

# Softball Rules and Regulations

## 8U Division

(Spring 2026)

[https://usssa.com/docs/Fastpitch/Fastpitch\\_Rules.pdf](https://usssa.com/docs/Fastpitch/Fastpitch_Rules.pdf)

All play will be judged according to the rules established by USSSA Softball with the following **exceptions**. Any situation not specifically covered in these local rules will be governed by the current year's USA rules.

### Eligibility

Only those girls properly registered with the towns **Frankfort, Mokena, Frankfort Square, Homewood, Steger, Flossmoor, Manhattan and Tinley Park (Bulldogs and Bobcats) Girls Softball Programs** will be eligible to participate in association activities and game play. All registration fees must be paid, and a completed registration form must be on file with that player's organization. Any team using a player who is not registered with their town/organization or a player that is registered, rostered and plays on a Full Time Travel, or current season's high school team, will automatically forfeit the game in which the action occurred. **Each eligibility infraction will be reviewed by the SSC board to determine if further disciplinary action is necessary.**

### Age

**The SSC follows the USSSA age rules.** Age determination is based upon the player's age as August 31<sup>st</sup> of the year preceding play for spring season. If a player wishes to play in a division other than their age level, the parent(s) of the player must formally petition the league board which will then notify the SSC Board for approval.

8U: 7 and 8-Year-Olds

Age determination for the fall season is based upon the division that the player's age will place them into for the spring season preceding the fall season. No registered or rostered full-time travel players are allowed to register or participate.

### Uniforms

Each player must be in proper uniform to participate. A player's uniform consists of the standard team uniform shirt, pants, and safety equipment. Uniform shirts must be tucked into the player's shorts or pants. **Softball pants are recommended for players in this age division and shorts are allowed, if permitted by the home organization.**

**No jewelry or hair combs are allowed to be worn during game play.** Medical alert jewelry is permitted and must be discussed with the umpire prior to the start of the game.

### Equipment

#### Bats

Only official softball bats will be allowed. Bats made of aluminum, graphite, or ceramic materials must have an official softball insignia or have had it before such an insignia wore off. T-ball, little league, and baseball bats are strictly prohibited.

#### Balls

Only **LEATHER COVERED** softballs with the official ASA/USSSA/NSA softball insignia are to be used for game play. All game balls are supplied by the home team at the beginning of each game. Synthetic or softie balls are NOT allowed. The home team is responsible for supplying game balls. **10U - 11" softie ball - 1 New, 1 gently used ball per game**

## Batting Helmets

All batters, on-deck batters, and base runners are required to always wear protective batting helmets. It is mandatory for all batting helmets to be equipped with a face mask. A player may wear their own batting helmet only if it is equipped with the mandatory face mask. A player, who in the judgment of the umpire intentionally removes a helmet while base running during a live play will be called out.

## Pitcher's Equipment

Any player occupying the pitcher's position is required to wear a protective face mask. Any pitcher refusing to wear such protective gear will not be allowed to occupy the pitcher's position. It is further recommended that protective masks be worn by all infielders for their safety.

## Catcher's Equipment

**Catchers must wear full catcher's gear consisting of: a catcher's helmet with an integrated face mask and throat guard, chest protector, and shin guards.**

## **Umpires**

**Each scheduled game shall be officiated by at least one umpire for all divisions. For 8U, all umpires must be a minimum of 12 years of age. If no umpire arrives within 15 minutes after the scheduled start of the game, the managers may, upon mutual agreement, officiate the game themselves. The defensive team's coach will call the plate, and the offensive team's coach will call the field. Unless both managers agree to a makeup game, if no officiating agreement can be made, the game shall be considered a forfeit by the home team. The Home Team must make every attempt to contact scheduled umpire prior to cancelling game.**

**It is strictly the responsibility of the umpire to resolve all issues regarding the 2- hour rule, which includes: halting the game due to darkness, curfew, minimum number of players, etc., and the umpire's decision on these matters is final.**

The umpire will have general responsibility for calling games due to weather conditions. If lightning and/or thunder is observed and the umpire has not elected to call the game, the managers of the teams must remove his/her players from the field. If there is a disagreement as to the merits of this action, it must be reported by the disagreeing party to the Grievance Committee within 48 hours. If for any reason other than adverse weather, a game cannot be played, it will be forfeited by the team which cannot play, unless a mutual makeup game is decided upon between the two teams.

Any changes to the schedule will be communicated through the advanced communication system built into the website. Changes will be sent via email and text message (if available on your phone). It is the players and coaches' responsibility to check their email and text prior to leaving for a scheduled game. Umpires retain the authority to eject any offending party from the game and determine what is foul language and unsportsmanlike conduct. Ejected parties must leave the vicinity of the field until the completion of the game and shall not approach or otherwise attempt to communicate with the umpires or opposing team following the completion of the game.

## **Players**

A minimum of 6 players is required for a team to start a game in 8U. A team that cannot field the minimum number of players within 15 minutes after the scheduled start of the game will automatically forfeit and the game will not be rescheduled. The exception to this rule is if both managers agree to extend the 15-minute period, if a late player arrival is expected.

If a manager has advance notice that their team will be short of the minimum number of required players for a game, the manager has the option of calling a player up from the 6U division to act as a substitute player for that game. **Players from the same age division can also be used as a substitute, if there is no one available to call up. Under no circumstances can a substitute player from the same age division pitch in the game. All call ups from the 6U division may play any position but the**

**outfield.** A team may not utilize a substitute player if they have eight players available from the original team roster unless both coaches agree prior to the game.

A team that loses a player due to an injury that occurred during game play, and as a result no longer has the required minimum number of players to continue the game, may at the managers' discretion continue to play with less than the minimum number of players or may ask for and be granted a forfeit.

### **Coaches Option for 11 Defensive Players**

The maximum number of players that can occupy the field on defense is 11. 11 players are allowed on defense only if both teams have at least 11 players and both coaches agree to play 11. This rule is designed to maximize participation and is not intended to inhibit the teaching of proper fundamentals of the game. The positions include pitcher, catcher, 4 infield players and 5 outfielders. The outfielders must be employed as a right fielder, right center fielder, left center fielder, and left fielder. No short fielder is allowed, and the extra player cannot be utilized as an extra infielder. All outfielders must have both feet in the outfield grass.

### Manager Only Rule

Only the team manager or the designated acting manager can approach the umpire(s) to discuss an issue. Coaches, players, and spectators are not allowed to approach the umpire (s) to discuss any issues. Coaches are not allowed to add their input in any consequential discussion between umpires and managers. Both team managers should participate in conferences with the umpire(s). It is the responsibility of team manager or designated acting manager to ensure that only they and the other manager engage in discussions with the umpires. All discussions should be conducted in a respectful manner. The manager only rule shall also be in effect for pre-game conferences with umpires.

### **Pre-game Conference**

It is recommended that both managers or the designated acting manager(s) and the umpires have a conference prior to the start of the game to discuss:

- The Manager Only Rule
- Hit-by-Pitch
- Coach Pitch Rules
- Strike Zone
- Courtesy Runners
- Dead Ball Rule
- Last Inning Declaration
- Any other issue that is felt to be relevant to game play or the players

### **Field Dimensions and Gameplay**

#### **Base Lengths**

The distances between the bases is 50 feet and is measured from the back tip of home plate to the base.

## **Pitching Distance**

The distance for the placement of the pitching rubber is 30 feet and is the measurement from the back tip of home plate to the front edge of the pitcher's plate.

## **Pitching Circle**

The pitching circle must be a 16-foot diameter from the center of the pitcher's plate.

## **Standard Game Length**

5 innings maximum play.

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5 innings or 90 minutes. No new inning to start after 75 minutes. Drop dead applies at 90 minutes.

## **Score Keeping**

Scores will be kept at 8U but there will be no official standings recorded. It is the responsibility of the Home Team manager to enter the score on the SSC website.

## **5 Run Limit**

A team may not bat after they have scored the fifth run for any inning, regardless of the number of outs. A team's half of an inning ends when the play during which the fifth run is scored is over. Play continues until the ball is dead by rule, however a maximum of five runs are recorded. The umpire(s) are solely responsible for determination of when the ball becomes dead.

## **Courtesy Runner**

If a player is injured and unable to fully run the bases, the manager may request a courtesy runner through the umpire. The most recently retired player will be the designated runner. **A courtesy runner may also be requested by the catcher at any point in the inning.** This allowance is to speed game play by allowing the incoming catcher time to put on her gear.

## **Lead Offs**

Leaving from a base is not allowed until the ball has left the pitcher's hand. It is recommended that no more than an 5-foot leadoff taken.

## **Stealing**

Stealing is not permitted at 8U.

## **Sliding**

Sliding or other effort must be made to **AVOID CONTACT** with the defensive player. If contact is made, it will solely be the umpire's determination if there was an attempt to avoid contact. If no play is being made, the defensive players must give way to the offensive player.

## **Bunting and Slap Hitting**

Bunting and slapping are not allowed at 8U.

## **Infield Fly and Dropped 3rd Strike**

Infield fly rule and dropped 3rd Strike are **NOT** in effect.

## **Strike Zone**

A liberal strike zone must be utilized. From the armpits to the mid-shin, and one ball outside and inside the plate shall constitute a strike.

## **Line-Ups**

Lineups must be submitted to the opposing team manager for each game no later than 5 minutes prior to the start of the game. These lineups will include the full name of the player, her number, and the batting order that will be employed for the duration of the game.

## **Batting Order**

A continuous batting order will be employed, and outs will be called. An inning will end at the earliest of the following: batting through the lineup, 3 outs, or five runs. To ensure equal batting opportunities, coaches will be strongly encouraged to keep the same lineup throughout the season, beginning a game where the order left off the previous game.

## **Player Innings**

It is required that every player plays equal innings, each game. Up to 5 players can be utilized in the outfield at a time, for a maximum of 11 defensive players. The remaining extra players will rotate sitting out defensive innings. All outfielders must be in an arc-shaped pattern, equidistant to the cut of the outfield grass. No short-center position will be used. Under no circumstances may a team have 5 infielders, and all outfielders must have their feet in the grass. A catcher must be utilized no matter how many players a team has. A player shall not play the same position for the entire game and must play the infield for at least half the innings of the game. Coaches are strongly encouraged to play players at every position throughout the season.

During playoffs no more than 5 outfielders are allowed.

## **Defensive Substitutions**

Free defensive substitutions are permitted. Coaches may switch positions anytime during an inning.

## **Dead Ball**

Runners who have advanced past the mid-point between bases may continue to the next base, runners who have not must return to the previous base. On balls hit to the outfield, once the outfielder has possession of the ball, the runner may only continue to the base she is currently running to. Runners cannot advance on an overthrow to ANY base.

## **Pitching**

Games will be player pitch for at least the first two innings. A team may opt to pitch the entire game or change to coach for the last inning. This will be at the discretion of the coach, allowing an opportunity for more players to pitch, or batting through the order.

## **Player Pitch**

Players pitch to the opposing team. A team pitcher shall pitch up to 5 pitches per batter. If three strikes are thrown without contact, the batter is out. After a pitcher throws three called "balls" the coach from the batting team will pitch to the batter, inheriting the current count.

## Coach Pitch

The coach will inherit the count and continue to pitch until completion of the at-bat. **Coaches can strike out the batter.** The coach does not have to pitch from the pitching rubber but must be within the circle. Coaches cannot walk a batter. Coaches need to make every attempt to get out of the way when a ball has been hit. If the batted ball hits a coach, the play is considered dead, and the batter is awarded first base. The defensive team pitcher should be positioned to the glove side of the coach pitching.

## Coach on Field

No more than 2 coaches on the field at any time during regular season games; Coaches must stay behind the bases and try to avoid being in the way during game play; playoffs no coaches are allowed on the field.

## Hit by Pitch

Because this is a developmental pitching level, coaches need to use common sense. Hit batters will occur. Encourage batters to move out of the wayward pitch. Batters WILL NOT be awarded 1st base. If a pitcher hits a batter, the coach will come into pitch, and will inherit the count.

## Home Team Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the manager of the designated home team to set up the bases and pitching rubber prior to the start of the game. It is the responsibility of the manager of the designated home team to retrieve the items from the field and place them back in the lockbox after the game. Base peg covers must be replaced on the field and the clean-out tool returned to the lockbox. The area around the pitching circle and batter's boxes should be raked and leveled. It is the responsibility of the manager of the designated home team to make sure that the lock on the lockbox is securely locked before they leave the field. Missing or damaged equipment should be reported to the division coordinator immediately after the game. The home team is responsible for supplying a new game ball at each game. These balls are supplied by your town to the manager at the beginning of the season.

It is the responsibility of the **HOME TEAM MANAGER** to enter the game score. Game score **MUST** be entered within 24 hours of the completion of the game. Missing scores after 48 hours of the completion of the game will be inserted as a forfeit score with the visiting team gaining the win. Coaches will be sent a password from the FGS website to enter these scores. If you are unable to enter your score you can send an email to your division coordinator who will then enter the score and correct the issue preventing you from entering the score. Scores for playoffs will be sent to the master scorekeeper directly following the completion of each playoff game.

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## Game Cancellation

Games cannot be canceled and rescheduled for any reason except adverse weather conditions or unplayable fields. The home team town's Softball President or designated field coordinator will make all decisions pertaining to field cancellation due to adverse weather conditions or unplayable fields and communicate to their coaches. It is the responsibility of each home team coach to communicate game cancellations with the visiting coach. Towns will report field conditions no later than 4:00 weekdays and 7:30 am on the weekends to each town's scheduler or softball lead.

If games have not been officially canceled, managers should proceed with the scheduled start time. Managers must arrive at the scheduled field at the time they requested their team to arrive. Games cannot be called beforehand in anticipation of adverse

weather conditions or the assumption that the field is unplayable. All reasonable attempts should be made to play scheduled games.

The umpire has the authority to cancel a game before one is started, if adverse weather conditions exist. If both managers agree before the start of the game that adverse weather conditions exist, the game can be cancelled. These games will be rescheduled.

The umpire will have general responsibility for calling games due to weather conditions. If lightning and/or thunder is observed and the umpire has not elected to call the game, the managers of the teams must remove his/her players from the field. If there is a disagreement as to the merits of this action, it must be reported by the disagreeing party to the Grievance Committee within 48 hours. If for any reason other than adverse weather, a game cannot be played, it will be forfeited by the team which cannot play, unless a mutual makeup game is decided upon between the two teams.

Any changes to the schedule will be communicated through the advanced communication system built into the website. Changes will be sent via email and text message (if available on your phone). It is the players and coaches' responsibility to check their email and text prior to leaving for a scheduled game.

### **Adverse Weather**

If lightning is observed, the game should be halted immediately, and the players should be removed from the field. If the field is equipped with lightning detection equipment, all warnings from such equipment are to be strictly and absolutely obeyed, in spite of any observation of weather conditions to the contrary. Safety of all participants and spectators is the priority. No game can resume until 30 minutes after the last lightning strike.

### **Disciplinary Actions**

All players, parents, coaches, and managers must adhere to the Code of Conduct, to which they signed at the beginning of the season. Disputes should first be discussed by managers and umpires with the umpire holding discretion in enforcement. Only the head coach is allowed to communicate with umpires. If disputes cannot be settled at the game, complaints must be submitted to each town's softball lead, which will be thoroughly reviewed by the SSC board.

Umpires retain the authority to eject any offending party from the game and determine what is foul language and unsportsmanlike conduct. Ejected parties must leave the vicinity of the field and shall not approach or otherwise attempt to communicate with the umpires or opposing team following the completion of the game.

Coaches are fully responsible for the actions and behaviors of your team's spectators. Umpires will address spectator issues with that team's coach. If the coach refuses to address the issue, both the coach and spectator will be ejected and required to leave the vicinity of the field and shall not approach or otherwise attempt to communicate with the umpires or opposing team following the completion of the game.

All ejections will be reviewed by the SSC board to determine if future disciplinary action is necessary.

Bats or any other equipment thrown in anger will result in the batter being declared out and dismissal from the game with the ball being declared dead.

A bat that slips from the batter's hand will result in a warning to the team for the first occurrence. The second team occurrence will result in the batter being declared out, the ball declared dead, and the runners unable to advance. This ruling is based on the judgment of the umpire and is a non-arguable judgment call.

### **Grievances**

The Grievance Committee will handle only the following matters:

- Protests pertaining to lightning/thunder scenario. All other weather, darkness, curfew, etc. decisions are the sole responsibility of the umpire and will not be reviewed.
- Reported incidents of improper conduct by team managers, coaches, players, or spectators that are of a nature that poses a threat to the health and well-being of the players and/or the league.
- No other protests are allowed.