

2026 3rd & 4th Grade Softball - UPDATED 04/13/2026

IHSA Rules shall prevail unless specifically stated in these rules.

Base distance 60ft – Pitcher's Mound 30ft – 11" "Safe Soft" Ball

THE GAME

1. The home team is listed last on the schedule; bats last in the inning; will occupy the third base dugout.
2. The regulation game is 6 innings. A game called by the umpire shall be regulation if 4 or more complete innings have been played.
3. During the regular season, no new inning may start after 1 hour and 45 minutes. 1 hour and 55 minutes drop dead. During the playoffs, no new inning will start after 1:30 and there is no drop dead.
4. A half inning is completed when:
 - a. 3 outs have been made
 - b. OR 4 runs have been scored
5. During the playoffs only, if the 6th inning is reached prior to the No New Inning Time, the 6th inning shall be an unlimited run inning.
6. There is NO "SLAUGHTER" RULE.
7. Both teams must keep all records. Each team should compare scorebooks at each half inning for agreement. The umpire will settle any discrepancies.
8. Must have a minimum of 8 players to start the game (including borrowed players).

THE PLAYING FIELD

1. Only team players and approved coaches will be allowed on the bench and playing field.

2. Players are not permitted in the stands or behind the backstop.
3. Coaches are responsible for their spectators. Spectators who harass the umpires, opposing team coaches, players, or spectators will be ejected from the park.
4. The distance between the bases is 60---feet. The pitching distance is 35---feet measured from the front of the pitcher's mound to the rear tip of home plate.
5. Only nine defensive players.
6. No more than two offensive coaches are permitted on the field in foul territory during play.
7. NO DEFENSIVE COACHES – other than a **coach** at the backstop to retrieve foul balls/dead balls to help move the game along. No coaching from this position.

EQUIPMENT

1. The official softball is an ASA approved 11---inch ball. Each team will supply a game ball.
2. Coaches are responsible for all equipment issued to the team. If equipment repairs are required, contact the league director to make arrangements for repair or replacement.
3. All batters and on---deck players must wear batting helmets with protective face cages.
4. Pitchers must wear a face guard. STRONGLY ENCOURAGE A FACE MASK BE USED BY ALL PLAYERS.
5. All players shall wear entire uniforms. Coaches shall wear the uniform provided by their league.
6. No jewelry shall be worn during the game.
7. Metal spikes are not allowed.

PLAYERS AND SUBSTITUTES

1. Official lineup cards will be exchanged between coaches prior to the start of the game.
2. A team will be allowed to start and play the game with eight players.
3. A team with eight or fewer players may borrow a player(s) from another team with league director approval. A suspended player may not be substituted. The borrowed player cannot pitch. A team may only borrow enough players to bring their roster to nine.
 - a. The player(s) must be comparable in skill set to the missing players
 - b. The player(s) must bat last in the order
 - c. The player(s) must play an outfield position unless waived by the opposing coach
4. Free substitution will be allowed in all positions except pitcher.
5. No player may sit out twice until every player has sat out once. No player can sit out 3 times until every player has sat out twice.
6. All players must play one inning in the infield and one in the outfield.
7. In the spirit of development, it is recommended that players be rotated through different positions.
8. Head coaches may choose to sit a player for more innings only for disciplinary reasons or unexcused absence from practice. If this is the case, the umpire and opposing coach should be notified prior to the start of the game/inning.
9. Each player shall bat whether they play in the field or not.
10. A courtesy runner shall be used when an injury occurs or for the catcher or pitcher (of the next inning) with two outs in the inning. The courtesy should be the player that made the last batted out.

11. If a player needs to leave the game for any reason, their spot in the batting order will be skipped without penalty.

CONDUCT

1. A player who throws their bat either on purpose or by accident will receive a warning. A second offense will result in an automatic out.
2. A player who acts in an unsportsmanlike manner and is consequently removed by the umpire will be counted as an out in the lineup of that game and subsequently suspended for the next game. The suspended player will not be counted as an out in the suspended game.
3. Negative chatter by any player on the bench or in the field will not be allowed.
4. Positive "Spirit" cheering is encouraged.

PITCHING

1. A girl may not pitch more than 2 innings per game (1 pitch = 1 inning for a pitcher).
2. No more than (5) warm-up pitches prior to the start of a new half inning. If the catcher is not ready, the coach should catch the pitcher in warmups to help keep the game moving.
3. A windmill, slingshot or modified fast pitch is allowed. Emphasis is placed on the Manager to encourage the pitcher to pitch in the strike zone by either method. There is no penalty for an illegal pitch. A "No Pitch" will be declared unless the illegal pitch hits the batter.
4. USA Softball rules will be in effect for the pitching motion. A pitcher may have both feet on the pitching rubber, **OR** the pivot foot on the rubber and the other foot behind the pitching rubber, when presenting the ball and at the start of her motion. She may not lick her fingers and then directly put them on the ball. A backward step may be taken before, simultaneous with or after the hands are

brought together. The pivot foot must remain in contact with the pitcher's plate at all times prior to the forward step.

5. No "Crow Hops": The pivot foot must start on the rubber and stay in contact with ground until release of the pitch, where the foot leaves the ground before the pitch is released. This is to encourage that proper pitching form be developed.
6. The pitcher must be removed from the pitching position if she hits 2 batters in an inning, but may re-enter as pitcher. However, if that pitcher hits 3 batters in the same game, she must be removed from the pitching position for the remainder of the game.
7. If a batter is hit by pitch, she may elect to continue to hit rather than take first base. If this is the case, the pitch will count as a ball rather than a hit batter. (Note: This is added since many of the hit pitches occur as a result of the ball rolling into the batters foot).
8. 1 walk will be allowed per inning prior to the coach entering to finish the at-bat. The offensive coach will come in and finish the count once the pitcher has thrown 4 balls. An offensive coach assumes the pitcher's role and throws up to four pitches to complete the strike count or until the batter strikes out swinging or until the ball is put in play. For coach pitch, a strike will only be called if the batter swings and misses or fouls off the ball (cannot strike out on a foul ball). For player pitch, balls and strikes will be called, including looking strikes as well as swinging strikes. If the batter fouls the 4th pitch from the coach, she will continue to bat as long as she continues to make contact.
9. Unless the ball is put in play or fouled, the batter is out after the fourth coach pitched ball.
10. The "pitching" coach must pitch from the pitching rubber before the ball leaves the pitcher's hand.

11. The player---pitcher may stand to either side of the "pitching" coach, even with the pitching rubber before the ball leaves the pitcher's hand. Player must be within two strides of the pitching rubber.
12. The umpire will track the number of pitches and will call strikes as noted above.
13. The "pitching" coach is considered part of the playing field during game play. If the ball strikes the "pitching" coach, the ball remains live.

STEALING

1. Stealing is permitted of 3rd base only. Stealing is only permitted after the ball has crossed home plate. Delay steals are not permitted.
2. No advancement after a wild throw to second or third on a steal.
3. No stealing during coach pitch.

BASE RUNNING

1. While the pitcher has the ball within the pitching circle, runners must return to their base(s) and may not attempt to advance.
2. Runners can advance off the base after the pitched ball crosses home plate.
3. On an infield play runners may only advance one base.
4. On a ball hit to the outfield, runners may continue to advance until the ball is controlled in the infield. The runner must be at least halfway to take the next base.
5. Play stops and runners do not advance after overthrows at any base.
6. A courtesy runner should be used if the catcher is on base regardless of the number of outs. The courtesy runner shall be the player who made the proceeding out.

DEFENSE

1. Nine defensive players allowed. There is no "short---center".
2. Infielders may not be more than 2 feet in front of the baseline.
3. Outfielders must be positioned on the outfield grass prior to the release of each pitch.
4. The center fielder may not cover second base on an infield play. However, the center fielder is allowed to field a ball hit up the middle and tag the base.

OTHER

1. Bunting is NOT allowed.
2. The dropped third strike rule is NOT in effect.
3. The infield fly rule is NOT in effect.