

Hillsboro Girls Softball Association (HGSA) is a non-profit youth sports organization dedicated to teaching softball fundamentals and life skills through good sportsmanship, leadership, positive coaching, and peer and parent communication. As such, the rules below are expected to be adhered to by all involved parties. Any infraction is enforceable, as determined by the Coordinators and/or HGSA Board, up to, and including, expulsion from the HGSA and / or prohibition from any and all future HGSA-related events.

**ELIGIBILITY:**

1. All persons between the ages of 5 and 18, as of January 1<sup>st</sup> of the current softball year, are eligible to play in the HGSA; proof of age must be provided upon request. High School aged players must be enrolled in high school or an equivalent program to be eligible. Any persons not falling under these guidelines may petition for review by the Board on a case-by-case basis. Divisions are as follows: U-18 (grades 9-12); U-14 (grades 7-8); U-12 (grades 5-6); U-10(grades 3-4); U-8 (grades K-2). Players may be eligible to participate one grade level ahead but may not play down a level.
2. All players must complete a signed parent/guardian registration form, and a signed sportsmanship agreement form. Any false information intentionally furnished will disqualify the player from participation.
3. Team requests are to be filled in order of Teammate Request, Coach Request and School attendance/boundary. All remaining roster spots are filled on a random selection.
4. All late registrations will be placed on a waiting list, and potentially assigned to teams by the HGSA Board of Directors, with approval of the league President, as roster spots become available. The Division Coordinators will notify the Coaches of any late registrants.
5. Competitive Play – HGSA Players are not allowed to play on any other softball team between April 1<sup>st</sup> and the end of the HGSA Tournaments. The only exception to this rule is for players on their accredited high school softball team.

**TEAMS:**

1. Each team must maintain a roster of active players as established by the HGSA Staff and may not exceed 14 players. \*U18 division may not exceed 15 players per roster.
2. Each team will be assigned one head coach and one assistant coach; teams may choose instead to have co-coaches. All coaching staff, including parent helpers, must complete a coaches contract and submit to a background check. Anyone who submits a coaches contract is also required to complete the concussion and sportsmanship training prior to their first practice. The only exception to this is for Coaches not assigned prior to the beginning of the practice season, who will then have 10 days to complete and submit the training certificates.
3. Vacancies on team rosters will be filled from the established waiting list as they occur, with approval of the league President. Coaches are not allowed specific requests to fill their roster.
4. If a player misses four consecutive practices or games (unexcused), the coach may drop her from the team roster, with their Division Coordinator's consent.
5. Home team will be the official time and score keeper in all HGSA games.
6. If there are not enough players to form at least four U-18 teams, the U-14 and U-18 divisions may be combined, creating teams of players from grades 7-12.

## **UNIFORMS AND EQUIPMENT:**

1. HGSA will provide Board-approved uniforms for all teams, which must be worn at all games, and by all players. The approved uniform will consist of a team shirt, pants, socks\*, and (optional) hat or visor. Players not wearing the approved uniform may not be permitted to participate in the game. Shorts are not permitted to be worn during gameplay. \*Non-uniform socks may be substituted as long as they are not the same color as the ball and, in the opinion of the umpire, are not considered to be a distraction to other players.
2. Sweatshirts may be worn over the team uniform, but players must show the number on their uniform if requested to confirm the official batting order is being followed.
3. Soft-soled tennis shoes, rubber or metal cleats with laces tied must be worn; spikes will not be permitted.
4. All players must provide their own glove.
5. Batting helmets may be furnished by the league, or by the player, and are required to be worn at all times when in the field of play at all games and practices. Protective masks must be worn on batting helmets for all division except for the U-8 division, though they are recommended for U-8. All helmets and masks must be marked as NOCSAE approved.
6. All defensive players on the infield – including pitcher – must wear a protective fielders mask. In the U10 division this may be a plastic mask; all other divisions are required to be composed of metal.
7. Catchers are required to wear a face mask, chest and throat protectors, leg guards, and helmet in all situations. If the Catcher's helmet is of sufficient length, in the umpire's opinion, to protect the throat of the Catcher, an additional throat protector shall not be required. A protective mask must be worn while catching for a pitcher at all practices and games; no exceptions. The league will supply equipment, or players are allowed to provide their own that meets with umpire approval prior to the game.
8. All bats must have the ASA and/or USA certification stamp for use in league events.

## **RULES OF PLAY:**

Official U.S.A. softball rules shall apply to all general features of the game with the exceptions related to specific divisions. The following exceptions also relate to all HGSA divisions:

1. All teams will play with nine defensive players including three outfielders. An official game may be played with eight defensive players.
2. Teams will bat the roster.
3. There will be a maximum of six runs scored per team per inning, during regular season play.
4. The "Free substitution" rule is in effect, and players may re-enter the game at the bottom of an inning only. Any player once substituted may re-enter the game to take the place of an injured player, or of a player who must leave early – provided all players have had the opportunity to participate.
5. Games will start with a 15-minute contingency of the posted start time.
6. Games will consist of no more than 7 innings (or 6 ½ if the Home team is ahead at that point) or one hour and 45 minutes after the official declared start time. There shall be no "Last Inning" called. Games ending in a tie will constitute a completed game. The umpire shall declare the official start time to the Home team bookkeeper. Any innings (full or partial) played after the completion of the inning or time limit above will not be considered in the final reported score. A one hour and 45-minute drop-dead rule is in effect; this means no game will continue past one hour and 45 minutes after the declared start of the game.

- 6.1. Players and coaches are required to hustle on and off the field. U.S.A. time rules and penalties are in effect as to time-outs allowed and intentional rushing or hurrying of gameplay in order to influence the game's outcome, as decided by the umpire.
- 6.2. In the case of weather or darkness, either three innings or one hour of play will constitute an official game.
7. "Run Ahead Rule" – The game will be considered complete if:
  - After 3 innings, one team leads by 15 or more runs.
  - After 4 innings, one team leads by 12 or more runs.
  - After 5 innings, one team leads by 8 or more runs.
8. Any player on the team roster who appears for a game, and is physically able to play, must be permitted to play at least 3 (U-18, two) defensive innings. If fewer defensive innings are played in a game, a player must be allowed to play a minimum of one defensive inning. Any team failing to comply with this rule will forfeit the game, at the discretion of the Umpire and, if necessary, the HGSA Board.
9. Base stealing is permitted, with exceptions by division. There will be no leading-off until the ball has left the pitcher's hand.
10. Runners are expected to avoid collisions at all bases and home plate. Sliding is encouraged at 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and Home. At the discretion of the Umpire, runners may be called out for any play deemed reckless or dangerous; including not sliding when there is a close play at home.
11. For player safety, the on-deck batter must use the on-deck circle behind the batter (never on the batter's open side) – even when this means using the "other team's" on-deck area.
12. Jewelry will not be allowed on the playing field (i.e. earrings, facial piercings, metal hairclips, watches, etc.) Newly pierced post-style earrings may be worn, provided they are properly covered by medical tape or a bandage. Medical alert necklaces can be worn provided they are tucked inside the uniform shirt. Sunglasses, excluding mirror-style, may be worn.
13. Softballs must be U.S.A. approved. Circumference shall be based on division: U-8, 11 inch soft; U-10, 11-inch hard; U-12, U-14, U-18, 12-inch.
14. All postponed or rained-out games may be rescheduled to play on the first available date and field, as arranged by the league Scheduler, and with approval of both coaches. All coaches must give seven days' notice to the opposing coach and the Coordinator if they intend to postpone a scheduled game. Coaches of the postponing team must notify the Umpire Director as soon as possible.
15. Purposely or intentionally removing the batting helmet while a ball is in play, and before entering the dugout, will constitute an out for the offending player. This is a judgement call by the Umpire; the ball will be considered live, and runners may advance at their own risk.
16. After one warning by the Umpire, a thrown bat by any batter per team will constitute an out; the ball will be dead, and all base runners must return to the base they previously occupied. In clarification: At first occurrence of a thrown bat, the Umpire can warn both teams at that instance, and there will be no further warning for either team.
17. In the event a Pinch Runner is needed, the runner shall be the player who committed the last out. If there have been no outs, the pinch runner shall be the last batter on the roster for that inning.
18. No defensive player can dominate a baseline without possession of the ball; this includes the Catcher. If obstruction occurs, when all play ends the Umpire will award runners the bases they would have gained, in their judgement, had the obstruction not occurred.
19. All defensive players must begin each play in their designated natural positions as traditionally aligned for their respective roles. A player's natural position is defined by their role on the field, such

- as pitcher, catcher, infielders (1st base, 2nd base, shortstop, 3rd base), and outfielders (left field, center field, right field). Movement from these positions is permitted only after the ball is pitched.
20. Defensive players must be positioned in the grass before the pitch. **Exception:** Some fields (such as Fairgrounds Field #1) are cut further back due to use for adult leagues. On fields such as this, Defensive Players may stand no more than 5 feet into the dirt towards home plate.
  21. If the home team is ahead to begin the bottom of the final inning, the home team will be declared the game winner and will not bat again.
  22. If a "time out" is called, the duration shall not exceed one minute during regular season play, and no longer than 30 seconds during tournament play.
  23. An inning starts after the third out or the run limit has been reached in the bottom of the previous inning. The warm-up timer begins with completion of the first practice pitch of each half-inning.

#### **PITCHING RULES:**

1. A pitcher may not pitch more than 3 innings per game in the U-10\* and U-12 divisions. The U-14 and U-18 division pitchers may pitch an entire game. In the case of a substitution, each pitcher is counted as playing a full inning, no matter how many balls are pitched. (U-8 is coach pitch, and hit from a tee, so no pitch limit exists).  
\* In the event of a Texas tie-breaker during the tournament, a U10/U12 pitcher can pitch one additional inning (totaling no more than 4 innings for the game).
2. A pitcher may be removed or changed to play another defensive position during a game and return to pitching later, provided Rule #1 has not been violated. An inning pitched is determined by the delivery of ONE pitch, or by the completion of the inning.

Both feet must be on the ground within the 24-inch length of the pitcher's plate to begin the pitching motion. Pitchers' shoulders should be in line with first and third bases. The pitcher shall take a position with their pivot foot in contact with the pitcher's plate, and their non-pivot foot in contact with or behind the pitcher's plate. The pitcher shall bring their hands together for not less than one second, and not more than ten seconds before releasing the ball for delivery. A backwards step may be taken before, simultaneous to, or after the hands are brought together. The pivot foot must remain in contact with the pitcher's plate at all times prior to the forward step. The first violation to this rule will be declared a "no pitch." Additional violations will be declared a ball. If an illegal pitch is hit by the batter, the offensive coach can decide to accept the result of the hit, or have the pitch declared a ball.

All other pitching rules are in effect per the U.S.A. rules (i.e. hand position, presentation of the ball, and foot positioning)

The pitching distance for the U-8, U-10, and U-12 divisions is 35 feet. The distance for U-14 and U-18 divisions is 43 feet.

#### **EXCEPTIONS TO RULES BY DIVISION:**

Definitions:

**Infield Fly:** A fair fly ball (not a line drive or bunt) that, in the judgement of the umpire, can be caught by an infielder, pitcher, or catcher with ordinary effort, and when there are runners on first and second, or first second and third, with less than two outs.

**Dropped Third Strike:** The batter becomes a batter-runner when the catcher fails to catch the third strike before the ball touches the ground, and there are:

1. Fewer than two outs and first base is NOT occupied at the time of the pitch, or
2. Any time there are two outs.

U-14 and U-18 Divisions:

1. The infield fly rule is in effect.
2. Dropped third strike is in effect.

U-12 Division:

1. The infield fly rule is waived.
2. Dropped third strike is waived.

U-10 Division:

1. The infield fly rule is waived.
2. Dropped third strike is waived.
3. There is no stealing of home on a passed ball or overthrow; a runner may advance to home only on a play that begins with a hit, live ball.
4. There are no walks on a fourth ball. Upon reaching ball four count, the coach or designated pitcher will step in and resume the ball/strike count. All pitches thrown by the coach or designated pitcher are strikes. The coach or designated pitcher must pitch from within the pitching circle (both feet at the time the ball is released). A hit ball that touches the coach or designated pitcher will be considered a foul ball and is considered a strike.

U-8 Division:

1. T-ball games will consist of three innings, or one hour and 45 minutes, whichever offers more play time. If three innings have not been completed after the time limit, the game is over, and no additional game play is considered official. If three innings have been played, but there is time remaining, teams may agree to continue to play to the time limit.
2. There is a 6-run limit per team, per inning.
3. Base runners may not advance on a dead ball, an overthrow, or once the ball has been thrown toward the pitcher. Base runners may continue to advance until a hit ball has been touched by a defensive player. Coaches are to agree on dead ball interpretation before the start of the game. No stealing of bases is allowed in the U-8 division.
4. There will be no strikeouts.
5. Any batter may have the ball pitched to them by an approved volunteer associated with their team. The ball must be pitched underhand from the pitching circle (both feet within the circle at the start of the pitch; the motion may carry one step out of the circle). A hit ball that touches the person pitching will be considered a foul ball and is counted as a strike. In the interest of time, after **four** pitches, the batter must use the batting tee. The batter may not start her turn at bat with the tee, then switch to assisted pitching.
6. The home team shall supply a home plate umpire, and the visiting team is responsible for a designated field umpire.
7. A ball must be thrown overhand, and not rolled, to achieve an "out." Only if the distance to throw the ball is short, an underhand toss is allowed for safety reasons.
8. A hit ball must travel past the arc in front of home plate to be considered a fair ball. If it does not pass this arc, it is declared as foul and added to the batter's count as a strike.
9. A defensive player (other than the catcher) may not cross over the arc in front of home plate to tag out a runner. The tag by a defensive player must occur before the arc, or the ball must be thrown to the catcher to complete the play.

## **ADDITIONAL RULES:**

1. **SPORTSMANSHIP:** Parents, players and spectators exhibiting poor sportsmanship will be requested to leave the field by the Umpire. This decision will be final, and not subject to appeal or protest. Coaches or Team volunteers that are in violation of the Coaches contract will be instructed to leave by the Umpire. Non-compliance will result in forfeiture of the game by the offending team. Division Coordinators must be notified immediately of any and all sportsmanship violations. The Coach is responsible for all players, parents, and spectators and their actions.

Designated Manager: For each game, teams will designate a Coach as the Manager, and this Manager will attend the pre-game plate talk with the Umpire. ONLY the designated Manager is allowed to approach the Umpire regarding any rule clarifications, and must complete this process properly by calling time, or approaching the Umpire between innings. Any Coach who is not designated as Manager for the current game and questions calls or otherwise exhibits unsportsmanlike behavior toward the Umpire may be ejected without warning.

Unsportsmanlike Spectator: If the Umpire witnesses unsportsmanlike actions or comments from any spectator, the Umpire will notify the designated Manager of the offending spectator. The Manager will provide the spectator one warning. If the spectator continues to be disruptive or unsportsmanlike, the Umpire will eject both the spectator and designated Manager.

Ejections: All ejections made by an Umpire result in the following: Ejected individuals must immediately leave line of sight of the field and are not allowed to interact with any game participants. Failure to comply with the rules of ejection will result in forfeiture of the game. If the designated Manager is ejected, a replacement Manager may be assigned. If two Managers/Coaches from one team are ejected during the same game, that team forfeits the current game.

2. Only one team official may enter the playing field as spokesperson for the team unless there is an injured player and time-out has been called.
3. To comply by OSAA standards, no HGSA volunteer at the U18 level may be coaching or affiliated with any OSAA softball program.
4. Managers, Coaches, and players are permitted to coach only from within the coaches' boxes at first and third base when their team is at bat. Coaches will receive one warning for not staying within the confines of the Coaches box. After one warning, the Coach will be asked to return to their bench area. If this request is not honored, the offending team will forfeit the game, at the Umpire's discretion. Managers, Coaches and players are prohibited from being on the playing field while their team is in the field defensively, unless a time-out has been called.

Exception for U-8 division: one assigned adult can be on the field while their team is fielding, in order to better teach the game.

5. Under no circumstances is a Coach allowed to touch a base runner while the ball is in play. This includes a "high five" or slapping the runner on the back while running the bases. A violation of this rule will result in the runner being called out.
6. There are NO electronic devices allowed on the field. Any person witnessed using an electronic device will be issued a warning by the Umpire and must discontinue use of the device. Continued use will result in ejection from the game and fall to the same rules of compliance as unsportsmanlike ejections.

7. Negative criticism (or razzing) of other players, Coaches, or Umpires will NOT be tolerated. This includes cheers and recorded music deemed to be offensive, unsportsmanlike, or intentionally distracting to the opposing team. At the discretion of the Umpire and/or the Division Coordinator, offending players, Coaches or spectators can be ejected from the game and must leave line-of-sight of the field. Designated managers are responsible for the conduct of their team and spectators.
8. Specified ground rules will be agreed upon by team officials and Umpire(s) at the home plate conference before the start of each game.
9. Players arriving late for a game will be added to the bottom of the batting order with no penalty.
10. If a player leaves the game for any reason, the player can be scratched from the batting order with no penalty. Once scratched, that player cannot play until the next game.
11. The penalty for arguing in the field is ejection from the game, field, and possible suspension or removal from HGSA. This rule applies to all Managers, Coaches, players, parents, and other spectators.
12. Physical altercations, offensive or vulgar language or actions, and racial, derogative, or sexual slurs will not be tolerated on or off the field. If these occur during a game, the offending player will be subject to an out against their team, expulsion from the game and/or suspension or removal from the HGSA, at the discretion of the Umpire and Division Coordinators. If the occurrence is outside of game play, the conduct will be reviewed by the HGSA Board and subject to penalty up to and including expulsion from HGSA. This rule applies to all forms of interactions including social media and applies to all persons involved in any league event.
13. The home team shall notify the Director of Umpires if there is no Umpire at a game.

#### **DIMENSIONS AND FIELD OF PLAY:**

1. The home team is designated as such in the official game schedule, as prepared by the league. Home team will provide the official scorekeeper for each game.
2. Home team is responsible for verifying the field is properly lined and bases are secured. Any problems must be reported to the Umpire before the game begins.
3. Dimensions for the U-14 and U-18 divisions shall be 60' between bases, 43' from home plate to the pitching rubber, and 84' 10-1/4" between home plate and second base, crossing the pitching rubber.
4. Dimensions for U-8, U-10 and U-12 divisions shall be 60' between bases, 35' from home plate to the pitching rubber, and 84' 10-1/4" between home plate and second base, crossing the pitching rubber. For U-8 there will be a six-foot arc extending from the back of home plate into the playing field, to designate the live ball area.
5. Dugouts are NOT assigned. Please be respectful of teams already at the field when selecting your dugout.

#### **PROTESTS:**

DECISIONS INVOLVING UMPIRES' JUDGEMENT ARE NOT SUBJECT TO PROTEST. Any other situation involving rules, eligibility, etc. may be protested at a fee payable to the league by the team filing the protest. This fee is \$25, and the protest process is as follows:

1. The Umpire(s), opposing coach, and official scorekeeper must be notified BEFORE the next pitch, or the protest is invalid and nullified. The scorekeeper must note the date, time, inning, outs, count, player(s) involved, and the Umpire(s) name in the margin of the scorebook.
2. Within two business days following the protested game, the protesting coach must lodge –in writing – an official league protest sent to the President, Coordinators, and Director of Umpires. The fee must be paid at the time of the submission of protest.
3. The decision of the Board of Directors is final.

**COMPLAINT PROCEDURE:**

1. If a conflict is with a specific person, attempt to resolve directly with the person.
2. Approach the Coach for assisting conflict resolution.
3. Contact the Coordinators for further assistance.
4. If the complaint has still not been addressed, or a solution reached, you may request to have the Board of Directors address the complaint. Your complaint must be provided in writing, and a hearing time must be requested. The Secretary will schedule a time for your complaint to be heard.

\*Any step in this process may be skipped if it is deemed inappropriate to the situation.