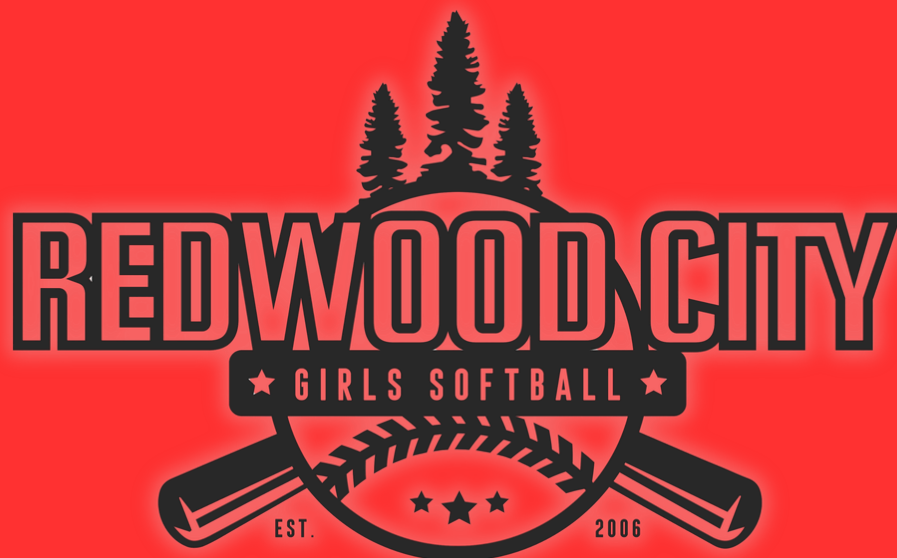




2026 Spring Softball
Division Rules
JUNIORS / 8U



GENERAL

Welcome to the 8U Juniors division!

8U is an instructional division, players are encouraged to develop skills for all positions. For the 2025 season, we have updated the rules to be more inline with our surrounding leagues on the peninsula. We will continue using player pitch followed by coach pitch to finish at bats. We will, however, gradually build up to having player pitchers complete a four-ball count before introducing coach-pitch.

Practices: Teams are encouraged to practice (at least) once a week per the practice schedule.

THE PLAYING FIELD

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Field:

The playing field shall be a standard shape for official softball with the following exceptions:

- Distance between bases: 55 feet.
- Distance between pitching rubber and the back tip of home plate: 30 feet.
- The pitching circle shall consist of a circle with an 8-foot radius emanating from the center of the pitching rubber.

Set-up/Breakdown:

Home team is responsible for setting up the field, including:

- Lining the baselines, batter's box, pitching circle,
- Installing the bases before the start of the game
- Returning bases to storage when the game has ended
- Dragging the field, which is mandatory at the conclusion of the last game of the day.

Home team will set outfield cones at approximately 135 feet from home plate. A ball hit over the cones in the air is a homerun. A ground ball or line drive that rolls or bounces through the cones, regardless if it touches a player or not, is a ground rule double.

EQUIPMENT

Uniforms:

Uniforms and socks are supplied by the league and must be worn by each player on a team. Players are to provide their own cleats and gloves and softball pants.

Sweatshirts or Jackets on Cold Days:

Sweatshirts or jackets with or without numbers may be worn in the field and up at bat on cold days and nights.

Jewelry and Medical Alert:

Jewelry shall not be worn during an official game. Medical alert bracelets and necklaces are not jewelry and may be worn but must be taped to the body in such fashion that the medical alert information is visible.

Batting Helmets and Mask:

A **Batting Helmet** with a **NOCSAE** approved **Face Mask** shall be worn by all offensive players when in fair or foul territory on the playing field. Batting helmets are required **AT ALL TIMES** when a player has a bat in her hands. Players may only have a bat in their hands while at the plate or in the batters circle. **AT NO TIME** will a player swing anywhere else during a game. Chin straps are optional per recent USA Softball rule changes; but if worn, it must fit securely.

Face masks for player pitchers are required to wear at all times on the field.

EQUIPMENT

Face masks for all other position players are optional for second or third year players but Highly Recommended to wear. Avoiding player injuries should be a priority for all coaches.

First year 8U players will be required to wear a facemask at all times on defense.

Catcher's Gear:

Shall be worn by any player that is positioned behind home plate or that is warming up a pitcher during practice or game play.

Balls:

The official game softball is the 10-inch Easton IncrediBall or similar, soft squeeze 10-inch softball provided by the league.

FEMALE ADULT CHAPERONE

In accordance with USA Softball requirements, a female adult must be present at all team activities, including games, practices and other team events. This person can be a coach, assistant coach, manager or team parent volunteer.

PLAYERS, COACHES, SUBSTITUTES

Players:

The minimum number of players is six (6). A team may have a maximum of ten (10) players on the field on defense at any time (6 infielders and 4 outfielders). Infield positions are First Base (1B), Second Base (2B), Shortstop (SS), Third Base (3B) Pitcher (P) and Catcher (C); outfield positions are Left Field (LF), Left Center (LC), Right Center (RC), and Right Field (RF). If a team does not have six (6) players, players may be shared between teams so that the girls can still play a game.

Players Arriving Late:

If a player arrives late to the game, that player shall be inserted in the vacant position in the batting order (bottom of the order). Players may be inserted in the lineup at any time after they arrive.

Players Leaving Early:

There shall be no penalty if a player must leave early. The lineup will move up to allow for the absence.

Players from a Lower Division Filling Out a Roster:

When a team is short players for a particular game, the team that is short players may borrow fielders from the other team such that the shorthanded team is able to position a minimum of 6 players on the field. Players from the lending team will not miss at bats – they should be replaced by another player from the lending team should their turn at bat arise while they are in the field. In lieu of borrowing fielders from the opposing team, players may be brought up from a lower division (6U) of the league or from the same division (8U) to fill out the roster up to ten (10) players. The player(s) shall wear her/their own team's uniform. Duplicate jersey numbers will be allowed.

Any player that is brought to a team as a substitute will bat last in the order and may not pitch.

Defensive Substitutes:

Defensive substitutions may be made at the coach's discretion. Players are not allowed to rotate positions during an inning, unless an injury requires the rotation.

Injured Players:

An injured player shall not be allowed to play in a game. Injuries that occur during practice or games must be reported to the RCGSL board. Email at treasurer@rcgsl.org . Please include: Player name, Player DOB, Date of Injury, Type of injury, Treatment given, and whether Parents were notified. This information may be emailed by the Head Coach, Assistant Coach or Team Manager.

Coaches on the Field:

During game play, Offensive coaches are allowed in the first and third base coaches boxes. A coach is also allowed to be in the pitching circle when a coach pitcher is used in accordance with these rules. Defensive coaches are allowed on the field of play. A maximum of three defensive coaches can be on the field at one time. One is permitted to act as a backup for their catcher to field past balls, this is not required but it helps keep the game moving. The other two coaches must position themselves on the outfield grass in left field and right field. This is to give their players direction on defense. They must not interfere with a ball in play or touch their players to direct them . We highly encourage defensive coaches on the field to give the kids live situational coaching that they can only get during a game..

THE GAME

Starting Times:

Consult schedule for all game times and locations.

Reschedule Games:

RCGSL will attempt to reschedule games when cancelled or not completed due to rain. Contact scheduler@rcgsl.org

Starting Line-ups:

Starting line-ups shall be presented to the opposing manager at least ten (10) minutes prior to the scheduled starting time of the game and must include the names and uniform numbers of the players present.

Game Balls:

Home team shall provide two (2) 10-inch IncrediBalls for game balls prior to the start of the game. One new and one in game worthy condition.

Home Team/First Base Dugout:

Home team will occupy the First Base dugout. Unless there is a double header then teams may remain in the dugouts they started the first game in.

Warm-ups Prior to Game:

Batting practice, pitching practice and infield practice are not allowed anywhere in fair territory on the infield prior to the start of the game. Warmups are confined to foul territory of the infield and the grass outfield in fair or foul territory.

Game Length:

Games shall be **one hour and thirty minutes (1:30)** or **five (5) innings** in length, whichever occurs first. If an inning is underway at the expiration of the 90 minute time limit, that inning will be played to its conclusion (top and bottom halves).

Score:

Score shall be kept; however standings will not be. There will be no end of season championship playoffs for the 8U division.

3 Outs per half inning**No Infield Fly Rule****No Batting Tee in 8U****Fielding Positions and Positioning of Players:**

Each team will play with six (6) infielders – Pitcher (P), Catcher (C), 1B, 2B, 3B and SS and four (4) outfielders – LF, LC, RC and RF. All outfielders must be positioned no closer than the edge of the grass or 10 feet behind the bases. Teams must rotate players between infield and outfield so they can gain experience; however, a player's safety shall always be considered before placing a player in the infield.

Infield:

The infield is defined by USA Softball Official Rules as "That portion of the field in fair territory that includes areas normally covered by infielders".

Outfield:

The outfield is defined by USA Official Rules as "That portion of the field in fair territory that includes areas normally covered by outfielders".

BASE RUNNING**Dead Ball:**

A dead ball occurs after a play is attempted on a batted fair ball in the Infield once the player pitcher regains possession of the ball within the pitcher's circle and no further play is made on a base runner(s) by the pitcher. Until this happens runners are permitted to run a total of two (2) bases on a hit in the infield. If runners are less than halfway to the next base when the pitcher gains control of the ball within the pitchers' circle, they will be sent back to the base they last touched. If runners are more than halfway to the next base they are permitted to advance to that base.

A ball hit to the Outfield is considered dead once the ball is returned to the infield dirt from the outfield grass. Until this happens the ball is live and runners may advance up to four (4) bases (homerun) on a hit to the outfield. If runners are less than halfway to the next base when a ball that was hit to the outfield (grass) is returned to the infield (dirt) they will have to go back to the base they last touched. If runners are more than halfway to the next base they are permitted to advance to that base.

Stealing:

No stealing

Lead off:

Lead offs are permitted upon the release of the ball by the player pitcher of up to 10 feet . There is no leading off during coach pitch. Any base runner leaving early (i.e. before the release of the ball by the pitcher) will be given a single warning. If it happens again the runner will be called out.

OVERTHROWS

A. On a throw to first base the following occurs: No Batter-Runner can advance to second base as a result of an errant throw to first base. All other Runners may advance one (1) base past the base they are going to on an errant throw to first base with liability of being put out if the ball stays in live ball territory.

B. On a throw to any other base or position: If an errant throw occurs to any other base or position, all runners, including the batter-runner may advance one (1) base past the base they are going to when the errant throw occurs with the liability of being put out.

C. The umpire will only award a base to the runners if the ball has been thrown out of play. Example: If the ball is thrown into a dugout or over a fence.

D. Runner and batter-runner may be put out if they advance beyond the base they are entitled to on an errant throw. At the end of the play, the umpire will return all runners to the base they are entitled to if they have not been put out. In the spirit of fair play and so as to not have to rely on the umpires, Offensive/ Base Coaches should attempt to hold runners from proceeding past the base they are entitled to during play.

E. Once the first overthrow is committed at any base or position the ball is dead and runners may not advance any further than the bases they were entitled to after the first overthrow. In other words, only the first overthrow counts. If the ball is overthrown two or three times before it gets back to the pitcher this does not mean that the runners can keep advancing. One overthrow to a base or position only.

PITCHING

Balls and strikes will be called by the umpire. If there is no umpire present the coach of the team on offense (batting) will call balls and strikes for their team from behind the pitcher. This way the batting teams coach is already in position to act as the coach pitcher. Keeps the game moving.

Before April 1:

When the player pitcher reaches a two-ball count on the batter the coach of the team that's batting will pitch the remainder of strikes left in the at-bat. 0 strikes = 3 coach pitches, 1 strike = 2 coach pitches, 2 strikes = 1 coach pitch. Strikeouts by the player pitcher are permitted as long as three strikes are thrown before two balls.

After April 1:

When the pitcher reaches a four-ball count on the batter the coach of the team that's batting will pitch the remainder of strikes left in the at-bat. 0 strikes = 3 coach pitches, 1 strike = 2 coach pitches, 2 strikes = 1 coach pitch. Strikeouts by the player pitcher are permitted as long as three strikes are thrown before four balls.

Moving to a four-ball count for the second half of the season is designed to give more chances for the player pitchers to learn how to pitch and encourage batters to swing at player pitches. Remember we can keep the game at a speedy pace with a coach behind the catcher to retrieve wild pitches.

If a batter fouls off their last coach pitch, they are granted another pitch. This repeats until a coach pitched ball is either put into fair play or swung at and missed for strike 3 and an out.

PITCHING

The staff-pitcher must pitch with at least one foot within the pitching circle.

New player pitchers in the 8U division are permitted to pitch from anywhere within the pitchers' circle until April 1st. Allowing players to move a little closer to home plate so they can reach the catcher is beneficial for their development.

Coaches are going to have to use their judgement on the above rule. If you have player pitchers that are able to pitch from the rubber mound before April 1st, please have them do so. Having them pitch from less than 30 feet will not benefit their development.

After April 1st all player pitchers must start pitching with one foot on the pitching rubber at the start of their wind up. This is to develop their strength and accuracy from the actual pitching distance for this division.

When a staff pitcher is pitching, the player pitcher acts as a fielder and must position herself to either side of the staff pitcher with at least one foot fully within the pitching circle.

Coach pitchers are permitted to coach their batters and runners while coach pitching. This will only help in their players' development. Staff pitchers shall not interfere with a batted ball or a defense's ability to make a play on a batted ball.

Walks:

There are no walks

PITCHING

Drop third:

There is no drop third strike for 8U. Batters are out upon strike three. Drop third strike is when the catcher drops the third strike, and a batter can run to first base.

Strike Zone:

The strike zone is the space over any part of home plate when a batter assumes a natural stance adjacent to home plate which is between the top of the batter's shoulders and the bottom of the knees. However, due to the fact that players at this age are just learning how to pitch, umpires are instructed to be generous in their interpretation of the strike zone –in other words, the pitcher is to be given the benefit of the doubt at all times on close pitches and pitches that are hittable near the strike zone are to be called strikes.

Rotation of Pitchers:

Pitchers may pitch a maximum of six outs (two innings) per game. A team must use at least three pitchers per 5 inning game. For purposes of this rule, if a pitcher pitches a complete inning which is concluded before three outs are recorded due to the four (4) run maximum rule, that pitcher will be charged with three outs, or one full inning, regardless of the number of outs actually recorded before the inning ended.

Players interested in pitching will need to practice pitching as much as possible, including with a parent or sibling outside of regularly scheduled team practices. Pitchers should attend RCGSL pitching clinics and should consider formal pitching lessons or instruction. RCGSL will provide pitching clinics for developing pitchers during the season and can assist you with referrals to local pitching coaches.

BATTING

Run Limit/ Scoring:

A team during their at-bat can score a maximum of 4 runs per inning.

Batting Rotation/ Batting Order:

Each team will bat their entire roster. Order of batting shall not change from inning to inning. The batting order will continue UNTIL the defensive team makes three (3) outs OR the offensive team scores four (4) runs, whichever occurs first. At that time, the inning will be over, the bases will be cleared, and the offensive and defensive teams will switch. Upon a team returning to offense, the batting order will continue with the next girl who was scheduled to be up to bat at the time the previous inning ended and will continue thereon until the inning is over as described above.

Bunting:

Intentional bunting (squaring around to bunt) is permitted against a player pitcher. Intentional bunting is not permitted at any time against a coach pitcher. When a coach pitcher is pitching, the batter must swing away.

Hit By A Pitch:

If a batter is hit by a player pitch they can elect to take their base or continue batting. If the player elects to keep batting the pitch that the player was hit by will count as a Ball in the count. If a batter gets hit by a coach pitch it will count as one of the allotted coach pitches for that at bat (no pressure coaches).

Coach Pitcher Hit by Batted Ball:

If a coach pitcher is hit by a batted ball the ball is dead and the batter is awarded 1st base. All other runners that may be on base are awarded one (1) base of advancement. Coach pitchers must make an attempt to get out of the way of a batted ball. If it's found that the coach intentionally took the hit the batter will be called out and runners will have to return to the base they previously occupied.

PROTESTS

There shall be no protests in the 8u division. All calls made by the umpire are final and not subject to protest or review.

UMPIRES

RCGSL will endeavor to provide youth umpires to serve as umpires at Juniors division games. Umpires may work from behind the plate or behind the pitcher. The Umpire is encouraged to return balls to the pitcher or catcher to keep the game moving. If no league designated umpires are available at game time, each team will be asked to provide one volunteer to umpire the game. If one team cannot provide a volunteer, the other team may provide two or the game may proceed with just one volunteer. If one or more official umpires arrives after the game has started, the umpire(s) will take control of the game in progress (games will not start over). The Umpire's authority over the conduct of the game is final. The Umpire has the right, within USA Softball and RCGSL guidelines, to bench or dismiss any player, manager, coach, other participant or spectator who harasses an umpire. Umpires may also terminate a game if coaches, managers, players and/or spectators, in the Umpire's view become, or continue to be, disruptive, verbally harassing and/or threatening in nature after a warning has been given.