

OZ PARK BASEBALL

ASSOCIATION

2026 OPBA GIRLS SOFTBALL: 8U, 10U and 12U Rules

(Differences between age groups noted where appropriate)

1. Number of Players to Play/Forfeit:

- a. **8U:** All teams must play with at least 7 players for a game to count as an official game. If a game is played with 7 or 8 players, the 8th and 9th spots in the batting order, as applicable, will **not** count as automatic outs.
- b. **10U and 12U:** All teams must play with at least 8 players for a game to count as an official game. If a game is played with 8 players, the 9th spot in the batting order will **not** count as an automatic out.
- c. All games have a fifteen (15) minute forfeit time. If the opposing team cannot field a team fifteen minutes after the scheduled start, the game is forfeited. If both teams are unable to field a team, it is a double forfeit.
- d. Any player that arrives after the start of the game must be added to the end of the batting order. The player may enter the field as a defensive player in the middle of an inning as an outfield player only if an open spot remains but may not be subbed in for a player already on the field.

2. Number of Players on Defense:

- a. **8U:** Defensive team is allowed a maximum of ten (10) players on defense: six infielders and four outfielders. Outfielders must be equally spread out between the foul lines; no short center. **Outfielders must be in the grass.**
- b. **10U:** Defensive team is allowed a maximum of nine (9) players on defense: six infielders and three outfielders. Outfielders must be equally spread out between the foul lines; no short center. **Outfielders must be in the grass.**
- c. **12U:** Defensive team is allowed a maximum of nine (9) players on defense: six infielders and three outfielders. **Outfielders must be in the grass.**

3. Outfield Coaches:

- a. **8U:** Each 8U team will be allowed two defensive outfield coaches on the playing field, in the outfield, while on defense.
- b. **10U and 12U:** 10U and 12U teams may not have a coach in the infield or outfield.

4. Inning (Run Caps)/Time Limits:

- a. **8U:** The inning ends when three outs have been recorded or **five** runs have been scored. Total runs will be capped at **five** per inning, including the final inning. The game must be completed in the allotted time slot, with a **maximum of five innings.**

- i. **8U Time Limit:** No new inning may start 1:15 from the game's scheduled start time with a hard stop at 1:30.
 - ii. If an inning is started but not completed before the hard stop time, then the score reverts to the score of the last full inning. Games can be called complete with a tie.
- b. **10U and 12U:**
 - i. The inning ends when three outs have been recorded or **five** runs have been scored. Total runs will be capped at **five** per inning. The 5-run-per-inning limit shall be lifted for the last inning (as determined by the umpire) of each game; provided, that the visiting team's half of the last inning ends should they lead by a maximum of 16 runs. In such a scenario, the 17th run will not count.
 - ii. The last inning is the sixth inning or the last inning as determined by the umpire in his/her discretion because the time limits are likely to expire or because of darkness or inclement weather. Note that that the game is over at the completion of the sixth inning or the last inning as determined by the umpire, even if there is time remaining before the hard stop time is reached.
 - iii. ***We encourage the coaches to discuss with the umpire before the start of the fourth and fifth innings whether that inning will be the last inning because the time limits are likely to expire or because of darkness or inclement weather. Coaches cannot determine what constitutes the last inning without the express agreement of the umpire.***
 - iv. **10U Time Limit:** No new inning may start 1:35 from the game's scheduled start time with a hard stop at 1:50.
 - v. **12U Time Limit:** No new inning may start 1:35 from the game's scheduled start time with a hard stop at 1:50.
 - vi. If an inning is started but not completed before the hard stop time, then the score reverts to the score of the last full inning. Games can be called complete with a tie.
 - vii. **COACHES ARE DISCOURAGED FROM PLAYING SLOWLY AT THE END OF A GAME TO USE THE TIME LIMITATIONS TO SECURE A VICTORY. DOING SO CAN SUBJECT THE COACH TO DISCIPLINE BY THE OPBA BOARD AND POSSIBLE FORFEITURE OF THE GAME.**
- c. **All Ages:** There is no slaughter rule.
- d. A game can only be called for weather by an umpire. If a coach decides to stop play for their team based on weather without the umpire having called the game, that team forfeits the game. If a game is called by an umpire for weather, the score reverts to the last full inning played.

5. **Rules of Play:**

- a. All teams will bat a continuous batting order.

- b. No player can sit for more than one defensive inning, until all players have sat one defensive inning. If a player is sitting out a defensive inning, they maintain their spot in the batting order and will bat if their turn comes up in the batting order. Players must play at least one (1) inning of infield play in each game, and coaches are strongly encouraged to rotate players to all possible positions during a game and throughout the season.
- c. A courtesy runner will be put in for a catcher on base with two outs or if a runner is injured. The courtesy runner will be the player who made the last out.
- d. When Play is Dead:
 - i. **8U:** Play is dead when the ball is in **possession of an infielder** who is not making a play on any offensive players.
 - ii. **10U and 12U:** For a play in the outfield, play is dead **when the pitcher has possession** of the ball and is no longer making any attempt at any baserunner.
 - iii. Once a play is ruled dead, runners may not further advance. At the judgement of the umpire, runners, who are less than half of the distance to the next base, will return to the previous base.
- e. Stealing/Leadoffs/Stealing Home:
 - i. **8U:** Stealing and leadoffs are prohibited at 8U.
 - ii. **10U:** Leadoffs are not allowed. Stealing is only permitted **after the ball crosses home plate**, with normal tagging-up rules applied. In the event a runner leaves the base early, the runner will be forced to return to the base, a warning will be issued to the team, and the next infraction for that team results in the base-runner being called out – all subsequent infractions result in the base runners being called out. **Note that stealing is not permitted during coach pitch.**
 - Stealing Home:
 - a. 10U base runners **may never steal home** (on a passed ball, wild pitch or otherwise).
 - b. Runners stealing 2nd or 3rd base, or occupying 3rd base, are not permitted to advance home on an **overthrow by the catcher to any base** (e.g., a runner occupying 3rd base cannot advance home if an errant throw is made by the catcher to 2nd base). The runner must be batted or forced in.
 - c. Any overthrow or errant throw **by the catcher** while trying to throw out a runner attempting to steal 2nd or 3rd base will be ruled a **dead ball**, and runners cannot advance any further
 - iii. **8U, 10U and 12U.** Note that in all instances, the catcher pitcher exchange is a **dead ball** and runners (on any base) cannot advance or execute a delayed steal.

iv. **12U:**

- Lead-offs are allowed ***after the pitcher releases the ball***. In the event a runner leaves the base early (prior to release), the runner will be forced to return to the base, a warning will be issued to the team, and the next infraction for that team results in the base-runner being called out – all subsequent infractions result in the base runners being called out.
- Stealing is permitted, including stealing home, with normal tagging-up rules applied.
- Base runners are permitted to advance on any pick-off attempt to any base.
- A base runner may steal home but must abide by the following “Avoiding Contact” rules.

v. **Avoiding Contact:** If there is a play at the plate, the runner is required to avoid a collision at home, and it is strongly recommended that runners slide. This only applies if there is a play at the plate. In all other situations, a runner must avoid contact with the defensive player. **TO BE CLEAR, THE BASE RUNNER HAS THE PRIMARY OBLIGATION TO AVOID CONTACT** – however, both players should seek to avoid contact with each other. This does not mean the runner must slide at all bases, on all plays. Malicious contact by either the offensive or defensive player will result in an out and ejection of the offending player. Umpire’s discretion will apply in all cases.

vi. **Tagging Up:** Runners may ‘tag up’ on a fly ball.

f. **Overthrows:**

i. **8U:**

- On an overthrown ball that remains in the field of play, a runner may attempt to advance a maximum of **one base**; however, the runner does so at his or her own risk and may be thrown out by the fielding team.
 - a. Example: If a ball that is hit to the shortstop and the shortstop overthrows first base, then the runner may advance to second but no further. The runner may not advance on any subsequent overthrows.
- On an overthrown ball that leaves the field of play, all runners advance one base.

ii. **10U:**

- On an overthrown ball that leaves the field of play, the ball shall be ruled dead, and all runners advance **one base** (including home, as applicable).
 - a. Note that this rule does not apply to any overthrow or errant throw **by the catcher** while trying to throw out a

runner attempting to steal 2nd or 3rd base, which will be ruled a **dead ball**, and runners cannot advance any further.

- Overthrown or errant throws that remain in the field of play are live until the ball/play is considered dead in accordance with the rules under “When Play is Dead” above.

i. **12U**:

- a. On an overthrown ball that leaves the field of play, the ball shall be ruled dead, and all runners advance **one base** (including home, as applicable).
- b. Overthrown or errant throws that remain in the field of play are live until the ball/play is considered dead in accordance with the rules under “When Play is Dead” above

g. Infield Fly Rule:

i. **8U and 10U**: Not in effect.

ii. **12U**: In effect.

- When declared by the umpire, an “infield fly” is a fair ball that can be caught by an infielder (this includes the pitcher, catcher or any outfielder positioned in the infield) with ordinary effort where
 - Runners are on first and second, or
 - When all three bases are occupied and before there are two outs in the inning.
- The batter is automatically out (whether the ball is caught or not), which removes the force play at all other bases. The ball is considered live, so runners may properly advance at their own risk.
- If a declared infield fly becomes foul, it is treated as a foul ball.

h. Catcher Position is Mandatory: During player and coach pitch, teams must field a catcher in full gear. If a team has less than 10 players, a catcher must always be fielded.

i. **8U**: The umpire may assist the catcher by returning the ball to the pitcher.

ii. **10U and 12U**: It is the job of the player in the catcher position to return the ball to the pitcher. A ball should never be thrown back to the pitching mound at these levels by either an umpire or a coach.

i. Bunting:

i. **8U**: Prohibited.

ii. **10U**: Allowed during the player pitch portion of 10U.

- iii. **12U**: Allowed.
 - j. At fields where a permanent, enclosed on deck circle is not available (like Jonquil Park), coaches should teach the “on deck” batters to take practice swings in a safe part of foul territory on whichever side has the “on deck” batter facing the hitter’s back.
 - k. Coaches should coach from behind the backstop and should not be in the batting box coaching or adjusting the swing of the batter at any time at any level.
 - l. Dropped Third Strike: There are NO DROPPED THIRD STRIKE CALLS in any age division.
 - m. Balks: Balks are not called in any age division.
 - n. Throwing of the bat is to be strongly discouraged. A team warning shall be given after the first offense. After a warning has been issued, any offending player shall be called out on the next and any subsequent infraction.
 - o. Players are expected to be in their official Oz Park uniforms prior to taking the field.
6. Equipment:
- a. Softballs:
 - i. **8U**: Teams will play with “Incredi-ball” training softballs.
 - ii. **10U**: Teams will play with an 11” standard softball.
 - iii. **12U**: Teams will play with a standard 12” softball.
 - b. Helmets/Fielding Masks:
 - i. **All Ages**: A protective two-flap helmet and face guard must be worn by a batter and runner(s). A violation of this rule shall constitute a team warning, and any successive violation in a game shall cause the violator to be called out at the discretion of the umpire.
 - ii. **All Ages**: Fielding masks are mandatory and are to be worn by the pitcher, 1st and 3rd base players, at all times, while a team is on defense.
 - c. A catcher’s mitt is NOT required for the catcher.
 - d. Bats shall not exceed 33” in length, and the barrel cannot be larger than 2 1/4” in diameter. Wooden or aluminum/composite bats can be used at the player’s choice.
7. Field Dimensions:
- a. Base Paths:
 - i. **8U**: Base paths are 50’.
 - ii. **10U and 12U**: Base paths are 60’.
 - b. Pitching Rubber:

- i. **8U**: 30' from home plate.
- ii. **10U**: 35' from home plate.
- iii. **12U**: 40' from home plate.

8. Pitching Rules:

- a. **8U**: Games will be completely coach-pitched. Each batter will receive 4 pitches from the coach. At the third strike (regardless of when that occurs), or after the 4th pitch (or at the third strike), a tee will be brought to the batter's box and the player will be provided one swing at the ball on the tee. Missing the tee results in a strike-out. Contact with the tee, of any kind, will be considered a foul ball – the player cannot be called out on a foul ball.
 - i. See additional Coach Pitch rules below.
- b. **10U**: Players pitch from the beginning of the game. If the player-pitcher reaches four balls, the hitting team's coach will finish the at bat and inherit the current strike count on the hitter. The coach will throw a maximum of **3** pitches – the player is not required to swing at any/all of the pitches but is only allowed a maximum of three pitches. The hitter cannot walk but can strike out. If the hitter fails to put the ball in play after three pitches, the batter is out. A foul ball cannot end an inning and the hitter cannot be called out on a foul ball.
 - i. *For example, on a 4/2 count, the coach comes in to pitch – the coach is able to throw up to three pitches – if the player swings at the first pitch, and misses, she is out – if she chooses to watch the pitch, she is allowed two more pitches – if she chooses not to swing at the second pitch, she is allowed one more pitch (she hasn't hit 3 strikes) – at the third pitch, if the player does not make contact, or chooses not to swing, she is out – if she hits the ball foul, she is entitled to another pitch (same rule applies if the next pitch is hit into foul territory) – after the third pitch, if the ball is not put in play, or hit into foul territory, the batter is called out on strikes.*
 - ii. See additional Coach Pitch rules below.
- c. **12U**: Normal softball pitching rules apply (e.g., walks are awarded on the fourth called ball). **A pitcher may appear in no more than 2 innings per game.** The innings do not need to be consecutive. A single pitch constitutes an inning pitched.
- d. Hit-By-Pitch: If a batter is hit by a pitch thrown by the pitcher (not the coach), then the umpire may award the batter first base, provided that the batter made an attempt to avoid the pitch. The umpire has discretion to not award first base if the batter does not attempt to get out of the way of the ball. This is strictly within the umpire's discretion.
 - i. If any pitcher hits **three (3)** batters in one (1) inning where the batters are awarded first base, then the pitcher must be removed from the pitcher's position for the remainder of the inning. The removed pitcher may return to pitch in a subsequent inning (not necessarily the next inning); *provided*, that if that pitcher hits another batter who is awarded first base (i.e., four total HBP), then that pitcher is removed for the remainder of the game from the pitching position.

- ii. **Note:** *If the ball hits the ground before hitting the batter, it is still ruled a hit-by-pitch.*

e. **Reliever Rules:**

- i. **10U and 12U:** Any new pitcher must face a minimum of one batter before being removed.
- f. The ball must begin inside the pitcher's mitt. Once the pitcher's hand enters the mitt there must be a two second delay before beginning the motion. At the start of the pitcher's motion, ONE foot must be in contact with the pitching rubber. **Step-backs are allowed.**
- g. All pitchers are to pitch in one continuous underhand or windmill motion, without an arc to the delivered pitch. Pitchers may use a partial windmill (sometimes referred to as "sling-shot") motion instead of the full windmill motion but are strongly encouraged to learn and use the full windmill motion.
- h. Pitchers are allowed 5 warm-up pitches when entering the game, 3 when returning at the start of the next inning, and one after the catcher is in place.

i. **Coach Pitch Rules:**

- i. If a batter is hit by a pitch thrown by a coach, it is a ball and the batter is **not** awarded first base.
- ii. The coach must pitch from the pitching rubber, using a similar motion as that used by player pitchers and without an arc.
- iii. During coach pitch, the player in the pitcher's position must play within a three-foot radius of the pitching rubber. Players, during coach pitch, cannot take a position in front of the rubber.
- iv. A coach is allowed two mound visits per pitcher per inning. **On the second visit, the pitcher must be removed for the remainder of the inning.** Any active player, including one on the bench, may be substituted as a pitcher. If a player comes off the bench to pitch in the middle of an inning, that inning does NOT count as a defensive inning on the bench for the player who did not start the defensive inning and was sitting out.
- v. If a coach is unintentionally hit with a batted ball during coach pitch, the ball remains in play. If the pitching coach intentionally makes contact with the ball or in the umpire's judgment interferes with a defensive play, the ball is dead, and the batter is out. The coach will be given a warning and a second infraction will result in the coach being ejected from the game.

Note: *Exceptions to these rules may apply during playoffs, including with respect to pitching limits. Official playoff rules will be clarified prior to playoffs.*