



2024 Juniors Division Rules

GENERAL

Although still an instructional division, players are encouraged to develop skills for all positions. For 2024 season, we will continue using player pitch followed by coach pitch to finish at bats. We will, however, gradually build up to having player pitchers complete a four – ball count before introducing coach-pitch. The tee will no longer be used in the Juniors division.

Practices: Teams are encouraged to practice (at least) once a week per the practice schedule.

THE PLAYING FIELD

Field: The playing field shall be a standard shape for official softball except that bases shall be only 55 feet apart. The pitching rubber shall be 32 feet. The pitching circle shall consist of a circle with an 8 foot radius emanating from the center of the pitching rubber.

Field Setup: Home team shall be responsible for setting up the field which includes lining the baselines, batter's box, and pitching circle, and installing the bases before the start of the game; for returning bases to storage when the game has ended; and providing game balls.

EQUIPMENT

Uniforms: Uniforms are supplied by the League and must be worn by each player on a team. Players are to provide their own cleats and gloves.

Sweatshirts or Jackets on Cold Days: Sweatshirts or jackets with or without numbers may be worn in the field and up at bat on cold days and nights.

Jewelry and Medical Alert: Jewelry shall not be worn during an official game. Medical alert bracelets and necklaces are not jewelry and may be worn but must be taped to the body in such fashion that the medical alert information is visible.

Batting Helmets and Masks; Face Masks for Player Pitchers: A batting helmet with a NOCSAE approved face mask shall be worn by all offensive players when in fair or foul territory on the playing field. Batting helmets are required AT ALL TIMES when a player has a bat in her hands. Players may only have a bat in their hands while at the plate or in the batters circle. AT NO TIME will a player swing anywhere else during a game. **Face masks for player pitchers are required.** Chin straps are optional per recent USA Softball rule changes; but if worn, it must fit securely.

Catcher's Gear: Shall be worn by any player that is positioned behind home plate or that is warming up a pitcher during practice or game play.

Balls: The official game softball is the 10 inch Easton IncrediBall or similar, soft squeeze 10 inch softball provided by the league.

FEMALE ADULT CHAPERONE

In accordance with USA Softball requirements, a female adult must be present at all team activities, including games, practices and other team events. This person can be a coach, assistant coach, manager or team parent volunteer.

PLAYERS, COACHES, SUBSTITUTES

Players: The minimum number of players is six (6). A team may have a maximum of ten players on the field on defense at any time (6 infielders and 4 outfielders). Infield positions are First Base (1B), Second Base (2B), Third Base (3B), Shortstop (SS), Pitcher (P) and Catcher (C); outfield positions are Left Field (LF), Left Center (LC), Right Center (RC), and Right Field (RF). If a team does not have six (6) players, players may be shared between teams so that the girls can still play a game.

Players Arriving Late: If a player arrives late to the game, that player shall be inserted in the vacant position in the batting order (bottom of the order). Players may be inserted in the lineup at any time after they arrive.

Players Leaving Early: There shall be no penalty if a player must leave early. The lineup will move up to allow for the absence.

Players from Other Team or a Lower Division filling Out a Roster: When a team is short of players for a particular game, the team that is short players may borrow fielders from the other team such that the shorthanded team is able to position a minimum of 6 players on the field. Players from the lending team will not miss at bats – they should be replaced by another player from the lending team should their turn at bat arise while they are in the field (to avoid the need for this players making the final out or left on base at the end of the previous inning should be used as loaner players). In lieu of borrowing fielders from the opposing team, players may be brought up from a lower division of the league to fill out the roster up to ten (10) players. The player(s) shall wear her/their own team's uniform. Duplicate jersey numbers will be allowed.

Injured Players: An injured player shall not be allowed to play in a game. Injuries that occur during practice or games must be reported to the RCGSL board. Email at treasurer@rcgsl.org. Please include: Player name, Player DOB, Date of Injury, Type of injury, Treatment given, and whether Parents were notified. This information may be emailed by the Head Coach, Assistant Coach or Team Manager.

Defensive Substitutes: Defensive substitutions may be made at the coach's discretion. Players are not allowed to rotate positions during an inning, unless an injury requires the rotation.

Coaches on the Field: During game play, offensive coaches are allowed in the first and third base coaches boxes. A coach is also allowed to be in the pitching circle when a coach pitcher is used in accordance with these rules. An adult backup catcher is also permitted, as set forth below in accordance with these rules.

THE GAME

Starting Times: Consult schedule for all game times and locations.

Starting Line-ups: Starting line-ups shall be presented to the opposing manager at least ten (10) minutes prior to the scheduled starting time of the game and must include the names and uniform numbers of the players present.

Game Balls: Home team shall provide two (2) game balls prior to the start of the game.

Home Team Dugout: Home team will normally occupy the first base dugout.

Warm-ups Prior to Game: Batting practice, pitching practice and infield practice are not allowed anywhere in fair territory on the infield prior to the start of the game. Warmups are confined to foul territory of the infield and the grass outfield in fair or foul territory.

Game Length: Games shall be one hour and thirty minutes (1:30) or four (4) innings in length, whichever occurs first. If an inning is underway at the expiration of the 90 minute time limit, that inning will be played to its conclusion (top and bottom halves).

Score: Score shall be kept; however standings will not be. There will be no end of season championship playoffs.

Fielding Positions and Positioning of Players: Each team will play with six (6) infielders – Pitcher (P), Catcher (C), 1B, 2B, 3B and SS and four (4) outfielders – LF, LC, RC and RF. All outfielders must be positioned no closer than the edge of the grass or 8 feet behind the bases. Teams must rotate players between infield and outfield so they can gain experience; however, a player's safety shall always be considered before placing a player in the infield.

Dead Ball: A dead ball occurs when, after a play is attempted on the batted ball, the pitcher possesses the ball within the pitcher's circle and no further play is made on a base runner(s) by the pitcher. When the ball is dead due to possession of the ball by the pitcher within the circle, no runner may be put out, advance or score. Runner(s) must retreat to the base(s) they had previously occupied, or if more than half way can advance to the next base.

Rescheduled Games: RCGSL will attempt to reschedule games when cancelled or not completed due to rain.

Umpires: RCGSL will endeavor to provide youth umpires to serve as umpires at Juniors division games. Umpires may work from behind the plate or behind the pitcher.

The Umpire is encouraged to return balls to the pitcher or catcher to keep the game moving. If no league designated umpires are available at game time, each team will be asked to provide one volunteer to umpire the game. If one team cannot provide a volunteer, the other team may provide two or the game may proceed with just one volunteer. If one or more official umpires arrives after the game has started, the umpire(s) will take control of the game in progress (games will not start over).

The Umpire's authority over the conduct of the game is final. The Umpire has the right, within USA Softball and RCGSL guidelines, to bench or dismiss any player, manager, coach or other participant or spectator who harasses an umpire. Umpires may also terminate a game if coaches managers, players and/or spectators, in the Umpire's view become, or continue to be, disruptive, verbally harassing and/or threatening in nature after a warning has been given.

PITCHING RULES

- A. Balls and strikes will be called by the umpire. The player pitcher will pitch to the batter until:
 - a. The ball is put into play by the batter
 - b. The batter strikes out; or
 - c. The staff-pitcher comes in to pitch which occurs:
 - i. Before April 1: The pitcher reaches a two-ball count on the batter
 - ii. After April 1: The pitcher reaches a four-ball count on the batter for the first two innings of play followed by a two-ball count for the remainder of the game
- B. After the batter has reached a full ball count, the staff-pitcher from the batting team will come in to pitch. The strike count achieved by the player pitcher will carry over for the staff pitcher. The staff-pitcher will throw up to an additional three pitches to the batter, unless the last pitch is fouled off in which case the batter is entitled to another pitch. Players that do not put the ball in play off the staff pitcher will be declared out (no tee will be used). **When the staff pitcher is pitching, both called and swinging strikes and fouls count against the batter.** Example – if the batter swung and missed at one pitch and fouled off another against the player pitcher, then swings and misses at the first pitch from the coach, she will be declared out by strikeout.
- C. The staff-pitcher must pitch from within the pitching circle. When a staff pitcher is pitching, the pitcher acts as a fielder and must position herself to either side of the staff pitcher with at least one foot fully within the pitching circle. Staff pitchers should refrain from coaching batters, other than to inform them of the strike count and number of pitches they have remaining to put the ball in play. Staff pitchers may not coach baserunners under any circumstances. Ideally, a team's staff pitcher will

not also be acting as a base coach. If it is necessary to do this, then another adult from the batting team should replace the staff-pitcher in the coaching box.

Other Pitching Related Rules

- A. **Strike Zone.** The strike zone is the space over any part of home plate when a batter assumes a natural stance adjacent to home plate which is between the top of the batter's shoulders and the bottom of the knees. However, due to the fact that players at this age are just learning how to pitch, umpires are instructed to be generous in their interpretation of the strike zone –in other words, the pitcher is to be given the benefit of the doubt at all times on close pitches and pitches that are hittable near the strike zone are to be called strikes.
- B. **Rotation of Pitchers.** Pitchers may pitch a maximum of six outs (two innings) per game. A team must use at least two pitchers per game. For purposes of this rule, if a pitcher pitches a complete inning which is concluded before three outs are recorded due to the four (4) run maximum rule, that pitcher will be charged with three outs, or one full inning, regardless of the number of outs actually recorded before the inning ended.

Players interested in pitching will need to practice pitching as much as possible including with a parent or sibling outside of regularly scheduled team practices. Pitchers should attend RCGSL pitching clinics and should consider formal pitching lessons or instruction. RCGSL will provide pitching clinics for developing pitchers during the season and can assist you with referrals to local pitching coaches.

Staff Catcher – if the umpire is working from behind the pitcher, a parent from the defensive team may position his/herself behind the catcher and return balls not put in play and not caught by the catcher to the pitcher or catcher. The purpose of the staff catcher role is to keep the game progressing – the staff catcher may only pickup and return balls that are dead and must not become involved in game play (e.g an attempted put out at the plate). The staff catcher role is optional.

BATTING

Rotation Batting Order: Each team will bat their entire roster. Order of batting shall not change from inning to inning.

Batting Order Continued: The batting order will continue UNTIL the defensive team makes three (3) outs OR the offensive team scores four (4) runs, whichever occurs first. At that time, the inning will be over, the bases will be cleared and the offensive and defensive teams will switch. Upon a team returning to offense, the batting order will continue with the next girl who was scheduled to be up to bat at the time the previous inning ended and will continue thereon until the inning is over as described above.

Bunting: Intentional bunting (squaring around to bunt) is permitted against a player pitcher. Intentional bunting is not permitted at any time against a staff pitcher. When a staff pitcher is pitching, batters must swing away.

BATTER-RUNNER AND RUNNER

Base Runners Advancing and Scoring: Base runner(s) may advance and score when a pitched ball is hit into play by the batter. Base runner(s) may take a lead off the base when the ball is released from the pitcher's hand. Base runner(s) may then proceed to the next base when the batter hits the ball in fair territory. Base runners may not take off on a direct run/steal to any base on a pitch. They may only take a "lead". A "lead" is constituted as approximately three steps from the base, while facing the infield.

Base runner advancement: On balls hit in the infield, batters and runners may advance a maximum of one base. Base runners may not advance extra bases on overthrows (example – runner on second and batter hits a ball to the second baseman who fields it and overthrows first base. The batter must remain at first and the other runner may advance only from second to third). Batter and baserunners may advance an extra base when a ball is hit into the outfield. A maximum of two bases are allowed.

Maximum Number of Runs: The maximum number of runs any team may score in one inning is four (4) runs.

Innings: An inning is complete when three (3) outs are recorded or four (4) runs are scored, whichever occurs first.

Stealing: There shall be no stealing of bases or advancements on wild pitches or passed balls. Players may take a lead off of the base when the ball is delivered by the pitcher.

PROTESTS

There shall be no protests in the Juniors Division.