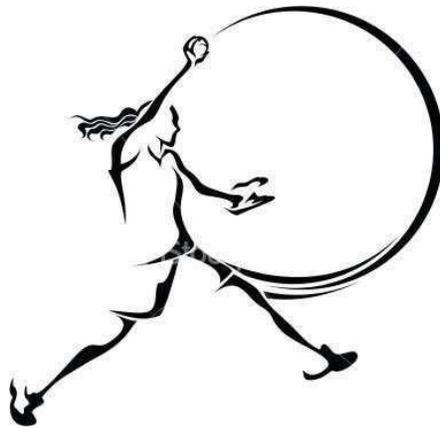


Revised Spring 2024

**GIRL'S SOFTBALL RULES
(3/4) Minors**



Revision History

DATE	SECTION	DESCRIPTION	AUTHOR
4/2024	All	Broad changes to align with format of 5/6 rules	D. Blumenfeld
9/2023	Coach Pitching	Umpires will continue to call balls and strikes	D. Blumenfeld

Code of Ethics

Each person that participates in the 3 / 4 grade Softball League must conduct themselves within a certain standard of conduct as outlined by the home organization Softball League.

Therefore, it is justified to assume that all adults participating, including scorekeepers, umpires, fans, coaches, and managers, would set high standards of conduct for themselves.

Managers and coaches in particular, working almost daily with the players must have a moral obligation to be leaders in every respect.

LEAD BY EXAMPLE. Your attitude towards umpires, other managers and coaches and other teams are picked up by our youth as the golden rule of competition. It is also picked up by the parents and coaches of your team. Please set the right example.

General Rules

1) These rules apply to all participating towns Arlington Heights, Prospect Heights and Mt. Prospect for fast pitch softball: Minors (grades: 3th & 4th only)

2) The following abbreviations will be used to indicate town specific situations.

a) Arlington Heights = AH; Prospect Heights = PH; Mount Prospect = MP

3) The only players permitted to play, and practice are those who have registered with a park district and / or the affiliate recreation program by paying the appropriate fee. Players may be registered in multiple leagues (including travel) as long as they are registered in this league. Players can only be placed on one house league team. Registration lists for each town should be shared to avoid this situation from occurring in the future.

4) The spirit of the game is to follow the Illinois High School Association (IHSA) rules as closely as possible. Managers CANNOT (by joint agreement) change any rule before the game. If there are any specific field rules that need to be decided, they must be discussed and resolved with the umpire before the start of the game. It is the responsibility of both managers to make sure they agree in the presence of the umpire to ensure clarification of rules. The umpire is requested to abide by pre-game discussions.

5) Good sportsmanship should be utilized for every aspect of the game. The managers should emphasize this with their teams. Cheering or comments by the team or fans must not be detrimental to the other team. Managers are responsible for the behavior of their team and fans and can be ejected if they are not controlled. All managers must read these rules and review them with the players and coaches of their team at the beginning of the season. Affiliate incident report must be submitted to the commissioner if there is any issue with fans, coaches, or umpires.

6) The home team is responsible for setting up the playing field at least 30 minutes before a game is to start. Each team gets 10 minutes for infield practice. Home infield practice is from 25 minutes before game time to 15 minutes before game time. Visiting team gets from 15 minutes before game time to 5 minutes before game time. Five minutes prior to game start all players must vacate the field for the pregame conference with the umpire. Weather conditions or completion of a previous game may not allow for this. Take down of the field is also the responsibility of the home team. The home team must also supply 2 game balls with at least 1 being new. The home team keeps the game balls at the end of the game. The home team uses the third base dugout.

7) If the field is unplayable, the home team must notify the visiting team manager by talking to someone in a coaching capacity at least one and one half (1 1/2) hours before scheduled game time and getting confirmation. Leaving a voice mail or sending an email without confirmation is not sufficient notice. Notifying the umpire is also the responsibility of the home team through the league commissioner.

Rescheduling games is the responsibility of the home team. The league commissioner may also assist in rescheduling the game. Games that are cancelled or suspended, teams should make every effort to reschedule the game within two weeks. If the game that was cancelled or suspended is near the end of the season the game should be made up ASAP.

Games that can't be made up before the start of the playoffs will not be played and are not counted in the standings.

8) Season Layout and Standings

- a) The regular season is scheduled to have 12 games for each team. Weather or other cancelations may result in fewer games being played.
- b) The start of the season will vary by year; however, the 3rd week of April will be targeted.
- c) Best efforts will be made to schedule the Allstar game on the last Saturday of the regular season
- d) Best efforts will be made to start the playoffs on the second week of June, allowing for approximately three full weeks of playoffs.
- e) The playoffs will finish before the 4th of July, generally on the last weekend of June.
- f) Each season a town will be designated to keep the official standings.
- g) Playoffs seeding is based on regular season finish based on win percentage. A tie game counts as a 1/2 a win for each team. A game that is not played does not get added to the standings.
- h) The playoff format (round robin, single elimination with bracket play) will be decided by the league commissioners before the start of the regular season.

9) The manager/coach may decide to use substitute players during the game or any part of the game if they do not have 9 players able to play or will fall below 9 players during a game. Those players must be registered in any of the recreational programs in the park districts/or villages. They must play an equal amount of time to the rest of the team in the field as well as bat within the batting order. Replacement players from younger league levels are preferred and can be used for any game. Replacement players may also be used from within the Minors league, but ONLY for regular season play, not post-season. Replacement players must wear the uniform of the team to which they are registered. Replacement players should not start the game ahead of roistered players and they should bat last.

a) Minors: Replacement players may play any position except pitcher. At no time should a replacement player play the same position for more than 2 innings in a game.

10) All games changes must be approved by your league representative.

11) Both teams must have at least 6 players including replacements to start the game. If they do not within 15 minutes of the scheduled start time, then the game is a forfeit. If during the course of a game play the number of available players drops below 6 then play must stop. If a team that has less than 9 players decides to stop playing, then the other team will be declared the winner. If a team plays with fewer than 9 players, then those missing positions in the batting order are not automatically an out. If a forfeit is declared, then allow the umpire to leave if he/she desires. If the managers want to have a practice game, then decide up front how long or how many innings will be played.

- a) It is up to the discretion and agreement of the managers in the presence of the umpire to start the game with shared players from the opposing team.

12) Players are to be given equal defensive playing time as much as possible. No player sits out a second inning until everyone sits out one inning with the exception of a pitcher pitching in consecutive innings.

- a) All players must play a minimum of 2 innings in an infield position (pitcher is an infielder), and 2 innings in the outfield or catcher position. This may not always work depending on the number of players a team has at a game. In the regular season there is no penalty, but league commissioner should be made aware of the violation and address it with the violating team. Lineup cards should be built for seven innings and follow the spirit of the rule. For the playoffs,

share lineup cards including by position and inning if a violation is noticed the error should be corrected.

13) Each team bats its full roster of available players including replacements. Players that show up after the game has started are placed at the end of the original batting order. Players that leave during the game are skipped in the batting order from then on without a penalty.

14) A regulation game shall consist of seven (6) innings. Games are typically scheduled with 2 or more hours between games. Teams must abide by the following game time considerations:

- a) At 1 hour and 40 minutes from game start time, the next new inning will be the last inning, regardless of whether it is the 6th inning or not. If play stops during the last inning due to a time limit, the outcome of the game is determined by the score at the last completed inning. There are no time restraints for Playoff or Championship Games.
- b) In a regular season game where the next game is scheduled to start 2 hours or more after the scheduled start of your game, your game ends automatically 10 minutes prior to the start of the next game (immediate play stop). Teams must immediately vacate the field and dugouts so the next team can get ready to play. Game outcome shall be determined by the score at the last completed inning.
- c) Playoff & championship games shall never revert back for scoring; always finish the inning in progress. Games which end in a tie refer to rule 35 regardless of game time limit. A playoff/championship game maintains rights to the field until conclusion, regardless of start time for any following game.

15) If there is no umpire to start the game, then the managers should play the game with volunteer umpires. The managers need to agree to the method (using fans, coaches, one coach or manager to be the umpire). The intent is to do everything possible to play the game at the scheduled time.

- a) If the umpire is not there at game time or later than 15 minutes, an incident report must be filled out and reported to your league commissioner.

16) Once the umpire takes control of the field, he/she is responsible for halting the game due to rain, lightning, darkness, time, or any other circumstances. The umpire's calls are final. There should be no questioning of an umpire on a judgment call. Questions about rules shall occur with the umpire and both managers present. All issues on the field must be resolved and will be considered final for purposes of that game. Any rule clarification required should be requested through an incident report. No games can be played under protest to the town or league commissioners. In the case of rain stopping the game, it is recommended that a rain delay of 20 minutes be used before the game is officially ended. In the case of lightning stopping a game, resumption of play cannot begin unless 20 minutes has elapsed from the last lightning or the all clear from a lightning detection system.

- a) The umpires are the representatives of the league or organization by which they have been assigned to a particular game, and as such are authorized and required to enforce rule that occur on the field.
- b) They have the power to order a player, coach, captain, or manager to do or omit to do any act which in their judgment is necessary to give force and effect to one or all of these rules and to inflict penalties as herein prescribed.
- c) The plate umpire shall have the authority to make decisions on any situation not specifically covered in the rules.
- d) When an injury occurs, the umpire must halt play immediately.

17) If the game is called for any reason after the start of the game before 4 full innings (3 1/2 if home team is ahead) then the game must be made up from the beginning. If the game is called at the end of a complete inning after 4 full innings (3 1/2 if the home team is ahead) then the game is considered complete even if it is a tie. If the game is called in the visiting half of the inning or during the home half of the inning and the home team is losing, then the score will revert back to the last completed full inning and the game will be considered complete even if it is a tie.

18) Only rain outs and games called by the umpire (before 4 full innings are completed) will be rescheduled. Rescheduling games due to lack of players or coaches is not allowed. Everything should be done to complete games on their scheduled date including using substitutes.

19) No alcohol, tobacco, or vape products shall be used by players, managers, coaches, fans or parents during any games or practices on the field, bench, stands or the surrounding area. PA only: All fields are tobacco and alcohol free 24/7, it is illegal for anyone on PPD or school property to use these products.

20) Abusive or foul language and / or conduct will be grounds for removal from the field for players, manager, coaches and/or fans.

21) Viewing Game Behind Screen

- a) No manager, coach, player, scorekeeper, or spectator is permitted to view the game from behind the backstop (i.e. directly behind home plate.)
- b) Limits for spectators and coaches shall start from the fence opening for each team. Batters are allowed to warm-up in a safe area behind the backstop.
- c) Umpire's parents may stand or sit behind the backstop.

22) Managers are responsible for keeping players, coaches, fans and parents under control. Managers cannot play in games. Only the manager, coaches and players can be in the dugout during the game. Managers must notify the other managers if they will be out of town and provide assistant manager numbers in case rain notification is needed.

23) Scorekeepers from both teams must be identified and must consult with each other to verify the score often during the game.

24) Scores must be reported to the league commissioner by the winning manager within 24 hours after the scheduled start of the game, or by the home team in the event of a tie.

25) Ejections – When practical, umpires are to give a warning to the offending person(s) for potential ejection.

If the situation does not improve then the umpire can eject the offending person(s) from the field. If the person leaves quietly then there will be a 1 game suspension for that person from attending the next scheduled game. If the person leaves by making a scene, then there will be a 3-game suspension for that person from attending the next 3 games. If the person charges the umpire or threatens the umpire, then the person will be suspended for the rest of the season. If the person does not leave the field when requested, then the umpire can call a forfeit against the offending team. The umpire will notify the league commissioner of all ejections immediately after the game. The town and league commissioners will interview some people from the game to determine the suspension period.

26) Metal spikes are not permitted - at practices or at games.

27) Managers need to share the batting order with opposing teams and must provide a copy of their lineup should an opposing team request it due to an in-game concern. During playoffs both teams must exchange full line ups prior to game start.

28) All players warming up a pitcher must wear a catcher's mask.

29) All offensive players must wear a batting helmet which includes a face mask while batting or running the bases.

30) All infield players, pitcher included, must wear a fielder's mask in line with NOCSAE certification. Catchers must wear a catcher's helmet, mask, chest protectors, and shin guards.

31) Base coaches under 18 yrs. old need to wear a batting helmet while on the field.

32) Contact / Sliding / Defensive Interference

- a) Contact/Sliding/Defensive interference are inherently "judgment" calls by the umpire so the only discussion with the umpire is rules interpretation.
- b) When the defensive player has the ball, it is the responsibility of the runner to avoid contact that affects safety. Specifically, if the runner does not slide, they need to not run into the defensive player. The runners are strongly suggested to slide. In the event contact is made during the act of sliding, the umpire is requested to be more lenient in their interpretation of this rule. If contact is made without a slide, the umpire should determine if it was incidental with an attempt to avoid contact or if the runner simply ran into the defensive player without an attempt at avoidance. The runner should be called out for contact made without effort to avoid it.
- c) When the defensive player does not have the ball, they have an obligation to leave the baseline and access to the bases clear. In the event contact occurs and the defensive player does not have the ball, this is considered defensive obstruction, and the runner should be considered safe at the base to which they are running. The catcher cannot impede the base runner attempting to score when she does not have the ball.

33) Contact with Base / Stealing

- a) Leadoffs are not permitted.
- b) Runners must have at least one foot in contact with the base they occupy until the pitched ball is hit, or crosses home plate.
- c) If a runner leaves earlier than this, the umpire will first warn the manager and if a second infraction occurs by the same team, play is stopped and the runner is out.
- d) Stealing shall not be permitted by the leading team once they are ahead by 10 or more runs.

34) Baserunning

- a) A baserunner may advance from 2nd to 3rd after a pitched ball (in other words, they can steal 3rd base).
- b) Overthrows by the catcher on an attempted steal will NOT result in advancement of the baserunner beyond the base they were advancing to.
- c) Overthrows by the catcher beyond the pitcher are NOT considered a live ball in Minors and baserunners can NOT advance.
- d) Under no circumstances will a baserunner be allowed to advance to home plate unless the batter puts a pitched ball into play or is hit by a pitch from the player pitcher not the coach pitcher.
- e) The ball remains live until the umpire calls "Time".
- f) After a ball is hit into fair territory by the batter and a defensive player's throw to the 1st baseman goes past the 1st baseman and into foul territory, the ball is dead and play shall stop with no advancement. This is the same for a force or any play at third base.
- g) Time will be called when the ball is in the possession of any fielder inside the 16 foot circle. At any field without a circle, it is the umpire's judgement as to the distance to the pitcher's plate (inside the circle). The umpire may see this area as large as inside the basepaths, it is the umpire's judgement.
- h) Runners that have crossed the halfway point between two (2) bases will be awarded the next base when time is called and no play is made on a runner, umpire judgement.
- i) Runners that have not reached the halfway point will be returned to the previous base, based on umpire judgement.

35) Infield fly – Minors does not have infield fly.

36) Run Limits

A team may only score four (5) runs per inning.

- a) There is no continuation of play, once the run max per inning is hit, the inning is over.

37) Tie game rule. If weather and game time limit rules permit, a complete game which ends in a tie shall go to international tie breaker rules. The last player out shall start the inning on second. Each batter starts with a 1-1 count. 3 outs played as normal, and unlimited runs.

38) A **mercy rule** will be enforced if a team has the following advantage as follows:

- a) 11 or more runs after the completion of the at the 4th inning
- b) 6 or more runs after the completion of the 5th inning

39) If a **courtesy runner** is requested to the umpire, then the player that made the last out will run. If that person is not available, then the person making the previous out will run. Courtesy runners are only permitted for a player who is catcher or pitcher in the coming inning, or a player with an injury.

40) The pitcher will be replaced if she hits 3 batters with a pitch during an inning. She will be replaced for the rest of the game if she hits a 4th batter with a pitch during a later inning of the game.

41) There are no Intentional walks.

42) Pitchers will be able to pitch a **maximum of 2 innings** per game. One pitch constitutes an inning for pitchers (not any other position). A pitcher may be taken out of a game and returned as long as the total number of innings pitched is 2 innings or less. If this is exceeded and is not detected until sometime after the first pitch to a batter, then the pitcher must be removed immediately from pitching and the playing field for that inning and substituted by someone in a defensive position on the field. The defensive team will play the field for that inning with 1 less position player. All pitches already pitched by the offending pitcher and resulting plays will count as valid pitches and valid plays.

43) Batter Strike Zone

- a) The strike zone is from the batter's highest shoulder to the knee, and over home plate.
- b) A pitched ball dropping before or on home plate is to be called a ball.
- c) We encourage all coaches to teach the players to swing to put the ball into play unless the ball is clearly out of the strike zone.

44) Batters need to try to avoid being hit by a pitch (including rolling balls or balls which have already bounced off the ground). Bases awarded are up to the discretion of umpire.

45) In the Minor League, any batter reaching 4 balls during an at-bat will have a coach from the batting team pitch to the batter.

- a) The number of strikes prior to ball four remain.
- b) Coaches are to start no more than one foot in front of the rubber.
- c) The pitcher must play defense behind the coach on the coach's glove side.
- d) The umpire will call strikes while the coach is pitching.
- e) The at bat ends for the batter on strike three or when the ball is hit in play.

Example: batter has a count of 3 and 1. Pitcher throws ball four. Coach comes in to pitch. First pitch thrown batter watches it and ump calls it a strike. There are now two strikes. Next pitch fouled off, still two strikes. Next pitch swing and miss, strike three at bat over.

46) Batters throwing a bat the first time in a game will be issued a warning. If the same batter throws a bat again in the game, the batter will be called out.

47) The IHSA has an entire section devoted to pitching. This serves as a high-level summary. Pitchers must start their motion with their pivot foot on the pitchers' plate. A step back prior to separation of hands is not necessary but permitted, as is rocking or crouching. They can take one step forward in the process of using a windmill motion to deliver the pitch. If the pitcher pushes off and leaves the ground in their motion, the ball must be pitched (ball has left the pitcher's fingers) prior to the pivot foot replanting on the ground. Crow Hopping is illegal. Illegal pitches are called by the umpire and are a delayed dead ball. The offensive team can take the result of the pitch or a ball to the batter's count. It is up to the manager to instruct and monitor his/her pitchers in the proper method of pitching.

48) If a batter is injured during batting and cannot continue, then the next batter will assume the existing count without an out being declared.

49) Jewelry

- a) It is not recommended and is up to the manager, coach or umpires' discretion at the games.

50) Shirts/Jerseys should be tucked in.

51) Pitching Distance - 32' from the back tip of the plate to the front edge of the pitching rubber. 16' circle radius.

52) Base Distance 60' apart

53) Visits to Pitcher The pitcher must be removed from pitching anytime she is visited for the second time by someone from the bench during an inning. It is recommended to keep trips to the pitcher at sixty seconds or less. An injury to the pitcher timeout (approved by the umpire) would not count toward this total.

54) Any legal, 12" official softball bat can be used for games or practice. Legal bats must bear either the ASA 2002 or 2004 or the USA Softball All Games Certification Marks. Additionally, the bats should not have been tampered with and not be listed on the USA Softball's Non-Approved Bats with Certification Marks list at www.usasoftball.com. Wooden bats may be used and do not need to have an official seal on them as long as the barrel is less than 2 1/4 inches in diameter. The bat must be for softball, not baseball.

55) Minor will use an 11" softball.

56) Pitchers are allowed to warm up with 5 pitches at the start of the inning. If a pitcher is substituted for during an inning, the new pitcher is allowed 5 warm up pitches before they begin pitching to a batter.

57) A fake bunt is an illegal act and results in an immediate out and a dead ball. If a player squares to bunt they can pull their bat back to try to take a ball or they can attempt to make contact by bunting the ball. Any attempt to chop or change the bunt to a swing is considered an illegal act for purposes of this rule and the batter will be out.

58) Slap hitting is not allowed.

59) Outfielders

- a) Three (3) outfielders must begin at the start of any pitch on the outfield grass (even at Melas Park).
- b) Under no circumstances can an outfielder cover 2nd base for a force.

Reminder for any item not mentioned above, follow IHSA rules.

Example for field set up below:

