



## **Hendricks County Girls Softball League**

### **Division Rules - 12U, 13-15U, & 16-18U (2026)**

(rev. 3-01-26)

The following rules have been approved by all participating league coordinators and should be observed at all parks participating in the Hendricks County Softball League. All Rules NOT LISTED will be governed by ASA/USA rules and regulations.

**ROSTERS:** Rosters should have no more than 13 players per team unless agreed upon otherwise by league coordinators.

### **LEAGUE ELIGIBILITY:**

***SPRING*** league eligibility is determined based on the player's age as of September 1, 2025

***FALL*** league eligibility is determined based on the player's age as of September 1, 2026

Note: If a player is discovered to be participating in an ineligible age division during the regular season, that player will be removed from the team. If a player is found to be playing in an ineligible age division during a tournament, the entire team will be disqualified from the remainder of the tournament.

**GAME SCHEDULE:** Teams will generally play two games per week with rotating hosting locations. If the league has an odd number of teams, it may be necessary for one team to play three games in a week (usually a doubleheader) to ensure every team has an opponent.

You will be notified by your coach if a game has been cancelled due to inclement weather or some other unforeseen event. Park rules will be used to determine if a game needs to be interrupted mid-game due to inclement weather (including lightning).

If a scheduled game cannot be played, the league coordinator will try to reschedule the game. However, there is no guarantee that all cancelled games will be rescheduled.

### **EQUIPMENT:**

- 12-inch optic yellow ball
- ASA/USA approved bat
- Batting helmet with protective face mask - *Players will not be allowed to bat without a helmet WITH face mask. All batters and base runners must wear their helmets until they leave the field.*
- Fielder's Masks – 12U: mandatory for all positions, 13-15U: mandatory for all infield positions (outfield encouraged), 16-18U: not mandatory for any position, but encouraged. **IMPORTANT:** Each community may have their own rules regarding fielders masks so please carry one in your bat bag at all times and respect the individual rules of each park.
- Heart Guard – pitchers are encouraged to wear a heart guard or equivalent
- Softball Cleats with plastic spikes (metal cleats are not allowed)
- All catchers must wear the required catchers gear per ASA rules. The organization provides a set of catchers gear for each team.

**REGULATION GAME OVERVIEW:** A regulation game consists of:

- Seven innings or 75 minutes (whichever occurs first) constitutes a game. No new inning should start after 70 minutes and the current inning should be completed when possible.
- A game should be started with at least eight players unless agreed upon otherwise by both coaches. Late players may be inserted at the bottom of the batting order. If only eight players (or less), the ninth (or preceding) positions in the batting order will NOT be considered an automatic out.
- Batters may bunt and runners may steal
- Runners may leave the base as soon as the ball is released from the pitcher's hand
- A game is considered complete if it cannot be continued due to darkness or inclement weather
- If a regular season game ends with a tie score, it will be recorded as a tie game. If a championship game ends with a tie score, the international tie breaker rule will apply and the new extra inning will start with no outs.

**GAME TIME LIMITS:**

All games shall be 75 minutes and finish the current inning. No new inning should start after 70 minutes have been played. The current inning should be finished even if the time limit has expired. The game clock will begin as designated by the umpire. If a game starts late due to delays by one or both teams, an umpire or director may shorten the game's time limit to preserve the start time of the following game on that field. If a team is more than 15 minutes late, the opposing team must choose to subtract the time from the game's time limit or forfeit the game completely. This rule does not apply if the delay is caused by a prior game exceeding its scheduled time.

Tournament championship games will not have a time limit. Six complete innings (12U) or seven completed innings (14U/13-18U) will be played to complete a championship game unless BOTH teams agree to play with a time limit. The mercy rule is still in effect for championship games.

**RUN LIMITS:**

**12U:**

- 6 run limit per inning/per team for the first three innings
- 10 run limit per inning/per team for innings four and five
- Unlimited runs during inning six

**13-18U/14U:**

- 8 run limit per inning/per team for the first three innings
- 10 run limit per inning/per team for innings four and five
- Unlimited runs during inning six & seven

**RUN RULE / MERCY RULE:** A game is considered complete once one team has:

- 15 run lead after three innings (2 ½ if home team is ahead after top of the 3rd)
- 12 run lead after four innings (3 ½ if home team is ahead after top of the 4th)
- 8 run lead after five innings (4 ½ if home team is ahead after the top of the 5th)

Note: It is up to the coaches or scorekeepers to monitor for the run rule. If you believe your team has reached the run rule: call time, confirm with the other team's coach or scorekeeper, and then inform the umpire.

**FIELDING:** 12U shall field ten players. 13-18U & 14U shall field nine players.

**BATTING/BASE RUNNING:** All players must remain in the same batting order for the entire game (\*). Coaches shall exchange batting lineups prior to each game. Any player arriving late to a game may be added to the bottom of the lineup. Players may steal after the pitcher releases the ball. No throwing of bats (\*\*).

\* If a player bats out of order, the following rules apply:

- If the error is discovered while the incorrect batter is at bat, the correct batter shall take her place and assume the count of the incorrect batter.
- If the error is discovered after the incorrect batter has completed their turn and before the first pitch to the next batter, the batter who should have batted is out - all runs scored are cancelled and base runners shall return to their original base.
- If the error is discovered after the first pitch to the next batter, all runs scored and all bases ran shall be declared legal. No one is called out, however those that missed their turn at bat will not bat until the next time their name appears in the line-up.

\*\* If a player throws a bat, their team will receive a warning after which any subsequent violation will be cause for the offending player to be called out (umpire's discretion). If the bat hits any person, the batter is automatically out without a warning. If a batter is called out for throwing a bat and if the ball is hit fair, the play is declared dead, and all base runners must return to the base they occupied prior to the dead ball.

### **PITCHING:**

**12U:** Pitch from 40 feet. Pitcher can pitch a maximum of five innings per game.

**13-18U & 14U:** Pitch from 43 feet. No pitching limits.

Note: One pitch in an inning is considered an inning pitched. Any pitcher may re-enter the game at any point (starting or relief), but limited to one pitcher switch per inning (barring injury or other emergency).

**OVERTHROW RULE:** There is no overthrow rule for any base in 12U, 14U, or 13-18U

**INTERFERENCE:** If a play is being made at a base or in the baseline, the base runner should avoid unnecessary contact with the defensive player or the base runner may be called out for interference (subject to umpire discretion). Interference does not require direct contact between players.

**OBSTRUCTION:** Defensive players, who are not in possession of the ball or not in the process of fielding a hit ball, cannot obstruct the runner's ability to reach the next base. This includes catchers blocking home plate without the ball. If obstruction is called, the umpire will assess (post-play) whether the obstruction influenced the outcome of the play and make appropriate corrective calls if deemed necessary.

**INFIELD FLY:** An infield fly may be called when there is (#1) less than two outs and (#2) first and second bases, or first, second, and third bases are occupied. If a batter hits a fair fly ball (not a line drive or a bunt) that can be caught by an infielder with "ordinary effort" (in the judgment of the umpire) and the umpire calls "infield fly", the batter is out. However, the ball is still live and all regular rules apply to the runners. If the ball is caught, runners can stay or tag up and attempt to advance. If the ball is dropped, runners can stay or attempt to advance (no tag up required). The batter is still out regardless of whether the fielder catches or drops the ball.

**DROP THIRD STRIKE:** If first base is open and the catcher fails to catch the ball "in flight" or drops the ball on the batters third strike, the batter may run and attempt to reach first base (although they did not hit the ball). If there are two outs, the batter may attempt to run even if first base is occupied. The batter/runner must be tagged or forced out at first base in order to be out.

**LOOK BACK RULE:** When a runner is off the base while the pitcher has control of the ball inside the pitchers circle, the runner must immediately advance to the next base or return to their original base. The runner cannot stand between bases and continue to go back and forth. The runner will be declared out if they do not immediately return to their original base or proceed to the next base (steal). The runner will NOT be out if a play is made by the pitcher, including a fake throw ("pump fake" or feint/flinch directed towards the runner).

**INJURED PLAYER:** In case of injury or illness, a team can continue to finish a game with as few as eight players. If injuries result in seven players or less, game may continue if agreed upon by both coaches. The injured or ill player should be scratched from the batting lineup and will not be considered an automatic out.

**COURTESY RUNNERS:** A courtesy runner will be allowed for a batter who is injured. A courtesy runner may also be used for the catcher or pitcher (no injury required) after there are two outs. This allows the catcher time to "gear up" and the pitcher time to warm up before the next inning (helps speed up game). If the catcher or pitcher is already on base and the second out occurs, no courtesy runner is allowed. The courtesy runner will be the player who recorded the last out.

**SUBSTITUTE/EMERGENCY PLAYERS:** Emergency players or "subs" may only be utilized when nine or fewer players are available for 12U or eight or fewer players are available for 13-18U. A maximum of two emergency players may be used in any one game to field a total of no more than 10 players for 12U and no more than 9 players for 13-18U & 14U. Emergency players must bat last and play in the **outfield** only. (\*\*\*)

\*\*\* Emergency players during the regular season may be from the same age group or younger. Emergency players for tournament games must be from a lower age group. Emergency players must have participated in the league's current season. Emergency players must be identified at the start of the game to the umpire and opposing coach.

**UMPIRES:** All regular season games will have one umpire in all age divisions except for 6U. Championship games will have two umpires.

**"WALK UP" MUSIC:** Walk up music or sound effects may only be played as the batter is walking up to the plate or after a play is over. Music should be stopped or "faded out" as the batter enters the batter's box. Violations will result in a warning from the umpire. Any proceeding violations after the umpire warning will result in no walk up music or sound effects allowed for the rest of the game.

\*Some communities may not allow walkup music.

**SPORTSMANSHIP:** Players and coaches will always conduct themselves with good sportsmanship. If a player is ejected for any reason, the team with this player will not forfeit the game; however, the team will record an out in that lineup position going forward. Any player or coach ejected may not participate in the next game. Parent protests are not allowed. Disputes should be settled by the umpires and coaches at the time of the call and should be handled in a sportsmanlike manner. If a spectator is ejected, the spectator must leave the playing area immediately.