

2024 Youth Softball Rules: Divisions 1 (3rd & 4th grades) & 2 (5th – 7th grades)

PHILOSOPHY: Remember Athletes 1st. Every decision you make as a coach should be in the best interest of your players and not the desire to win. We hope that helping young people to develop physically, psychologically, and socially will always be more important to you than beating the other team. This does not mean winning isn't important, you should instill in your players the desire to win, to strive to do their best, to pursue excellence. However, the outcome of the game – winning or losing – is not the most important objective. If the players do their best, they will have succeeded, regardless of the outcome of the game. Help us say yes to better sports for kids!!

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1. All playing rules except those herein are in conformance with the Iowa Girls High School Rules.
2. Teams will field 10 players: **Pitcher must have at least one foot in the circle when coach pitches.**
Div 1: Outfielders must be behind the base path until the ball is pitched.
Div 2: Outfielders must be in the grass until the ball is pitched.
3. A team must have at least 7 players to field a team – 4 of the players must be original team members – there are no automatic outs if you play with 7-9 players.
4. If a team does not have enough players to field a team:
 - A. Pick up players from the opposing team: Pick-up players must wear their own team's shirt.
 - B. Pick up players from another team in their division: Pick-up players must wear their own team's shirt.It is up to the team that is short players, as to which option they wish to use.
The team they are playing can't disapprove of the players they pick up.
You can only pick up a maximum of 4 players – cannot exceed 10 players with pickup players.
Pick-up players cannot play over your own players and may only play in the outfield and bat last in the line-up.
5. Each player must play two (2) innings each game. Each player must play at least 6 innings in the infield and at least 6 innings in the outfield during the season.
6. Only rubber cleats or tennis (gym) shoes will be allowed. Shirt/uniform must be worn and visible. NO JEWELRY ALLOWED.
7. Games will be 75 minutes long (**not playing out the inning**) or six full innings. Time will start when the umpire calls the first batter. NO infield practice will be allowed for either team before the game, once the umpire is present.
8. To help get more innings in per game, there will be a 4-minute maximum between innings.
9. Courtesy Runner: A courtesy runner MUST be used for the catcher/runner when there are two outs. The catcher must return to the dugout and dress. The replacement runner will be the player that made the last out.
10. All catchers are required to wear a catcher's helmet with a mask, chest protector and shin guards.
11. The umpire will keep a running count of the score (scoreboard). His/her tally is final. No standings kept.
12. Each team is required to supply one umpire for each game. Umpires will be at 2nd and 3rd bases. Please pick knowledgeable people.
13. A half inning consists of 3 outs or 4 runs.
14. **PITCHING:**
Player pitch: A count will be kept – if the batter gets 3 strikes, they are out – if the batter gets 3 balls: the coach will step in and pitch.
Coaches Pitch: Coaches will pitch 3 pitches (if the batter hits a foul ball on the last pitch, they get another pitch). If the ball is not put into play, the batter is out. Coach must pitch from pitching rubber.
 - a) The coach will not be allowed to field the ball or interfere in any way. If the coach interferes batter is out – runners frozen (umpire's discretion).
 - b) Pitchers can only pitch 2 innings per game – one pitch constitutes one inning.
 - c) **Pitching distance:** Div 1=35 ft .. Div 2=40 ft
 - d) **Ball:** Div 1=11" ball .. Div 2 =12" ball
 - e) Windmill/Slingshot pitches allowed.
 - f) There shall be no balks.
 - g) Pitcher must wear pitching mask – even when coach pitches.
 - h) **Div 1 only - Defensive team must supply an adult behind the catcher to help shag balls. Can't speak to or help players.**
 - i) **Softball mechanics: see pitching sheet.**
15. Strike zone: Space over plate - between the batter's shoulders and knees, when assuming a natural batting stance.
16. **BATTING:** All players will be in the batting order. A batting order must be submitted to the umpire and to the opposing team using names.
 - A. A batter **hit by a pitch** may advance to first base if the batter made an effort to get out of the way of the pitch and the pitch was from the player pitcher.

- B. All batters must wear a **batting helmet with a face mask and chin strap** when batting and running the bases. If a player enters the batter's box without a helmet or if a base runner removes their helmet while on base, they will be automatically out.
 - C. Batters may not **throw their bat**: first offense – team warning, second offense – batter will be called out (runners frozen).
 - D. On deck batter allowed - batter may not approach the plate until umpire instructs them to do so.
 - E. All players must wear pants/sweats (to cover legs) when batting/running bases. If a player enters the batter's box without having their legs covered, they will not be allowed to bat until their legs are covered. If sliders are worn, players must have sliders on both legs and must be pulled up before entering the batter's box.
 - F. If the third strike is dropped by the catcher, the batter can't advance to first – there is no dropped third strike rule.
 - G. **The batter after touching first base may turn towards the field without being tagged out ... if they take a step or steps towards second, they can be tagged out.**
17. **Infield fly rule:** Div 1 - will not be in effect ... Div 2 – Will be effect.
***Infield Fly Rule:** Is a fair fly (not including a line drive nor an attempted bunt) which can be caught by an infielder, with ordinary effort: and provided the hit is made before there are 2 outs and at a time when 1st & 2nd bases or all bases are occupied. The pitcher, catcher and any outfielder who positions themselves in the infield on the play shall be considered infielders. The batter is automatically out and runners may advance at their own risk, tagging if the fly is caught.*
18. **Base paths:** Div 1 = 50 feet .. Div 2 = 60 feet
19. **Safety Base – First Base:** On a batted ball the batter should use the yellow part of the base. Fielders should use the white part of the base. Once the batter/runner has passed the base they should then use the white part of the base.
20. Once a defensive player has the ball in the pitching circle and the runner stops – the runner must go back to the base just touched. If the runner stops and then advances, they will be called out.
 If a defensive player has the ball in the pitching circle and the runner does not stop their momentum towards the next base, they can keep on going. If the ball goes out of the playing area (dugout or fence) the runners will be awarded one base.
21. **Stealing:**
Div 1 = There is no stealing, however, players may lead off, they may leave the base once the ball leaves the pitcher's hand. They can't lead off more than 10 feet. The runner must be back on the base before the pitcher starts their wind up for the next pitch.
Div 2 = Stealing is allowed, base runners may not leave the base until the ball leaves the pitcher's hand. If the runner leaves early, the runner is out. **Base runners may steal home, however can't steal home on a pitcher – catcher exchange or passed ball.**
22. **Sliding:** Base runners must slide to avoid a collision when a close play is pending at 2nd & 3rd bases and at home plate. If a runner fails to slide, they will be called out (umpire's discretion).
23. Only the coach may appeal to the umpire. Only rule interpretations can be appealed. Judgment calls cannot be disputed.

TEAMS ON DEFENSE: All players and equipment must stay inside the bench area, except those playing.

Div 1: One coach is allowed on the playing field to help the players and one adult shagging balls behind catcher.

TEAMS ON OFFENSE: All players and equipment must stay inside the bench area.

Coaches may be in the 1st and 3rd base coaching boxes. Please stay in box.

TEAM PLAY SHEETS: For each game, coaches must fill out a team play sheet.

This is for the Department to keep track of innings played and positions played by each player.

Please turn in to umpire or email to office the next morning by 9:00 am

PRACTICE & GAMES: Practice is a very important part of the youth sports program. Practices are scheduled at specific time so that the coach can make it. Please try to have your player at practice. We understand and encourage children to participate in a wide range of activities. When conflicts arise, please let your coach know so each player can be accounted for. Please be aware that if your child misses practice, he or she may still participate during games, however, may not be as involved as much as those players who do attend practice.

Div 1 & 2 Softball Rules - 2024