



2026 GIRLS SOFTBALL 8U RULES AND REGULATIONS

League Administration

The Johnston County Athletic Association shall administer the league and reserves the right to make any changes they deem necessary.

Official Tar Heel Softball Rules, Inc. will apply with the following modifications

Eligibility

This program is for girls ages 7–8 as of January 1, 2026. Players must pay their entry fees, turn in a completed application and give the recreation department a copy of a birth certificate before participating in organized practices or games.

Equipment

- A. Molded rubber cleats or tennis shoes are recommended for all players. Metal cleats and barefoot are not permitted.
 - B. All batters and base runners must wear batting helmets with facemasks
 - C. Each player must wear a glove in the field.
 - D. Each player must play in her uniform.
 - E. Catchers must wear equipment consisting of a helmet, facemask, shin guards and chest protector.
 - F. All players must wear a fielder's protective mask while playing an infield position.
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Playing Rules

- A. Ten players constitute a team, but a team may begin with eight players until additional players arrive.
1. Ten players will play defensive, 6 infielders and 4 outfielders. The outfield will be defined as 10' behind the base path.
 2. All outfielders must be positioned at a similar radius.
- B. Each team will submit a lineup to the press box ten minutes before their scheduled game time.
- C. One umpire will be used for each game and the umpire must call the game from behind home plate.
- D. Each game will consist of six innings or a one hour and fifteen-minute time limit on all games with no inning beginning after one hour and ten minutes. Games will play until the inning has been completed; there will be no drop-dead play.
- E. An inning consists of five runs or 3 outs, whichever comes first.
- F. Consecutive batting order – Each coach will make up a batting order consisting of all members of the team that are present for the game. Players will bat in this order throughout the game. Any player arriving after the game has started must be placed at the end of the batting order.
- G. A maximum of **FIVE** pitches will be thrown to each batter. If a player does not hit the ball after the maximum pitches thrown or if she swings and misses three times, the player is out. There will be no limit of number of foul balls on the 5th pitch or 3rd swing.
- H. A coach will throw the pitches from a distance of 35 feet. Teams will use an ASA or NFHS regulation 11" softball.
- I. Bunting is not permitted. If in the judgment of the umpire, a player has attempted an intentional bunt, the ball is immediately called a foul ball and it counts as a strike.
- J. The defensive pitcher must have both feet inside the pitching circle until the batter makes contact with the ball.
- K. The Adult pitcher **MUST** leave the field, 1st or 3rd base line, when the ball is put in play.
- L. Mandatory base runner for the catcher with two outs.
- M. If a batted ball hits the pitcher (coach), the ball is dead. If the pitcher catches a line drive in self-defense or is hit by a batted ball, the ball is dead. The batter is then placed on first base and other runners advance only if forced but, if in the opinion of the umpire the pitcher interferes with the batted ball, the batter is out.

- N. There is no stealing and the base runner may not leave the base until the ball is hit. If a runner leaves the base before the ball is hit, then the runner is declared out. (DELAYED DEAD BALL)
- O. TarHeel Leagues Inc., specific rule; there is no overthrow rule. The lead runner must be contained for play to stop.
- P. Action will be stopped after each play has been completed. The ball will be called a dead ball when the defense has contained the front runner. A runner may advance, at her own risk, when the ball is being thrown from the outfield to the infield.
- Q. Coaches must position their infielders so they will not obstruct the baselines. The base runner is entitled to the baseline and proper positioning will minimize obstruction calls.
- R. On balls hit to the outfield, where the ball is being returned to the infield, and on infield hits, players should be taught to make a defensive play in the infield where reasonable opportunity exists.
- S. THERE WILL BE NO SLINGING OF THE BAT! The following penalties will be enforced by the umpires and coaches:
1. First Time – player warning
 2. Second Time – player will be called out.
 3. Third Time – player will be called out and ejected from the game.
- T. Mandatory Playing Rule: Players must play defense in every other inning. A player may not sit out two consecutive innings on defense. All players must bat in the consecutive batting order.
- U. CONDUCT – Team personnel and spectators are expected to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner for a youth recreational sporting event. Any team personnel are subject for removal from the game by the umpire and/or the facilitator for unsportsmanlike conduct, profanity or any other objectionable behavior.
- V. Team personnel must clean up their respective dugout before leaving each game.
- W. Team personnel and umpires shall not use tobacco or tobacco-like products on or in the vicinity of the playing field. If the field is at a school facility, school policy states that no tobacco products are allowed on campus.
- X. SPORTSMANSHIP – All players and coaches are to demonstrate good sportsmanship at all times. Lining up at the end of the game to shake hands with the other team is mandatory and only a small token of sportsmanship. Remember to demonstrate good sportsmanship from the beginning to the end.



2026 GIRLS SOFTBALL

10U/12U/16U RULES AND REGULATIONS

League Administration

The Johnston County Athletic Association shall administer the league and reserves the right to make any changes they deem necessary.

- **Official Tar Heel Softball Rules, INC will apply with the following modifications
- **Rules not specifically covered by the Tar Heel Leagues, Inc, will revert to the NFHS Rules for Fastpitch Softball.

General Notes

- A. Age Divisions: 10U, 12U, & 16U
- B. Cut-off Date: January 1, 2026.
- C. Birth Certificates are required for each player. It will be each area's responsibility to have a copy of each participant on file.
- D. Umpires: Each site will be responsible for booking and paying for the umpires to call games at their site. There shall be 2 umpires booked for each game. If for some unforeseen reason, only 1 umpire arrives for the ball game, the umpire MUST call the game from behind the plate. One umpire for 10U.
- E. Scorekeepers: Communities should have scorekeepers or supervisors who will be responsible for the field supervision, time limits, run limits, mandatory playing rule and scorekeeping. The score will be displayed if able. If an official scorekeeper is not present, the home team is responsible for keeping the official scorebook. If the home team has to provide the scorekeeper, the scorekeeper should sit behind the fence at home plate if possible.
- F. Farm Team Procedures: in order to prevent forfeits, a farm team system may be used for the 10U, 12U & 16U divisions. If a team does not have enough players to field a team, a coach may call their assigned farm league team coach for a list of eligible players. Farm

- C. Run Rule: The game will be declared a complete game when the home team is leading by 10 runs after 3 ½ innings of play in the 10U & 12U age groups, and 4 ½ innings in the 16U age group. The bottom half of the inning must be played if the visiting team accumulates the ten-run margin.
- D. Maximum Runs/Inning: In the 10U league, the offensive team will bat until 5 runs have been scored or 3 outs have been recorded, whichever comes first. In the 12U league, the offensive team will bat until 7 runs have been scored or 3 outs have been recorded, whichever comes first. 16U unlimited scoring.
- E. Grace Periods: a 10-minute grace period will be given for the first game of the day only. All other games will start at the official game time.

Playing Rules & Regulations

- A. All age groups will use 60 ft bases.
- B. Teams will be allowed to start a game with eight players. If a team cannot field at least eight players, they will lose by forfeit. If additional players, arrive after the game has begun, teams may put their 9th or 10th (10 & under only) player in the field and place late players at the end of the continuous batting order. If, for any reason, a team drops below eight players, they will automatically forfeit.
- C. Dropped Third Strike

1. 10U & 12U:	May not advance
2. 16U	May advance if:
	a. Less than two outs & 1st base is NOT occupied
	b. There are two outs.
- D. Continuous Batting Order: each coach shall make a batting order consisting of all members of the team that are present for the game. Players will bat in this order throughout the game.
 1. Lineups must be turned into the official scorekeeper at least 10 minutes prior to the scheduled game time.
 2. All pitching changes must be reported to the official scorekeeper.
 3. All players must play in every other defensive inning. No player may sit out two consecutive innings.
 4. Coaches should report possible violations of the mandatory playing rule to their area B.O.D. A penalty will be issued within 24 hours of infraction.
 5. The mandatory playing rule may only be waived for disciplinary reasons or injury. (Players injured or being disciplined must be reported to and approved by the appropriate B.O.D. for that area.)
 6. If a player gets injured or has to leave the game, their batting position will be skipped and no out will be recorded. However, if a player cannot bat, they will not be allowed to reenter the game.

Note: If a player is ejected from the game, an out will be recorded each time their batting position comes up.

- E. Free substitution is allowed for all players throughout the game, pitchers may re-enter once per inning.
- F. Infield Fly Rule
 - 1. 10U No infield fly rule.
 - 2. 12U & 16U Infield fly rule will apply.
- G. Stealing
 - 1. 10U May steal when the ball crosses home plate. May not steal home.
 - 2. 12U & 16U May steal any base when the ball leaves the pitcher's hand.

Note: 10U Only: The runner may not advance more than one base during a steal attempt. If the runner is stealing second or third and there is an errant throw or catch and the ball gets by the fielder, the runner MAY NOT advance any further.

- H. Speed up Rules:
 - 1. Mandatory runner for the catcher with 2 outs.
 - 2. Optional runner for the pitcher and/or catcher with less than 2 outs.
 - 3. Runner must be the person who made the last out.
 - 4. A coach must warm up the pitcher until the catcher is ready. Once the catcher is ready, the pitcher will receive two additional pitches.
- I. Sliding Rule: a base runner, advancing to any base, must attempt to avoid a collision if the defensive player has possession of the ball or is about to catch a thrown ball. If the base runner does not attempt to avoid a collision and makes aggressive contact with the defensive player, she is automatically declared out and will be ejected from the game if deemed flagrant.

Note: This is a judgment call by the umpire and cannot be protested.

Pitching Rules & Regulations

- A. Pitching Distances
 - 1. 10U 35 feet
 - 2. 12U 40 feet
 - 3. 16U 43 feet
- B. Pitching Regulations
 - 1. 10U & 12U No pitcher may pitch more than 4 innings per game.

2. 16U No pitcher may pitch more than 5 innings per game.

3. One pitch constitutes an inning.

C. Pitcher's Delivery Clarification (directly from NFHS rule book):

1. Prior to starting the delivery (pitch), the pitcher shall take a position with the pivot foot on or partially on the top surface of the pitcher's plate and the non-pivot foot in contact with or behind the pitcher's plate. Both feet must be on the ground within or partially within the 24-inch length of the pitcher's plate.
2. The pitch starts when one hand is taken off the ball or the pitcher makes any motion that is part of the windup after the hands have been brought together.
3. Once the hands are brought together and are in motion, the pitcher shall not take more than one step which must be forward, toward the batter and simultaneous with the delivery. Any step backward shall begin before the hands come together. The step backward may end before or after the hands come together.

Protests & Conduct

A. Protest: a coach may not protest a judgment call. The only allowable protests are those involving eligible players or rule misinterpretation.

B. Protest Procedures

1. Notify the umpires and official scorekeeper at the point of infraction.
2. Continue the game under protest.
3. All protests must be reported to the League President within 24 hours of occurrence. Then, protests should be submitted in writing to the League President within 96 hours of the game start time. Attach a check for \$50.00 for the protest fee: Payable to Johnston County Athletic Association, check will be returned if the protest is upheld. The protest committee will render a decision within 24 hours of receiving the protest.

C. Conduct: Players, coaches and spectators are expected to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner for a youth recreational sporting event. Any player, coach or spectator is subject for removal from the game by the official for unsportsmanlike conduct, profanity, or other objectionable behavior. Any coach, player or spectator ejected from the game must leave the facility immediately and will be suspended for the next two games. A second ejection will automatically result in a suspension for the remainder of the season.

Special Rules for 10U League Only

A. In order to play a more competitive game, the hitter will receive pitches from the player pitcher until 4 balls have been called by the umpire, the batter has struck out, or the

batter puts the ball into play, whichever comes first. The coach will then step in and pitch the remaining strikes that batter has left (such as) the batter has no strikes, then the coach will pitch 3 pitches, if the batter has 2 strikes, then the coach will pitch 1 pitch. The batter CAN NOT RECEIVE A BASE ON BALLS, BUT CAN STRIKE OUT. The umpire will not be behind the plate for the coach pitches. There must be an umpire behind the plate during the player pitcher pitches to make a call on the pitches.

- B. If at anytime a batter is hit by a pitch she may take first base. If a coach-pitcher hits a batter, the batter will remain at bat. The pitch does count as a pitch thrown.
- C. Stealing may only take place when the player-pitcher is throwing. A runner may not steal a base when the coach-pitcher is throwing.
- D. There is no overthrow rule.
- E. A batter may not at anytime receive a base on balls.
- F. A coach may not stand behind the catcher.
- G. No bunting on coach pitches.
- H. Ten players constitute a team, but a team may begin with eight players until additional players arrive.
 - 1. Ten players will play defensive, 6 infielders and 4 outfielders. The outfield will be defined as 10' behind the base path.
 - 2. All outfields must be positioned at a similar radius.