



## GRADE 1-2 LEAGUE RULES - 2021 SEASON

### Note:

The League will be monitoring the latest COVID-19 guidance from the state. As of March 1st, we are in Phase III, step 2. The Basics of what that means for Rec Softball:

- Softball is considered a "moderate risk" sport. Since it is an outdoor activity, the requirements are less stringent than for indoor sports, so it should be an almost normal season. That said...
- We will follow physical distancing guidelines in the dugout and sidelines.
- Masks are required when athletes are not on the field of play.
- Masks are still required for all athletes when distancing is not possible. For now, this includes players in the infield and batters. Athletes will be encouraged to take frequent mask breaks when they are safely able to distance from other players.
- Masks are always required for spectators and coaches.
- We will minimize the sharing of equipment. Equipment that is shared will be disinfected. Balls do not count as shared equipment.
- We will continue to review guidelines from the state of MA, from USA Softball of MA and from the City of Newton and make changes to our protocols as appropriate.

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### PLAYING FIELD

1. The distance from the back of home plate to the center of the pitcher's rubber at adult-pitcher's discretion
2. The distance from the back of home plate to the back of 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> base = 60 feet
3. The distance from the center of 2nd base to the furthest part of 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> base = 60 feet
4. Pitcher's circle is a circle (real or imaginary) with a radius of eight feet from the center of the pitching rubber
5. The head coach from each team are the final arbiters of the distances.

### PLAYERS AND SUBSTITUTION

1. All players present shall play in the field, each inning.
2. Players should be positioned in a conventional infield/outfield arrangement with the following exceptions:
  - a. Each team has no more than two "pitcher's helper" who are positioned at least three feet behind the pitcher while maintaining full visibility of the batter.
  - b. An additional infielder may stand by second base
  - c. Other players should play in the outfield and stand at least ten feet behind the base path until the ball is fielded.
3. The game will be played regardless of how many players attend the game.
4. A player removed from the game may re-enter the game at any time, in any position.

### BALANCED PLAYING TIME

1. Players should play a different position each inning.
2. Coaches should try to alternate players between the infield and outfield each inning.
3. All players bat once, each inning.
  - a. Coaches are encouraged to reverse the batting order each inning so everyone has the opportunity to be a base runner.

## THE GAME

1. Outs are recognized but there is no limit on the number of outs per inning. Outs are part of the game.
2. The score is not officially kept.
3. Games typically last three or four innings. The home team bats last in each inning.
4. The home team takes the first base-side bench and is responsible for supplying the game bases.
5. If the league does not supply an umpire, the adult-pitcher will also be the umpire for that half-inning.

## TIMING OF THE GAME

1. All players and coaches are expected to arrive at least twenty minutes before the officially scheduled starting time.
2. Games should start on time. It is important to keep the game moving. Therefore:
  - a. The team at bat supplies an adult-pitcher (preferably a coach), an adult-catcher, and at least one safety-adult to sit on the bench to ensure the players' safety.
  - b. The defensive team is allowed to have **one** coach in fair territory to aid their players in proper positioning. Please, one coach is MORE than enough during a game.
  - c. No juice breaks or snacks until the game is over. Water bottles on the bench are okay.
3. Weekday games will begin at 5:45 p.m. and no new inning shall start after 7:10 PM
4. Weekend games – Games begin at 1:00 p.m. and no new inning shall start after 2:30 p.m.
  - a. If another game is following on the same field, no new batter shall receive a pitch after 2:50 p.m. (no exceptions).
5. The first scheduled game of the week cancelled due to rain will be rescheduled for the following Saturday at 1:00 p.m. Sunday is considered the first day of the week. If two games are cancelled in the week the coaches are responsible for rescheduling the second cancelled game with their grade commissioner.
6. Once a game begins (first pitch is thrown), only the umpire-coaches have the authority to stop the game due to darkness, rain or for any other reason.
7. If an umpire does not arrive by game time, the coaches will run the game by themselves.

## BATTING

1. Players cannot strike out. They are encouraged to swing at any pitch that they can reach.
  - a. Coaches should do their best to pitch the ball over the plate, waist-high and with *reasonable velocity*. Young players have a difficult time hitting slow, *loopy* pitches and high pitches.
2. Coaches should always catch from a safe position behind the plate. Grade 1-2 teams are only supplied an adult-size umpire mask for catcher equipment.
3. For the safety of all, players need to learn that throwing the bat (intentionally or unintentionally) upon swinging at a ball is not acceptable. A batter who throws her bat will receive a warning for the first and second offense in a game. Thereafter the offending batter will be ruled out and no runners may advance. Warnings should be discreetly handled by that player's coach either at first base or upon their return to the bench if she made an out.
4. Bunting is not allowed.
5. For the safety of all, batters are not allowed to swing a bat unless they are in or near the batters box. There is no such thing as an "on deck" circle or "on deck" batter in grade 1/2 games.

## BASE RUNNING

1. Stealing is not allowed.
2. Base runners can take a lead once a ball leaves the pitcher's hand.
3. Base runners may advance only one base when the ball is overthrown into foul territory.
4. A base runner may advance as many bases as she can when the ball is overthrown into fair territory.
5. The coach "umpire" will declare a play over when the ball has been thrown to a defensive player in the vicinity of the pitcher's circle.
  - a. Base runners that are half-way or less to the next base must return to the preceding base.
6. A batted or thrown ball hitting any adult in fair territory, is in play.

## **SAFETY ISSUES**

1. Teams are encouraged to play games in light rain. Games must be suspended for 15 minutes at the first sight of lightning.
2. Once the game begins, the umpire-coaches are in complete control of the game.
3. Coaches are expected to remain on the bench or in the general vicinity of the bench during the game. All players not in the field, at bat, or on deck are expected to remain on the bench during the game. Only players and the designated safety-adult(s) are allowed on or near the players' bench.
4. Coaches are responsible for keeping the equipment, players, parents and other spectators behind an imaginary line drawn from the end of the backstop to the fence in front of the player's bench. This imaginary line extends beyond the distance of the left and right fielder.
5. Batters and base runners must wear helmets and chin straps at all times. Players are not allowed to be base coaches.
6. Beginning in 2017, for safety during the games, the league is strongly recommending that girls playing in the position of the two Pitcher's Helpers and 1st base wear an infielder's facemask. Face masks are provided as team equipment although some girls may choose to supply their own.
7. Sneakers or rubber cleats may be worn. Rubber cleats are recommended, as they are safer, especially in damp weather. Metal cleats are not allowed.
8. No jewelry including watches, rings, earrings or necklaces can be worn during the game.
9. Players should wear NGSoftball shirts, pants, socks and visors to the game.
10. No dogs are allowed near the players' bench, even if on a leash. Dogs at the field must be leashed at all times.
11. No smoking or alcoholic beverages are allowed at the field.
12. Please pick up debris on the field and by the player's bench following the game.

## **ZERO TOLERANCE**

1. The coaching staff is ultimately responsible for the behavior of the parents of their team and their fans.
2. Taunting of players by anyone will not be tolerated.
3. Players, coaches and fans must treat the umpire with respect.
4. Protests of an umpire's judgment calls including balls and strikes, arguing, baiting, yelling nice pitch before the umpire calls the pitch, etc. are all considered heckling.
5. Umpires will report un-sportsmanlike heckling or conduct by players, coaches or spectators to the head coach of the offending team. If a warning goes unheeded, the offender will be ejected from the field. If the heckling or conduct persists, the game may be suspended by the umpire.