

MIDDLE ESSEX

Summer 2022 Softball Rules

RULES:

The current rules of USA Softball are in effect with the following notes, exceptions and highlights.

- Time limit --- No new inning may begin after 1 hour and 45 minutes. If the game is tied, the international tie- breaker rule will be put into effect in the next inning after the time limit has expired. {Coaches are not allowed to waive this rule... or any other rule...for that matter}
- Any game that plays to the time limit will be considered an official game regardless of the number of innings. If the home team doesn't get to bat at the end of a game, the score reverts to the last completed inning.
- Divisions 18A, 18B, 14A and 14B pitch from 43 feet. The 12's pitch from 40 feet and the 10's pitch from 35 feet.
- A team may use either a rule- book line up or a continuous batting order. The later allows for free substitution. – The only restriction here regards the pitcher, if removed she may not return to pitch in the same inning, but is free to pitch in any other inning.
- Each player **MUST** play three (3) defensive innings. Consideration should be given to games that will not go the entire seven innings to ensure players receive adequate playing time. {In other words, don't wait until the 5th inning to put a player in the game.} – If using a rule- book line up and there is a DP, the DP is exempted from the 3 defensive innings rule.
- The following Divisions are allowed (but not required) to play with ten (10) fielders – 14B, 12B and 10U. Each of the four outfielders must be positioned on the outfield grass and may not make a put-out in the infield except on a fly ball or double play. Other Divisions will play with 9 fielders.
- A 15 run slaughter...ok, mercy rule is in effect. It is invoked after 5 innings (4 ½ if home team) and at the point in which it occurs.

- Base coaches may be either adults or players (players must wear a helmet).
- Smoking by anyone near the softball diamond is prohibited. Coaches should actively enforce this rule.
 - Pitchers and 1st and 3rd basemen in 12A, 12B and 10U are required to wear an approved face guard while in the field. It is recommended for others.

SIX RUN RULE:

This rule applies to all Divisions except 18A. An inning will end early if a team scores six runs before they are put out three times. The play on which the sixth run scores will end at its normal conclusion. {Effect, if more than 6 runs score in the inning they all count.} The six run rule is lifted in the **7th** inning. {Clarification... if the game is likely to end before the 7th, because of darkness or other circumstance, the six run rule is still in effect... It's only lifted in the **7th** and beyond.}

SPECIAL RULES FOR THE 12B DIVISION:

- A runner may not leave the base until the pitched ball reaches the plate. (Same penalty as the rulebook, you're out for leaving early).
 - There is no dropped third strike rule.
 - The infield fly rule is in effect
- .. Coaches should go over these rules with the umpire during the pre-game conference.

SPECIAL RULES FOR THE 10U DIVISION:

- Players pitch from 35 feet. If having difficulty at this distance and with the consent of both coaches, a girl may modify her pitching stance so that only one foot is in contact with the pitching rubber. If that doesn't help, she may move in another step or two. This provision is made to make the game flow along more smoothly.
- Base runners may steal from second to third and third to home, but only two runs per inning may be scored in this fashion. Runners must wait until the pitched ball reaches home plate.
 - A runner may only advance from 1st to 2nd on action generated by an at bat.
- However, in the A Division, a runner may also steal from 1st to 2nd
- The catcher's throw to any base (to catch a stealing runner) is a live ball
- The "walk and run" play is not allowed. A player may not advance to second on a walk.
- The dropped third strike rule is not in effect.
- There is no infield fly rule.
- A **five** run rule & 15 run mercy rules are in effect as detailed in previous sections.
- Games will be played with 11- inch softball.
- 10U games in this league are 7 innings.
 - Pitchers, first and third basemen are required to wear an approved face guard.