Northern California

Girls Softball

Association

Rules of Play

(Approved January 2026)

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PART A. RULES OF PLAY

SECTION 1. RULES OF PLAY OVERVIEW

The following rules have been established by the Northern California Girls Softball Association ("N.C.G.S.A." or "NorCal"). This Overview will help leagues understand how the rules will be applied.

NorCal reserves the right to amend, omit or modify the NorCal playing rules at any time in order to maintain a competitive balance and to preserve the integrity of the game and for the good of the game.

These rules have been designed to help promote development of playing skills at all levels of play.

The member leagues of NorCal may choose to add or amend any of the NorCal playing rules within their leagues in order to maintain competitive balance and for the good of the game.

The prevailing rules will be USA SOFTBALL playing rules with exception for rules that override such as:

1. League rules (Any other rules a member league has put in place).
2. NorCal Playing Rules.

Only the NorCal and USA SOFTBALL Playing Rules **will be used** in all of the following NorCal events:

1. All Inter-league play.
2. All-Star Championship Play.
3. Fall Ball Tournament Play.
4. Fall Ball Season Play.

These rules will be used at all levels of play. Any exceptions related to age groups, level of play, or tournament play will be noted within the Playing Rules of that specific event.

For Inter-league play single games, the Host Team will be "home". For Inter-league play doubleheaders of the same teams on the same day, the host team will be "visitor" for the first game and "home" for the second game. For Inter-league play round robin or multi-games on the same day, the umpire will flip a coin at the start of each game to determine "home" team, unless specified on the schedule.

SECTION 2. PITCHING REGULATIONS

10-UNDER / 12-UNDER / 14-UNDER / 16-UNDER

1. A girl may not pitch more than four (4) innings per game. Violation will result in an ineligible player.
2. One pitch to a batter in an inning shall constitute an inning pitched.
3. Championship games will have NO pitching limitations.

8-UNDER

1. Pitching Restrictions – No more than 2 innings per pitcher for the first 4 innings, with 1 additional inning after the 4th inning and open pitching after the sixth inning. Violation will result in an ineligible player.
2. One pitch to a batter in an inning shall constitute an inning pitched.
3. Championship games will have NO pitching limitations.

SECTION 3. NorCal TIEBREAKER RULE

8-UNDER / 10-UNDER / 12-UNDER / 14-UNDER / 16-UNDER

1. **All Tournament Advancement Play:** In case of a tie at the end of the regulation game and/or time limit, a runner will be placed on 2nd base in first extra inning. The player scheduled to bat last in that respective half inning will start at 2nd base. If tie is not broken, the second extra inning and succeeding innings, the last 2 players scheduled to bat last in that respective half inning, shall start at 3rd base and 2nd base.
2. **Inter-League and Fall Ball Season Play:** No extra inning will be played, Game will end in a tie.

SECTION 4. PLAYERS AND SUBSTITUTES

10-UNDER / 12-UNDER / 14-UNDER / 16-UNDER

1. No minimum play rules and USA SOFTBALL rules apply.

8-UNDER

1. Free substitution during the game.
2. Bat the roster (continuous batting).
3. A Team may start the game with 10 players on defense. Teams may compress lineups down to 9 without penalty. Once a team drops below 9 players to 8 players, an out will be charged to the team in the 9th position of the batting order. A team may start the game shorthanded with 8 players but when playing shorthanded, an Out will be charged in the 9th position in the batting order. A game can never start or finish with less than 8 players and will result in a forfeit of the game.

SECTION 5. TEAM MANAGEMENT

8-UNDER / 10-UNDER / 12-UNDER / 14-UNDER / 16-UNDER

1. Managing personnel must be USA SOFTBALL insured with a background check.
2. Management of teams will be any gender at least 18 years of age, who may have an assisting staff of coaches and at least one female staff either in dugout or on field of play. Team functions will not be permitted unless a female at least 18 years of age is in attendance.
3. Coaches may be any gender at least 18 years of age.
4. All game staff on the field of play or dugout must be **USA SOFTBALL registered for the current year. All game staff must display USA SOFTBALL Badge on the field of play.**
5. Junior staff (under 18) must be a registered USA SOFTBALL player and approved by league President and communicated to NorCal Commissioner.

SECTION 6. PROTESTS

8-UNDER / 10-UNDER / 12-UNDER / 14-UNDER / 16-UNDER

1. Disposition
   a. Protests will be discharged through a committee established by Tournament Site Director.
   b. The plate umpire will stop the game at the time a protest is filed and notify the Protest Committee.
   c. Play will remain suspended until a decision has been reached by the Committee.
   d. Continuation of play will take place after the decision has been delivered to all the parties involved.

All Decisions made by the Protest Committee are final.

SECTION 7. SCORING

8-UNDER / 10-UNDER / 12-UNDER / 14-UNDER / 16-UNDER

1. Official record of books will be kept of all games.
2. Electronic scorekeeping is acceptable.
3. Home team will be the official scorekeeper.
4. If home team is unable to provide official scorekeeper, visitor will keep the official book.

SECTION 8. EQUIPMENT

8-UNDER / 10-UNDER / 12-UNDER / 14-UNDER / 16-UNDER

1. All equipment used must meet USA SOFTBALL regulations.
2. All players MUST wear a batting helmet with a face mask.

SECTION 9. PLAYING OPTIONS

10-UNDER / 12-UNDER / 14-UNDER / 16-UNDER

A team may play one of the following options for any game.
(Interleague, All-Stars, Fall Ball Tournament and Fall Ball Season play)
Each team must declare an option before the start of each game.

1. Bat the Lineup Option (Extended Lineup)

- The coach/manager may submit a batting lineup from 8 players up to 15 players.
- Each additional player will be listed as a substitute below the batting lineup.
- Each player in the batting lineup that does not have a defensive position will be listed as an EP (extra player) and can be listed in any order within the batting lineup.
- When batting more than nine players with no available substitutes: if an injured player is not available to bat in their place in the batting lineup, the batting order will be compressed to the number of batters in the batting order with no out recorded for the injured player unable to bat.
- Max compression to nine (9) players: If a batting line up drops below 8 players, a team will forfeit.
- Player reporting to the game late may be added to the end of batting lineup or as a substitute.
- Players in the batting lineup may freely exchange defensive positions on the field with all pitcher and catcher changes being reported.
- Batting order never changes.
- Substitutions coming off the bench must be reported to the umpire and placed in the lineup.
- USA Softball reentry rule applicable for all substitutes.
- DP/Flex entry rule available.

2. Bat Nine and Play Nine Defensively Option

- The coach/manager may submit a batting line-up with nine players batting.
- Each additional player will be listed as a substitute below the batting lineup.
- Each player in the batting lineup will play a defensive position.
- Player reporting to the game late may be added as a substitute.
- If a batting line up drops below 8 players, a team will forfeit.
- Player reporting to the game late may be added to the end of batting lineup or as a substitute.
- Players **NOT** in the batting lineup may **NOT** freely exchange defensive positions on the field.
- Batting order never changes.
- Substitutions coming off the bench must be reported to the umpire and placed in the lineup.
- USA Softball reentry rule applicable for all substitutes.
- DP/Flex entry rule available.

SECTION 10. COURTESY RUNNER

1. The team at bat may use a Courtesy Runner for the pitcher or catcher providing the pitcher or catcher bats for themselves and reaches base safely.
2. Any player present at the game and in the lineup or on the bench may be a Courtesy Runner.
3. The same Player may not run for both the pitcher and catcher in the same game.
4. In the top of the first inning only, the pitcher and catcher, are identified as those players listed on the lineup sheet as pitcher and catcher. Thereafter, the pitcher and catcher are identified as the last player to have played the position on defense.
5. If a player is on base as a Courtesy Runner and it becomes her turn to bat, she will be pulled off base to bat. The player for whom she is running for (pitcher/catcher), will be called out.
   Exception: If third out of the inning, the inning will be over and the player that was the Courtesy Runner will lead off the next inning for their team.

SECTION 11. INJURED PLAYER

If an injured player is a base runner, the last out can run for the injured player. If the injured player is not available to bat in their place in the batting lineup, the batting order will be compressed to the number of batters in the batting order with no out recorded for the injured player unable to bat.
Exception: If a batting line up drops below 9 players because of the injured player, the player(s) will take an out.

SECTION 12. DIVISIONSIONAL RULES

10-UNDER / 12-UNDER / 14-UNDER / 16-UNDER

1. Ages: 16U (15 to 16)/14U (13 to 14)/12U (11 to 12)/10U (9 to 10).
2. Ball (USA SOFTBALL Approved) (12U – 16U 12" Core 54, Dreamseam or Dudley) / (10U – 11" RIF 10 or Dreamseam).
3. Base 60'.
4. Pitching distance – (16U - 43')/(14U – 43')/(12U – 40')/(10U – 35').
5. Team size - 9 to 15 Players recommended.
6. Regulation game is 7 innings or time limit.
7. Game time: 1 hour 30 minutes. No new inning.
8. 5 run rule per half inning.
9. Run Rule is 15 runs after 3 innings; 12 runs after 4 innings; and 8 runs after 5 innings.
10. Play 9/Bat 9 or Bat the Lineup.
11. Pitching restrictions – 4 innings per game.

8-UNDER

Purpose of this program is to maximize basic instruction for girls 7 and 8 by teaching fundamentals of softball.
Developing pitching and fielding skills should be emphasized.

1. Ages 6, 7, 8.
2. Ball 10" RIF Level 1 – USA SOFTBALL Approved.
3. Base 60'.
4. Pitching 30'.
5. Team Size 10 to 15 players recommended.
6. Regulation game is 6 innings or time limit.
7. Game time: 1 hour and 30 minutes. No new inning.
8. 5 run rule per half inning. Half inning ends when the play is completed not when the 5th run scores.
9. Run Rule is 15 runs after 3 innings,12 runs after 4 innings; and 8 runs after 5 innings.
10. Pitching Restrictions – No more than 2 innings per pitcher for the first 4 innings, with 1 additional inning after the 4th inning and open pitching after the 6th inning. Violation will result in an ineligible player.
11. Illegal pitch will not be called. However, the pitcher must make every attempt to pitch legally. If in the umpire's opinion the pitcher is gaining a gross advantage from an illegal pitch, then coach must correct or remove the pitcher.
12. Leadoff 15' maximum – Allowed on release of pitch - No stealing.
13. Teams will take outs for any lineups with less than 9 players; games may start with 8 players.
14. Bat the Roster. Play 10 defensively. Free defensive substitutions.
    - Outfielders must be 10' from natural baseline at time of swing.
    - Outfield is defined as a chalk line that is 10' beyond the natural baseline and continues to the fence line or dead ball territory.
    - Outfielders may not lineup as infielders – 6 infielders – 4 outfielders for 10 player team.
15. Any pitch that is not put into play by the batter will be a dead ball. No back picks on base runners.
16. Bunting or slap hitting is allowed. Exception: No bunting or slap hitting off coach-pitcher.
17. Runners can only advance one base on a batted ball being fielded in the infield that has not crossed the 10' outfield line.
18. Runners and batter/runner may advance extra bases while a hit ball remains in the outfield and must stop at the next base once the ball is in control in the infield. Control will be a ball caught in the glove or hand. ~~or an attempt catch and within reach~~.

19. Runners and batter/runner may be put out if they advance beyond the base they are entitled to. At the end of play, the umpire will return all runners to the base(s) they are entitled to if they have not been put out.
20. No walk, coach pitch at 4th ball.
    - Coach pitches the remainder of the strikes, each pitch is a strike unless fouled on 3rd strike.
    - Foul Ball is no strike 3: foul tip is active.
    - Coach-pitcher must pitch with one foot on the pitching plate.
    - If a batted ball strikes the coach-pitcher, the play is dead with the batter awarded first base and all other runners advance only if forced. At no time shall the coach-pitcher obstruct play and can NOT be a Base Coach during the play that he/she has pitched.
    - NO bunting or slap hitting off coach pitch.
    - Player-Pitcher must have at least one foot in the pitching circle during the pitch by coach-pitcher.
21. If hit by pitch by player-pitcher – batter must walk to first base (NO EXCEPTIONS).
    - If hit by coach pitcher's pitch, batter will receive another pitch (does not count).
    - A ball that hits the ground and then hits the batter will not be considered hit by pitch – it's a ball.
22. Courtesy Runner: The Courtesy Runner Rule allows for a runner to replace the pitcher or catcher when on base. Any player present at the game and in the lineup can be Courtesy Runner. If a player is on base as a Courtesy Runner and it becomes her turn to bat, she will be pulled off base to bat. The player for whom she is running for (pitcher/catcher), will be called out.
23. No dropped third strike.
24. No infield fly rule.
25. Runners must be back on base at time of pitch or out is recorded, hesitation rule in effect.

TEE BALL (Suggested rules)

Purpose of this division is to promote skills and knowledge of the game in a fun environment. These are recommended rules for leagues that do not have this program already in place. If you have already established a program, please continue using your program.

1. Ages 4 1/2 through 6.
2. Ball 10" RIF Level 1 – USA SOFTBALL Approved.
3. Base 50'.
4. Team Size: 8 Players recommended.
5. Game time: 1 Hour or three complete innings.
6. No leadoff – leave when in play.
7. Bat the roster every turn at bat.
    - Pitching will be done by an adult pitching to their own team.
    - Batter will be allowed 4 balls or three strikes. If player fails to make a hit, the Tee will be used.
    - An adult will place the ball on the batting Tee. No practice swings.
    - She is allowed only 3 swings on the Tee before being declared out.
    - Foul ball on third strike is declared out.
8. Players may advance only station to station.
9. No play at the plate.
10. No standings, no score.

PART B. FALL BALL RULES

SECTION 1. FALL BALL SEASON RULES

10-UNDER / 12-UNDER / 14-UNDER / 16-UNDER

Rules established for Fall Ball season play are as follows: (Any rule not covered in the NorCal Rules of Play handbook, please refer to the current USA SOFTBALL rulebook. NorCal rules are exceptions to USA SOFTBALL rules and will be used if applicable.)

1. The Home and Visitor teams will be assigned on the schedule. The scheduled Home team shall provide a new game ball for that game.
2. Teams will provide their own scorebook.
3. No new inning will begin after 1 hour and 20 minutes from the beginning of the game or seven innings. Any new inning started shall be finished unless another rule applies. There will be a minimum 20-minute break between all games.
4. Run Rule is 15 runs after 3 innings; 12 runs after 4 innings; 8 runs after 5 innings.
5. NorCal pitching regulations will be used and enforced.
6. One pitch to a batter in an inning shall constitute an inning pitched.
7. The USA SOFTBALL short-handed rule applies. You can start with 8 players. The ninth batter is an out. If you drop below 8 players for whatever reason, the game is a forfeit.
8. Any game stopped before completion for any reason will start from the exact point at which it was stopped. Only players who were on the original line-up card will be allowed to complete the game. Unless an injury has occurred, no time will be added to the clock.
9. **No extra inning will be played, Game will end in a tie**.
10. When time expires, if trailing team can't tie or take the lead due to maximum runs, game will end. **Finish the batter.**
11. Only positive cheering is allowed. The word "swing" is not allowed at any NorCal game.
12. Both teams shall report scores no later than 8pm on the evening of the scheduled game.

8-UNDER

Rules established for Fall Ball season play are as follows: (Any rule not covered in the NorCal Rules of Play handbook, please refer to the current USA SOFTBALL rulebook. NorCal rules are exceptions to USA SOFTBALL rules and will be used if applicable.)

1. The Home and Visitor teams will be assigned on the schedule. The scheduled Home team shall provide a new game ball for that game.
2. ALL ADULTS MUST HAVE CURRENT YEAR CERTIFICATION STICKER TO BE ON FIELD OF PLAY.
3. The host team shall provide new game balls
4. No new inning will begin after 1 hour and 20 minutes from the beginning of the game or 6 innings. Any new inning started shall be finished unless another rule applies. There will be a minimum 20-minute break between all games.
5. Run Rule is 15 runs after 3 innings, 12 runs after 4 innings; 8 runs after 5 innings
6. NorCal pitching regulations will be used and enforced.
7. One pitch to a batter constitutes an inning pitched.
8. The USA SOFTBALL short-handed rule applies. You may start with 8 players. The ninth ~~and tenth~~ batter is an out. If you drop below 8 players for whatever reason, the game is a forfeit.
9. Any game stopped before completion for any reason will start from the exact point at which it was stopped. Only players who were on the original line-up card will be allowed to complete the game. Unless an injury has occurred, no time will be added to the clock.
10. Illegal pitches will not be called. However, the pitcher must make every attempt to pitch legally. If in the umpire's opinion the pitcher is gaining a gross advantage from an illegal pitch, then coach must correct or remove the pitcher.
11. **No extra inning will be played, Game will end in a tie**.
12. When time expires, if trailing team can't tie or take the lead due to maximum runs, game will end. **Finish the batter.**
13. Both teams shall report scores no later than 8pm on the evening of the scheduled game.

SECTION 2. FALL BALL TOURNAMENT RULES

16-UNDER / 14-UNDER / 12-UNDER / 10-UNDER

1. A time limit for each game will be announced prior to the tournament at the Managers meeting.
2. At the start of each game the umpire will flip for home team.
3. Run Rule is 15 runs after 3 innings; 12 runs after 4 innings; and 8 runs after 5 innings.
4. When time expires, if trailing team can't tie or take the lead due to maximum runs, game will end. Finish the batter.
5. NorCal pitching restrictions will be used and enforced.
6. Championship games will have NO pitching limitations.
7. The USA SOFTBALL short-handed rule applies. You can start with 8 players. The ninth batter is an out. If you drop below 8 players for whatever reason, the game is a forfeit.
8. Home team is the official scorekeeper. If home team is unable to provide official scorekeepers, the visiting team will be responsible for the official book.
9. In case of a tie at the end of the regulation game and/or time limit, a runner will be placed on second base at the start of each team's turn at bat in the extra innings. In first extra inning, the player scheduled to bat last in that respective half inning will start at 2nd base. If tie is not broken, the second extra inning and all succeeding innings, the last 2 players scheduled to bat last in that respective half inning shall start at 3rd and 2nd base.
10. You will provide your own scorebook.

8-UNDER

1. A time limit for each game will be announced prior to the tournament at the Managers meeting.
2. At the start of each game the umpire will flip for home team.
3. Run Rule is 15 runs after 3 innings, 12 runs after 4 innings; and 8 runs after 5 innings.
4. When time expires, if trailing team can't tie or take the lead due to maximum runs, game will end. Finish the batter.
4. Pitching Restrictions – No more than 2 innings per pitcher for the first 4 innings, with 1 additional inning after the 4th inning and open pitching after the 6th inning. Violation will result in an ineligible player.
5. Championship games will have NO pitching limitations.
6. The USA SOFTBALL short-handed rule applies. You may start with 8 players. The 9th batter will take an out. If you drop below 8 players for whatever reason, the game is a forfeit.
7. Home team will be the official scorekeeper. If home team is unable to provide official scorekeepers, visitor will have the official book.
8. In case of a tie at the end of the regulation game and/or time limit, a runner will be placed on second base at the start of each team's turn at bat in the extra innings. In first extra inning, the player scheduled to bat last in that respective half inning will start at 2nd base. If tie is not broken, the second extra inning and all succeeding innings, the last 2 players scheduled to bat last in that respective half inning shall start at 3rd and 2nd base.
9. Courtesy Runner: The Courtesy Runner Rule allows a runner to replace the pitcher or catcher when on base. ~~with two outs only~~. Any player present at the game and in the lineup can be Courtesy Runner. If a player is on base as a Courtesy Runner and it becomes her turn to bat, she will be pulled off base to bat. The player for whom she is running for (pitcher/catcher), will be called out.
10. You will provide your own scorebook.