



DISTRICT 5 SOFTBALL ALLIANCE

MAJORS SOFTBALL RULES

Objectives

The primary objectives of Majors Softball are to continue teaching the fundamentals and nuances of the game, to improve the players' skills, and to develop habits of teamwork and good sportsmanship.

Governing Rules

1. Except where specifically amended in this document, the rules of Little League Softball will govern baseball play in the League.
2. If there is a conflict between these rules and the Little League rules, these rules apply.

Field Layout

1. The base paths are 60 feet in length. Measurements are taken from the point of home plate to the back edges of first base and third base, and from the foul line edges of first and third base to the center of second base. First and third base are entirely inside the corners of the diamond while second base is centered on the corner.
2. The front of the pitching rubber is located 40 feet from the point of home plate in a direct line with second base.

Game Administration

1. The "Home Team" is in the field first and bats last.
2. A division coordinator designated by the league will determine whether fields are playable. Coaches must not conduct practice or play games when the coordinator has determined the fields to be unplayable. The division coordinator will communicate with the coaches if the fields are closed. The coaches are responsible for communicating with their players/parents.
3. Games are played using 12-inch-diameter, little-league approved softballs.

Duration and Weather Delays

1. The top of an inning may not start later than 1 hr 50 min (110 min) after the coaches meeting at home plate. A game is considered complete once 4 innings are completed, or when the home team is ahead after 3-1/2 innings have been completed.
2. A game may be shortened by mutual agreement of the coaches for reasons such as darkness or inclement weather.
3. A game may be suspended for rain by the umpire and may be restarted at any time provided that the field conditions permit.



4. A game must be suspended immediately if lightning is observed by anyone. If using a weather app with lightning tracking, a game should be suspended if lighting is noted within 10 miles of the field. Play may be resumed a minimum of 30 minutes after the last lightning bolt was observed.
5. If a weather delay lasts more than 60 minutes, the game should be postponed.

Uniforms and Appearance

1. All players are to wear uniforms during games, including visor, shirt, and softball pants, but will not be disqualified from playing in a game for failure to wear a complete uniform. It is the responsibility of coaches to discipline players who repeatedly violate this rule. Visors must be worn correctly, and shirts must be tucked in at all times.
2. Wearing of jewelry by players is discouraged. Umpires may require the removal of any jewelry which, in the umpire's judgment, may present a hazard to the player or others.

Rules of Play

1. Runners may not leave the base until after the pitcher has released the ball.
2. Bunting is permitted.
3. Runners may advance after a caught fly ball, provided that they tag up. If a runner leaves the base before a fly ball is caught, and the ball is thrown to the base before he returns, the runner is out (i.e. "doubled up").
4. If a thrown ball goes out of play, regardless of where the throw originated, the play is dead and runners advance one base beyond the base to which they are nearest. If a pitched ball goes out of play, the runners advance one base only.
5. If a thrown ball does not go out of play, regardless of where the throw originated, the play is **not dead** and runners may advance at their own risk.
6. A runner who intentionally collides with a fielder is out. If a fielder obstructs the path of a runner, the runner advances to the next base without liability to be put out.
7. The circle violation will be in effect. Ensure that all coaches, players, and parents understand this rule. When a runner is off a base after a pitch or after a batter has completed an at-bat, and while the pitcher has the ball within the 8-foot radius circle, the runner must IMMEDIATELY attempt to advance to the next base **or** return to the previous base. Once the runner has decided which base to move toward she must not hesitate or change direction unless a play is made on her. A fake throw as determined by the umpire is considered an attempted play.



- a. Basically, when the pitcher has the ball in the circle—the runner has to go back to the base or try to steal the next base. She may not stay off and “dance” around to try to bait the pitcher.

Safety

1. All batters, runners and catchers must wear protective helmets. Facemasks for batting helmets are required.
2. Catchers must also wear a facemask, throat/neck guard, chest protector, and shin guards.
3. Defensive facemasks are required for pitchers and corner infielders.
4. All bats not being used at the plate must remain on the ground. Warm up swings are only allowed at the plate. **There is no on-deck circle.**
5. Sliding is permitted, and is encouraged as necessary to avoid collisions. Sliding is only allowed **FEET FIRST. NO HEADFIRST SLIDING IS ALLOWED.** If a runner slides headfirst, the runner may be called out at the umpire’s discretion.
6. At home plate, a runner must slide when a defensive player has the ball and is attempting to put the runner out. No collisions with the catcher will be permitted. A base runner who, in the judgment of the umpire(s), intentionally runs into the catcher or another defensive player will be ruled out.

Scoring

1. Runs scored, innings pitched, final score, and other game statistics must be recorded.
2. It is the responsibility of the head coach of the home team to communicate this information to the league official(s) at the end of each game.

Batting Order, Defensive Lineup and Player Participation

1. Before each league game, coaches will provide a batting order that includes every player expected to participate in that game. Players will bat in that order throughout the game whether they are playing in the field or not.
2. No player should play in the field more than one inning longer than any other player. Players should not be off the field for two consecutive innings. Therefore, if one player plays four innings, no one else can play more than five. Exceptions to this rule may only occur as the result of injury or premature termination of a game due to weather, darkness, or run rule.
3. Players that have been removed from the field for a substitute may re-enter the game after the team has recorded at least three outs while the substitute was in the field, or at any time if the substitute is unable to continue play due to illness or injury.



4. A player who has not arrived prior to his/her first at bat will be removed from the line-up without penalty to the team. A player who arrives after having been removed from the line-up, or who was not included in the original line-up, will be placed at the end of the batting order and will bat in that spot in the order for the rest of the game. Players must arrive before the top of the 4th inning to be inserted into the game.
5. Games may start with a minimum of 7 of your own players. If you have less than 7 players, the game will be considered a forfeit.
6. If you know you are going to be short players, you may secure a temporary substitute from the division directly below you. The temporary substitute must be a registered player for your league. Notify your individual league's leadership (e.g. President, Vice President and/or Player Agent) of the substitution before the game begins. If you are securing temporary substitutes, you should not exceed 9 players for that game, and the substitute player(s) should not pitch.

Umpires and Game Conduct

1. Umpire's Rule: The umpire(s) shall have the power to rule on any matter not specifically covered by the Little League Baseball rules or these rules.
2. Games are six innings. A game called on account of weather, darkness, or any other reason is official if the team trailing in the score has batted at least four times.
3. 5 Run Rule: In innings 1 through 5, the half inning is ended when 5 runs are scored. There is no run rule in the sixth (or last) inning.
4. 15 Run Rule: If either team is leading by 15 runs or more after the opposing team has had 4 or more turns at bat, the game will be ended.
5. If there is a question regarding a call by an umpire: the head coach may call time out and ask to speak to the umpire. The opposing head coach will be included in the discussion. Only questions concerning the proper application of the rules by the umpire may be raised. Calls involving solely the judgment of the umpire may not be questioned.
6. Any attempt to injure a player, coach, or umpire will result in the ejection of the offending player or coach. In addition, an offending player who is a batter or baserunner will be ruled out.

Coaches

1. There may be up to 4 coaches present in the dugout.
2. Base coaches may be players (wearing a helmet) or coaches.
3. The head coach may call for time out to talk to a pitcher. The granting of a time out to permit a mound visit/conference is at the discretion of the umpire. See rules associated with mound visits in the "Pitching" section below.
4. Coaches or any other members of the bench may only enter the field of play after granted "Time" by the umpire, or to tend to the health or safety of a player.



5. Coaches, especially base coaches, must refrain from calls or other actions that could impact the view or judgement of the umpire.
6. Base coaches must try to avoid contacting foul balls, overthrows, or other balls that have not been ruled dead by the umpire.
7. Coaches must behave in a manner that upholds the values of the league, including sportsmanship, trust, and mutual respect for players, coaches, umpire(s) and fans. Deviations from this behavior will follow a three-strikes policy and are subject to review by the interleague disciplinary board. Decisions made by the disciplinary board are final.
 - a. Strike 1 will result in a verbal discussion/warning.
 - b. Strike 2 will result in a discussion or meeting with the Softball leadership and could result in a suspension or other punishment based on the severity of the action(s) as solely determined by the Softball leadership.
 - c. Strike 3 will result in punishment based on the severity of the action(s) as solely determined by the Softball leadership, and may result in suspension from the league, either immediately or in the following years.

Pitching

1. Coaches may warm up their pitcher.
2. New pitchers will receive up to 3 minutes or 7 pitches to warm up, whichever occurs first. Returning pitchers will receive up to 1.5 minutes or 5 pitches to warm up, whichever occurs first.
3. There are no balks. When a pitcher commits an illegal pitch, the umpire who observes a the illegal pitch will rule “illegal pitch,” and explain to the pitcher and the pitcher’s coach the action that constituted an illegal pitch. Each pitcher will receive one warning. After the first warning, each illegal pitch will add one ball to the count. This is a dead ball, and the runners do not advance unless the ball added to the count results in a walk.
4. If a pitcher hits three batters in the same inning, the umpire will make a judgement as to whether that pitcher needs to be removed from the position. If the pitcher is removed, they cannot return to pitch in the same game, including extra innings.
5. Any player on a regular season team may pitch. There is no limit to the number of pitchers a team may use in a game.
6. A pitcher once removed from the mound can return as a pitcher at any time but can only return to the mound once per inning.
7. A coach may call time out to visit the pitcher. On the second visit to the same pitcher in the same inning, that pitcher must be removed from the mound. The player may remain in the game in a different position. A total of 4 mound visits/conferences are permitted in each game.
8. A pitcher may pitch up to 12 innings in one day. If a pitcher throws 7 or more innings in a day, a one calendar day of rest is required (e.g. if 8 innings are thrown during a Saturday



doubleheader, the pitcher must rest on Sunday and cannot pitch again until Monday).

9. Pitchers may wear sleeves as long as they are not the same color as the ball.
10. If a coach believes the health and safety of a player is at risk, the concerned coach should contact a league official within 2 days of the game. The league official(s) will confer with the coaches to understand the situation and determine what actions, if any, are necessary.

Fielding

1. Teams may play up to 10 players in the field, including up to 4 outfielders. The decision to play with 9 or 10 players must be discussed and agreed to by both coaches at the coaches meeting at home plate. If one coach does not agree, or the discussion is not had, teams will play with 9 players. However, if agreed to by both coaches, one team can play with 9 and the other can play with 10 fielders.
2. The infield fly rule is in effect at the umpire's discretion. The infield fly should be discussed by both head coaches and the umpire during the coaches meeting. The key elements on the infield fly rule are:
 - a. There must be less than 2 outs.
 - b. There must be runners on first and second OR first, second, and third.
 - c. The fly ball cannot be a bunt or a line drive.
 - d. An infielder must be able to catch the ball with ordinary effort.

Batting

1. Bats used in games must be Little League approved with a bat performance factor (BPF) of 1.20 or less and a maximum barrel diameter of 2-1/4 inches.
2. A batter who throws a bat deliberately, will be called out and ejected from the game, and all runners will return to their original bases. A batter who throws a bat unintentionally will be warned on the first occurrence. On the second and any subsequent occurrence, the batter will be called out and all runners will return to their original bases. The umpire's judgment as to the batter's intent will be conclusive.
3. A passed ball or wild pitch is a live ball and the baserunners may advance at their own risk. If this occurs on ball 4, the ball is live and the batter may also advance at their own risk.
4. **The drop third strike rule is in effect.** This occurs when the ball hits the ground before the catcher controls it, the catcher traps it against the ground, or the catcher juggles it and it touches the dirt. The batter becomes a runner on a dropped (uncaught) third strike when:
 - a. First base is unoccupied, **OR**
 - b. There are two outs, regardless of who is on base

If one of those conditions is true, the ball is live, the batter must be tagged or thrown out at first, and all other runners may advance at their own risk.



Baserunning

1. Runners must remain in contact with the base until the pitcher releases the ball. Each team will receive one warning. The following provisions apply when a runner is judged to have left the base too early:
 - a. Any outs made in the subsequent action stand.
 - b. If the ball was not put into play by the batter, all runners not called out return to their original bases.
 - c. If the ball is put in play, the runner who left early and any runners behind them will occupy the base(s) closest to where the batter finished. If the batter is out, the runner who left early, and any runners behind them must return to their original base(s).
 - d. Violations after the team warning will result in the offending runner being ruled out. The disposition of other runners will follow the provisions above.
2. A baserunner must avoid contact with a defensive player, whenever possible. At home plate, a runner must slide when a defensive player has the ball and is attempting to put the runner out.
3. A base runner who, in the judgment of the umpire(s), intentionally runs into a defensive player will be ruled out.
4. A runner may score on a steal of home, a wild pitch, a passed ball, a fielding error, or an error on the return throw to the pitcher.
5. Runners must return to a base when a play is over and when the pitcher has control of the ball in the circle.
6. The team at bat may use a courtesy runner for the catcher at any time. The courtesy runner should be the player who recorded the last out. In the top of the first inning only, the catcher is identified as the player listed on the lineup as the catcher. Thereafter, the catcher is identified as the last player who physically played that position on defense.

Playoffs

1. All teams will play in an end-of-season tournament. Teams will be seeded according to regular-season record.



Appendix A

Some Commonly Misunderstood Rules

1. **Catcher Interference:** If the batter hits the catcher's glove, it is catcher interference. The ball is dead. The batter is awarded first base, and runners who are forced advance to the next base.
2. **Batter Hit by Pitch While Swinging:** If a batter is hit while swinging, it is a strike if the batter misses or hits it foul. If the batter hits the ball into fair territory, it is in play. The umpire must use discretion in judging whether a batter is making a legitimate attempt to swing.
3. **Batter Hit on Hand by Pitch While Not Swinging:** The batter is awarded first base. The batter's hands are not "part of the bat."
4. **Batter Batting Out of Order:** If a batter is batting – or has batted – out of order, the following rules apply:
 - a. If the umpire is notified of the mistake, by either team, before the at-bat is completed, the correct batter will complete the at-bat with the existing ball/strike count.
 - b. If the umpire is notified of the mistake by the defensive team, after the at-bat is completed and before a pitch has been made to the next batter:
 - i. The player who should have batted is declared out.
 - ii. If the improper batter has reached base, he or she will be removed from the bases and all players who advanced as a result of the play that put the improper batter on base (e.g. hit, walk, error, fielder's choice, etc.) return to their original bases.
 - iii. If the improper batter made an out, the out is nullified and any runners who advanced on the play return to their original bases.
 - iv. Runners who advance on their own while the improper batter is at the plate (e.g. by steal, passed ball, wild pitch), keep the bases they have advanced to.
 - c. If the umpire is notified of the mistake, by either team, after the at-bat is completed and after a pitch has been made to the next batter, the at bat is considered legal and the player following the improper batter in the line-up becomes the next batter.
5. **Foul Ball Situations:**
 - a. Home plate is in fair territory.
 - b. The bases are also in fair territory. If a ball hits a base, it is a fair ball no matter where it goes afterwards.
 - c. If a ball first touches the ground in the outfield (beyond first or third base), all that matters is where it lands. A ball hit fair that passes first or third base in fair territory but lands in foul territory, is a foul ball.



- d. If a ball is played in the infield (between home plate and either first or third base), all that matters is where the ball is when it is touched by a player. A ball that rolls down the baseline is fair if it stops or is touched in fair territory. Conversely, it is foul if it stops or is touched in foul territory.
 - e. If the batter is the first player to touch the ball, he/she is out if the ball is in fair territory when the touching occurs. If the ball is in foul territory when it hits the batter, it is a foul ball, even if it later bounces into fair territory.
6. **Infield Fly Rule:** The infield fly rule is called when, with two or more baserunners in force situations and less than two outs, a batter hits a fair fly ball and the umpire judges that an infielder could catch the ball with ordinary effort. If the infield fly rule is called, the batter is automatically out and the runners advance at their own risk. They may tag up on a caught ball. If the infield fly rule is called, and the fielder fails to catch the ball, the runners do not have to run. The purpose of the infield fly rule is to prevent a fielder from intentionally missing a fly ball in order to start a double or triple play.
 7. **Runner Hit by a Batted Ball:** A runner (including the batter) who is hit in fair territory by a batted ball, is out, and the ball is immediately dead. Other runners return to the last base they reached safely.
 8. **Contact between batter running to first base and catcher fielding the ball:** This is not interference on the batter or obstruction on the catcher unless the umpire judges that the contact was intentional.