**OFFICIAL RULES - METROWEST GIRLS SOFTBALL LEAGUE**
MINORS DIVISION
Grades 3 and 4 - 2018 Season
Last Updated: March 14, 2018

If rules are not specifically covered, the rules of the USA Softball shall govern play.

| Rule # | Rule | Explanation |
|---|---|---|
| C 1 | Pitching Distance | 35 feet |
| **C 4** | **Pitching Limit** | **3 innings per pitcher** |
| D 5 | Ball | 11" FLEXI Softball |
| E 5 | Dropped 3rd Strike | Batter does NOT advance to 1B |
| E 6 | Infield Fly Rule | Infield Fly is NOT in effect |
| E 7 | Bunting | Allowed only once per half inning |
| | Slashing | Is NOT allowed |
| E 9<br><br>E 8 | Stealing | *Stealing 2nd base and/or home plate are prohibited.*<br>***Stealing 3rd base is allowed upon pitcher's release*** |
| E 11 | Bunting/Stealing Run Limit | Bunting and stealing are NOT allowed when the team at bat is ahead by 8 or more runs. Runners are only allowed to advance on a batted ball. |
| F 1 | Inning Run Limit | 4 per half inning |
| F 2 | Inning Run Limit Exception | If the team at bat is behind by 8 or more runs in any inning and there are fewer than 3 outs, they will be allowed to continue to score runs in that inning until their score is within 8 runs of the other team. This allows them to exceed the 4 run per inning rule prior to the last inning of the game. |
| F 3 | Final Inning | *Hard stop @1-hr./30-minutes* |
| F 4 | Mercy Rule | 15 or more runs after team that's behind has batted 4 times |

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A. Scheduling

1. A league representative should be consulted to confirm postponement or rescheduling of a game (there are **no** make ups games for **fall softball**).
2. The visiting coach and the umpire must be notified at least 2 hours prior to game time if a game is to be postponed due to weather conditions.
3. The umpire will use his/her discretion in deciding if a game is to be postponed due to weather conditions at the beginning of or during the game.
4. Games must be stopped immediately upon sighting of lightning or upon hearing thunder. Fields must be cleared for at least 30 minutes AFTER the last time thunder is heard or lightning is seen.
5. ***Each game is 6 innings***.
6. There will be a hard stop (game over) at 1-hour, 30-minutes (player up to bat may finish her at bat if game is still in progress).
7. Games may end in a tie after 6 innings or at 1-hour, 30-minutes.

B. Players

1. *Each team will play up to 10 players in the field at a time, but 4 players must start in the outfield upon the pitch.*
2. There will be no substitutions allowed using players from higher divisions. Registered players from the same town, but different teams (including 2nd graders), may be used to play a game only as a last effort to get enough players to prevent forfeiting a game.
3. Added players must be placed at the end of the batting order and regular team players must get their first choice of field position.
4. Added players are not allowed to pitch.
5. Coaches should do everything they can to play the game as scheduled even if they are short-handed. If one team is short-handed the opposing team is strongly encouraged to send players to the short-handed team to increase opportunities for balanced play and playing time for players.
6. A team expecting to have fewer than 7 players is obligated to contact the opposing coach at least 24 hours before game time to reschedule the game.
7. All players will be included in a continuous batting order. The initial batting order reflects those players ready to play at game time. Late arrivals must be placed at the end of the batting order, not inserted in the middle of the line-up as they arrive. If an injured player in the continuous batting order is unable to play she will be skipped in the order and the opposing team will not get an automatic out.
8. Each player must play 2 complete innings in the field unless the coach has a valid reason for not playing her.
9. Free defensive substitution rules are in effect.
10. Defensively a coach will position players in the following universally accepted infield positions: pitcher, catcher, first base, second base, third base

and shortstop. Additional defensive players are outfielders. All outfielders must start each pitch with both feet on the outfield grass

C. Pitching

1. *The pitcher's plate will be 35 feet from the apex (point) of the plate to the front of the pitcher's plate. To ensure the safety of the pitcher, the pitcher is not allowed to pitch from less than 35 feet. The pitcher's feet must always start from the pitcher's plate and the first step MUST be forward.*
2. Balls and strikes will be called.
3. **ANY player can be re-inserted as a pitcher** during a game if she hasn't pitched her maximum 3 innings.
4. One pitch constitutes an inning pitched.
5. If a pitcher gets to **3 balls** on a batter, a coach from the team that is batting will come in to finish that batter's at bat. (The number of strikes on the batter carries over to the new pitcher).
6. Every at bat will end with a *hit* or a *strike out*.
7. Three strikes will constitute an out.
8. Batters are not allowed to walk. This is an attempt to speed up the game and prevent multiple walks. **A ball will be declared to any batter that is hit by a pitch (CONSISTENT WITH HBP by rolling pitch - See Section E -Game Rules - Item #16).** However, a batter will be awarded a walk if injured, or fears injury, upon the discretion of the umpire and coaches.

D. Equipment & Field of Play

1. The bases will be 60 feet apart.
2. Double safety base is required at 1st base.
3. Batting helmets with face masks are mandatory for batters, base runners and players waiting on deck.
4. Throat protectors, shin guards, chest protectors, and catcher's helmets with masks are required for catchers.
5. *Eleven-inch FLEXI softballs will be used.*
6. All bats must visibly display an ASA approval stamp.
7.








E. Game Rules

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1. *Each team is allowed to have coaches on the field during the game to provide fielding instruction. The coach may not interfere with the play. This should be weaned as much as possible during the second half of the season.*
2. The home team score book shall govern the score of the game.
3. *The look back rule is in effect.* When a pitcher has the ball within a 8-foot radius around the pitcher's rubber, the base runner is obligated to proceed in either direction to a base. Play freezes when the pitcher has control of the ball. Runners in between bases must go to the closest base.
4. *Any tied games (at the end of 1-hour, 30-minutes or 6 innings) are declared ties.*
5. **A courtesy runner will be encouraged for the catcher** with 1 or more outs to allow for equipment change. The courtesy runner will be the latest recorded out.
6. *A dropped 3rd strike by a catcher is a strike and an out.*
7. *The infield fly rule is not in effect.*
8. *Bunting is permitted but only once per half inning.*
9. *Stealing 3rd base is allowed upon the pitchers release*
10. *Stealing 2nd base and/or home plate are prohibited.*
11. *Base runners may only proceed home via a hit **or by tagging up**.*
12. Bunting and stealing are NOT allowed when the team at bat is ahead by 8 or more runs.
13. *If a thrown ball hits a base runner, that runner is safe.*
14. Runners are allowed to tag up on fair and foul balls.
15. *USA Softball umpires will be used for all league games.*
16. Batters hit by a pitch (HBP) will be awarded first base. *However, batters must make an effort to avoid a ball that is errantly thrown which rolls to the plate. If, in the umpire's estimation, the batter does not make an effort to avoid being hit by a rolling pitch she will NOT be awarded a base and the pitch will count as a ball.*

F. Run Limits

1. There is a 4 run per inning rule. Once a team has scored 4 runs the half inning will be terminated regardless of the number of outs.
2. If the team at bat is behind by 8 or more runs in any inning and there are fewer than 3 outs, they will be allowed to continue to score runs in that inning until their score is within 8 runs of the other team. This allows them to exceed the 5 run per inning rule prior to the last inning of the game.
3. There are no run limits in the last inning of the game (there is no need to with the 1-hour, 30-minute time limit)

G. Safety Rules

1. All players must remove ALL jewelry to be eligible to play. Taping over earrings is not allowed.
2. Face masks are strongly encouraged for infielders, especially Pitchers, first base and third base. Catchers must wear full protective gear plus they must have a throat guard on their catchers mask/helmet. The use of mouth guards is also encouraged for those in the field.
3. A batter that throws the bat will be given a warning (the umpire will inform the coaches and the player of the warning). The second time *any* batter throws the bat the player will be called out.
4. If the defensive player blocks the base path without possession of the ball, the runner will be safe. The defensive player is not allowed to stand on or straddle the base path, a base or home plate unless they have possession of the ball.
5. USA rule on avoiding collisions states:
   *i.* In an effort to prevent injury and protect a defensive player attempting to make a play on a runner, a runner must be called out when they remain on their feet and crash into a defensive player who is holding the ball and waiting to apply a tag. To prevent the out ruling, the runner may slide, jump over the defender holding the ball, go around the defender or return to the previous base touched.