

**NFHS Softball rules apply with the following exceptions**

- A. A player's grade is their grade during the 2025-2026 school year.
- B. FIELD DIMENSIONS
  - a. Pitching Distance --- 43ft.
  - b. Base Distance --- 60ft --- 84' 10" from home plate to second base and first base to third base.
  - c. There will be an 8ft radius circle around the pitcher's plate.
- C. A 12" ASA or NFHS approved Fast Pitch Softball will be used.
- D. GAME LENGTH --- 5 innings
- E. TIME LIMIT --- One Hour and Thirty minutes (1:30)
  - a. If an inning ends prior to the time limit, next inning will be played in full.
- F. Three Outs or Five (5) runs constitute an inning.
- G. RUN RULE --- See General Rule #14
- H. COMPLETED GAME
  - a. If the game is called due to bad weather conditions, it will be considered a completed game after 45 minutes or four complete innings.
  - b. The final score of this completed game is determined by reverting to the last completed inning. If the score is tied, the game will be recorded as a tie game.
  - c. If the game is not complete the game will be replayed from the start.
  - d. Game Rescheduling should follow **General Rule #8**.
  - e. Tie-Game – If a regular season game ends in a tie after regulation play or time limit, then the game will be over and marked down for standings as a tie. If a tournament game is tied at the end of regulation play or time limit, the game will continue into extra innings until there is a winner. These extra inning rules are listed within the General Rule #24, World Series Tournament Rules.
  - f. Weather will be monitored by a third party connected to each hometown, in most cases a field supervisor.
    - 1. The league has agreed on resources for the third party to use while monitoring the weather and those are to be used to determine if play continues or stops.
    - 2. If inclement weather becomes a problem, the third party will communicate with the field umpires.
    - 3. If play needs to be suspended, it will be suspended for 30-minutes. After 30 minutes conditions will be evaluated by the third party. If play cannot continue or is suspended a second time after play continues, the above rules for a completed game will be used to determine if the game is completed or needs to be rescheduled.
- I. Players may wear steel cleats in the 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> Grade Girls Group.
- J. PLAYER/COACH EJECTION
  - a. Any coach or player ejection needs to be reported to their Town Rep and the current League President.
  - b. If a coach or player is ejected in Game #1 of their doubleheader, they are allowed to return in Game #2 of that same doubleheader.

## K. PLAYER SUBSTITUTION

- a. 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> Grade Girls teams have the choice of using either Free Substitution or Player Re-Entry for offense and defense during league games --- During tournament games, 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> Grade Girls teams will use the same Player Substitution Rules as the 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Girls Group.
- b. FREE SUBSTITUTION
  1. Every player is placed into a batting line up for the entire game.
    - i. Example --- If a team has 13 players at the game, all 13 players will be in the batting line-up the entire game.
  2. Defensively players can be moved from position to position by the team's coaches without notifying the official scorekeeper.
  3. Teams using Free Substitution only need to report Pitching Changes to the Home Player Umpire and the Official Scorekeeper.
- c. PLAYER RE-ENTRY
  1. Teams using Player Re-Entry for player substitutions will bat either 9 players or 10 players (Extra Hitter) in their original batting line-up.
    - i. The remaining players, after the original 9 or 10 players, will be considered subs for the entire game.
  2. Any starting player in the team's original game batting line-up may be removed and re-entered one time --- provided that player occupies his original batting position when he is re-entered back into the game.
  3. The starting player who was removed from the game, MAY NOT re-enter the game in a batting position of a substitute player.
  4. Teams using Player Re-Entry MUST report all player substitutions to the Home Plate Umpire and the Official Scorekeeper.
  5. If a team fails to complete a game with all 10 batters – 9 batters plus the EH -- due to an ejected player, injury, etc, an automatic out will be taken for any missing batter from the original batting lineup.
- d. SUBSTITUTING A PITCHER
  1. There is NO Limit on the number of innings any one pitcher can pitch in a game.
  2. The innings pitched in the game do not need to be consecutive innings.
  3. If the pitcher leaves the game and is placed in a defensive position, the pitcher may return to pitch.
  4. If the pitcher leaves the game and is placed on the bench, the pitcher can return to the game but cannot pitch.
  5. Any team coach is limited to two (2) visits to the pitcher's mound area per inning.
    - i. On the second visit, the pitcher must be removed from the pitcher's circle.
- e. EXTRA HITTER (EH)
  1. Teams using Player Re-Entry to substitute their players, may use an Extra Hitter (EH) as a 10<sup>th</sup> batter in their line-up --- Teams using Free Substitution WILL NOT use an EH, because all of their players are already placed into a batting line-up.
  2. Teams using the Extra Hitter (EH) will use the EH – 10 batters -- for the entire game.
  3. Teams using the Extra Hitter (EH) will make note of that player on their original batting line-up.
  4. If all of the starting line-up bats, any 9 in batting order may play defense. Defensive positions may be changed, but the batting order must remain the same.

## L. OFFENSIVE RULES

- a. All Base Runners can steal any base, including home.
- b. The Batter can run on a third strike if the catcher drops the ball and first base is not occupied.
  1. If there are two (2) outs and first base is occupied, the batter may also run if the catcher drops ball.
- c. SOFTBALL -- LOOK BACK RULE
  1. The look-back rule will be in effect when the ball is live, the batter-runner has touched first base or has been declared out and the pitcher has the possession of the ball within the pitchers circle.
  2. The runner may stop once, but then must immediately return to the base or attempt to advance to the next base.
    - a. The batter-runner, after completing a turn at bat and while the pitcher has the ball within the pitching circle – including base on balls or a dropped third strike – can round first base toward second base, may stop, but then must return to first base or attempt to advance to second base.
    - b. PENALTY – The ball is dead. “No Pitch” is declared and the runner is out. If two runners or more are off their bases, when one is called out (due to the look-ball rule), the ball is dead and the other runners are returned to the last base touched – only one runner may be called out.
    - c. EXCEPTION – The runner will not be declared out if a play is made on another runner (a fake throw is considered a play), or the pitcher no longer has possession of the ball within the pitching circle or if the pitcher releases the ball on a pitch to the batter.
- d. BAT RULE -- All Softball bats are allowed, as long as there are no cracks or dents.
- e. COURTESY RUNNER(S)
  1. 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> Grade Girls teams can use a Courtesy Runner.
  2. 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> Grade Girls teams will follow the NFHS Courtesy Runner Rule.
  3. At any time, the team at bat may use courtesy runners for the pitcher and/or the catcher.
  4. The same individual courtesy runner may not be used for both positions (pitcher and catcher) during the game.
  5. Neither the pitcher nor the catcher will be required to leave the game under such circumstances.
  6. In the Flint Hill League – A Courtesy Runner MUST be the last out committed.
  7. A player may not run as a courtesy runner for the pitcher or the catcher and then be used as a substitute for another player in that half inning.
    - i. If an injury, illness or ejection occurs and no other runners are available, the courtesy runner may be used as a substitute.
  8. The official scorekeeper shall record each courtesy runner’s participation and also announce it to the opposing team.
  9. A player who violates the courtesy-runner rule is considered to be an illegal substitute.
    - i. Should an injury, illness or ejection occur to the courtesy runner, another courtesy runner may run for the pitcher or catcher.
  10. In the event the offensive team bats around, the pitcher and/or catcher who had a courtesy runner inserted on their behalf may bat in their normal position in the batting order.
- f. Chinstraps – optional for 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> Grade Girls

## M. PITCHING GUIDELINES

- a. The pitcher shall take a position with the pivot foot in contact with the pitcher's plate and the non-pivot foot in contact with or behind the pitcher's plate.
- b. The pitch starts when the pitcher's hands separate after they have come together, the hands may be motionless or moving, while the pivot foot is in contact with the pitcher's plate.
- c. Any step back with the non-pivot foot must begin before the start of the pitch. Once the pitch has started (the hands separate), the pitcher shall not take more than one step, which must be forward, toward the batter and simultaneous with the delivery.
- d. The pivot foot may remain in contact with or may push off and drag away from the pitching plate prior to the front foot touching the ground, as long as the pivot foot remains in contact with the ground and within the pitcher's plate.
- e. If a hole has been created in front of the pitcher's plate, the pivot foot may be no higher than the level plane of the ground.
- f. Pushing off with the pivot foot from other than the pitcher's plate is an **Illegal Pitch**.
- g. **Illegal Pitch**
  1. An Illegal Pitch is a pitch that violates the Pitching Rules.
  2. The signal for an Illegal Pitch by the umpire is a Delayed Dead Ball Signal.
  3. The illegal pitch can be hit by the batter.
    - a. If the Illegal Pitch is hit by the batter and the batter reaches first base or beyond the illegal pitch is nullified. All action stands and the illegal pitch is canceled.
  4. If the Illegal Pitch is hit by the batter and the batter does not reach first base safely or if any runner fails to advance at least one base, the coach of the team at bat shall have the option of the result of the play or the penalty of the illegal pitch.
  5. If the batter is hit by the illegal pitch out of the strike zone, the batter is awarded first base and the base runners are advanced if forced.
  6. First Illegal Pitch Offense Per Pitcher is a Warning.
  7. **Illegal Pitch PENALTY** (after the Warning) - A ball is awarded to the batter

## N. DEFENSIVE RULES

- a. Teams play with nine (9) defensive players
- b. **MINIMUM DEFENSIVE PLAYING TIME**
  1. All players must play Five (5) innings of defense per double header.
  2. Failure to do so will result in an automatic out at the start of the next inning.
- c. The Infield Fly Rule applies in the 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> Grade Girls Group.
- d. If a team is playing with less than 9 players, the team must field a player in the pitcher and catcher positions.
- e. Dead Ball Appeal --- **See General Rule #16**

O. AUTOMATIC OUTS --- LESS THAN NINE PLAYERS

- a. A team MUST start their game with seven (7) players.
- b. If a team is playing with less than 9 players, the team must field a player in the pitcher and catcher positions.
- c. If a team starts their game with less than nine (9) players - automatic outs could be applied in regular season games.
  1. If a team starts with eight (8) players --- the team could take one (1) automatic out.
  2. If a team starts with seven (7) players --- the team could take two (2) automatic outs.
  3. The team can place their automatic out(s) anywhere in the original batting order.
- d. At the pre-game conference, both team coaches will decide if Automatic Outs will be used for the entire game.
  1. If both coaches agree – then Automatic Outs will be used for the entire game.
  2. If one coach disagrees or both coaches disagree – then Automatic Outs will be used for the entire game, based on the above rules.
  3. This is a game-to-game decision.