pitch should be flat (this is a prep league for fast pitch).

5. Courtesy runner for catcher at any time. Mandatory with two (2) outs. The substitute runner should be the last out.

6. A team can play ten (10) defensive players.

7. Offensive team bats the entire lineup.

8. A team must have at least eight (8) players to begin a game. An out will be counted for the ninth-place batter.

9. Infield fly rule IS in effect.

10. Each team will have a five (5) run limit per inning except for the last two innings. There will be no run limit in either the fourth or fifth inning. If a team is ahead by fifteen (15) or more runs after four (4) complete innings of play, the game will be called a complete game.

11. Base stealing is allowed. Only one base may be advanced per pitch. I.E. Runner on first steals second. Catcher throws ball into Center Field. Runner can go to third base on error thrown.

12. Runner may steal home on a passed ball/wild pitch/overthrow back to ANY infielder.

13. The runner may leave base when the ball leaves the pitcher's hand. If a runner leaves the base early, the team will receive a warning and the runner will be returned to the original base. On the second infraction and all following infractions, any runner on that team will be called out and removed from the base. Each team gets one warning per game.
14. When the coach is pitching, if a runner steps off the base before the ball is hit, the team will be warned one time. A second offense and all subsequent offenses by any runner on that team will result in the runner being called out and removed from the base.
15. The catcher does not have to catch the third strike for an out to be recorded. The batter cannot advance to first base.
16. Batters may bunt if a player is pitching but not when the coach is pitching.
17. If two runners occupy the same base, the trailing runner will be called out.
18. If a trailing runner passes a lead runner on the base path, the trailing runner will be called out.
19. If a coach assists a runner by touching him in any way, the runner is out.
20. Any player throwing a bat in the act of swinging will be given one warning and will be called out on the second infraction.
21. Be aware that the batter's box for fast pitch is 7' by 3' which is 2 feet longer than the batter's box for the boy's leagues.
22. Batting helmet with attached face mask is mandatory for anyone batting, on deck, or on base.
23. A circle with an 8' radius will be marked around the pitching rubber.
24. When the ball is in the pitcher's possession inside the circle, the base runner either proceeds immediately to the next base or returns immediately to the base previously occupied. A warning will be given to the entire team for the first infraction (the same warning outlined in rule #11 and #12). All subsequent infractions will result in the runner being called out. Each team gets one warning per game concerning base running whether it involves stealing, ball inside circle, etc., NOT one warning for each different infraction.
25. If the pitcher fakes a throw, the runner is free to proceed or return at her own discretion.
26. If a batter is walked she may advance to first base only.

Section 3. Playing Time Rules

1. Mandatory playing time of at least two (2) innings in the field. Penalty for the infraction of the playing time rule is forfeiture of the game. In case of rain shortened game or run rule.
2. The coach has the final authority on playing time for a player regarding attitude, practice attendance, and general conduct. The coach must notify the opposing coach, scorekeeper, and umpire prior to the start of the game as the reason a player who is present and in uniform is not being allowed to play.
3. If a player does not arrive before the beginning of the third inning, the coach is not obligated to adhere to rule 1 above.
4. If a player has to leave a game (injury, sickness, prior commitment, etc.) an out will be recorded when that player's time at bat occurs.
5. In the event a team is short on players, they may pick up players from a younger team in their organization to play, i.e., a U-10 team may pick up players from a T-B team to have enough to play.

Section 4. Protests

1. All protests must be made by the head coach or designated coach who is filling in for the head coach. No protests will be allowed on an umpire's judgment call. The Umpire has the final on all judgment calls.
2. The only legal protest is one that involves: violation of playing rules, the use of ineligible players, infraction of the playing time rule
3. Protests for ineligible players and playing time infractions must be filed within fifteen minutes after completion of the game.
4. Protests for playing rules violation will be made at the time of the rule in question. The head coach MUST notify the umpire before the next pitch. The umpires will try to work out the ruling to prevent a protest. If this is not possible, the umpire shall announce to both teams that the game is being played under protest.
5. Protests will be handled by a protest committee consisting of the league administrator from each member group not involved in the protest.
6. All coaches should strive to keep from protesting games by trying to reach an agreement with the umpires and opposing coaches.
7. The committee's ruling will be the final authority of all protests.

Section 5. Time Limit of Games

1. Game length is 6 innings or 80 minutes. No new inning will be started after 80 minutes of game play.
2. A new inning is considered started immediately after the third out of the last inning. For example, if the third out in the bottom of an inning occurs at 79 minutes, then the next inning would proceed as normal.
3. The start time of the game begins when the umpire concludes the pregame meeting with both coaches. Umpire should tell both teams and the scoreboard operator, if applicable, the start time.
4. The umpire is the official timekeeper and has the final ruling on when the time limit is reached.
5. If the umpire believes a team is purposely delaying the game in order to prevent another inning being played (excessive timeouts, unnecessary substitutions, etc.) then the umpire can allow another inning to be played.
6. If all five (5) innings have been completed with the game tied, and the time limit is not up, the game will continue until the time limit expires or a winner has been determined. If time expires with the game still tied, the game will be extended for one (1) extra inning. If the game is still tied, it will be declared a "suspended" game and finished at the end of the season if necessary to decide the year-end standings.
7. The time limit is not a drop-dead type of limit. If time expires finish the inning under normal softball rules.

Section 6. Discipline

1. Any player who is ejected from a game will be suspended for the rest of the game and the following game. A second offense would carry the same penalty.
2. Any coach who is ejected from a game will be suspended for the rest of the game plus the following:
 - 1st offense-one game suspension immediately following the ejection.
 - 2nd offense-one game suspension immediately following the ejection.
 - 3rd offense-suspended for the rest of the regular season and league tournament.

A coach may make one (1) appeal to a committee consisting of the local league directors. If the appeal is ruled in favor of the coach, he will not be charged with an ejection from the game.

Section 7. Pitching Rules

1. The pitcher will pitch from a distance of 35'.
2. A pitcher may pitch a maximum of 8 innings per calendar week (Monday through and including Sunday). If a pitcher delivers one pitch in an inning, she shall be charged with one inning pitched. Any game in which a pitcher exceeds her allotted innings per week will result in a forfeit. However, the game is not stopped at that point. Play the game as normal. The protest committee will have the final ruling.
3. A pitcher shall wear no jewelry, sweat bands, batting glove or anything inconsistent with the team's legal uniform which could distract the batter. The opposing head coach may request that the article be removed at any time prior to or during the game.
4. The pitcher must wear a protective mask while pitching.
5. A defensive coach may call time out for a pitcher's conference once per inning with no penalty. The second time out will result in the mandatory replacement of the pitcher.
6. Each half inning will begin with a player pitching to the opposing team. If three batters are walked in a single half-inning, the offensive coach will be called in to finish that half inning by pitching to his/her own players. A batter that is hit by a pitch will count toward the three batter limit.
7. When the coach comes in to pitch, the girl who was pitching will remain at that position for defensive purposes. She should stand beside the coach and be no closer than 35 feet to the batter.
8. When the coach comes in to pitch, each batter will get a maximum of five (5) pitches, the batter either:
 - Puts the ball into play
 - Strikes out (3 swings)
 - Is called out due to pitch count

In case of a foul ball on the last pitch, the batter will receive another pitch (unless the foul ball is caught for an out). This continues until the batter does one of the three options listed above.

9. When pitching, a coach cannot walk or hit batters to get them to first base.
10. The coach cannot coach the batters or runners from the pitching mound.
11. The coach will impact the play as little as possible either by stepping out of the way, moving outside the playing field, etc. If a coach impacts a play, the umpire may amend the play in any way deemed fair in his judgment.
12. If the coach, while pitching, is hit with a batted ball, the batter will get to hit again. The ball is considered "dead" and no pitch is counted against the batter.
13. No stealing is allowed if the coach is pitching.
14. Pitchers will go by the NCHSAA rules for wind up.