

8U Division Rules (Ages 6–8)

All rules and regulations for this league shall follow **IHSA/NFHS rules**, except for the following modifications and additions.

THE PLAYERS

1. Playing Time

- No player may sit out more than two innings per game.
- No player may play the same defensive position for more than three innings per game.
- Coaches are encouraged to provide equal playing time for all players.

2. Continuous Batting Order

- A continuous batting order will be used; all players bat.
- Late Arrivals: Players arriving late will be added to the bottom of the batting order.
- Players Leaving Early: If a player leaves due to injury, illness, or family circumstances, her spot in the lineup will be skipped without penalty and will not be recorded as an out.
- Injured Batter: If a player is injured during an at-bat and cannot continue, it is not an out. The last recorded out may complete the at-bat.
- Ejected Player: If a player is ejected, her batting position becomes an automatic out for the remainder of the game. The player is not suspended from future games.

3. Minimum Players

- Teams may play with a minimum of six 6 players.
- Teams failing to meet the minimum player requirement must forfeit the game.

Substitute Players

- Teams may borrow players from other 8U teams within the league.
- Substitute players may play any position except pitcher.
- Substitute players must bat last.

THE GAME

1. Game Ball

- The primary game ball shall be one new 11-inch soft-core softball.
- A second game ball may be used if it is in very good condition.

2. Length of Game

- Games shall consist of 6 innings, or 1 hour and 30 minutes, whichever comes first. Any inning will be completed.
- Ties are permitted.
- Weather-Shortened Games: A game is considered official after:
 - 3 innings are completed or 2 ½ innings if the home team is ahead.
 - If the umpire suspends the game due to weather or unsafe conditions before the inning is completed: Revert to the score from the previous completed inning.
- Home Team Leading After Time Limit or After Top of the 6th inning
 - If the top half of an inning concludes after the time limit and the home team is ahead, the bottom half will not be played.
 - If the time limit is reached during the bottom half of an inning while the home team is ahead, the current batter will complete the at-bat and the inning will end.
 - If the home team is ahead after the top of the 6th inning, the bottom half of the inning will not be played.

- Extra Inning: If six innings are completed, the game is tied, and the time limit has not been reached: A 7th inning may be played.

3. Run Limit

- Maximum of 5 runs per inning for all innings except:
 - 6th inning and any extra innings: Unlimited runs.

4. Sportsmanship

- Team chants and comments must:
 - Be directed only toward teammates.
 - Be positive in nature.
 - No chanting during the opposing pitcher's windup.
- Music
 - Warm-up and walk-up music are permitted and welcome.
 - Music volume must allow players and coaches to communicate effectively.

5. Defensive Alignment

- Teams may field a maximum of 10 defensive players: 4 Infielders, 4 Outfielders, Pitcher, and Catcher.
- Outfielder Positioning: All outfielders must begin each pitch on the grass. Use judgement for larger dirt fields.
- The short center fielder may move in to cover second base.
- No other outfielder may cover a base unless:
 - Backing up a play, or
 - Covering an unattended base.

6. Field Positioning During Coach Pitch

- The player occupying the pitcher position must:
 - Remain level with or behind the pitching rubber.
 - Stay within the pitcher's circle.
- Other infielders may not position themselves closer than the back edge of the pitcher's circle.

7. Ball Contacting Coach Pitcher

- If a batted ball strikes the coach pitcher, the ball remains live.

8. Catcher Interference

- Catcher interference will be ruled a no-pitch.
- The batter will not be awarded first base.

9. Infield Fly Rule

- The infield fly rule is not in effect.

10. Bunting

- Bunting is not permitted.

11. Base Distance

- Bases shall be 60 feet apart.

12. Makeup Games

- Coaches should make every reasonable effort to reschedule cancelled games.

17. Umpires

- An umpire must officiate each game.
- By mutual agreement, coaches or parents may serve as umpires.

PITCHING

1. Pitching Distance

- The front edge of the pitching rubber will be 30 feet from the back tip of home plate.

2. Pitching Limit

- A pitcher may pitch a maximum of three innings per game.
- One pitch constitutes an inning pitched.

3. Warm-Up Pitches and IF/OF Warm-up

- New pitchers: 5 warm-up pitches
- Returning pitchers: 3 warm-up pitches
- Team infield/outfield warm-ups are only allowed before the first inning.

4. Hit by Pitch

- If the umpire determines the batter was not hit by force, the pitch is ruled a ball and the at-bat continues.
- A pitch that bounces before hitting the batter is not considered hit by force.
- If the umpire determines the batter was hit by force, the coach pitcher enters and completes the at-bat under Rule #7 below.

5. Illegal Pitches

- No illegal pitches will be called.

6. Walks

- Walks are not permitted.

7. Coach Pitch Procedure

- After the fourth ball is called:
 - The batter retains only the strike count.
 - The offensive coach pitches until the at-bat ends by hit, strikeout, groundout, or flyout.
- Coach Pitch Limit
 - Maximum of three pitches.
 - The umpire continues calling balls and strikes.
 - If the third coach pitch is fouled off, additional pitches will be allowed until the at-bat is completed.

8. Coach Pitch Mechanics

- The coach pitcher must begin on the mound and take only one natural step forward.

9. Pitcher Substitutions

- Free pitching substitutions are allowed, provided the three-inning limit is observed.

10. Pitching Fundamentals (Instructional Emphasis, 12u and up: illegal pitches will be called)

- Coaches are encouraged to teach:
 - Hands must be apart when stepping onto the pitching plate.
 - Once the hands come together, the pitching motion begins.
 - The pitcher may not separate and then reconnect her hands before delivering the pitch.

BASE RUNNING

1. Sliding

- Players should be taught to slide to avoid contact and ensure safety.
- Slide Rule (NFHS Rule 8-6): A runner is out if:
 - Article 13- She does not legally slide and causes illegal contact or interferes with the fielder making a play.

- Article 14- She remains upright and maliciously crashes into a defensive player.
Malicious contact overrides obstruction.

2. Leadoffs

- Runners may leave the base once the ball crosses home plate.
- Leaving early will result in a warning.

3. Stealing

- Runners may steal 2b and 3b
- Stealing home is prohibited.
- No additional bases may be stolen on an overthrow.
- No stealing during coach pitch.

4. Look-Back Rule and Dropped 3rd Strike

- The Look-Back Rule is not in effect.
- Dropped 3rd Strike is not in effect.

5. Advancement on Batted Balls:

- Infield Hit: Batter may advance only to first base.
- Outfield Hit: Runners may advance at their own risk until the pitcher has possession of the ball within the pitcher's circle.

6. Overthrows and Passed Balls

- No extra bases may be taken on overthrows or passed balls. Exception:
- If the ball is being returned from the outfield and overthrown, runners may continue at their own risk.

7. Continuous walks are not allowed.

8. Courtesy Runners

- A courtesy runner may be used for the pitcher and catcher at any time.
- The courtesy runner shall be the last recorded out.

SAFETY

1. Defensive Face Masks

- All defensive players must wear face masks.

2. Batting Helmets

- Helmets must include a full-face mask.

3. Catcher's Equipment

- Proper catcher's protective equipment is required.

4. Approved Bats

- Bats must display USSSA 1.20 thumbprint stamp, or USSSA 1.20 rating.

5. Cleats and Jewelry

- Metal cleats and jewelry are prohibited.
- Players will be given an opportunity to remove or replace improper equipment.

6. On-Deck Batter

- The on-deck hitter must remain at the batter's back.

7. Uniform Requirements

- Softball pants are required.
- Leggings or shorts may not be worn.

8. Dugout Safety

- Players must remain behind the fence while in the dugout.

COACHES

1. Ejection and/or Suspension

- Any coach ejected by an umpire will receive a one-game suspension.
- Coaching during a suspension will result in a team forfeit.

2. Multiple Ejections

- Any coach ejected from two games by an umpire, even across multiple seasons, will be:
 - Removed for the remainder of the current season, and
 - Prohibited from coaching in future seasons across all participating towns.

3. Responsibility for Conduct

- Coaches are responsible for addressing code-of-conduct violations involving coaches, players, spectators, and anyone associated with their team.

4. Defensive Coaches

- Up to two defensive coaches may be on the field.
- They must remain behind the baselines.

5. Interaction with umpires

- Only head coaches may approach and interact with umpires.