



Junior Division - Playing Rules

Modified 4/20/2021

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 7 players to start, but teams can finish a game with less than 7 players
- 6 innings or 1:30 time limit (no new inning, 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 7:30 PM or 1:30 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 6th^h 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.
- 11 inch ball

PITCHING:

- The pitching distance is 35 feet.
- Modified or Fast Pitch motion is acceptable.
- No pitcher can pitch more than 4 innings per 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. Bounced balls do not count, nor do "coach pitch" pitches.

- No Walks. After the 4th ball, a coach will enter to pitch. The at-bat continues with the same count until the batter hits a ball into fair territory or strikes out. The pitcher continues to field the position.
- The Umpire calls balls and strikes.

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.
- No dropped 3rd strike.

ON THE BASES:

- No continuation on a walk.
- Runners can take a lead after the ball leaves the pitcher's hand
- Stealing is allowed, with a limit of one base at a time. No stealing home. No advancing on an overthrow.
- 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)
- No Infield Fly Rule 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.
- 10 players in the field, including 4 outfielders
- Outfielders must start on the outfield grass (or 25') prior to each pitch.

PLAYOFFS:

- Top three 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 5 member towns to determine the remaining 5 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 6 inning game)
- If the game is tied after 6 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.

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.