

## 5<sup>TH</sup> / 6<sup>TH</sup> GRADE SOFTBALL RULES

Rules governing play will be the National Federation of State High School Associations rules with the following additions, exceptions, changes:

1. Game length will be 6 innings or 60 minutes. No new inning will begin after 50 minutes. Games will end when the inning in progress is over, even if the game is tied.
2. The base path distance will be **60 feet. The pitching distance will be 35 feet. The home team will take the 3<sup>rd</sup> base dugout.**
3. A regulation 12" softball will be used in this league.
4. Play can begin with 7 players. When another player arrives, that player can be inserted into the line-up and in an open position. Games will be ruled a forfeit if the number of players fall below 7 on a team. If a player in the lineup must leave the game early for reasons other than injury, the coach must notify the opposing coach and the umpire. ***If there are less than 7 players at game time, a 5-minute grace period will be given before a forfeit is declared.***
5. Nine (9) defensive players will be allowed to take the field with 6 standard infield positions (including catcher) and 3 outfield positions. 4 outfield positions may be used if both coaches agree. All present players will be in the batting lineup and will take their turns at bat.
6. Three outs or one time through the line-up will end each half inning. However, the coaches and umpires will meet before the game and each team will be allowed to bat the number of batters equal to the team with the most players. On the last batter, the play is over when the runner(s) stop running. Free substitution allowed on defense. All players must play at least 2 innings in the field.
7. A mercy ruling of 10 runs after the 3rd inning will be observed. If at the end of the 3rd inning, one team is ahead by 10 runs or more, the umpire will call the game.
8. Stealing is allowed, including home. A runner can leave the base when the ball leaves the pitcher's hand.
9. The **dropped third strike rule** will be in effect. If the batter does not immediately start running, they will be called out. (*Umpire's judgement*). The batter/runners may advance on a dropped third strike as long as first base isn't occupied at the time of the pitch. With two outs batter/runner may advance even if the base is occupied.
10. A thrown bat is an automatic out – ***player safety issue (Umpire may issue warning before declaring batter out – umpire judgement)***
11. Runners are out if they do not legally slide and cause illegal contact – runners are never required to slide, but they must avoid dangerous contact.
12. All equipment must be kept in the dugout – the on-deck batter should be the only player out of the dugout. Equipment or players out of the dugout are in play and could interfere with play and penalize your team.
13. Any umpire's decision which involves judgment is final. If there is only one umpire, he/she shall have complete jurisdiction in administering the rules. If a player or coach is ejected from the game, they will have an automatic one game suspension. The player or coach will not be allowed to be at the ballpark during this suspension – failure to comply will result in his/her team forfeiting.

14. The coach must not leave the practice or game until all players have been picked up by their parent(s) or designated other as specified by player's parent.
15. ***Players may be added to the roster through the first 4 games of the season. No roster additions will be allowed after 4 games. ONLY PLAYERS WHO ARE REGISTERED MAY PLAY IN GAMES AND PRACTICES. ANY UNREGISTERED PLAYERS OR PLAYERS PLAYING ON MULTIPLE TEAMS/ NOT THEIR ASSIGNED TEAM DURING A GAME WILL LEAD TO THE TEAM HAVING TO FORFEIT ANY GAME(S) THEY HAVE PLAYED IN.***
16. **Make-up games will be played for rainouts or other weather-related issues only!**

*Sportsmanship points will be awarded every game based on the behavior of parents, spectators, players, and coaches. Please inform your parents and players about this before your first game. You must maintain a 3-point average (5 points possible) to be eligible to continue playing. Please encourage parents and players to be good sports. Please do not use noise making devices. (Cowbells, air horns, etc.)*

*We would like all our youth sports league games and practices to have a Drug-Free Environment. Managers, coaches, and parents are not allowed to use tobacco of any kind during games or practices. Violators will be asked to leave the park immediately.*

**Coaching Tips: What players should learn in their third year of softball.**  
**(These are just some pointers to better help coaches teach kids during games. Keep in mind, some kids may be more advanced than others at different skills).**

- Execute the basic rules of softball (i.e., out vs. safe, runs, fair vs. foul ball, etc.)
- Know what a force out is: A force out (aka force play) is made when a baserunner is forced to leave his base when the batter becomes a baserunner himself, and a fielder successfully tags the next base before the runner can reach it).
- Identify which positions they want to play and can perform with ease.
- As a catcher, execute all the responsibilities of the position, including making strong and accurate throws to appropriate bases to deter base stealing.
- As a pitcher, execute more techniques and strategies, as well as the simple basics of a proper pitching motion.
- Consistently anticipate and execute the proper play on defense.
- Execute advanced offensive strategies and tactics including sacrifice bunts; and other hitting strategies per ball/strike count and runners on base.
- Recognize balls versus strikes while at bat and swing at strikes.
- Be comfortable approaching each at-bat, whether coach- or player-pitched (pitcher should focus and throwing fastball over the plate nothing special).
- Successfully perform a steal.
- Confidentially slide; know how to slide or avoid contact when baserunning.
- Understand coaching strategies and offensive/defensive signals.