

Union County Softball League

RULES AND REGULATIONS

Safety

1. **All defensive players must wear a face mask (8U & 10U). Pitcher, corner infielders (1,3) are required to wear approved fielder facemasks for 12U; however, are strongly recommended for all fielders.**
2. All batters must wear a batting helmet with an attached face mask and all hardware being present and unbroken.
Penalty: Team warning, subsequent infractions, strike issued for delay of game.
3. Sliding
 - a. Head-first sliding into a base is prohibited and is an automatic out if there is a play or not.
 - b. A runner returning to a base from less than 10 feet may dive head-first back into a base.
 - c. **Runners must slide into home plate and avoid any contact if possible with catcher. Runners making contact with catchers will be called out at the umpire's discretion ONLY.**
4. Thrown Bats
 - a. Any batter who after swinging discards her bat in such a way that it hits or nearly hits anyone or is in an unsafe manner as ruled by the umpire shall have a team warning issued to her team. Subsequent infractions result in the batter being called out and all runners returning to bases occupied at time of pitch. This is a judgement call to be made by the plate umpire.
 - b. Any player who throws their bat in anger or demonstration shall be ejected without warning at the discretion of the umpire.
5. No jewelry, metallic or otherwise, may be worn on any part of the body. This includes: earrings, bracelets, necklaces, anklets, rings, and hard hair beads. This is not a complete list of prohibited items; it is in the umpires' discretion what is allowed or not.
6. Bat boys or girls are not allowed.
7. Anyone under 18 who is coaching a base must wear a helmet with a face mask while on the field.

Participation

8. **Each association will be required to submit a verified roster at the start of the season. Each association's commissioner is responsible for determining player eligibility based on a 12/31 date of birth in their respective age groups.**

- **Spring Season Rosters will be due by March 15th of each year.**

- **Fall Season Rosters will be due by August 15th of each year.**

9. All uniformed players in attendance must be in batting order.

10. If for injury or disciplinary reasons a uniformed player will not be in the game the opposing coach and umpire must be notified before the game. If a player is left out to begin the game **for injury or disciplinary reasons**, they can't come in at any point during the game.

11. If a player arrives late, they must be inserted to the end of the lineup. Any player added to the batting order after the batting order has been completed once, must play defense before they are allowed to bat.

12. Free substitution is allowed on defense with players on bench.

13. No player may sit on the bench for more than 1 consecutive inning without playing defense. Penalty: Defensive substitution is made when discovered.

14. If a player is removed from the lineup during the game an out will be counted in their spot unless removed due to an injury or an illness.

15. If a player is removed for any reason, they may not return to game.

16. If a player is removed from lineup and takes the team below 9 players an automatic out is recorded in the empty spot in the lineup.

17. Pull-up Players:

- a. Pull-up players are allowed only to meet the 9 player minimums.
- b. Pull-up players must be from **the same or** younger age group **and be a rostered player** from the same association.
- c. **Pull-up players must play in the outfield on defense and must bat last in the batting lineup. Maximum of (2) players can be picked up but cannot go above (10) total players.**

18. **To speed up game play, if the catcher gets on or is current on base when one or two outs occur, she may be replaced by a pinch runner. The pinch runner must be the last out or if no outs made in inning must be the furthest available player in the lineup from the runner to be pinch run for. This will allow the catcher to get ready before the next inning begins.**

Game

19. **Official size softball shall be 11” for 8U and 10U divisions. All balls must be leather 375/47 core.**
20. All games are 6 innings.
21. All games are 1 hour 30 minutes long. No new inning will be started after 1 hour and 25 minutes.
22. An official game is 4 innings or 3 ½ innings if the home team is ahead.
23. Teams are allotted 2 minutes to change sides. The pitcher gets 5 warm up pitches if time allows. The umpire has discretion to not allow defensive warm-ups and/or to minimize the number of warm-up pitches prior to the inning.
24. If the coach huddles with team before sending them out to the field it will be counted as the official visit for the inning and counts against the 2 minutes between innings. Penalty: 1st batter is awarded 2nd base. This is a judgement call to be made by the plate umpire if the umpire feels that this action is intentionally delaying the game.
25. There is a 5 run per inning limit, and a 9-run limit in the 6th inning only. In the case that an over the fence home run causes more than the run limit then all runs count, and the inning is over.
26. If the time limit expires in the 5th inning and either team is up by at least 9 runs or if the home team is ahead and batting when time expires, the game is over. If the time runs out in the 6th inning, the game is over if either team is up by over 9 runs.
27. The slaughter rule is 10 runs after 5 innings for all age groups or 15 runs after 4 innings (10u and up) or 15 runs after 3 innings (8u).
28. 8 players are required to start a game. If a team does not start the game with 9 players, then the 9th spot in the order is an automatic out.

Pitching

29. Pitchers are limited to 3 innings per game **and 9 innings per week (2 inning limit/game in fall season) for 12U and younger. One (1) pitch constitutes an inning. There are no restrictions for 14U and above.**
30. After pitching in 3 innings **(2 innings for fall season)**, the pitcher must be removed from pitching position. If a pitcher is pitching into a 4th inning, they are to be removed when discovered.
31. **Pitching distance shall be 35' (8U & 10U), 40' (12U) and 43' (14U) from front of Pitching rubber to the front of home plate.**
32. **One foot must be in contact with pitching rubber when delivering the pitch. This includes coach pitching.**
33. **Pitching circle shall be 16' diameter from center/front of pitching rubber with the center located at the center/front of the pitching rubber.**

8U Age Specific Rules

34. Pitching

- a. All pitching shall be done by a coach.
- b. Pitching coach shall be a coach from the batting team.
- c. Pitching coaches may be substituted **only after a complete inning. Once a pitching coach is removed from the game, they may not return to pitch in that game.**
- d. See General Rules for additional information/rules associated with coach pitching.

35. Batting

- a. 1 bunter will be allowed per inning per team.
- b. The bunter will be the first batter in the inning to attempt to bunt and contact the ball.
- c. The bunter may attempt to bunt until they are put out or reach base. They may swing away during the same at bat if they don't fake a bunt and then swing away on the same pitch. **Fake bunts and swinging away is an automatic immediate out.**

- d. Once one batter has bunted in an inning, any additional attempt to bunt shall be declared a dead ball, no pitch, and the batter is out if they contact the ball or not.
- e. On a batted ball, if the first throw by the defense is made by an infielder and the throw gets by the first baseman, the batter/runner may attempt to go to 2nd base at their own risk. Limit 1 base per overthrow on 1st base for all batter/runner and all base runners.
- f. If a throw to first is from an outfielder or is not the first throw from an infielder, the 1 base per overthrow is waived and all base runners may advance as far as they wish at their own risk.
- g. Each batter will receive a maximum of 5 pitches.
- h. A batter is out if:
 - 1. With 2 strikes they swing and miss
 - 2. If a 3rd strike is foul tipped (and caught by catcher) regardless of how many pitches are delivered
 - 3. If they do not swing at the 5th pitch.
- i. If 5th pitch is fouled by batter, the 5th pitch is to be repeated.
- j. There is no infield fly or dropped 3rd strike rule.

36. Defense

- a. The player at the pitcher position must have at least 1 foot inside the circle and be behind the coach that is pitching until the pitch is delivered.
- b. Outfielders must start at least 10 feet behind the base patch and remain until the pitch is delivered.
- c. Time will be called when the pitcher has the ball in their possession and in the circle, or if the defense possesses the ball ahead of the lead runner, or if all runners have stopped even if momentarily.
- d. Umpires have been told to call time quickly to speed up the games. Time calling may not be argued or protested as it is in their discretion to call time when they see fit.
- e. Defense may play with a 4th outfielder for a total of 10 defensive players. 8 players are required to start a game, in which case only the 9th batter is an out.
- f. **The defense is allowed one coach to be in the outfield in foul territory on each foul line to help position the fielders.** The coach may not use his position in the outfield to argue calls with the umpire.

37. General

- a. A coach from the batting team shall pitch to the batting team **and immediately leave the playing field in the direction opposite of the batted ball and avoid any play on the ball.**
- b. The coach pitching to the batter may not direct base runners during a play. Repeated offenses will result in an ejection.
- c. If a thrown ball strikes the pitching coach the ball is declared dead and batter and all runners move ahead 1 base.
- d. If a batted ball strikes the pitching coach the ball is declared dead, and batter and all runners move ahead 1 base.
- e. If the pitching coach intentionally interferes with a batted ball the ball is dead, batter is out, and all runners return to last base occupied. If it is a thrown ball the ball is dead and all runners including batter runner return to last base touched at the time of the throw.

10U Age Specific Rules

38. Defense has the option of using a 4th outfielder.

39. 8 players are required to start a game. The 9th batter in lineup is an automatic out.

- a. **Baserunners may not leave the base until the ball has left the pitcher's hand.**
- b. Only 1 base per runner may be stolen per pitch. If a runner attempts to steal more than 1 base, the ball remains live, and all outs recorded will count. When play stops, all runners will be sent back to the legally stolen base.
- c. **Only 1 base per runner may be stolen if the ball is overthrown. If a runner attempts to steal more than 1 base, the ball remains live, and all outs recorded will count. When play stops, all runners will be sent back to the legally stolen base.**

40. Runner from 3rd may steal home.

41. No dropped 3rd strike or infield fly rule.

42. Pitching

No one walks rule:

If the pitcher from the fielding team pitches four (4) called balls during any given pitch count, a coach from the batting team comes in for a total of **two (2) pitches**

for this batter only. **The ball-strike count does not carry over to the (2) pitches from the coach.** If the batter does not get a hit within the **two (2) pitches** from the coach, the batter is out. **ONLY (1) Foul Ball is allowed. NO EXCEPTION!**

The fielding team's pitcher then returns to the mound to pitch to the next batter.

Each pitcher is given the opportunity to pitch to every batter. Each batter is given the opportunity to hit off the fielding team's pitcher. Each fielding team has a greater chance to play defense with each batter.

All other rules not listed will be followed according to the North Carolina High School Athletic Association rules.

Coaches are to stay along their dugout fence and cannot wonder/walk up and down the foul lines. No buckets or chairs on the field.

Head Coach is responsible for their Assistant Coaches, players and parents. In the event an umpire ejects a coach, that coach will serve a one (1) game suspension for the next game, which they must attend and sit in the stands. They will not be allowed in or around the dugouts and cannot coach at all.

Profanity, fighting, and unsportsmanlike conduct will not be tolerated from anyone. Offenders will be asked to leave the facility or park.

Alcoholic beverages are not permitted in the park at anytime, anywhere, which includes the parking lots. Offenders will be told to leave the park and proper authorities notified.

Decisions of the umpire are final. Any questions directed at umpires regarding rules should be done after asking for a timeout. Confrontational approaches to the umpire will not be tolerated.

***THE ABOVE LOCAL RULES WILL BE USED AND ENFORCED IN ALL GAMES INVOLVING ANY UNION COUNTY SOFTBALL LEAGUE TEAMS AGAINST ANY OTHER ASSOCIATION DURING LOCAL LEAGUE PLAY. THE ONLY EXCEPTION WILL BE GAMES PLAYED IN-HOUSE WITH TEAMS OF THE SAME ASSOCIATION AND WITHIN THEIR OWN DIVISION.**