

National Federation of State High School Associations and Little League Softball® Rules and Regulations Comparison



Little League®

NFHS

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

Scope of Play	Worldwide	United States
Membership	Community based leagues w/boundaries	Public & Private Schools or equivalent
Sports Scope	Softball (fast pitch) and Baseball	Softball (FP & SP), baseball and a large number of other school sponsored sports and activities
Players	Female & Male Ages 4-18	Female & Male Grades 7 thru 12 with eligibility
Divisions of Play	Tee Ball (4-7), Minor (5-12), Major (9-12) Junior (12-14), Senior (13-16), Big (14-18)	Middle School/JR High (grades 7-9) JR Varsity (grades 9-12), Varsity (grades 9-12)
Player Eligibility	Age, Residence	Age, Residence
Playing Seasons	Spring, Summer, Autumn of calendar year	Spring and/or Autumn of school year
Restrictions	Limits to roster size (Differ by division) Limits to number of same age players on Major roster Pitching limits on innings in a day (Minor/Major) Pitching rest required based on innings pitched Minimum games in a season is 12 Re-entry restrictions (mandatory play and sub rule)	Roster size determined by school No age group limit No limits No rest required Schedule set by schools and/or league guidelines No wait period for re-entry

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PLAYING FIELD

Base Lines	60 Feet	60 feet: FP & SP w/12" ball; 65 feet: SP with 11" ball
Field Distance	Recommended: 200 Feet	185-235 ft. for fast pitch
Pitching Distance	Major: 40 Feet JR/SR/Big: 43 Feet	43 feet all levels
On-Deck Position	Major: Not Permitted JR/SR/Big: Permitted	Permitted
Catcher's Box	Major: Foul lines extended 9 ft thru point of home plate JR/SR/Big: 10 ft long x 8.5 ft wide	10 ft long x 8.5 ft wide for all divisions of play
Double First Base	Allowed - optional Treated as 2 bags on initial play Only white bag can be used thereafter	Allowed - optional Same Both bags can be used thereafter
Other Bases	Must disengage from anchor on impact	Disengagable bases not mandatory
Bench / Dugout	Must be provided and must be protected with 8 ft min high wire fence	Recommended for contestants Bench/dugout area fence protection not mandated

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EQUIPMENT

Metal Cleats	Major: Not Permitted Junior/Senior/Big: Permitted	Permitted: All Levels
Ball Specifications	Major/JR/SR/Big: 12" (11 ⁷ / ₈ -12 ¹ / ₈) Weight 6 ¹ / ₄ - 7 ounces	12" dia, .47 max COR; 375 lbs max compression, 6 ¹ / ₄ -7 oz. Must be optic yellow w/NFHS authenticating mark
Bat Certification	1.20 BPF certification marking	ASA Certification and not on the Non-Approved list
Bat Length	Majors and below: 33" Max JR/SR/Big: 34" Max	34" max for all divisions
Bat Composition	Wood, alloy, aluminum, composite	Same
Catcher's Mask	Must have dangling throat protector no matter what style helmet/mask	Must have throat protector (extended wire frame or dangling throat protector)
Catcher's Glove	Can be any type (mitt or glove) Optic markings permitted	Same Optic markings not permitted
Pitcher's Glove	Must be glove; no solid optic, white or gray	Glove or mitt; no solid optic or optic markings
Batting Helmets	NOCSAE approved double ear flap Face Guards: Optional Chin Straps: Optional	Same Face Guards: Mandatory Chin Straps: Optional
Defensive Masks	Permitted	Permitted

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THE GAME

Length	Majors: 6 innings; Regulation - 4 (3 ¹ / ₂) JR/SR/Big: 7 innings; Regulation - 5 (4 ¹ / ₂)	JH/JV/VAR: 7 innings; Regulation 5 (4 ¹ / ₂) JH/JV: doubleheaders 5 innings each by state adoption
Run Rule	Major :10 after 4 innings (3 ¹ / ₂) JR/SR/Big: 10 after 5 innings (4 ¹ / ₂)	JH/JV/VAR: 15 after 3 (2 ¹ / ₂) and 10 after 5 (4 ¹ / ₂)
Time Limit	None; unless imposed by the local league during the regular season	None; unless playing in public park and one is imposed
Tie Breaker	Does not exist	By state association adoption
Player Required	Must have 9 to start and finish Penalty: None. Game is rescheduled.	Must have 9 to start; may finish with 8 (short-handed rule) Penalty: Forfeiture (short-handed rule)
Batting Order	Majors: straight 9 or continuous batting order Juniors: straight 9 or continuous batting order Sr/Big: straight 9 or 10 with DH	Straight 9 or 10 using DP/Flex option (short- handed rule)
Mandatory Play	All divisions except Big: 6 def. outs; 1 at bat All divisions except SR & Big - Tournament: Depends on Roster size: 13 or more: 1 at bat; 12 or fewer: 1 at bat, 6 consecutive defensive outs.	No mandatory play rule in regular or post season games.
Substitutions	All Divisions Reg. Season: Only starter can re-enter Major/JR Tournament: Starters and subs have multiple re-entries after both meet mandatory play SR/Big Tournament: Starter only can re-enter 1 time	Starters and substitutes each have one re-entry
Appeals	Live ball appeal only	Live or dead ball appeal allowed
Protests	Allowed for misapplied rules, ineligible players and ineligible pitchers	NFHS state associations can adopt

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PITCHING

Eligibility	Major: Max of 12 innings/day; More than 6 inn.; 1 day rest required Jr/Sr/Big: No restrictions Max of 5 pitchers per game	No restrictions
Regulations	Same as NFHS	NFHS written rules
Delivery	Same as NFHS	NFHS written rules
Infractions	Same as NFHS	NFHS written rules
Penalty for Pitching violations	Illegal Pitch or No Pitch	Same Penalty
IP Penalty	Major: Ball on batter JR/SR/Big: Same as NFHS	Ball on batter; if runner, runner awarded one base Only a ball on batter for 20 second violation
IP Penalty Option	Manager of offense has choice of penalty or play, unless BR and all other runners advance 1 base safely. In that case, IP is nullified	Same
Conferences	3 per game, per pitcher; 4th removes 2 per inning, per pitcher; 3rd removes	3 per game total
Intentional Walk	Must throw 4 balls	Must throw 4 balls
Warm Up Pitches	8 or 1 minute	5 or 1 minute
Replace, Remain in game and return	Once per inning; no warm up pitches	Once per inning; no warm up pitches
Removed for Sub	Can re-enter; cannot return to pitch	Can re-enter; can return to pitch

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BATTING

Bunt	Allowed	Allowed
Bunt Attempt	Holding bat in the strike zone; Must be pulled back for a ball	Same
Extra Positions	Senior/Big League: DH	DP/Flex (optional) for all levels
Drop 3rd Strike	Major/Junior/Senior/Big: Allowed	JH/JV/VAR: Allowed
Hit by Pitch	Must attempt to avoid ball hitting them	Must not move to be hit by pitch when in batters box. If in box, do not have to move.
Illegal Bat Penalty	Batter out; Bat removed; one adult base coach eliminated for remainder of game. Outs on play stand; runners return. 2nd violation has manager ejected in tournament play; Batter is ejected Option of play or penalty before next batter steps in to batters box.	Batter out; Bat removed; Batter and head coach ejected. Runners return to base or remain out
Batter Interference	Batter is out; runners safely advancing are returned. Batter not out if runner is out With 2 outs, batter is always out.	Immediate dead ball. Batter is out Runners return to base occupied at time of interference.

Batting out of Turn Properly appealed	Proper batter out; improper batter's action nullified; runners advancing return, outs stand on runners put out as a result of batted ball by improper batter	Same
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Retired Batter Interference	Runner being played on is out	Same
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BASE RUNNING

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Sliding	Major: No head first sliding while advancing Penalty: Runner is out JR/SR/Big: Head first slide is permitted	Permitted
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Stealing	Maj/Jr/Sr/Big: May leave on release of pitch	May leave on release of pitch
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Leave Base Early Penalty	Immediate dead ball; runner called out	Same
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Off base too long after pitch or play Ball in Circle	Circle Rule Violation Immediate dead ball, violator out, other runners return to last base touched	Look Back Rule violation Same penalty
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Interference	Immediate dead ball; runner violating is out. Batter Runner awarded 1st base if not the violator. All other runners return to last base touched at time of interference. Runs can never score	Same
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Retired Runner Interference	Immediate dead ball; runner being played on is out; other runners return. If interference is judged to be to prevent a double play, then runner closest to home is other runner declared out	Same
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Obstruction	Type A Immediate Dead Ball Runner or Batter Runner directly being played on. Award one base beyond last base touched. Other runners advance if forced	Delayed dead ball for all obstructions
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Obstruction	Type B Delayed Dead Ball Runner or Batter Runner not directly being played on. At end of play, time is called and bases, if any, are awarded as to where the umpire judges the runner or batter would have made had there been no obstruction.	Delayed dead ball for all obstructions Base awards are umpire judgment as to where the runner could have advanced had there been no obstruction. Other runners advance only if forced.
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Runner can not be called out between the bases where the obstruction occurs.	Runner can not be called out between the bases where the obstruction occurs.
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If runner goes beyond protected base, she does so with the risk of being put out.	If runner goes beyond protected base, she does so with the risk of being put out.
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Interference by an obstructed runner takes precedence over the obstruction.	Interference by an obstructed runner takes precedence over the obstruction.
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Following runner is out if she passes an obstructed runner.	Following runner IS NOT OUT for passing an obstructed runner.
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Bench Runners	Special Pinch Runner (SPR), Rule 7.14 May use only once per inning. Runner must not currently be in batting order. BUT is allowed to have already played in the game. Runner may run for multiple players. SPR not confined to just pitcher and catcher. Player can only be run for 1 time in the game. Can be run for at any base.	Courtesy Runner Rule 8.9 Can only run for the pitcher and catcher of record during the game. CR must not have been in the game yet. One CR cannot run for both the pitcher and catcher. Once CR runs for either the pitcher or catcher, that CR can only run for that position. CR can enter the game as a sub, but not in the half inning in which she ran. CR can enter to run anytime after pitcher and catcher reach base. CR can not run for DP if DP is batting for the pitcher or the catcher.
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