

2026 3-4 Rules

Lakeside Softball League

Evanston Baseball and Softball Association
Lincolnwood Baseball - Softball Association
Morton Grove Baseball - Softball Association
Skokie Baseball - Softball League

Revised – March 2026

The current official USA Softball Fastpitch rules apply, except as specified below.

General

- Divisions are based the 2025 – 2026 school year.
- No metal cleats are allowed.
- Full catchers gear equipment is required.
- Any team unable to field a team of seven players within five minutes after the designated starting time forfeits that game. If this occurs, the teams are encouraged to loan players and scrimmage.
- The distance between bases is 60 feet.
- The distance from the edge of the pitching rubber closest to home plate to the corner of the plate furthest from the pitching rubber is 35 feet.
- The ball is an 11” ASA Fastpitch compliant ball for the Spring and Fall seasons. It will be an 11” Incrediball for the Summer season.
- Each team is responsible for keeping score and verifying it with the other team after every half-inning. Traditional score books and software apps such as Game Changer are acceptable if they record outs, the runners’ progress on the basepath, the batting order, and runs scored so that scoring discrepancies can be reconciled. In the event that a discrepancy can not be resolved, the home team scorebook will used. ”Hash mark” records of runs scored are not acceptable for keeping score.

Protests

- ALL UMPIRE DECISIONS ARE FINAL. NO PROTESTS ARE ALLOWED. PROTESTING OR ARGUING CALLS MAY RESULT IN EJECTION FROM THE GAME.
- The head coach may politely and respectfully ask the umpire to clarify a specific call. The umpire does not need to reconsider the call. No one other than the head coach is allowed to ask for clarification of a call.

Conduct

- Managers, coaches and parents are strongly urged to remember that the game is for the kids and to let the players play, the coaches coach, and the umpires call the game. The umpires have a hard a hard job, and everyone is doing their best to give the girls a good experience. Parents and spectators should refrain from discussing calls with the umps. In the rare instance when a call needs to be discussed, that conversation should only involve the head coaches and the umpire. Remember, the best experience for kids is to be able to play the game without delays and disputes.
- Head coaches are accountable for the conduct of their players, coaches, and others associated with their team.
- Verbal or non-verbal harassment of players, coaches or umpires by opposing players, managers, coaches or spectators is strictly prohibited. This includes loud or repeated criticism of the umpires. Only head coaches can discuss calls with the umpire. Continued violation of this rule may result in the removal of the offending parties and/or forfeiture of the game. Coaches and umpires should work together to prevent this from happening.
- ANY PLAYER, COACH, OR FAN WHO IS EJECTED FROM THE GAME MUST LEAVE THE PARK IMMEDIATELY AND NOT RETURN. ANY CONTINUED INTERACTIONS BETWEEN THE EJECTED INDIVIDUAL AND THE GAME WILL RESULT IN FORFEITURE OF THE GAME. UMPIRES SHOULD NOTIFY SOFTBALL LEADERS FROM TOWN OF EJECTED INDIVIDUAL.
- Team chants and cheering must be positive, directed towards your own team or player, and end as soon as the pitcher is ready to pitch.

Lineup and Substitution Rules

- Every player will be placed in the batting order regardless of their current fielding assignments or lack thereof and bat every time that position in the batting order comes up.
- Every player must play a minimum of two full innings per game in a defensive position.
- No player may sit out two innings before every player sits out one.
- Every player must play at least one full inning in the infield and one full inning in the outfield.
- No player should play more than two innings in the same position. The intent of this rule is to give young players a chance to play a variety of positions and prevent perceptions of ability or other biases dominating lineups.
- Players arriving after the first pitch of the game may be inserted at the bottom of the batting order.
- If a team cannot field 10 players for a scheduled game they may call up to three players from another team in the same or a younger division.

Batting

- A batter receives pitches until a) the batter hits the ball into fair territory, b) the batter strikes out, or c) the count reaches three balls.
- Batters are not awarded bases on balls in this division. After the third ball, the batter's coach will deliver underhand pitches from a distance considered fair and safe by the umpire. The strike count will remain the same, and the coach will have a maximum of three pitches until the ball is put into play or the batter strikes out. If a batter fouls off the third pitch or any pitch thereafter, she will continue her at-bat until she puts the ball into play, swings and misses or takes a pitch. Otherwise, the batter is out after the third pitch.
- Bunting is not allowed.
- No dropped third strike rule is enforced; the batter is out.
- For the safety of all involved, the batter must not throw the bat. The first occurrence will result in a warning by the umpire. The second occurrence will result in the batter being declared out. The third occurrence will result in the batter being declared out and being removed from the batting order. On the second and third occurrence, the play is dead, and runners may not advance. Players removed from the batting order continue to play defense, and the team does not incur an out when the spot comes up again.

Base Running

- The inning begins with no runners on base.
- On a batted ball remaining in the infield, all runners are entitled to attempt to advance no more than one base. No runner may advance on an overthrow to any base. No base is awarded for overthrows that go out of play.
- On a batted ball that is hit beyond the infield (*ie* the ball goes past an infielder or beyond the imaginary plane of the infield), the batter and all base runners may advance on the base paths until, in the judgement of the umpire, the ball returns to the infield (*ie* a throw breaks the imaginary plane of the infield or a fielder runs the ball back into the infield). The ball must only break the plane, it does not need to be caught or fielded cleanly. When the ball returns to the infield, the play is dead, but a base runner that is between bases may continue to the next base at her own risk.
- No stealing of bases is allowed.
- Lead-offs are allowed only after the pitch has crossed home plate. Runners leaving early will be given a warning. Repeatedly leaving early may, at the discretion of the umpire, result in the runner being declared out.
- The catcher is permitted to make a play on a runner leading off, but runners may not advance.
- Base runners must make every effort to avoid a collision with a defensive player. If, in the umpire's judgment, such effort was not made, the base runner will be called out. If, in the umpire's judgment, the collision was flagrant and intentional, the base runner will be called out and may be removed from the game for the safety of the other players.
- When a play is being made on first after a batted ball, the fielder should use the inner, white base and the runner should use the outer, orange safety base in order to avoid a collision.
- Courtesy runners are allowed for injured players. In such cases, the courtesy runner will be the player who made the last batted out prior to the request for a courtesy runner.
- If there are two outs and the catcher is on base, a courtesy runner must be used, specifically the last batted out.

Fielding

- Teams will use 10 players in the field including short center. The short center fielder may play in the outfield OR at least 10 feet behind second base. The short center can not play on or in front of the base. Outfielders must play in the outfield, which is defined as at least 10 feet past the baseline.
- Players playing first base, third base, and pitching must wear fielding masks. All other fielders are encouraged to wear fielding masks.
- Fielders not fielding a ball must make every effort to avoid collision with a base runner. If, in the umpire's judgment such effort was not made, the base runner will be declared safe. If, in the umpire's judgment, such collision was flagrant and intentional, the fielder may be removed from the game for the safety of the other players.
- No infield-fly rule is enforced; the fielder must catch the ball to put the batter out.
- Appeals (eg for a missed base) must be made verbally by the head coach before the next pitch, before the fielding players have left the infield, or before any play or attempted play. The umpire may accept an appeal if they saw the incident and the appeal was made properly. Judgement calls (eg tags, strikes and balls) are not subject to appeal. An appeal is not to be interpreted as a play or attempted play.
- Appeals must be made verbally and before the next pitch, before the fielding players have left the infield, or before any play or attempted play. An appeal is not to be interpreted as a play or attempted play.

Pitching

- Players in full catcher's gear, managers or coaches may warm up their pitchers between innings.
- Pitches are delivered in an underhand manner.
- Pitchers may begin their motion with just one foot on the pitching rubber. Stepping back with the non-pivot foot is allowed. The pitcher may take only one step toward the plate before the ball is released. The pivot-foot must remain in contact with the ground.
- Reductions to the 35' pitching distance may be considered on an individual basis.
- No pitcher may pitch more than two innings. One pitch counts as an inning.
- The total innings pitched by travel pitchers may not exceed four. One pitch counts as an inning. A travel pitcher is defined as a player actively pitching for a travel team.
- No base will be awarded for a hit-by-pitch. A ball is called, and the batter's coach will deliver the remainder of pitches underhand from a distance considered fair and safe by the umpire. The count will remain the same, and the coach will have a maximum of three pitches plus the number of remaining balls until the ball is put into play or the batter strikes out. A batter can not strike out on a foul ball. She will continue her at-bat until she puts the ball into play, swings and misses or takes a pitch. If the batter is hurt due to HBP and can't continue the at bat, move on to the next batter. Hurt batter is not considered out or awarded a base.
- Pitches that are rolling or bounce more than once will not count as hit-by-pitch.
- Removal of the pitcher for multiple hit-by-pitch's is at the discretion of the fielding coach and the umpire.

Ending a Half-Inning

- The batting team retires after three outs or scoring the maximum number of runs allowed, whichever comes first.
- The maximum number of runs allowed is five, unless the batting team is behind by more than five runs.
- A team behind by more than five runs can score up to 10 runs to tie the game, but they cannot take the lead that inning. This includes the last inning. Games can end in a tie.

Ending a Game

- No new inning may start after 90 minutes.
- The run limits are in effect for the last inning. Games can end in a tie.
- The game is over when one of the following conditions is met:
 - Six innings, or five and a half if the home team is ahead, have been played.
 - The play must be stopped due to weather, darkness, or other factor.
- Three innings, or two and a half if the home team is ahead, constitutes a complete regular-season game
- If play must be stopped before six innings, or five and a half if the home team is ahead, have been played, the score reverts back to that of the last full inning.

Weather Protocol

- Weather systems will determine playability at fields that have them. If a field doesn't have a weather system, the umpire will make the call for safety.