

# JUNIOR SOFTBALL RULES – Grades 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup>

(Designed by Washington, NTRA, Eureka, Metamora and Germantown Hills Softball Directors for Rec League Play)

PLEASE NOTE – we follow USA Softball Rules with the following modifications.  
Select USA rules have been included below for clarification purposes only.

Reminder – this is an instructional league. Rules have been modified according to the players age and/or ability, while attempting to prepare some players for Junior High/IESA teams.

## PLAYERS, SUBSTITUTES, EQUIPMENT

1. Each team will roster players as determined by the board after registration. Late registrants may be added to each team OR placed on a waiting list. This decision is determined by the board.
2. The fielding team will consist of 10 players. (catcher, pitcher, 4 infielders, 4 outfielders)
3. Teams must be able to field 8 players or must forfeit the game 15 minutes after start time. In the event of injury during a game, a team may continue play with less than 8 players.
4. Teams expecting less than 10 players may call-up girls from the age group below. Coaches may not pull subs from an opposing team of the same age group unless approved by the other team AND the directors. Any sub may not pitch unless approved by the opposing team AND the directors.
5. Each player must sit out once before any player sits out twice.
6. \*\*\*Each player must play one inning in an infield position and one inning in an outfield position, within the first 3 innings. To report an infraction, the coach must call time out, discuss with the umpire who will verify positions/rotation with the opposing coach. The coach will receive a warning upon the first infraction; the second infraction will result in automatic loss of the game. Coaches will submit line-up cards with player name and jersey number to the opposing team. Directors are unable to verify infractions that are reported after the game is completed.
7. Players may be freely substituted at any position in any dead ball situation. This includes pitchers and catchers.
8. All players must wear tennis shoes or rubber cleats. Metal spikes/cleats are not allowed.
9. Coaches are responsible for the equipment assigned to them. Equipment must remain in the dugout when not in use.
10. \*\*\*Batters/runners must wear a helmet with a facemask.
11. Pitchers must wear a fielder's facemask and heart guard if provided by the organization.
12. There is no color, size, or type of restriction on fielding gloves.
13. B and C TRAVEL BALL GIRLS ARE NOT ALLOWED TO SUB OR PLAY IN-HOUSE unless approved by the board of directors. Approved travel ball players may not pitch.

## PLAYING FIELD

14. Pitching distance is 35 feet. Base distance is 60 feet. An **11 inch ball** will be used.
15. The home team shall occupy the dugout on the third base side, visitors on the 1<sup>st</sup> base side. Each team is allowed 10-15 minutes of pre-game warm ups, if time allows. Pregame warm-ups will be performed on your respective side of the outfield and foul territory. Full field warm-ups are not allowed. **Start times for games will not be adjusted to allow time for warm-ups.**
16. Coaches must remain in the dug-out while their team is on the field. Exception: to speed up the game, a coach or volunteer (must be an adult) may field passed pitches behind the catcher.
17. Only coaches, players and umpires are allowed in the dug-out and on the playing field. Dugout gates are to stay closed at all times.
18. Please do not allow players to climb on or sit upon the dugout walls. Players must stay behind the fence in the dugout, unless they are on-deck and wearing a helmet. This is for the safety of the girls.

## PITCHING, CATCHING, FIELDING

### 19. Kid pitch rules (only first and third inning)

- a. Players will pitch following the ASA/USA guidelines. Both feet must be on the ground within the 24-inch length of the pitcher's plate. The shoulders shall be in line with first and third bases. The pitcher shall take a position with their pivot foot in contact with the pitcher's plate and their non-pivot foot in contact with or behind the pitcher's plate. The pitcher must not make any motion to pitch without immediately delivering the ball to the batter.
- b. Three strikes constitute an out and four balls is a walk.
- c. Hit by pitch: if a batter is hit by the pitch during kid pitch, the batter will take first base.
- d. We advise coaches to work with at least 2 pitchers. There is no limit to innings pitched, since kids only pitch 2 innings per game, but players get sick/injured or may miss games for vacations. This helps prepare your team for every game and helps develop the program for the following year.

### 20. Coach pitch rules (all other innings)

- a. Coaches will pitch following the ASA/USA guidelines which require their pivot foot in contact with the pitcher's plate and their non-pivot foot in contact with or behind the pitcher's plate.
  - b. Batters may only advance by a batted ball. No walks or hit by pitch apply.
  - c. Batter gets 3 swings or 5 pitches, whichever comes first. No called third strikes. Batters may continue batting if the fifth and subsequent pitch is deemed a foul ball. An out will be recorded after the 5<sup>th</sup> or final non-fouled pitch.
  - d. Pitched balls must have a flat trajectory.
  - e. If a batted ball hits the coach pitcher, the result is a dead ball and the pitch is replayed. Runners may not advance.
  - f. If a coach intentionally interferes with a batted ball while pitching, the batter will be called out.
  - g. The defensive player/pitcher must have at least one foot in the pitching circle and must be equal to or behind the pitching rubber.
  - h. Coaches pitch to their own players.
21. \*\*\*Catchers must wear all gear, even during practice and warm-ups. This includes a helmet with mask and throat guard, chest protector and shin guards. If catching gear is in use, additional catchers must wear a batting helmet.
22. The in-field fly rule DOES NOT apply. Runners may not advance on a caught fly ball.
23. \*\*\*Outfielders must play at the edge of the grass or at least 15 feet beyond the baseline on the larger fields.

## BATTING, BASE RUNNING

24. All players will bat in consecutive order. Late arriving players will be added to the bottom of the batting order. In the event of injury, the player is removed from the batting order, or can be skipped and may return to the batting order in the same position. No penalty will be applied to injured batters removed or skipped.
25. Bunting is not allowed.
26. Dropped 3<sup>rd</sup> strike rule DOES NOT apply.
27. A batter is automatically out for throwing the bat after a warning is given by the umpire. One single warning is given to both teams after the first occurrence.
28. A batter will be called out if she stands/steps on home plate while batting the ball.
29. No stealing. Sliding is allowed. Base runners may lead off the base, after the ball is released from the pitcher's hand, with each pitch. Runners will be called out for leaving too soon, after a warning is provided by the umpire.
30. Runners may advance to the next base(s) on a hit to the outfield but must stop at the closest base when the ball is in possession of an infielder, and within the infield. (I.E. the infield player can not run into the grass of the outfield to obtain possession of the ball to "stop the runners" from advancing.)
31. \*\*\*Base runners may advance ONLY ONE BASE on an overthrow, while taking the risk of being put out at the next base. Any runner may attempt to advance to the next base at the time of the initial over throw. The fielder can then choose to attempt a put-out on any advancing runner. Once this play is completed, the ball is then dead. Only one over-thrown advancement is allowed per batted ball.

32. A base runner is out if hit by a batted ball, regardless of spot of occurrence on the field.

#### GAME LENGTH, SCORING

33. Game length is 6 innings or 75 minutes. When the time limit is reached – the current inning will continue until completed. A new inning will not begin after the time limit has been reached. Three innings constitutes a game (2 ½ innings if the home team is ahead). Games ending in a tie will not be replayed.

34. \*\*\*RUN RULE PER INNING – during each inning, the team at bat must take the field after scoring 5 runs, regardless of outs. (All runs scored on the final play of the inning DO count.)

35. A game will be called if there is a 15 run lead after 4 innings or 12 run lead after 5 innings.

36. Each team must supply a score keeper. Final scores must be confirmed at the end of the game and reported to the league coordinator.

37. During tournament play and the championship game, all regular season rules apply, including time and run limit.

38. END OF THE SEASON, TIE BREAKING RULE – Ties for league standings at the end of the season will be determined as follows – head-to-head, win/loss records against the team above the tying teams in the standing, win/loss records against the team below the tying teams in the standing, then coin toss (the team that won the first game between the two teams calls the flip.)

#### WEATHER, CONDUCT, PARK RULES

39. EXTREME WEATHER – At the first sound of thunder or sight of lightning, games will be suspended for 30 minutes. The 30-minute suspension of play restarts every time lightning is seen or thunder is heard. All players and coaches must leave the playing area, per park guidelines. This may include leaving the dugouts.

40. HEAT ADVISORY – Games will not be rescheduled or canceled due to heat advisory. It is the responsibility of the parents/guardians to hydrate the players before and during games, provide cooling towels during rest periods or notify your coaches if your player will not be attending.

41. NO PROTESTS ALLOWED. On a judgment call, the umpire's decision is final. If a coach feels an umpire has improperly enforced a rule or failed to enforce a rule, they must wait for a dead ball, and request a time-out to discuss the play and call. The rule in question will then be reviewed by the plate and field umpires. Time clock is running during rule discussions. Coaches should keep rules on hand at all times. Balls and strikes are not to be protested, they are judgment calls, made by the umpire and the umpire decision is final. Any strike zone concerns must be addressed with directors.

42. Rules have been designed by and reviewed by all participating directors of each organization. Coaches may request rule clarification during the game, but ANY AND ALL RULE CHALLENGES and COMPLAINTS need to be addressed with the directors after the game is completed and will not change the outcome of the game.

43. \*\*\*If a player is removed from the game for disciplinary reasons, the coach must notify home plate umpire and the opposing coach. Once a player is removed from the game, they are not allowed to re-enter the game at any point. The player must leave the park grounds upon removal from the game. Both directors must be notified if this disciplinary action is ever warranted.

44. WE WILL BE ENFORCING A ZERO TOLERANCE TOWARDS OFFENSIVE LANGUAGE RULE. THIS WILL APPLY TO ANYONE ON THE PARK GROUNDS. Any coach or spectator that uses foul or abusive language or that is under the influence of alcohol or any other controlled substance will be ejected from the park.

45. There shall be no harassment of a player by any coach, spectator, or player. This will include "baiting" members of one team by a coach, spectator, or player (s). This behavior can result in forfeiture of the game.

46. Each organization is responsible for reviewing these rules with all coaches and umpires in the league. Rules may be distributed or posted on the internet with public access via the organization website.

47. A program representative or board member must be present at each field/property during seasonal game play and tournaments. The director of each program is responsible for handling infractions and discipline of their league coaches and must remain involved throughout the entire season.

48. Coaches are responsible for the safety, discipline and sportsmanship of their players and the conduct of themselves, assistants, and spectators.

49. Sportsmanship is the first step in developing our young athletes for their future careers. Anyone or anything that seeks to hinder this development will be asked to leave the premises immediately and may not return.
50. Both teams are responsible for the liter in their dugouts and around their diamond. We ask for your assistance in keeping the PARK LITTER to a minimum.
51. Please encourage patronage of the concession stand. Washington Park District & NTRA use the proceeds from the concessions sales to help this program. Please do not bring store bought treats for the teams.

#### Covid 19 Guidelines

52. Per IDPH guidelines – (copied from [Sports Safety Guidance | IDPH \(illinois.gov\)](#) )  
[Executive Order 2022-06](#) issued on February 28, 2022, ended universal indoor masking requirements, including in schools and in public indoor settings where sports-related activities are held. All individuals may engage in sports-related activities, both indoors and outdoors, without wearing a mask, except where otherwise required by laws, rules, regulations or facility policies, including local business and workplace policies. As always, schools, districts, facility owners and other sports organizers may establish COVID-19 prevention policies that require the use of face coverings during sports-related activities. In addition, we recommend all individuals wear a mask for public indoor activities, including sports, in areas with high [COVID-19 community levels](#) and as recommended in Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines for [quarantine](#) and [isolation](#).
53. Covid 19 guidelines may change at any time per the state, please follow all current state, IDPH, IHSA guidelines.

Please feel free to contact your Softball Program Director with any questions or concerns.

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