



House League Softball Rules

Ponytail 2-3

Rev 2/2/2026

Philosophy: *The Northbrook Girls Softball Association is committed to providing a safe, enjoyable and instructional, yet competitive, softball experience for all of its House League players and coaches.*

1. Games, Innings and Equipment:

1.1 Game Length: Games will be six innings or one hour and thirty minutes, whichever comes first. No new inning may start after the official time limit. **There are no time limits for the Playoff and World Series games, the run limits and slaughter rule are still in play.**

1.2 Start Times: Official start of game shall be determined by first pitch. If an inning begins prior to the time limit, the game will not end until the inning is completed. The next inning begins at the time of the third out or run limit (see 1.4)

1.3 Extra Innings: If time has expired at the conclusion of six innings with the score tied, the game will be recorded as a tie. Only Playoff and World Series games will have extra innings. Position limits described in section 2 of these rules will stay in effect in the event of an extra inning game.

1.4 Inning End: An inning will end after three outs, or four runs being scored, whichever comes first.

1.5 Official Games: Time limits notwithstanding, the following constitutes an "official game" when weather prohibits further play: two and one half (2 1/2) innings shall constitute an official game, unless the home team is losing, in which case three (3) innings constitutes an official game. If any additional innings are not completed, the score reverts to the score at the end of the last completed inning.

1.6 Resumed Games: Where a game has not been completed and not considered "official", teams may resume the game (at a later date) at the point where the game was called, keeping in mind time elapsed, runners on base, any runs scored, etc.

1.7 Cleats: No metal cleats are allowed.

1.8 Uniforms: Players should be in uniform. Players should be discouraged from wearing jewelry. Coaches are responsible for ensuring players wear their complete uniform. No shorts or skirt will be allowed in any game under any circumstances. Any player wearing shorts or skirt will not be allowed to play in the game until she changes into her softball pants. (Pants are required for safety during sliding).

1.9 Safety Equipment: Catchers and anyone warming up a pitcher must wear a helmet. Batters, base runners and girls in the on deck circle must wear a batting helmet and only the batter and on deck hitter are allowed to swing bats. All fielders must wear a facemask.

1.10 Courtesy Runners: To encourage faster games, courtesy runners for the next inning's catcher if on base are allowed and encouraged after the second out. The courtesy runner shall be the girl making the last out.

1.11 Catcher Backups: A defensive team coach may back up the catcher. (This is to speed up the games by having someone throw pitches not caught by the catcher back to the pitcher). That person must remain silent once the player-pitcher steps on the rubber to go into her wind up and remain that way until the end of the play, except if there's a safety concern.

1.12 Bats: All bats used at games and practices must be ASA approved.

1.13 Balls: 11" soft yellow ball

1.14 Lightning: The NGSAs and the Northbrook Park District uses the *Thor Guard Lightning prediction* and detection system. At parks where there is a lightning detector - one long Siren will sound when lightning is detected within 5 miles of a lightning detector. If you hear this siren, see lightning, or hear thunder, seek shelter immediately. Play may resume after 30 minutes have passed without lightning. You must wait 30 minutes even if the siren sounds two short blasts indicating all clear sooner than 30 minutes. Be vigilant in monitoring and reporting weather conditions. Sirens are located at Techny Prairie, Village Green, Meadowhill, Wood Oaks, and West Park. This rule applies to all NGSAs games and practices.

1.15 Slaughter Rule: If a team is losing by 5 runs after 5 innings or 9 or more runs after 4 innings, the game will be considered a slaughter and may end or continue if both teams agree to do so. But the official result and score will be reflected without any elected extra play.

2. Player Participation:

2.1 Playing Time: NGSAs House League programs are fully inclusive and fully participatory. Every team member receives playing time in each game. The policy of the house league is that players should have, and coaches should strive for, equal participation by all players.

2.2 Position Involvement: Each player must be scheduled to play at least two innings in the infield during every game. Girls are encouraged to play all positions. However, girls playing first base should be able to adequately catch the ball and pitchers should be able to keep the game moving. (This is for safety and speeding up the game.) Pitcher and Short-Center are infield positions. Catcher is to be considered neither an infield nor an outfield position.

2.3 Position Limits: No player may play all 5 of the first 5 innings in the infield and/or catcher. Each player must play at least one of those innings in the outfield or be on the bench. A player may not play the same position more than two innings in any game.

2.4 Benching: No player may sit on the bench and be out of the defensive lineup for a second inning until all players have done so for at least one inning. No player may sit on the bench and be out of the defensive lineup for two consecutive innings

2.5 Batting Order: The batting order will be continuous and all players present will be included in the batting order. A player will bat when it is her turn to bat regardless of any field assignments.

2.6 Depleted Rosters: A team may play with 7 or more players. If a team can only field 6 players or fewer at the start of the game, it will be recorded as a forfeit even if the game is played. When a team is playing with 9 or fewer players, the opposing team is encouraged to lend outfielder(s) for each inning. Substitutes not on the team roster must be within the age range for the league and approved by the league commissioner.

2.7 Advance Notice: If a team notifies NGSAA 7 days or more in advance of a game that they will not be able to field the minimum required number of players, then NGSAA and the Head Coaches of the two teams shall make a good faith attempt to reschedule the game at a date, time, and place agreeable to all parties. If an agreeable rescheduling cannot be worked out prior to the originally scheduled game day, then the game will be recorded as a forfeit. If a team notifies NGSAA less than 7 days prior to a scheduled game or does not provide notice, the game will be recorded as a forfeit.

2.8 Forfeit Recording: Forfeits will be recorded as a 9-0 score, with forfeiting team losing.

3. Defensive Alignment

3.1 Defensive Positions: There will be ten defensive positions, as follows: First Base, Second Base, Third Base, Shortstop, Short Center, Left Field, Right Field, Center Field, Pitcher and Catcher, however, teams may elect to field 4 outfielders, although, you cannot borrow a player from another team as the 4th outfielder

3.2 Infield Positioning: Infielders may not be positioned more than three feet in front of the baseline. An infielder may play behind the baseline, but no further than 10 feet. This must be brought to the umpire's attention before the next pitch is thrown to correct the defensive positioning.

3.3 Baseline Positioning: Defensive players may not stand on the base or in the baseline unless attempting to force a runner out, tag a runner, or field a ball in play.

3.4 Outfield Positioning: Outfielders must be positioned beyond the skinned area of the infield (if the field has a skinned infield). If there is no skinned infield, or if the field is completely skinned, the outfielder must be positioned at least twenty-five feet beyond the infield.

3.5 Pitching Distance: the pitchers mound is at 35'. Teams/coaches have the ability to move the mound up to 32' if the pitcher cannot reach the plate from 35'. For safety reasons pitchers cannot start their pitch in front of the circle.

3.6 Base Lengths: The base lengths will be sixty (60) feet

3.7 Substitutions: Once defensive players have been positioned for an inning, they may not be substituted or repositioned except in the case of emergency or injury. The pitcher may be substituted, but if possible should assume the position of the person that is replacing her.

4. Pitching

4.1 Pitching Technique: The pitching technique shall be underhand fast-pitch. Windmill delivery is strongly encouraged. Pitchers may take a step back off the pitching rubber in their wind-up with their non-pivot foot.

4.2 Inning Limitations: A player may pitch a maximum of two innings in a game. Because of the required substitutions and participation, the two innings need not be

consecutive, and a player may go to the bench between the innings she pitches. One (1) pitch in an inning will constitute a full inning.

4.3 Proper Delivery: There will be no penalty for improper placement of the feet by the pitcher. The umpire will make one attempt to correct the infraction by instructing the pitcher (and her coach) in the proper technique. Pitchers may start with one or two feet on the pitching rubber and may take one step (not two) towards the batter before releasing the ball. A step back as part of the delivery is allowed. If the pitcher cannot execute the proper technique after the umpire's initial attempt to correct her, she will not be allowed to continue pitching.

4.4 Balls and Strikes: Balls and strikes will be called by the umpire from behind home plate. If Three (3) balls are thrown by the pitcher to a single batter, an offensive coach will throw pitches until that batter is able to hit the ball into play, or strike out. During this time, the player-pitcher shall either have both feet in the circle or have one foot in or on the circle to the right or left of the coach-pitcher. THERE WILL BE NO BASES ON BALLS. When the adult throws pitches, the objective will be to allow the batter to hit the ball. However, a player can be called out on strikes or strike out by swinging and missing on a pitch thrown by an adult.

Coach pitches must start from inside the pitching circle. If the coach pitching is unable to get out of the way and is hit by a batted ball, the ball will be live. The coach should not play the ball. If, in the umpire's discretion, the coach intentionally interferes with a live ball or fielder, the batter will be called out and base runners returned to their original bases.

4.5 Hit Batsmen: A pitcher who hits two batters with pitches in one inning may be removed at the request of the opposing coach.

4.6 Pitcher Warm-Ups: When a pitching change occurs, whether during or between innings, a pitcher shall be allowed a maximum of 5 warm-up pitches. If there is a delay in the defensive team or batter being ready, the umpire may allow the pitcher to continue throwing warm-up pitches at the umpire's discretion.

5. Batting and Base Running

5.1 Bunting: There will be no bunting or intentional half-swinging allowed. A batter violating this rule will be called out.

5.1.1 Chopped Ball: A player may, however, chop the ball into the ground with a full swing.

5.2 Thrown Bat: A batter who throws a bat unintentionally will be given a warning. If necessary, the umpire will instruct the player or her coach on the proper technique. A player who throws a bat for the second time in a game after receiving a warning will be called out. If the umpire does not observe a thrown bat, coaches are permitted to report a thrown bat to the umpire so that they can make a call or be aware.

5.3 Dead Ball Arc: Any batted ball in fair territory is a live ball. There is no dead ball arc in front of home plate.

5.4 Infield Fly Rule: The infield fly rule does not apply.

5.5 Tagging Up: Runners may advance to any base, including home plate, by tagging up after a fly ball is caught, regardless of whether the catch is made in fair or foul territory. The advance is at the runner's risk.

5.6 Foul Flies and Foul Tips: A batter who hits a foul fly which is caught by any fielder is out. A batter who hits a foul tip which is caught by the catcher is out if there were two strikes on her when the foul tip was hit. A caught foul tip with fewer than two strikes on the batter is considered to be a strike.

5.6.1 Foul Tip: A "foul tip" is a foul ball which does not exceed the height of the batter.

5.6.2 Foul Fly: A "foul fly" is a fly ball higher than the batter's height, in foul territory.

5.7 Strikes: A batter shall be out by strikeout if three strikes are called on her. Strikes may be by swinging and missing, swinging and hitting a foul ball, or a pitch not swung at but in the strike zone and called by the umpire. A foul ball hit when two strikes are on the batter is not a third strike.

5.7.1 Pitch hits plate: A ball not swung at that hits home plate shall not be called a strike.

5.7.2 High Arc Limit: At the umpire's discretion a pitch exceeding 12 feet of height shall be called a ball.

5.7.3 Dropped Third Strike: A runner may not advance to first base on a dropped third strike.

5.8 Hit By Pitch: If a batter is hit by a pitch, the batter will be awarded 1st base.

5.8.1 If, in the umpire's opinion, the batter has not made an attempt to avoid being hit by the pitch, it will be ruled a ball and the batter will not be awarded first base.

5.8.2 If a pitch hits the ground before hitting a batter, the pitch is considered a dead ball pitch and called a ball.

5.8.3 If a batter swings and is hit, it will be counted as a strike.

5.8.4 If a batter is hit by a pitch in the strike zone, it will be counted as a strike.

5.9 The Strike Zone: The strike zone is the space over any part of home plate, when a batter assumes a natural batting stance adjacent to home plate. The strike zone shall extend from the batter's chin to the mid calf, and one inch inside and outside the plate when the batter is in a normal batting stance.

5.10 Sliding: Sliding is at the discretion of the base runner. However, base runners should be encouraged to slide into bases on close plays to avoid collision, base runner interference and possible injury.

5.11 Lead Offs: There are no lead offs and a runner may not leave the base until the pitched ball passes home plate. If the runner leaves a base early, the umpire shall immediately stop play, the ball is dead (regardless of whether it is hit into play) and the runner shall receive a warning. After one warning per game, per team, runners who leave base early will be called out.

5.12 Stealing: There is no stealing and runners may not advance on a passed ball.

5.13 Overthrows: There is no advancing on overthrows at any base.

5.14 Sendback Rule: A base runner that advances past the maximum number of bases allowed on an overthrow will be allowed to return to the last base freely and it will be considered a dead ball. However, a base runner that overruns or over slides a base may be tagged out.

5.15 Running Through 1st Base: A runner running through 1st base may not be tagged out unless she shows intent to advance towards second base. Simply turning left instead of right does not show intent to advance. The red/orange "Runner's Base" should be utilized when running through the base for safety purposes.

5.16 Dead Ball: A play is considered dead when the pitcher has possession of the ball within a 10 foot arc of the pitching rubber or on an overthrow back to the pitcher when the pitcher is within a 10 foot arc of the pitching rubber and when otherwise described in the rules. Base runners may not advance further at this point unless they are more than halfway to the next base. If they are less than halfway, they must go back to the previous base.

5.17 Fielders Interference: Fielders may not block the path of the base runner or the base a runner is trying to reach without the ball. The base runner will automatically be awarded the appropriate base when a fielder blocks the path of a runner or be called safe at a base that was obstructed when a fielder does not have control of the ball. Interference will not be called on the fielder when making a play on the ball or runner.

5.18 Runners Interference: Base runners may not intentionally collide or intentionally attempt to dislodge the ball from the fielder. A base runner intentionally doing either of these will be called out and ejected from the game. A runner has the right to slide into a base in an attempt to avoid a tag and, if in doing so, the ball becomes dislodged, said runner is not in violation of this rule.

5.19 Baserunner Touching Ball: If a batted ball hits the batter or a base runner in fair territory before it is touched by a defensive player or before it passes an infielder, that batter or base runner will be called out and the play resulting in a dead ball. The pitcher is not considered an infielder in this case and the ball may pass the pitcher with the batter or base runner still being called out. Once the ball is touched by a defensive player or passes an infielder (excluding the pitcher), the batter or base runner will not be called out if they come in contact with the ball and it will remain a live ball.

5.20 Backstop: A batted ball that hits the backstop screen will become a dead ball. If it is caught by a fielder before it hits the ground it is considered a foul strike and the batter will not be called out.

5.21 On Deck Placement: On deck hitters must not be placed in front of the entrance to any dugout, must wear a batting helmet and must stay in the on deck area in front of their own dugout until it is her turn to bat and the current play is over. Interference will be called on the on deck hitter if she impedes with a live ball or a fielder attempting to make a play.

6. General

6.1 Behavior and Conduct: Coaches are responsible for the behavior of all players, assistant coaches and parents/family/spectators of their players. The Association's Code of Conduct shall be in effect at all times, and the umpires shall have sole authority thereunder.

6.2 Coaches Placement: Except for base coaching, coaches are to remain in the dugout area except:

6.2.1 For conferences with their own players during time outs

6.2.2 To set defensive players in position prior to the beginning of an inning.

6.2.3 In the event of an injury to any player.

6.2.4 In the event the umpire requests the coach's presence on the field.

6.2.5 When a coach has come in to pitch after 3 balls, as described in rule 4.4, or when a coach is backing up the catcher as described in rule 1.11.

6.3 Fields: All softball fields are designated as no smoking areas prior to and during games. Alcoholic beverages are also prohibited from all softball fields.

6.4 Game Score and Umpire Evaluation: Each team will keep score and submit a report as directed to the NGSA House Director.

6.5 Rescheduled Games: In the event a game is rained out or cancelled due to inclement weather or other circumstances, the game will be made up, on the next available date and field, as long as a date, time, and field can be arranged.

6.6 Blood: A player, coach or umpire who is bleeding or who has fresh blood on their uniform or clothing shall be prohibited from participating further in the game until appropriate treatment can be administered.

6.7 Protests: No protests of judgement calls will be considered. Umpires have sole authority to supervise the game. **Coaches are reminded that the House League is a league to foster enjoyment, instruction, inclusion and participation, and that winning games is only a secondary goal.**

6.8 Suspended Play: The Umpire may suspend play for up to 30 minutes or terminate play when, in the umpire's sole opinion, atmospheric conditions,

temperature, or the amount of light is not appropriate for playing the game. The umpire must inform the coaches of his/her decision.

6.9 Players on the Field: Besides playing a defensive position, batting, base running or base coaching, players are to remain in the dugout. Only one player is allowed to be on deck.

6.10 Readying Players: All teams should have defensive field assignments and be ready to take the field immediately following the 3rd out.

6.11 Negativity: Derogatory cheers with negative comments towards the other team or done loudly to interfere with the concentration of the opponent are not allowed.

6.12 Authorized Personnel: Other than the NGSAs board approved coaches, no parent, sibling, family member, or spectator shall be allowed in the dugout, on the field, or interact with an umpire during a game. Only approved coaches, players and umpires are allowed in the dugout or on the field during games. If a team is short-handed coaches, a parent will be allowed to help in the dugout, back up the catcher, or coach a base but must be approved by an NGSAs board member.

6.13 Lineup Exchange: Each coach may present the opposing coach with a written batting order and defensive fielding chart prior to the start of each game. Any changes made to these during a game must be brought to the attention of the opposing coach.

6.14 Coaches Interference: If a coach for the hitting team intentionally interferes with a live ball, batter/base runner or fielder, the batter or base runner shall be called out. If a coach for the defensive team interferes with a live ball, fielder, or batter/base runner, the batter or base runner shall be called safe.

6.15 Rule Clarification: If clarification of a rule is needed, head coaches or their designee should meet with the umpires and discuss it in a calm and professional manner. Judgment calls cannot be debated or argued. If a coach wishes to discuss a decision on a judgment call, they must wait until after the 3rd out of the inning and do so in a calm and professional manner. The umpire's decision is FINAL.

6.16 Postseason Seeding: For the purpose of final standings and seedings for postseason play, the order within each division shall be determined by Winning Percentage, calculated as: $(\text{wins} + (0.5 \times \text{ties}))/\text{games}$. If multiple teams are tied by winning percentage, the tie-breaker rules proceed by the following in order until a difference is found: Head-To-Head record between the tied teams, Total Run Differential (highest positive), Total Runs Against (lowest), Total Runs Scored (highest), and finally a coin toss conducted by the NGSAs House Director or their designate.

PONYTAIL PRE-GAME CHECKLIST

Umpires are often switching between Ponytail, Minors, and Majors games. This short checklist is intended to get both coaches and the umpire on the same page prior to every game. These items tend to cause the most confusion among coaches and umpires and it is recommended that they are discussed in the pre-game umpire meeting.

- No new inning after 90min. Slaughter rule 9 runs after 4 innings or 5 runs after 5 innings
- 3 Balls results in Coach Pitch. Coach Pitches CAN be called strikes.
- Hit by pitch does NOT apply if the ball bounces first or umpire discretion if pitch was a strike or player did not attempt to get out of the way.
- Balls that hit the plate are automatically a ball
- Strike Zone is batter's chin to the mid calf
- No Lead Offs, No Bunting, No advancing on ANY overthrow
- Runners may advance until the pitcher has possession of the ball within a 10 foot arc of the pitching rubber or on an overthrow back to the pitcher

LIGHTNING WARNING SYSTEMS

The Northbrook Park District has recently upgraded the lightning warning systems within the District. There are two main units. One (Strike Guard) is located at Heritage Oaks Golf Club with ancillary units at West Park and Wood Oaks Green. Another unit (ThorGuard) is located at Techny Prairie Park and Fields with ancillary units at the Chalet in Meadowhill Park and Village Green.

ThorGuard

- Techny Prairie Park and Fields: strobe light located on top of the building next to the lake
- Village Green: strobe light located on top of the Village Green Center
- Meadowhill Park: strobe light located on top of the Chalet next to the Velodrome

ThorGuard, a lightning **prediction** system will sound when there is an immediate threat of lightning. ThorGuard functions by evaluating the dynamics of the electrical energy within the atmosphere. This type of prediction system can generate false alarms so it is very important to be vigilant in monitoring weather conditions when participating in outdoor activities. One long (15-second) siren will sound and a strobe will flash on the unit when there is an immediate threat of lightning. Seek shelter immediately.

The siren will sound three 5-second blasts and the strobe will go off after the ThorGuard system determines conditions are safe. Play may resume only after the all clear siren.

Strike Guard

- Heritage Oaks Golf Club: strobe light located on the clubhouse, on the pump house near 17th hole, #5 green/#11 tee on the 18-hole course, the #4 tee on the east-9 course
- West Park: strobe light located on the Sports Center roof (NE corner)
- Wood Oaks: strobe light located on the tennis building in the middle of the park

Strike Guard, a lightning **detection** system will sound when actual lightning strikes have been detected within a 5-mile radius of Sportsman's Country Club. Strike Guard monitors cloud and cloud-to-ground lightning within a user-set radius and the technology prevents false alarms. It is imperative that warnings are adhered to immediately since the system has actually detected lightning in the area. The alert will be the same as the ThorGuard system. One long (15-second) siren will sound and a strobe will flash on the unit when lightning has been detected. Seek shelter immediately.

The siren will sound three 5-second blasts and the strobe will go off after the Strike Guard system determines conditions are safe. Play may resume only after the all clear siren.

Be vigilant in monitoring threatening weather and always err on the side of caution. Seek shelter immediately if:

- You hear one long siren.
- You hear thunder (regardless of siren).
- You see lightning (regardless of siren).

Avoid open areas, water, tall trees, metal fences, overhead wires, power lines, elevated ground, golf carts, mowers, cellular phones and radios.

30/30 Lightning Safety Rule

Go indoors if, after seeing lightning, you cannot count to 30 before hearing thunder. Stay indoors for 30 minutes after hearing the last clap of thunder.

The Northbrook Park District strives to provide a safe environment for participation in all activities.