



Senior Division - Playing Rules

Modified 3/31/2021

The Norfolk County Softball League follows Massachusetts USA Softball rules with the following highlights and/or adjustments

COACHING:

All coaches must adhere to the Coaches Code of Conduct. The Norfolk League expects strict adherence to the Code and any violations will be treated very seriously and may include being asked to leave the position.

We are grateful for the many volunteer coaches who help each season. Please be advised that volunteering does not guarantee a position.

THE GAME:

- Minimum of 8 players to start, but teams can finish a game with less than 8 players
- 7 innings or 1:45 time limit (not a "drop dead" time limit)
- Umpire will determine the last inning based on the approaching curfew; last inning is unlimited runs.
- If the away team is batting after 7:45 PM or 1:45 after the start of the game, then that inning will be the last inning and will be allowed to score unlimited runs. Any game that starts later than the original start time will follow the above rule based on the original start time.
- If a game is called due to rain/darkness, the score will revert back to the last completed inning, unless the home team is ahead when the game is called. The game will count as a completed game if the losing team has completed 4 innings of batting.
- 4 run limit per inning. Any runs scored beyond 4 do not count. Unlimited runs allowed in the 7th inning (or the last inning as declared by the umpire)
- When a makeup game needs to be scheduled the teams have 12 days to play the makeup game. The home team will offer three dates to the visiting team, preferably on a Tue, Thur, Fri or Sun. The visitor must accept one of the dates or forfeit. In the case of field availability issues, the game may be played at any available field but the original home team remains the home team.
- Players must arrive by the start of the fourth inning. Upon arrival the coach must notify the opposing scorekeeper of the player's arrival and the player will be added to the end of the lineup. This must occur prior to the start of play in the top of the fourth inning.

PITCHING:

- The pitching distance is 40 feet. However, pitchers may elect to throw from 43'.
- Modified or Fast Pitch motion is acceptable.
- Pitchers can pitch unlimited innings in a game.

- Only the starting pitcher can re-enter.
- If a pitcher hits 3 players in one inning or 5 players during a game, she must be replaced with another pitcher immediately and cannot return to pitch.

BATTING:

- Continuous batting order
- Batting Out of Order: the batter is out, next batter in order is up
- Bunting IS allowed. A foul bunt on the third strike is an out.
- Slashing is NOT allowed. (i.e. fake a bunt then pull the bat back and swing at the pitch). A batter who swings is immediately out - no warning
- If a player misses her time at bat because she had to use the restroom, then she is skipped in the order and no out will be recorded. The next batter will bat.

ON THE BASES:

- Runners may steal any base (USA rules) with no maximum. Runners can take a lead after the ball leaves the pitcher's hand
- Dropped third strike is allowed. When 1st base is open or whenever there are 2 outs - the batter may run to first on a dropped third strike. Other runners may advance as well.
- Pinch runners are encouraged for pitchers and catchers. The last recorded out will be used as the pinch runner (regardless of the inning). If one pinch runner is already on base, the next previous out becomes the 2nd pinch runner. If a pinch runner is needed in the first at-bat with no outs, the last batter in the batting order runs.
- The runner must avoid contact with the fielder/catcher by either sliding or giving herself up on a close play. Umpires will use their discretion on runners avoiding contact.
- Free substitution. Players can play any position and there are no rules on rotating positions.
- The Defensive Team assumes the responsibility of stopping the runners by getting the ball to a base in front of the lead runner or to the pitcher in the circle (standard USA softball rules)
- The Infield Fly Rule IS in effect.
- Players covering a base are not allowed to stand on the base and impede the runner from reaching that base and continuing to the next base. If a player does impede the progress of a runner, the umpire will use their discretion to call obstruction and award a runner an additional base. If there is a play at a base, the player receiving the ball cannot block the base rather must straddle the base allowing the runner to reach the base whether there is a slide or not.
- Outfielders must start on the outfield grass (or 25') prior to each pitch.
- 9 players in the field (3 outfielders), but if both coaches agree then each team may field 10 defensive players (4 outfielders).

PLAYOFFS:

- Top two teams, determined by final regular season standings, get a bye.
- Tie-breakers will be used in the following order: head to head play, fewest losses, fewest runs allowed, coin flip.
- In-town playoffs for each of the 6 member towns to determine the remaining 6 playoff berths.
- Seeding determined by final regular season standings.
- Playoff games will have a 1:45 time-limit, with the exception of the Semi-Finals and Championship Game (full 7 inning game)
- If the game is tied after 7 innings the International Tie Breaker format will be used.

SAFETY REGULATIONS:

- All helmets, whether league issued or personal helmets, MUST have cages. Batting helmets are required whenever a player has a bat - even during team practices. Chinstraps are no longer required by USA.
- Any player warming up a pitcher must be wearing a catcher's mask.
- USA/ASA approved bats only. Umpires will check bats prior to the game.
- All players on the batting team must be in the dugout (or bench area) except the batter and the player on deck. Those are the only two players who are allowed to have a bat. On-deck batter must stay behind fence (or similar).
- Coaches must take the responsibility to instruct and control parents/fans of their players.
- Use of facemasks is required for all fielders.
- No jewelry of any kind may be worn during the game. This includes watches, wristbands etc.
- Umpires will inspect all bats and helmets prior to the start of the game.

UMPIRES:

The League uses USA Umpires. The Umpire controls the game. Coaches may not talk to the umpires while a game is in progress except to ask a question about the progress of the game. (i.e. "What is the count?" Or "How many outs are there?"). Please treat them with respect at all times. If you wish to discuss something with the umpire, please do so between innings.