

Softball Rules and Regulations

12U Division

(Spring 2026)

https://usssa.com/docs/Fastpitch/Fastpitch_Rules.pdf

All play will be judged according to the rules established by USSSA Softball with the following **exceptions**. Any situation not specifically covered in these local rules will be governed by the current year's USA rules.

Eligibility

Only those girls properly registered with the towns **Frankfort, Mokena, Frankfort Square, Homewood, Steger, Flossmoor, and Tinley Park (Bulldogs and Bobcats) Girls Softball Programs** will be eligible to participate in association activities and game play. All registration fees must be paid, and a completed registration form must be on file with that player's organization. Any team using a player who is not registered with their town/organization or a player that is registered, rostered and plays on a Full Time Travel, or current season's high school team, will automatically forfeit the game in which the action occurred. **Each eligibility infraction will be reviewed by the SSC board to determine if further disciplinary action is necessary.**

Age

The SSC follows the USSSA age rules. Age determination is based upon the player's age as August 31st of the year preceding play for spring season. If a player wishes to play in a division other than their age level, the parent(s) of the player must formally petition the league board which will then notify the SSC Board for approval.

12U-11 and 12-Year-Olds

Age determination for the fall season is based upon the division that the player's age will place them into for the spring season preceding the fall season. No registered or rostered full-time travel players are allowed to register or participate.

Uniforms

Each player must be in proper uniform to participate. A player's uniform consists of the standard team uniform shirt, pants, and safety equipment. Uniform shirts must be tucked into the player's pants. **Softball pants are required for players in this age division and sliding pads are recommended, but not required.**

No jewelry or hair combs are allowed to be worn during game play. Medical alert jewelry is permitted and must be discussed with the umpire prior to the start of the game.

Equipment

Bats

Only official softball bats will be allowed. Bats made of aluminum, graphite, or ceramic materials must have an official softball insignia or have had it before such an insignia wore off. T-ball, little league, and baseball bats are strictly prohibited.

Balls

Only **LEATHER COVERED** softballs with the official ASA/USSSA/NSA softball insignia are to be used for game play. All game balls are supplied by the home team at the beginning of each game. Synthetic or softie balls are NOT allowed. The home team is responsible for supplying game balls. **12U - 12" hard ball - 1 New, 1 gently used ball per game**

Batting Helmets

All batters, on-deck batters, and base runners are required to always wear protective batting helmets. It is mandatory for all batting helmets to be equipped with a face mask. A player may wear their own batting helmet only if it is equipped with the mandatory face mask. A player, who in the judgment of the umpire intentionally removes a helmet while base running during a live play will be called out.

Pitcher's Equipment

Any player occupying the pitcher's position is required to wear a protective face mask. Any pitcher refusing to wear such protective gear will not be allowed to occupy the pitcher's position. It is further recommended that protective masks be worn by all infielders for their safety.

Catcher's Equipment

Catchers must wear full catcher's gear consisting of: a catcher's helmet with an integrated face mask and throat guard, chest protector, and shin guards.

Players

A minimum of 8 players is required for a team to start a game in 12U. A team that cannot field the minimum number of players within 15 minutes after the scheduled start of the game will automatically forfeit and the game will not be rescheduled. The exception to this rule is if both managers agree to extend the 15-minute period, if a late player arrival is expected.

If a manager has advance notice that their team will be short the minimum number of required players for a game, the manager has the option of calling a player up from a lower age division to act as a substitute player for that game. **Players can only be called up from a lower division; no player can participate as a substitute player in the current division in which they are registered.** For the regular season, with agreement of both coaches, a called-up substitute may pitch but is limited to pitching 3 innings in the 12U division. Call-up substitutes are prohibited from pitching during playoff games. Call-up substitutes are prohibited from playing the catcher position at any time. A team may not utilize a call up player if they have nine players available from the original team roster unless both coaches agree prior to the game.

A team that loses a player due to an injury that occurred during game play, and as a result no longer has the required minimum number of players to continue the game, may at the managers' discretion continue to play with less than the minimum number of players or may ask for and be granted a forfeit. The maximum number of players in the field is 9 for the 12U division.

Coaches

Coaches must coach their team from the dugout or coaches' box. No coach will coach from the outside of the field of play or from behind the backstop of the field.

Manager Only Rule

Only the team manager or the designated acting manager can approach the umpire(s) to discuss an issue. Coaches, players, and spectators are not allowed to approach the umpire (s) to discuss any issues. Coaches are not allowed to add their input in any consequential discussion between umpires and managers. Both team managers should participate in conferences with the umpire(s). It is the responsibility of team manager or designated acting manager to ensure that only they and the other manager engage in discussions with the umpires. All discussions should be conducted in a respectful manner. The manager only rule shall also be in effect for pre-game conferences with umpires.

Umpires

Each scheduled game shall be officiated by at least one umpire for all divisions. For 12U, all umpires must be a minimum of 15 years of age. If no umpire arrives within 15 minutes after the scheduled start of the game, the managers may, upon mutual agreement, officiate the game themselves. The defensive team's coach will call the plate, and the offensive team's coach will call the field. Unless both managers agree to a makeup game, if no officiating agreement can be made, the game shall be considered a forfeit by the home team. The Home Team must make every attempt to contact scheduled umpire prior to cancelling game.

It is strictly the responsibility of the umpire to resolve all issues regarding the 2- hour rule, which includes: halting the game due to darkness, curfew, minimum number of players, etc., and the umpire's decision on these matters is final.

The umpire will have general responsibility for calling games due to weather conditions. If lightning and/or thunder is observed and the umpire has not elected to call the game, the managers of the teams must remove his/her players from the field. If there is a disagreement as to the merits of this action, it must be reported by the disagreeing party to the Grievance Committee within 48 hours. If for any reason other than adverse weather, a game cannot be played, it will be forfeited by the team which cannot play, unless a mutual makeup game is decided upon between the two teams.

Any changes to the schedule will be communicated through the advanced communication system built into the website. Changes will be sent via email and text message (if available on your phone). It is the players and coaches' responsibility to check their email and text prior to leaving for a scheduled game. Umpires retain the authority to eject any offending party from the game and determine what is foul language and unsportsmanlike conduct. Ejected parties must leave the vicinity of the field until the completion of the game and shall not approach or otherwise attempt to communicate with the umpires or opposing team following the completion of the game.

Pre-game Conferences

It is recommended that both managers or the designated acting manager(s) and the umpires have a conference prior to the start of the game to discuss:

- The Manager Only Rule
- Hit-by-Pitch
- Illegal Pitches
- Strike Zone
- Drop Third Strike
- Infield Fly
- Continuation/Dead Ball Rule
- Courtesy Runners
- Last Inning Declaration: 1:30 vs. 1:45 Last Inning Drop Dead, Unlimited Runs
- Any other issue that is felt to be relevant to game play or the players

Field Dimensions and Gameplay

Base Lengths-

60 feet is the distance between the bases and is measured from the back tip of home plate.

Pitching Distance

40 feet is the distance, and the placement of the pitching rubber will be the measurement from the back tip of home plate to the front edge of the pitcher's rubber.

Pitching Circle

The circle is a 16-foot diameter from the center of the pitcher's plate.

Standard Game Length

7 innings maximum play.

Official Game Determination

Finish the Inning vs 2 Hour Time Limit

The last inning will be played in its entirety to determine an outright winner based on the scenarios below. Games can end in a tie game.

- No new inning at 1:35 minutes **IF** time will not permit the game to exceed two hours to complete the final inning. (ex. Back-to-back games, lack of lights)
- No new inning at one hour and forty-five minutes IF time will permit the game to exceed two hours to complete the final inning. (ex. No game behind the existing)

The last inning determination must be discussed in the pre-game conversation with both coaches and the umpire. The last inning must be clearly declared by the umpire and both coaches must agree. If the last inning is not declared, the game will default to no new inning at one hour and thirty-five minutes.

A full 7 inning game may be played if the field is available, both managers agree, and the umpire approves. **This agreement must be reached prior to the start of the game.** If this agreement is not reached prior to the start of the game, then the above determinations will take effect.

Played Innings

_12U: After 5 innings have been completed, 4 ½ if the home team is leading.

If a game becomes official but does not finish due to darkness or adverse weather conditions, the score that existed at the end of the last completed full inning will be the final score of the game.

If the required minimum number of innings for the division have not been played and the game was called for one of the following reasons: darkness or adverse weather conditions and a team was leading by 15 or more runs, the game will be considered complete and official. The score will be recorded, and the results included in the division standings. A game that is not official but is suspended due to weather shall be rescheduled and started from the top of the first as if the game had never been played.

Playoffs

To be eligible for playoffs, a team must have completed at least 12 of its regular season games. All of times must be made to reschedule rained out games and if necessary, League Directors may reschedule the game according to when both teams do not have a regularly scheduled game. If a team does not show up to a rescheduled game, they will forfeit the game.

All standings will be kept throughout the season. Two points will be awarded for a win and one for a tie. Tiebreakers will be then decided in the following order: head-to-head, runs against, coin flip. Mercy rule will be enforced in championship games (12 after 3, 10 after 5, 8 after 5).

Playoff Championship Game

The playoff games will be a full, 6-inning game, with no time limit. All innings are unlimited runs. Mercy rule will be enforced in all playoff games.

Playoff & Championship Tie Games

If a game ends in a tie, the international tiebreaker rule will take effect. Each team will begin the inning with a runner on second base. The runner must be the last batter of the previous inning. Additional innings will be played, following the international tiebreaker rule, if the inning ends in another tie score. (look up the rule for your own knowledge)

Regular Season Tie Games

If a game is tied it will continue until the tie is broken at the end of a complete inning, however, if the game is halted due to darkness or adverse weather conditions, the official result will be a tie. All playoff games will continue until the tie is broken.

Slaughter Rule

The Slaughter Rule can be enforced if a team is leading by 15 or more runs after 5 innings, 4 ½ if they are the home team.

If a game ends due to a 15-run lead, the game will be considered official, and the results will be recorded. The Slaughter Rule will be in effect from the above-mentioned inning until the end of the game.

5 Run Limit and Continuation

A team may not bat after they have scored the fifth run for any inning, regardless of the number of outs. A team's half of an inning ends when the play during which the fifth run is scored is over. Play continues until the ball is dead by rule. Once a pitcher has the ball in the pitching circle, the play becomes dead and the runners only get the base they are going to, even if they don't break stride. If the pitcher makes a play on the active runners, and the ball leaves the circle, the play will resume, and runners are free to advance. Once the ball is back in the circle, and secured by the pitcher, the ball is dead by rule. The umpire(s) are solely responsible for determination of when the ball becomes dead.

All runs scored during the final play of an inning will be counted. Example: if 4 runs have already been scored, the bases are loaded and batter hits a grand slam, all 8 runs will be counted.

There are no intentional walks allowed. This rule is aimed at efforts to undermine the inning run limit by walking in the 5th run rather than risking a multiple run hit. Violation of this rule will result in the award of 2 bases to the batter. The umpire is solely responsible for determination of a two-base award.

Last Inning of Play

In the last inning, or the inning that the umpire declares will be the last inning (the umpire must declare this before the first pitch of that inning is thrown), the 5-run limit is suspended. A team may score unlimited runs, and the defensive team must obtain 3 outs for the half an inning to conclude.

Courtesy Runner

If a player is injured and unable to fully run the bases, the manager may request a courtesy runner through the umpire. The most recently retired player will be the designated runner. **A courtesy runner may also be requested by the catcher at any point in the inning.** This allowance is to speed game play by allowing the incoming catcher time to put on her gear.

Lead Offs

Leaving from a base is not allowed until the ball has left the pitcher's hand.

Stealing

Any number of bases (including home) may be stolen. **There is no walk continuation or walk into a steal allowed. Violation of this rule will result in the player will be called out.**

Sliding

Sliding or other effort must be made to **AVOID CONTACT** with the defensive player. If contact is made, it will solely be the umpire's determination if there was an attempt to avoid contact. If no play is being made, the defensive players must give way to the offensive player.

Bunting and Slap Hitting

Bunting is allowed, however, slashing or faking a bunt followed by a swing attempt on the same pitch is not allowed. Slap hitting is also not allowed.

Infield Fly/Dropped 3rd Strike

Infield fly rule and Dropped 3rd strike are in effect.

In softball, the infield fly rule is designed to prevent the defense from turning a double or triple play by intentionally dropping a catchable fly ball.

When it applies:

- **There are fewer than two outs.**
- **There are runners on first and second base (or the bases are loaded).**
- **The ball is a fair fly ball (not a line drive or bunt) that, in the umpire's judgment, can be caught by an infielder, pitcher, or catcher with ordinary effort**

Hit-by-Pitch

If a batter is hit by the ball, the play is considered dead, and the player is awarded the base. If the home plate umpire rules that the batter did not attempt to avoid the pitch, and does not award the batter first base, then it will not count as a hit batter. The umpire will be solely responsible for this determination which is a non-arguable judgment call.

If a pitcher hits 2 batters in one inning, the pitcher **must** be replaced for the remainder of that inning. Only a starting pitcher may return to pitch subsequent innings if they have not fulfilled the division's pitching inning limit. Relief pitchers cannot return for subsequent innings if they hit two batters in an inning. If a pitcher hits three batters in a game, the pitcher cannot return pitch at any time during the remainder of the game.

Before the game, the managers should discuss with the umpires the hit-by-pitch rule and make it clear that it is a safety rule and that it is solely the umpire's call. No coach, player or parent will attempt to influence the umpire's decision. **A hit by pitch applies to both pitches that hit a batter on the fly and when bouncing on the ground first.**

Strike Zone

The strike zone will be defined as the area over home plate, between the armpit and the bottom of the knees. If any portion of the ball passes over home plate at the specified height, it is a strike. Managers should ask the umpire before the game what they intend to use as the strike zone. This serves to clarify the strike zone for all parties. If a manager feels that the umpire's strike zone has shifted during game play, the manager has a right to call a conference with the umpire and the other manager to discuss the situation.

Line-ups

Lineups must be submitted to the opposing team manager for each game no later than 5 minutes prior to the start of the game. These lineups will include the full name of the player, her number, and the batting order that will be employed for the duration of the game.

Batting Order

A continuous batting order, including all team members, must be employed. Late arrival players that arrive after the start of the game must be placed in the bottom of the batting order. Players will bat in the order designated in the line-up regardless of whether they are employed in the field or not. If the late player who is listed in the batting order is not present, the batter will be skipped without penalty, and they will bat the next time their turn comes up. The opposing manager should be informed immediately when this situation occurs. Should a player need to leave a game prior to the end of the game the same rule applies as above without penalty. A team may not continue a game with less than eight players in the field.

Player Innings

All girls must play a minimum of 4 complete innings defensively in a 7-inning game.

If a player has not played the required minimum number of innings due to a short game, the player must start defensively in the next game. No player can sit out for more than two consecutive innings. **It is recommended, but not required, that players rotate positions, during each game.**

Defensive Substitution

Free defensive substitutions are permitted. A pitcher may not leave and re-enter as a pitcher in the same inning.

Dead Ball

The ball will be considered dead once the pitcher has control of the ball and is within the designated pitching circle. Once the ball is dead, no runner may advance. In the event of an obvious injury to a player, the umpire may declare the ball dead and call a time out. The umpire will be responsible for the judgment as to the position of the runners.

Out of Order Batter

If a player bats out of turn, and is discovered during their count, the correct batter may come in and inherit the count. If the out of turn batter isn't discovered until they are on base, but the next batter hasn't had a ball pitched to them, then the out of turn batter is out. If the out of turn batter isn't discovered until after the following batter has been pitched to, there are no repercussions. Play continues as normal.

Pitching

The pitcher shall take a position with their pivot foot in contact with the pitcher's plate and their non-pivot foot in contact with or behind the pitcher's plate. Both feet must be on the ground within the 24-inch length of the pitcher's plate. The shoulders shall be in line with first and third bases. The pitcher must not make any motion to pitch without immediately delivering the ball to the batter. Leaping and/or crow-hopping are illegal.

Leaping is defined as the pitcher having both feet off the ground simultaneously. **Pushing off and dragging the pivot foot in contact with the ground is required. If a hole has been created, the pivot foot may drag no higher than the level plane of the ground.**

A crow hop is defined as the act of a pitcher who steps, hops, or drags off the front of the pitcher's plate, replants the pivot foot, establishing a second impetus (or starting point), pushes off from the newly established starting point and completes the delivery. Pushing off with the pivot foot from a place other than the pitcher's plate is illegal.

1st Offense - Warning

Additional Offenses - Pitch will be called a "ball"

Pitcher inning limits

12U – A pitcher cannot pitch more than 4 innings in a 7-inning game. Only the starting pitcher may return to the game one time, for a maximum of 4 innings pitched. Relief pitchers may not return to the game, after being substituted. One pitch in an inning counts as a full inning pitched.

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Home Team Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the manager of the designated home team to set up the bases and pitching rubber prior to the start of the game. It is the responsibility of the manager of the designated home team to retrieve the items from the field and place them back in the lockbox after the game. Base peg covers must be replaced on the field and the clean-out tool returned to the lockbox. The area around the pitching circle and batter's boxes should be raked and leveled. It is the responsibility of the manager of the designated home team to make sure that the lock on the lockbox is securely locked before they leave the field. Missing or damaged equipment should be reported to the division coordinator immediately after the game. The home team is responsible for supplying a new game ball at each game. These balls are supplied by your town to the manager at the beginning of the season.

It is the responsibility of the **HOME TEAM MANAGER** to enter the game score. Game score **MUST** be entered within 24 hours of the completion of the game. Missing scores after 48 hours of the completion of the game will be inserted as a forfeit score with the visiting team gaining the win. Coaches will be sent a password from the FGS website to enter these scores. If you are unable to enter your score you can send an email to your division coordinator who will then enter the score and correct the issue preventing you from entering the score. Scores for playoffs will be sent to the master scorekeeper directly following the completion of each playoff game.

Game Cancellation

Games cannot be canceled and rescheduled for any reason except adverse weather conditions or unplayable fields. The home team town's Softball President or designated field coordinator will make all decisions pertaining to field cancellation due to adverse weather conditions or unplayable fields and communicate to their coaches. It is the responsibility of each home team coach to communicate game cancellations with the visiting coach. Towns will report field conditions no later than 4:00 weekdays and 7:30 am on the weekends to each town's scheduler or softball lead.

If games have not been officially canceled, managers should proceed with the scheduled start time. Managers must arrive at the scheduled field at the time they requested their team to arrive. Games cannot be called beforehand in anticipation of adverse weather conditions or the assumption that the field is unplayable. All reasonable attempts should be made to play scheduled games.

The umpire has the authority to cancel a game before one is started, if adverse weather conditions exist. If both managers agree before the start of the game that adverse weather conditions exist, the game can be cancelled. These games will be rescheduled.

The umpire will have general responsibility for calling games due to weather conditions. If lightning and/or thunder is observed and the umpire has not elected to call the game, the managers of the teams must remove his/her players from the field. If there is a disagreement as to the merits of this action, it must be reported by the disagreeing party to the Grievance Committee within 48 hours. If for any reason other than adverse weather, a game cannot be played, it will be forfeited by the team which cannot play, unless a mutual makeup game is decided upon between the two teams.

Any changes to the schedule will be communicated through the advanced communication system built into the website. Changes will be sent via email and text message (if available on your phone). It is the players and coaches' responsibility to check their email and text prior to leaving for a scheduled game.

Adverse Weather

If lightning is observed, the game should be halted immediately, and the players should be removed from the field. If the field is equipped with lightning detection equipment, all warnings from such equipment are to be strictly and absolutely obeyed, in spite of any observation of weather conditions to the contrary. Safety of all participants and spectators is the priority. No game can resume until 30 minutes after the last lightning strike.

Disciplinary Actions

All players, parents, coaches, and managers must adhere to the Code of Conduct, to which they signed at the beginning of the season. Disputes should first be discussed by managers and umpires with the umpire holding discretion in enforcement. Only the head coach is allowed to communicate with umpires. If disputes cannot be settled at the game, complaints must be submitted to each town's softball lead, which will be thoroughly reviewed by the SSC board.

Umpires retain the authority to eject any offending party from the game and determine what is foul language and unsportsmanlike conduct. Ejected parties must leave the vicinity of the field and shall not approach or otherwise attempt to communicate with the umpires or opposing team following the completion of the game.

Coaches are fully responsible for the actions and behaviors of your team's spectators. Umpires will address spectator issues with that team's coach. If the coach refuses to address the issue, both the coach and spectator will be ejected and required to leave the vicinity of the field and shall not approach or otherwise attempt to communicate with the umpires or opposing team following the completion of the game.

All ejections will be reviewed by the SSC board to determine if future disciplinary action is necessary.

Bats or any other equipment thrown in anger will result in the batter being declared out and dismissal from the game with the ball being declared dead.

A bat that slips from the batter's hand will result in a warning to the team for the first occurrence. The second team occurrence will result in the batter being declared out, the ball declared dead, and the runners unable to advance. This ruling is based on the judgment of the umpire and is a non-arguable judgment call.

Grievances

The Grievance Committee will handle only the following matters:

- Protests pertaining to lightning/thunder scenario. All other weather, darkness, curfew, etc. decisions are the sole responsibility of the umpire and will not be reviewed.
- Reported incidents of improper conduct by team managers, coaches, players, or spectators that are of a nature that poses a threat to the health and well-being of the players and/or the league.
- No other protests are allowed.