

2026 IOWA VALLEY LEAGUE RULES – LITTLE LEAGUE SOFTBALL

1. Rules follow the National Federation of High School (NFHS) rules except for the following league rules.
2. **Defensive replacements from the opposing team:** All teams must field nine defensive players every inning. **Little League teams may play a 10th defensive player. This defensive player must play in the outfield.** If a team has only eight (or seven) players, the opposing team will supply one (or two) defensive substitutes. For the first inning, they may supply the last player (or last two players) in their batting lineup or other players on their bench. After the first inning, they will supply the last batter (or two batters) from the previous inning, or other player(s) on their bench. The defensive substitutes will only bat for their team. The team receiving the defensive substitute(s) will only bat players from their team. A team with fewer than 7 players at the start of the game forfeits. However, coaches are encouraged to play the games for the benefit of both teams' players. Coaches are encouraged to do what is in the player's best interest in all other situations. **Under no circumstances should a team be penalized with an out due to the number of players in their batting lineup.**
3. Little League games are 5 innings with no new inning started after 75 minutes (see below in the event of a tie after 75 minutes). The game officially begins with the first warm-up pitch thrown from the pitching mound by the home team. Each half-inning will consist of 5 runs or 3 outs. Three innings must be played to complete a game, or 2½ if the home team is ahead. If a team is ahead by 10 runs after 3 innings, the game will be considered complete, or 2½ innings if the home team is ahead by 10 runs. Teams are encouraged to play the full 75 minutes so that all players have an opportunity for additional game time.
4. If a game is tied after the last inning, after the time limit (75 minutes for Little League), teams will play an extra inning by placing the last batter from the previous inning on second base. The extra inning will begin with 1 out. If the game is still tied after the first extra inning, there will be a second extra inning, with the last two batters from the previous inning placed on 2nd base (the last batter) and 3rd base (the next-to-last batter), also beginning with 1 out. If, after the second extra inning, and the game is still tied, the game will officially end in a tie. Both teams will be awarded a 1/2 win.
5. If a batter is left in the batter's box at the end of an inning, they will be the leadoff batter the following inning, and the ball-strike count will be reset.
6. When time (daylight/safety) is a factor, any game may be stopped by mutual consent of the coaches or at the umpires' discretion. Postponed/ canceled games should be made up as soon as possible. Postponed/ canceled games that are not made up will result in a loss for each team.
7. In the event of rain or unplayable field conditions, visiting teams should be notified as soon as possible. Check the coaches' listings for phone numbers.
8. There will be free substitution at any time, with the only stipulation being that anyone who has batted in the lineup must bat in the same spot if re-entered. It is not necessary to notify the opposing team of any lineup changes unless requested to do so by the head coach of the opposing team. This should be decided before the game starts.
9. All defensive infielders must wear a face mask.

10. Batters, players on deck, and base runners must wear **batting helmets** (earflaps on both sides and faceguards). If they fail to do so after one warning, the umpire shall call them out. All catchers **must wear a helmet and throat protector (even on hockey-style masks)**. The game will not continue until they do so.
11. Little League pitching rubber shall be 35 feet from home plate. There will be 60 feet between bases.
12. ***Steel spikes WILL NOT BE WORN BY ANY PLAYERS!***
13. Little League baserunners cannot lead off base until the ball leaves the pitcher's hand. If the runner leaves the base before that, the runner will be called out. ***ONE TEAM WARNING!!!*** Baserunners may steal second base and third base, but ***Home Plate is closed*** (even if played upon while attempting to steal third, or while leading off of third **after a pitch has been delivered**). A baserunner may only steal one base per batter.
14. In Little League, the batter will be out, even if the catcher misses the third strike.
15. Runners must slide at any base (other than 1st) to avoid a collision when there is a play at the base. At the umpire's discretion, the runner could be called out if there is no attempt to slide.
16. Hit by pitch: If the ball hits the ground and then hits the batter, they are awarded 1st base **IF** the batter attempted to get out of the way of the ball. Umpire's discretion.
17. No infield fly rule for Little League softball games.
18. Bats must be a softball bat and have the USA Softball All Games, ASA 2000 or ASA 2004 certification mark with the **BPF 1.20 or lower designation**. NFHSSA logo is OK. Barrel diameter maximum of 2 1/4 ". Maximum length of 34. (NFHS rule)
19. Coaches may only visit the mound once per inning. On the second visit, the coach must put in a new pitcher.
20. No bunting (slap hitting is allowed).
21. Coach relief Pitch Rule: Little League softball is player-pitch, but if ball four is called before a hit or strikeout, the offensive coach will come in to finish the at-bat.
 - If the ball hits the coach while they are pitching, it is a live ball. The coach is considered part of the playing field.
 - No stealing when a coach is pitching, but a base runner may lead off once the ball leaves the coach's hand.
 - The strike count from the player pitch carries over to coach pitch.
 - The coach gets a maximum of three pitches, whether the batter swings or not.
 - The umpire will call balls and strikes when the coach pitches.
 - Once strike 3 is called, the batter is out.
 - If the batter hits a foul ball on the third pitch, they will get another pitch.
22. In the event of lightning or thunder, the game will be stopped, and players and coaches will be sent to **their cars or other safe shelter**. There must be at least 30 minutes from the last lightning or thunder event before the game can resume. The umpire and/ or coaches can call the game at their discretion. Games that cannot resume and have not played enough innings to qualify as complete will start where they left off when the game is completed.

2026 IOWA VALLEY LEAGUE RULES – PONY LEAGUE SOFTBALL

1. Rules follow the National Federation of High Schools (NFHS) rules except for the following league rules.
1. **Defensive replacements from the opposing team:** All teams must field nine defensive players every inning. If a team has only eight (or seven) players, the opposing team will supply one (or two) defensive substitutes. For the first inning, they will supply the last player (or last two players) in their batting lineup or other players on their bench. After the first inning, they will supply the last batter (or two batters) from the previous inning, or other players (s) on their bench. The defensive substitutes will only bat for their team. The team receiving the defensive substitute(s) will only bat players from their team. A team with fewer than seven players at the beginning of the game will forfeit the game. However, coaches are encouraged to still play the games for the benefit of the players from both teams. Coaches are encouraged to do what is in the best interest of the players in all other situations. **Under no circumstances should a team be penalized with an out due to the number of players in their batting lineup.**
2. Pony League games are six innings with no new inning started after 90 minutes (see below in the event of a tie after 90 minutes). The game officially begins with the first warm-up pitch thrown from the pitching mound by the home team. Each half-inning will consist of 6 runs or 3 outs. 4 innings must be played to complete a game or 3 ½ if the home team is ahead. After 4 innings, if a team is ahead by 10 runs, the game will be considered complete, or 3 ½ innings if the home team is ahead by 10 runs. Teams are encouraged to play the full 90 minutes so that all players have an opportunity for additional game time.
3. If a game is tied after the last inning, after the time limit (90 minutes for Pony League) teams will play an extra inning by placing the last batter from the previous inning on second base. The extra inning will begin with one out. If the game is still tied after the first extra inning, there will be a second extra inning with the last two batters from the previous inning placed on 2nd base (the last batter) and 3rd base (the next to last batter), also beginning with one out. If, after the second extra inning, the game is still tied, the game will officially end in a tie. Both teams will be awarded a 1/2 win.
4. If a batter is left in the batter's box at the end of an inning, they will be the leadoff batter the following inning, and the ball-strike count will be reset.
5. When time (daylight/safety) is a factor, any game may be terminated by mutual consent of the coaches or at the umpires' discretion. Postponed/ canceled games should be made up as soon as possible. Postponed/ canceled games that are not made up will result in a loss for each team.
6. In the event of rain or unplayable field conditions, visiting teams should be notified as soon as possible. Check the coaches' listings for phone numbers.
7. There will be free substitution at any time, with the only stipulation being that anyone who has batted in the lineup must bat in the same spot if re-entered. It is not necessary to notify the opposing team of any lineup changes unless requested to do so by the head coach of the opposing team. This needs to be decided before the game starts.

8. All defensive infielders must wear a face mask
9. Batters, players on deck, and base runners must wear **batting helmets** (earflaps on both sides, and faceguards). If they fail to do so after one warning, the umpire shall call them out. All catchers **must wear a helmet and throat protector (even on hockey-style masks)**. The game will not continue until they do so.
10. Pony League pitching rubber shall be 40 feet from home plate. There will be 60 feet between bases.
11. **Steel spikes WILL NOT BE WORN BY ANY PLAYERS!**
12. Pony League baserunners cannot lead off base until the ball leaves the pitcher's hand. If the runner leaves the base before that, the runner will be called out. **ONE TEAM WARNING!!!** Baserunners may steal second base, third base, and home.
13. The **infield fly rule** is in effect for all Pony League games.
14. Bats must be a softball bat and have the USA Softball All Games, ASA 2000 or ASA 2004 certification mark with the **BPF 1.20 or lower designation**. NFHSSA logo is OK. Barrel diameter maximum of 2 1/4 ". Maximum length of 34. (NFHS rule)
15. Coach may only make one trip to the mound per inning. On the second trip, the coach must put in a new pitcher
16. **Look-Back" Rule**

The pitcher's circle exists for and refers to the requirements that a runner on base does not "dance around" while the pitcher is inside the circle, has control of the ball, and is in no way attempting to make a play on the runner.

 - For example, when a batter gets a hit or a walk and rounds first base, if the pitcher has the ball within the circle and is not attempting a throw or faking a throw attempt, the runner must either advance towards second base or immediately return to first. The runner cannot juke back and forth to draw a throw. If the runner continues to change direction towards first, then second, the umpire may call the player out.
 - Likewise, if the runner stops between bases waiting for the pitcher to throw to a fielder, as sometimes happens between pitches, and the pitcher has the ball within the circle and is not attempting a throw, the runner may be called out by the umpire.
17. In the event of lightning or thunder, the game will be stopped, and players and coaches will be sent to their **cars or other safe shelter**. There must be at least 30 minutes from the last lightning or thunder event before the game can resume. The umpire and/ or coaches can call the game at their discretion. Games that cannot resume and have not played enough innings to qualify as complete will start where they left off when the game is completed.

2026 IOWA VALLEY LEAGUE BYLAWS

1. Iowa Valley League Commissioner: Joe Kell – jkell@cityoffairfax.org, 319-270-1919
2. Who is eligible:
 - a. Those who have just finished 3rd, 4th, or 5th grades will be eligible for Little League. Second graders may be added if needed to fill out a team, but must be approved by the League Commissioner. The IVL Rec board is only engaged if there is a dispute
 - b. Those who have just finished 6th, 7th, or 8th grades will be eligible for Pony League. Fifth graders may be added if needed to fill out a team, but must be approved by the League Commissioner. The IVL Rec board is only engaged in the event of a dispute.
 - c. Each player must be a **resident**, or a summer resident, of the community they represent, except in cases already approved by the board. Special exceptions should be handled by the concerned rec boards and noted on their rosters, then sent to the commissioner for approval. Special exceptions will be decided on a case-by-case basis. The IVL Rec board is only engaged when there is a dispute. The deadline for appeals is May 1st.
3. Team rosters must be submitted electronically by May 1, 2026, to the League Commissioner on the approved template. The approved template will include the player's name, grade, jersey number, and town of residence, with a **short explanation if not from the community they are playing for.** Combined rosters of all teams will be redistributed electronically to all LL and PL coaches for their respective leagues. Failure to submit a roster promptly will result in a forfeit of each game until their rosters are submitted. There will be no exceptions. **Special note:** The games will still be played!
4. For a new player moving into the community during the season to be eligible:
 - a. Regular season – the coach must notify the commissioner for approval before the player is eligible to play.
 - b. Postseason tournament - To be eligible for the postseason tournament, a player must be on the roster by the 5th game and must have participated in at least 50% of all of the regular season games. The commissioner will handle any exceptions.
5. There will be an **entry fee of \$100.00 per team payable to the post-season host town before the 1st regular-season game.**
- 6 Regular season and tournament seedings go by win percentage, followed by head-to-head results. If necessary, a coin flip.
- 7 Post-season host town will provide medals for 1st and 2nd place regular season winners and 1st and 2nd place post-season tournament winners for both LL and PL.
- 8 For regular-season games, the home team provides umpires and game balls, one new and one almost new.

- 9 All umpires should be a minimum age of a high school **sophomore**. It is up to each town to determine if its umpire is strong enough to only need a single umpire per game. Pony League tournament games should have two umpires.
- 10 League Tournaments:
 - a. The Iowa Valley postseason tournaments shall be rotated from town to town alphabetically. To keep the league alive, each town is encouraged to take its turn. Early rounds may be played at the home of the highest seed, when possible, with the host town holding the semi-final and championship games on their fields(s).
 - b. Teams will be scheduled for 2 “spring training” games before the beginning of the regular season in May. These games will be played according to league rules but will not count toward regular-season standings. If a game is canceled for any reason, it will not be made up. The regular season will start the following week.
- 11 The official baseball for the Iowa Valley Baseball League is the Diamond DOL-1.
The official softball for the Iowa Valley League is the Dudley SBC-11 Y FP (LL) and Dudley SB 12L Y RF FP (PL)
13. In the event of lightning or thunder, the game will be stopped, and players and coaches will be sent to their cars or **other safe shelter**. There must be at least 30 minutes from the last lightning or thunder event before the game can resume. The umpire and/ or coaches can call the game at their discretion. Games that cannot resume and have not played enough innings to qualify as complete will start where they left off when the game is completed.

2026 Iowa Valley League Coaches Guide

- 1 POST-SEASON HOST FOR 2026 – Baseball** – host town is Keystone. Please make checks out to: City of Keystone, and mail them to the City of Keystone, 208 1st St, Keystone, IA, 52249. **Softball** – host town is Atkins. Please make checks out to: Atkins Summer Ball, and mail them to Devyn Krug, 605 Valley Drive, Atkins, IA, 52206. All league fees should be received before the first regular-season game.
- 2 Teams will be scheduled for 2 “spring training” games the week of May 18, 2026. These games will be played according to league rules but will not count toward regular-season standings. If a game is canceled for any reason, it will be up to the coaches to make up the game, but not required. The regular season will start on Tuesday, May 26, 2026.
- 3 **Post-Season tournament** will start on Sunday, June 28th, 2026, and run through Thursday, July 2nd, 2026.
4. **Continuous batting order:** The Iowa Valley league recommends that all teams use a continuous batting order whenever possible.
- 5 **Weather:** Visiting teams should be notified as soon as possible if a game is canceled due to weather or field conditions. Check the coach listing for contact information.
- 6 **Makeup games:** Please work hard to have your makeup games completed within 2 weeks. The season isn't very long, so don't wait until the end to make them all up. If a game does not get made up during the regular season, it is considered a loss for both teams.
- 7 **Standings:** Current standings will be updated weekly. One coach from each team should email or text the results to the League Commissioner after each game so that league standings can be sent out on Monday. Both teams should report results to be sure they are received. When reporting results, include whether it was a LL or PL game and the names of the teams that played.
- 8 **Fewer Than 7 Players:** If you know you will have fewer than 7 players for a game, please try to reschedule before the game's start time. Once it's game time, you will be required to forfeit the game. Note that if you reschedule the game and it doesn't get played, the team that had the original low numbers issue will take a loss, and the other team, which had enough players, gets the win. This applies only if you have fewer than 7 players, not if you don't have your best players.
- 9 If a team forfeits a game due to low numbers, coaches are encouraged to play the game for the experience.
- 10 If a game needs to be rescheduled for any reason other than low player numbers and the game isn't made up by the end of the season, both teams will take a loss for that game.

11 Infield Fly rule definition.

- a. An Infield Fly is a fair fly ball (not a line drive or bunt) that, in the judgment of the umpire, can be caught by an infielder, pitcher, or catcher with ordinary effort and when there are runners on first and second or first, second, and third and less than two outs. When the umpire calls "infield fly" the batter is out, regardless of whether the ball is subsequently caught or dropped. The ball is live, and runners already on base may advance (at their own risk) if the ball is not caught or tag up and advance if it is caught

12 Pitchers will be allowed to throw curveballs at the discretion of his/her coach. A curveball will be called a strike if it is in the strike zone. ***It is the strong consensus of the IOWA VALLEY LEAGUE that curveballs should not be encouraged.*** Coaches, please use good judgment!

13 The 2026 All-Star game will be held in Blairstown, on Monday, July 6, 2026, for baseball, and Tuesday, July 7, 2026, for softball. More information TBA as it becomes available.

14 The official baseball for the Iowa Valley Baseball League is the Diamond DOL-1.
The official softball for the Iowa Valley League is the Dudley SBC-11 Y FP (LL) and Dudley SB 12L Y RF FP (PL)

15. In the event of lightning or thunder, the game will be stopped, and players and coaches will be sent to their cars or other safe shelter. There must be at least 30 minutes from the last lightning or thunder event before the game can resume. The umpire and/ or coaches can call the game at their discretion. Games that cannot resume and have not played enough innings to qualify as complete will resume where they left off when completing the game.

General Comments

General Comments

Let's speed the game up:

- Limit the number of warm-up pitches. After the first inning, 3-5 warm-up pitches are enough. Relief pitchers should be warming up on the sidelines and ready to go (except in the case of an injury), and make sure the umpire knows this and calls for the batter.
- Hustle in, hustle out. Players should be ready to take the field at all times.
- Remove your catcher from the bases with 1 or 2 outs. Have someone help them with their gear and make sure they're ready to take the field at the end of the inning.
- Talk to your team on their way into the dugout, not on the way out. Keep it brief.
- Make sure the on-deck batter and the batter in the hole are ready to go.
- Players need to pay attention to the game. Limit the number of visits from spectators to the dugout.

(coaches guide cont.)

Some towns may have younger players who do not get much playing time. If this is the case in your town, take it upon yourself as the coach to see that these young players get a chance to play. If this means scheduling scrimmages or extra innings against their pitchers, please do so.

The rules of the league are not intended to cover every play or situation that exists. It is our obligation as coaches to conduct the games in a **sportsman-like manner**. If you believe that an incorrect call is made, or a rule is incorrectly interpreted, call the umpire and opposing coach aside and talk the situation over with them. **Do not tolerate profanity from umpires, players, the fans, or other coaches. Such behavior should be reported to the league commissioner as soon as possible.**

Encourage your players to do their best. If they mess up, so what? They are only kids, and it is only a game. This is a kids' game, so let's make it a fun, learning experience for them. Many fine players have come out of the *IOWA VALLEY LEAGUE*, and each of those started as a scared 8-year-old. Most of the habits they pick up now will stay with them for the rest of their lives, so let's make sure they are GOOD habits.

(updated March 2026)