



Valley League Softball Rules

(Revised 4-30-24)

Official High School Federation rules shall be followed with the following exceptions &/or clarifications:

- A. All games are to be played on the dates and times as specified in the league schedules, unless a mutually agreed upon change is made 24 hours prior to the scheduled time and date. Teams will be allowed 15 minutes to field a team of at least 8 players prior to the declaration of a forfeit.
- B. Only players listed on the “Official Roster” are eligible to play in a game. A girl may not play on more than one Valley League team.
- C. It is the home team’s responsibility to maintain the field in a safe playing condition.
- D. The home team is required to furnish two new or good quality softballs for each game. Ball size will be 11” for 3/4th grade, and 12” for the 5/6th grade and the 7/8th grade.
- E. Each team is permitted 15 minutes infield prior to the start of the game, as long as it can start on time.
- F. Game Length – (time limits will be waived during tournament play)
 - 1. **3/4th grade** will play four inning games, with any new inning starting after 1 ½ hours being the final inning (from the time the game is scheduled to start). Three innings constitute a legal game. We will also have a “drop dead” time limit of 2 hours at this level only.
 - 2. **5/6th grade** will play six inning games, with any new inning starting after 1 ½ hours being the final inning (from the time the game is scheduled to start). Four innings constitute a legal game. There is no 2-hour time limit. The final inning cannot be called until the minimum inning restriction has been met.
 - 3. **7/8th grade** will play seven inning games, with any new inning starting after 2 hours being the final inning (from the time the game is scheduled to start). Four innings constitute a legal game. There is no 2-hour time limit. The final inning cannot be called until the minimum inning restriction has been met.
 - 4. Any time that a game is called during an inning because of time limit, weather, field conditions, etc., the score always reverts back to the score at the last completed inning. Games CAN end in a tie!
 - 5. Teams must get in and out of the dugout areas in one minute between innings!
- G. The Valley League has adopted a ten-run rule for all leagues. This rule provides that a game will end after five innings for 7/8th grade, or four innings for all other leagues, or any inning thereafter, when a team is ten or more runs behind and has completed its turn at bat.
- H. The Valley League has adopted a five-run rule as well. An inning is over when the team hitting gets three outs or scores five runs. There will be no more “open inning.” Instead, if a team is trailing by three or more runs entering into the final inning of the game, the team trailing will bat first. This team will have the opportunity to score enough runs to gain a one run lead. In the event that the trailing team gains a one run lead, the offense and defense will switch. The game will conclude when the defense gets three outs or the offense scores two runs to win the game.
- I. Each team will bat its entire roster.
- J. There shall be free defensive substitution, including pitchers. Each player must play a minimum of six defensive outs.
- K. Three defensive charged conferences per game (it is not charged if you change pitchers). An additional charged conference per extra inning will be allowed. There is a limit of one offensive charged conference per inning.
- L. Teams must have eight players to start the game. A player arriving after the game has started will be inserted at the end of the batting lineup.
- M. If a player is injured, is removed from the game, and misses a turn at bat, she cannot return to the lineup in that game. The injured player’s name will be removed from the batting order and all other players will continue to bat in the same order.

- N. If a player is injured while running the bases, she must be replaced by the player furthest from the batter that is not on base. This substitute runner returns to their place in the batting order ceasing the pinch running duties.
- O. The only time a player removed from the lineup becomes an out each time up is if the removal leaves the team with six players. If the lineup falls below six players, the game will be a forfeit.
- P. Uniform shirts will be of the same color and should be numbered with no two alike. No metal cleats below the 7th grade, and jewelry will not be allowed at any level, not even pierced ears covered with tape.
- Q. NOCSAE batting helmets are to be worn by all batters and runners in all leagues. All helmets must have facemasks! All catchers must wear catcher's head and face protection, as well as a chest protector and shin guards during warmups and during games.
- R. Any high school restriction on weight to length of bat and maximum bat diameter will be disregarded.
- S. Pitching:**
1. Styles: Windmill or slingshot pitching styles may be used. Please refer to the NFHS rule book for pitching specifics. **Please note that the rules have changed, and leaping is now allowed.**
 2. Distances: The pitching distance will be 35' for 3/4th grade, and 40' for 5/6th grade. For the 7/8th grade leagues (select & rec) we will use the high school distance of 43'. For both competitive fairness and safety reasons, this must be enforced!
 3. In the 3/4th grade league we will utilize a "coach bailout rule." Girls will pitch all innings of the game; however, there will be no walks. If ball four is pitched, the coach of the batter will come in and complete that at-bat (keeping the same # of strikes). During these situations girls may still strike out but may not walk! **The coach and the pitcher should remain in the pitching circle.** Girls may advance on passed balls during the coach pitch situations.
 4. Inning Restrictions: A pitcher must not pitch more than five innings in one game at the 7/8th grade level or four innings at the 5/6th grade level. One pitch constitutes an inning.
- T. Dropped third strike: At the 3/4th grade level, the batter is out regardless of if the third strike is caught or not. However, at all other levels, the batter may run when the catcher fails to catch the third strike, when there are fewer than two outs and first base is unoccupied, or anytime if there are two outs.
- U. Base running:
1. Bases will be 60 feet apart for all leagues.
 2. The runners may not lead off until the ball leaves the pitcher's hand.
 3. At the 3/4th grade level the girls may only steal on passed balls (any ball that gets behind the catcher or outside of the catcher's box), including when a coach is pitching.
 4. To speed up the game, the catcher & pitcher may be replaced by the player who made the last out if they safely reach base and there are two outs, or if they are on base when the second out is made.
 5. Any time the defensive player has the ball and it's a tag play or a force and the out has already been made, the runner must attempt to avoid contact. This may be done by sliding or getting out of the path of the play. Intentional contact made by the base runner will result in an out and the player being ejected from the game.
 6. At the 3/4th grade level, players may only take home during a force play, i.e. a walk, or as a result of a hit ball. No stealing home!
- V. Reminder: DO NOT THROW THE BAT! After a warning it will result in an out being called.
- W. The Infield Fly rule will apply. An infield fly is a fair ball and does not include a line drive or an attempted bunt, which can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort when first and second bases, or first, second and third bases are occupied with less than two outs.
- X. Remember to display **good sportsmanship** at all times. Coaches or players arguing with an umpire may result in an ejection from the game. In addition, only positive "chants" will be allowed. Coaches or players that are ejected for unsportsmanlike conduct will be suspended from the next contest as well.
- Y. Hit by pitch: If a pitcher hits 3 girls in any inning, that pitcher must be removed from pitching for the remainder of that inning. She may return in later innings, but if she should hit an additional 2 girls, she will not be allowed to pitch any further in that contest.
- Z. The winning coach must report the game score and pitcher innings for both teams on the www.valleyleaguesports.com site within 48 hours of the game.