



North Cincy Softball League Rules

2026

2026 North Cincy Softball League (NCSL) Spring Rules *(no changes from 2024 Spring Rules)*

Rules Common to all Leagues

1. All rules not specifically modified will be played under USSSA Rules for Softball. For a full copy of the USSSA rules – please go to www.ussa.com
2. All teams provide their own insurance and equipment.
3. The home team shall furnish a **NEW** game ball and good used ball for backup.
4. Coaches are held responsible for the conduct of players and fans of their team. If an umpire is having a problem with unruly fans, the coach will be asked to take care of the situation. If the problem persists, the umpire has the right to cancel the remainder of the game and declare a forfeit victory for the opposing team.
5. **No organized infield practice before the games.** Teams may warm up in the outfield grass or in foul territory only.
6. **No hitting balls against chain link fences.**
7. **No Hit sticks are to be used once the first game begins at any park.**
8. CONTINUOUS BATTING: A continuous batting rule is required for all teams, allowing managers to bat all of the players in attendance. In the event any player suffers an injury or must leave the game for any reason (except ejection) the team involved will not be forced to take an out when that player's turn comes up in the batting order. If a player is EJECTED, the team involved **MUST TAKE AN OUT** when that spot in the order comes up.
9. Unlimited defensive substitution is allowed.
10. Courtesy Runner: A courtesy runner may be used for the pitcher or catcher at any time. The runner shall be the player that made the last out, or in the first inning, the last batter in the line-up.
11. No protests. Umpire decisions are final.
12. **MUST PLAY RULE:** Every player who is present for a game must play at least two (2) innings of defense prior to the end of the fourth inning.
13. Only positive cheering directed at your own team or players is permitted. (No screaming or taunting of the other team or players will be tolerated.)
14. **TIME LIMIT:** No new inning shall start after the time designated in the rules for each league. Ties are permitted in regular season play.
15. No tobacco in the parks. No alcoholic beverages permitted.
16. **Intentionally** throwing of equipment will result in the player being ejected for the game. **Unintentionally** throwing of the equipment will be an out after one warning per team (at the discretion of the umpire).

17. Expedite the Game: Umpires are being instructed to strictly adhere to the rules between half-innings for getting teams quickly on and off the field. In addition, umpires are urged to follow the 60 second time limit for getting teams on the field. If a team is taking too much time, the umpire can call a ball on the first batter for each 10 seconds late. Pitchers will be allowed five pitches between half innings in the first inning only and only three pitches between half innings from the second inning on.
18. The League strongly recommends that a coach remove a pitcher that has hit numerous batters and/or displays little or no pitch control during the game.

Uniforms and Equipment

1. Catchers must wear required chest protectors, masks (w/ neck guard), shin guards, and helmets.
2. Batters, runners, and players on deck shall wear batting helmets. Players must wear batting helmets equipped with a facemask.
3. All players in the 10U and older leagues are required to wear the defensive safety mask while pitching.
4. All softball leagues are required to use the double safety base at first base.
5. No metal spikes allowed for any leagues (except 14uA and HS) – players or coaches.
6. Stud Earrings are allowed for all age groups. No hoops or dangling earrings are allowed.

NCSL Regular Season Tournament Play

1. For all tournaments, the teams will be paired as seeds 1/8, 2/7, 3/6, 4/5. In divisions of more than 8 teams, brackets will be developed for upper and lower tournaments. These pairing criteria will be used consistently across all leagues.
2. Tournament seeding will be determined by the final standings in each league. Ties will be broken by:
 - a. Head-to-Head competition
 - b. Lower of total runs allowed in Head-to-Head competition.
 - c. Coin flip
3. The higher seed (i.e. lower numerical seed) is always the home team for tournament games.
4. Tournament games cannot end in a tie and must be played until a winner is determined. All other regular season rules apply.

5. Awards will be given to the winners and runners-up of each tournament.

Weather Policy

1. In the event of inclement weather, the umpire(s) will decide whether to suspend or cancel a game.
 - a. In the event of a rain delay, the umpire or park representative will determine when/if the game resumes.
 - b. In the event of lightning, the umpire shall immediately stop play and clear the field for a minimum of 30 minutes. No play may begin until there has been no lightning for 30 minutes.
 - c. If a lightning detector siren is activated in the park, follow the guidelines of detector.
 - d. Tornado Siren Policy: In the event that county tornado sirens are activated, the designated park representative at the field/park will verify the threat and determine if the games at that field/park will be suspended or cancelled.
2. The total delay time permitted for any regular season game is 45 minutes. In the event the delay time exceeds 45 minutes, the game shall be called by the umpire(s) due to inclement weather as outlined in Rule 3. If after a delay, the game resumes, game time limits still apply.
3. Regular season games called due to inclement weather, in which the minimum number of innings to make the game official has not been reached, will be rescheduled at a later date. Game time limits still apply. Both coaches and the Umpire must sign the home team's scorebook which will be the official record of the game status upon restart.
4. Rescheduled games will be resumed from the exact point the game was halted.
5. Players not present at the start of a game will be placed at the bottom of the batting order.
6. Teams that do not have the minimum number of players required to restart a delayed or suspended game at the time of restart will forfeit that game.

Team Requirements

1. If a team has only eight (8) players to start a game, the game may be played with the ninth or tenth player put in when she arrives, at the beginning of the top or the beginning of the bottom of the inning.
 - a. Any roster player arriving late may be entered in the game at the top or bottom of the inning at the discretion of the coach, without having her name appear on the line-up.
 - b. A team shall not be penalized, if due to injury or illness, the team falls below the eight player minimum after the start of the game.
2. An officially designated team will forfeit a game if it is not on the field within ten (10) minutes of the designated game start time.
3. During the regular season, if a team is below ten (10) players and not less than six (6), it may pick up a maximum of four (4) players from the next

lower league to bring the total number of players up to a maximum of ten (10), in order to avoid forfeiture, with the limitations listed in "a" through "e" below.

- a. A Head Coach who desires to pick up a player must have prior consent of the player's parent(s) and there must not be any conflict with the picked-up player's regular team schedule.
- b. A picked-up player may not pitch.
- c. Any picked-up player must play at least two (2) consecutive innings and bat last in the batting order and bat the entire game.
- d. If a regular player arrives after the game begins, she must replace a picked-up player in the field immediately after the picked-up player has completed two (2) innings in the field. The newly arriving regular player must bat in the batting order after the last picked-up player.
- e. All picked-up players must be identified to the opposing Head Coach prior to the game.
- f. If rules are violated, the game may be forfeited.

Umpires

1. If there are no official umpires for the game, both Head Coaches may agree on a substitute. The game will be played with a substitute umpire. If no umpire shows and the coaches disagree, the NCSL League Director or park representative will select an umpire of his choice to officiate the game, or reschedule the game.
2. All 8U umpires will be positioned behind home plate. All umpires under the age of 18 must wear a mask (mandatory) and protective gear (chest protector and shin guards) is recommended.

Softball

Division	Pitching Distance	Base Distance	Regulation Game Innings	Official Game
6U	Coach 30	50	4	3
8U	Coach 35	60	5	3
10U	Player 35	60	6	3
12U	Player 40	60	7	3
14U-B	Player 40	60	7	3
14U-A and High School	Player 43	60	7	3

6U Coach Pitch Rule Exceptions:

1. Players must be five (5) and not over six (6) on or before December 31st of the previous year.
2. A designated coach or parent of the team at bat will pitch the entire game. Any number of coaches and/or parents may pitch during a given game.
 - a. Each batter will have a maximum of three (3) pitches. There will be no called or swinging strikes. If after three (3) pitches the batter has not put the ball in play, the ball will be put on a tee.
 - b. A batted ball that hits the designated pitching coach shall be considered a dead ball and the batter shall be awarded first base and all runners will advance one base. A batted ball that is deflected into the coach shall be considered a ball still in play and all runners may advance at their own peril.
 - c. The defensive fielding pitcher will position herself within three (3) feet on either side of the designated pitcher.
 - d. The designated pitcher should make no attempt to field a batted ball.
 - e. The designated pitcher cannot pitch until the fielding pitcher is adjacent to or behind the thirty (30) foot pitching line.
3. When batted from the tee, the ball must go past the 15 foot arc from home plate.
4. No infield fly rule.
5. An eleven (11) inch rubber ball will be used.
6. A maximum of five (5) runs will be counted in any single inning.
7. Two (2) defensive coaches are permitted on the field behind the outfielders. At no time should the coaches position themselves in front of the outfielders.
8. When a batted ball is hit into the outfield, the play will be dead when the outfielder controls the ball. The runners will only advance to the next base that they are headed to when the outfielder controls the ball.
9. No advancement on overthrows.
10. League standings will not be kept. No Tournament will be held for this age.
11. Outfielders must maintain a position with a minimum of 20 feet behind the baseline until the ball crosses home plate. It shall be obvious to spectators and opposing team which players are infielders and which are outfielders. No outfielder shall make an unassisted play at any base or on any base runner.
12. All players may play a maximum of two (2) innings in the infield and a maximum two (2) innings in the outfield each game and not the same position more than once during any single game. Infield positions are defined as pitcher, first baseman, second baseman, short stop, and third baseman. Outfield positions are defined as catcher, left fielder, left-center fielder, right-center fielder and right fielder.

13. A pitcher may not make an unassisted put-out by running to and tagging a base or by tagging a base runner, with the exception of the pitcher fielding a ground ball within 5 feet of the baseline prior to the batter-runner passing the pitcher.
14. No mercy rule in effect, games shall be played until completion or the defined time limit whichever comes first.
15. **TIME LIMIT:** No New Inning after 1:15

8U Coach Pitch Rule Exceptions:

1. **RUN LIMIT:** A maximum of five (5) runs will be counted in any single inning.
2. No mercy rule in effect, games shall be played until completion or the defined time limit whichever comes first.
3. **TIME LIMIT:** No New Inning after 1:20
4. An eleven (11) inch hard ball will be used. No softies are to be used.
5. This age group will allow teams to play up to 10 players in the field (6 infielders including pitcher & catcher, and 4 outfielders). Outfield positions must be at least 20 feet behind the normal base path at the start of the pitch.
 - a. The defense can employ a maximum of two defensive coaches in the outfield during play until June 1st.
 - b. After June 1st, no coaches will be allowed on the field while their team is playing defense.
6. No leading off or stealing allowed.
7. Infield fly rule is not in effect.
8. No advancement on overthrows.
9. This division will be exclusively a Coach Pitch League.
 - A. There will be no called strikes, no called balls, or hit batters. There will be swinging strikes and strikeouts. On the sixth (6th) pitch, the batter automatically has two (2) strikes. The batter must then hit the ball, if not the batter is out. If a ball is hit foul on the 6th pitch, or subsequent pitch, it will not count as a pitch. There are NO WALKS.
 - B. If the designated pitcher attempts to field a batted ball, the batter is out.
 - C. The designated pitcher cannot coach while the ball is in play. The only time the pitcher can talk to a player is to give instructions to the batter before making the pitch. If the designated pitcher coaches in any other way (i.e. saying "don't swing or swing"), the umpire will issue a warning. Any additional offenses during the game will result in the umpire calling the player(s) out.

- D. The defensive fielding pitcher will position herself within three (3) feet on either side of the designated pitcher. The designated pitcher shall not pitch until the fielding pitcher is adjacent to or behind the 35 foot pitching line.
 - E. A batted ball that hits the pitching coach (other than a ball that has been deflected into the coach by any of the defensive players) shall be considered a dead ball and the batter shall be awarded first base and all runners will advance one base. A batted ball that is deflected into the coach shall be considered a ball still in play and all runners may advance at their own peril.
 - F. Batters hit by a pitch will not be awarded first base.
 - G. Batters may not bunt.
10. On a batted ball to the outfield, all base-runners and the batter-runner may advance at their own peril a maximum of two (2) bases. If the ball is initially controlled in the infield by an infielder (including the catcher) all base-runners and the batter-runner may only advance at their own peril a maximum of one (1) base.
11. No outfielder shall make an unassisted play at any base.
12. A pitcher may not make an unassisted put out by running to and tagging a base or by tagging a base-runner, with the exception of the pitcher fielding a ground ball within 5 feet of the baseline prior to the batter/runner passing.
13. All players must play two (2) innings in the infield each game. Infield positions are defined as pitcher, first baseman, second baseman, short stop and third baseman. Outfield positions are defined as catcher, left fielder, left-center fielder, right-center fielder and right fielder. Exceptions: In the case of a team with a 13 player roster, or a game shortened when a home team leads after the fifth at bat for the visiting team, coaches shall make every reasonable effort to balance playing time and positions equally between all players. Upon notification of abuse of the exceptions, the NCSL League Director may impose team specific instructions to ensure balanced playing time and positions for all players.
14. No player will sit out a 2nd inning until all players have sat out for at least one inning.
15. In an effort to speed up play, coaches may be positioned behind home plate or in the catching position to catch pitches and return the ball to the "Coach Pitcher." A player must still be positioned at the catcher position but can stand to the side of the plate. The player must play the position with respect to batted balls and plays on runners at home plate.
16. This age division will use umpires at some fields and may NOT at others. If no umpire, the coaches from each team will be responsible for all calls. If there is a disagreement the play will be done over.

10U Player Pitch Rule Exceptions:

1. **RUN LIMIT:** A maximum of five (5) runs will be counted in any single inning.
EXCEPTION: The per inning run rule will be lifted in the 6th inning only! It will remain in effect for all prior innings, even if a team is down by more than 5 runs and the game is about to end due to Mercy Rule or the Time Limit.
2. **MERCY RULE:** If the winning team leads by 12 runs after the losing team bats in the 5th inning, the game is over.
3. **TIME LIMIT:** No New Inning after 1:30
4. An eleven (11) inch ball will be used.
5. This age group will allow teams to play up to 10 players in the field (6 infielders including pitcher & catcher, and 4 outfielders). Outfield positions must be at least 20 feet behind the normal base path at the start of the pitch.
6. Batters will be declared out when the catcher drops a third strike. Base runners can still advance in this situation with less than two outs.
7. **STEALING:** A base runner can attempt a steal of the next base when the ball leaves the pitcher's hand. Base runners are limited to stealing one base per legal delivery. **NO STEALING OF HOME IS ALLOWED in the 10U-B divisions.** After the pitch, a runner on third may advance home if there is an attempt made to pick-off the runner at third base. The runner must still adhere to the one base per legal delivery requirement, meaning that they must have already acquired third base at the time of the pick-off attempt. A runner that steals third base cannot advance to home on an errant throw from the catcher that is an attempt to put them out on the steal
 - a. In the 10U-A division only, a runner may advance to home on a passed ball (i.e. players are allowed to steal home). Cannot be done immediately after an attempt to steal 3rd base. Players are still limited to one base per steal attempt. **On a throw down to 2nd base from the catcher, a runner at 3rd IS ALLOWED to attempt to advance home.**
8. Stealing second base in conjunction with a base on balls is not allowed.
9. Infield fly rule is not in effect.
10. In the 10U-South division only, there will be a maximum of one additional base on an overthrow from any position. For example, an overthrow occurs on runner at 1st base, the runner is allowed one base (i.e. is allowed to go to 2nd base). However, if the runner does not attempt to advance to 2nd base, the runner is not awarded 2nd base. The base must be earned by the runner. This applies to all runners on the bases and the batter-runner.
11. At 10U-B (both North and South Levels), for both the look back rule and leaving the base early - there will be one warning per team per game given - subsequent occurrences will result in the runner being declared out.

12. Umpires are instructed to be flexible with the pitchers due to the fact that this age group represents the beginning level of instruction. We encourage umpires to discuss technical flaws in pitching mechanics with coaches **after** the game, rather than holding up the game. Coaches are also advised not to hold up games by "nit picking" the technical flaws of the opposing pitchers.
13. Pitching Rule/Guideline for 10U-B (Both North and South) - Managers and Coaches are to teach the girls the proper technique for pitching; however, in the spirit of focusing the girls' efforts on throwing strikes, the umpires have been asked to relax their interpretation of the above rules for all games in the 10U-B Leagues. Any style of pitching is acceptable as long as upon release of the ball one foot is in contact with the pitching rubber and the pitcher is properly dragging her back foot.
14. In the 10U-B South division only - There shall be NO WALKS. If the batter receives a ball four (4) count, the team manager of the hitting team, or his/her designee, shall pitch a maximum of three (3) pitches to the batter.
 - a. The strike count will continue from its previous point when the ball four (4) count was achieved, and umpires will continue to call swinging strikes.
 - b. If during the first or second coach pitch, the batter receives a third non-foul swinging strike, the batter shall be called out. In the event the batter fouls the coach's third pitch, the batter's at-bat continues until she either puts the ball in play, swings and misses, or takes another subsequent pitch.
 - c. There is no stealing, bunting or hit-by-pitches allowed while the manager of the hitting team, or his/her designee, is pitching.
 - d. The maximum bases a player can advance during the coach pitch portion is one (1) base. That applies to all runners and the batter.

12U/14U/HS Player Pitch Rule Exceptions:

1. **RUN LIMIT:** A maximum of six (6) runs will be counted in any single inning.
EXCEPTION: The per inning run rule will be lifted in the 7th inning only! It will remain in effect for all prior innings, even if a team is down by more than 6 runs and the game is about to end due to Mercy Rule or the Time Limit.
2. **MERCY RULE:** If the winning team leads by 12 runs after the losing team bats in the 5th inning, the game is over.
3. **TIME LIMIT:** No new inning after 1:50
4. All players must play at least two innings of defense prior to the end of the 4th inning.
5. Umpires are to enforce rules of pitching for all 12U-A, 12U-North, 14U and HS level games. I.e. Don't allow a pitcher to crow hop/lift the push off leg off the ground.

All Divisions/Ages

1. Once a pitcher hits three (3) batters in one inning, she must be removed for the remainder of the inning. If a pitcher hits six (6) batters total, she cannot pitch the remainder of the game.
2. This will be at umpires' discretion only – and cannot be argued – same as balls/strikes and other judgment calls. The umpire has discretion to not count HP that occurs for example, when a ball rolls into a player.

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