



Stars of Tomorrow League Rules 2025 (rev 3/13/25)

Programs, Teams, & Players

- The Stars of Tomorrow league is made up of teams from Belvidere, Pecatonica, Poplar Grove, Roy Gayle, and Stateline Shamrocks.
- Teams will consist of strictly recreational players to provide opportunities for them to learn the game with players of similar skill.
- If a team plays in more than three tournaments outside of the league they will be classified as a tournament team and will not be allowed to play in the league.
- Teams will not be allowed to have travel players that are rostered on a travel team.
 - Rec players may sub for travel teams.
 - Games will not be moved to accommodate travel players' schedules.
- Independent teams will need to be approved by the Stars of Tomorrow board before being accepted in the league.

Rosters

- All players must be registered on the official Stars of Tomorrow website roster page.
- All rosters will be locked at midnight prior to the league starting
- If a team adds a player after the deadline they will need to contact the league director for access.
- If a team plays with a player not on the official roster or a borrowed player is added that does not qualify per the league borrowing players rules, they will forfeit the game.

Scores

- Home Team (by coin flip) will keep the Official Book
- Scores can be loaded online through the Stateline Sports Group app.
- Deadlines:
 - The home team (by venue) must submit scores within one week; otherwise, the visiting team will be credited with a 1-0 win.
 - Incorrect scores can be corrected by the visiting team within two weeks after the game.

NFHS Rules

- Rules governing Stateline Stars of Tomorrow League are defined by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Rulebook.
- All rules stated below are provided to help clarify, emphasize, or modify NFHS rules for the league. Where changes are identified, league rules will take precedence.

LEAGUE RULES (Exceptions to NFHS Rules)

Pregame Meeting

- Prior to the start of the game, both team managers will meet the umpire at home plate with completed lineup cards.
- The lineup cards will clearly list the following:
 - First & last name of each player and uniform number.
 - Pitcher and Catcher for the first inning.
 - Borrowed players will be identified on the lineup card by placing a 'B' next to their name.
- Any time changes or 'drop dead' rules will be clarified at this time.

Home Team

- The home team will be decided by a coin flip at all venues. The winner of the coin flip has the choice of home or away.

Innings

- 8U & 10U - 6 Innings
- 12U & 14U - 7 Innings

Run Rules

- 8U – 4 Runs per inning
- 10U – 4 Runs per inning
- 12U – 5 Runs per inning
- 14U – 7 Runs per inning

Mercy Run Rules

- 12 runs after 3 innings
- 10 runs after 4 innings
- 8 runs after 5 innings

Defensive Players (also see playing short page 8)

- 8U & 10U - 10 players with a minimum of 7 (The opposing team is allowed to loan a player to bring the team to 7 and there will be no automatic out imposed).
- 8u & 10u – The defensive team must provide a parent/coach to back up the catcher.
- 12U & 14U - 9 players with a minimum of 7 (The opposing team is allowed to loan a player to bring the team to 7 and there will be no automatic out imposed).
- Prior to the ball being pitched, there shall be no more than 6 defensive players on the infield. The positions would normally include catcher, pitcher, first, second, third & short. A team's outfielders must, in the umpire's opinion, be in the outfield. After the pitch has been released, there are no restrictions. This rule is intended to prevent teams from playing their outfielders too close.
- No player is allowed to sit out on defense for two consecutive innings.

Pitching Distances

- 8U – 35 ft
- 10U – 35 ft
- 12U – 40 ft
- 14U – 43 ft

Pitching Rules

- In all age groups, when a pitcher throws at least one pitch in any inning the pitcher will be charged with an inning pitched.
- 8U
 - Coaches will pitch the first two innings of all 8u games as explained below in 'Coach Pitch'.
 - Players will pitch the rest of the game and follow all 'Coach Pitch' rules below.

- 8U & 10U
 - An individual pitcher will be allowed to pitch 2 innings per game (innings do not have to be consecutive).
- Coach Pitch 8u & 10u
 - After the 4th ball or a maximum of 6 pitches, regardless of the count, the offensive coach will come into pitch. The batter will then be allowed two pitches to put the ball into play and one additional pitch only if the batter fouls off the 2nd coach-pitched ball (maximum 3 coach pitches). If the ball is not put into play by the 3rd pitch the batter is called out.
 - The coach must pitch with at least one foot on the pitching rubber and the player pitcher must have one foot in the pitcher's circle and one foot out.
 - The pitching coach is not allowed to do any coaching while the ball is in play and must remain in the circle until the play is over and the umpire has called time.
 - On any play where the pitching coach makes contact with a hit ball or player, the play will be ruled dead and the coach's pitch will start over from the same count.
 - All foul balls are live as long as they go over the batter's head and normal rules apply. If a foul ball does not travel over the batter's head it will be ruled foul, even if the catcher catches it. The batter will continue up to the max 3 coach pitches.
 - There is no stealing during coach pitch.
- 12U & 14U
 - Pitchers will be allowed to pitch four innings per game but cannot pitch more than two consecutive innings.

Hit by Pitch

- Pitcher
 - Must be removed from the inning if 'in the umpire's judgment' two batters have been hit with 'significant force' in that inning.
 - That player can return in later innings as long as all other pitching rules are enforced.
 - If removed from the game a 2nd time they may not re-enter that game as a pitcher.
- Batter
 - The batter has the option to continue batting after being hit by one pitch. The umpire will make a ruling based on if the batter was hit with 'Significant Force'. A batter in obvious pain or discomfort should be awarded 1st base.
 - If the batter is hit a 2nd time in the same at-bat they must take their base.
 - Hit by a pitch counts even if the ball hits the ground at any point before making contact with the batter

Trips to the Mound

- A trip to the mound is defined as any time a coach walks on the field to talk to any defensive player, including the pitcher. If a pitcher calls time out and goes to the sideline to talk to a coach this will also constitute a trip to the mound.
- 8U & 10U: A coach can make a 1 'trip to the mound per inning. On the 2nd trip, the pitcher has to be removed.
- 12 & 14U: A coach can make a 1 'trip to the mound per inning. On the 2nd trip, the pitcher will be removed for the rest of that inning.
- The removed pitcher can play another position in the field but may not pitch again that inning.

Infield Fly Rule

- 8U & 10U - No infield fly rule.
- 12U & 14U - Infield fly will be enforced.

Offensive Players

- All age divisions will bat with a continuous batting order and all players batting.

On-Deck Batters

- On deck, batters will take a position behind the current batter.

Courtesy Runners

- Courtesy runners will be the last out. If the game just started it will be the last player in the lineup.
- Courtesy runners can be used for the pitcher and catcher only.
- A courtesy runner must be used for the catcher unless there are no outs. If there are no outs it will be the head coach's option to use a courtesy runner for the catcher.

Bunting

- Bunting is allowed at all ages at all times, including during 8u/10u coach pitch.

Dropped 3rd Strike

- 8U & 10U - Batter cannot advance on dropped 3rd strike - batter is out.
- 12U & 14U - Dropped 3rd strike rule is in effect.

Leading Off & Stealing

- Leading off is permitted in all age divisions as soon as the ball leaves the pitcher's hand.
- 8U - No stealing
- 10U - Runners can only steal 2nd & 3rd - there is never a situation where a runner can steal home.
 - A runner may not advance past the base they were stealing - even on an overthrow.
- 12U & 14U - All stealing is allowed.
 - Runners may advance in jeopardy as many bases as possible.

Overthrows Other Than Stealing Overthrows (this is when a ball is hit into play):

- 8U & 10U
 - All runners can advance (in jeopardy) one base on an overthrow - including home.
 - If the defense makes a play on any of the runners AFTER the overthrow is recovered, the overthrow rule resets at that point and runners may continue to further bases. If further overthrows occur, the overthrow rule will be in play again from that point.
 - The umpire will determine how many bases the runners can advance to and have the ability to reset runners similar to an overthrow out of play.
- 12U & 14U can advance in jeopardy as many bases as possible on any overthrow.

Overthrows out of Play

- 8U may not advance any additional bases on an overthrow out of play.
- 10U, 12U & 14U can advance without jeopardy to the bases all runners were going to when the ball goes out of play (per USSSA rules). This will be determined by the umpire(s).
- If a team is too far behind to tie/win because of run rules, then both teams are encouraged to continue playing in accordance with the time limit rules. Umpires are to continue if both teams decide to continue. In tournament play, this rule will not be enforced to keep players fresh for future games.

Throwing the Bat

- The plate umpire shall warn any batter who accidentally throws her bat after a swing (first-time offense).
- If this occurs a second time, the batter will be called out, the ball shall be dead and runners cannot advance. On the second offense, the umpire will decide if the batter can continue to bat in that game. If the umpire decides not to allow the batter to continue on offense, the player will be allowed to continue playing defense but their spot in the lineup will be an out for the rest of that game.

Collision Plays

- When a defensive player has possession of the ball and is preparing to make the tag on a runner, the runner must avoid contact or vacate the base path. The runner may not deliberately run into the defensive player. (Interference - Penalty: Runner is out).
- Sliding is not required at any base, yet strongly recommended. The ultimate responsibility in avoiding a collision belongs to the runner.
- If the Umpire (in her/her judgment) determines that the runner would have been safe had the player not attempted to avoid a collision, the umpire will call the runner safe, even though she was tagged out (Obstruction - Penalty: Runner is safe and awarded that base).
- Collision plays can only involve a player being played on.
- In the case of collision, and the runner is called for interference, all other runners will return to the last base they touched. If this occurs a second time to the same player (same game), that player will be removed and an automatic out incurred for her position in the lineup.
- If no play is being made on the runner, the defensive player must not interfere with the runner (obstruction). If solid contact occurs, a "delayed dead ball" will be signaled. Defensive interference will be called and the runner will be awarded as many bases as the Umpire (in his/her judgment) determines the runner could have made safely had the interference not occurred.
- A runner cannot be called out for collision when colliding with a defensive player after a runner touches home plate safely or first base safely (and does not attempt advancement to 2nd base).

Manager or Coach Ejection

- If a manager or coach is ejected they must leave the playing area and will not be allowed to coach the next scheduled game.
- If a manager or coach is ejected from the game and then (after being sent to the viewing area) is ejected from the park, they will not be allowed to coach the next two scheduled games. It will be the responsibility of the home field venue manager to notify the program in which the coach coaches with regards to an ejection.

Warm-Ups Prior To and During a Game

- There will be no pregame warm-up on the official playing diamond prior to the game unless time allows for both teams to be completed by the official start time.
- Batting practice is not permitted on the field prior to any game.
- There will be no soft toss against diamond fences with hard balls.
- Pitchers will be allowed 5 warm-up pitches before the 1st inning and 3 warm-up pitches every inning after (any new pitcher will be allowed 5 pitches).
- Infield and outfield may use warm-up balls for the 1st inning only. There will be no warm-up balls after the 1st inning.

Start Time & Between Innings

- All games will start exactly at game time or 5 minutes after the last recorded out of the previous game. There will be no pregame warm-ups and pitchers are to be warmed up and ready to play.
- We will be using the one-minute rule between innings. If after one minute the batter is ready to bat and the pitcher is not ready to pitch, then a ball will be awarded to the batter. Conversely, if after one minute the pitcher is ready to pitch and the batter is not ready then a strike will be given to the batter.
- Coaches and umpires will remind players to hustle in and out between innings. Coaches will need to have their lineup changes managed accordingly and make sure catchers have gear on and are ready for the start of each inning.

Game Time Limits:

- Game times are **90 minutes then finish the inning** (league games can finish in a tie).
- Venues may change time limits if needed to finish games. Any time changes will be clarified at the umpire/coach's meeting before the game. Time changes may have the 'drop dead' rule applied.
- If 'drop dead' is reached, the final score will revert back to the last complete inning.
- An inning is officially complete once the 3rd out of the home team's at-bat takes place. If there is any time left at this point the game will continue until time runs out and an inning is complete.
- It is the head coach's responsibility to find out game time restrictions at the host venue prior to the start of any game. This is typically clarified in the pregame coach/umpire meeting.
- If venues have additional available time the teams may continue playing but the official time limits will decide the winner of the game.

Tie Games

- When a regular-season game is concluded and the score is tied after regulation or the expiration of the venue's adopted time limit, the game will end in a tie.

Thunder & Lightning

- If at any time thunder is heard or lightning is seen the game is to be immediately halted and all players/fans moved to a place of safety.
- Any game halted due to thunder or lightning will not resume for a minimum of ½ hour after the last sound or sighting.

Interrupted Games

- Interrupted games are games temporarily suspended due to unforeseen conditions such as a brief rainfall, injury, temporary light failure, unruliness of teams or their spectators, or other incidents necessitating the game to be suspended.
- These games may be resumed on the same day at the discretion of the umpire(s).
- An interrupted game shall resume at the exact point it was suspended, including the inning, outs recorded, runners on base, and the ball/strike count. The remaining game time limit will be adjusted for the delay.

Rain Outs

- It will be the goal of all venues to announce rainouts 90 minutes before any scheduled games. Each venue will be responsible to reschedule the rained-out game as soon as possible. It is the responsibility of coaches to make every attempt to play canceled games.

Official Game

- If a game in progress has to be called due to weather, the game is complete and official when 4 innings have been completed (3 ½ if the home team is leading). The final score will be taken from the last completed inning once 4 are finished but before interrupted - if 5 innings are complete and the game is interrupted in the 6th then the score after the 5th is the final score, and so on.
- If a game in progress is called due to weather before 4 innings have been completed (3 ½ if the home team is leading) it is not official. It will be the responsibility of the home venue to schedule the completion of the game from the point it was suspended. If not rescheduled it will not count.

Playing Short

- If a team loses a player for any reason, they may continue playing as long as they still have 7 players. No automatic out is imposed unless the player is ejected.
- Any ejected player will result in an automatic out in their batting position.
- If a player, batter, or runner is injured, the injured player may be replaced by a player not currently on base. The sub will be the last batted out. If replacing the batter, the current ball/strike count remains. Defensive players can be replaced at any time without penalty.
- A team may begin the game with 7 players. Late player(s) shall be added in the last batting position(s) and the team will not be charged an out at this position in the batting order.
- Teams may not play short if there is an eligible player available. If an eligible player arrives, they must enter the game immediately.

Borrowing Players

- Teams may borrow players only if they have less than 10 rostered players available. If there are 10 rostered players available, they may not add a borrowed player.
- If there are borrowed players playing and a rostered player arrives after the game has started, they must sub in for the borrowed player unless the team will still have less than 10 players. In this circumstance do not switch the order, just add the late player to the end of the lineup.
- If a team knows they will be short players, they are encouraged to work within their organization to borrow players from another team. In all cases of substitute players, the opposing coach and umpires must be notified of substitute players during the pregame meeting.
- Borrowed players can come from the same age group or younger. Same-age players that are registered in an older division may not play down; this will be considered the same as playing an older player and result in a forfeit.
- At no time may a team use a player that is not registered in one of the Stars of Tomorrow Programs. This will result in a forfeit.
- A Team must have at least 6 rostered players playing or they will forfeit.
- Players borrowed from younger age divisions may play/bat in any position.
- Players borrowed from the same age division may not pitch or catch and must bat after all original rostered players.

Tournament Roster Rules

- **Roster Freezing:** All team rosters will be frozen at the start of each tournament. Once the tournament begins, teams may not borrow players from other teams within the same league tournament.
- **Borrowing Players:** If a team is not participating in a tournament, its players may be borrowed, but they must be officially cleared for that specific tournament. League rules still take precedence over tournament play.
- **Restrictions on Borrowed Players:**
 - Borrowed players from the same age division **cannot pitch or catch**.
 - Borrowed players must bat at the end of the lineup.
- **Roster Availability Rule:** Teams may not use players from another roster if they have **ten or more** of their own rostered players available for the tournament.

This document serves as the official guideline for the Stars of Tomorrow league and is subject to change at the league director's discretion.