



## GRADE 5-7 LEAGUE RULES - 2014 SEASON

Newton Girls Softball plays by the ASA rulebook except as noted below. In selected cases we have simply restated an existing ASA rule with the intent of avoiding a misunderstanding.

### PLAYING FIELD

1. The distance from the back of home plate to the center of the pitcher's rubber = 40 feet (windmill) or 38 feet (non-windmill).
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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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. Batter's box is six inches from home plate, three feet wide by seven feet long: four feet in front of a line drawn through the center of home plate.
6. The umpire is the final arbiter of the distances.

### PLAYERS AND SUBSTITUTION

1. A team will play with a maximum of ten players in the field (six infielders and four outfielders).
  - a. A team should play defense with no more than three additional fielders than the short-handed team.
  - b. In any inning that one team is short-handed by three or more players than their opponent, the short-handed team will have an automatic out called after the last present person in their batting order completes their at bat.
    - i. There is no limit as to how many times the automatic out rule can be called in an inning (in the case of a short-handed team batting around the order).
  - c. A ball hit to an open outfield position of a short-handed team (less than nine fielders) can be called a "ground rule" double or triple at the umpire's discretion.
  - d. Playing a game with fewer players is fun for the players. They will get more at bats and receive more fielding opportunities.
  - e. The team that is *not* short-handed may at their discretion waive the automatic out rule while keeping in mind that this rule is more about balancing the at bats and playing time for both teams and less about balancing the teams' competitiveness.
2. All outfielders must stand at least fifteen feet behind the base path until the ball is hit. Typically this is where the outfield grass meets the infield dirt.
3. A player removed from the game may re-enter the game at any time, in any position.

### BALANCED PLAYING TIME

1. Each player who is available for five innings must play at least two innings in the infield and three innings overall.
  - a. A player present for four innings must play at least one inning in the infield and two innings overall.
  - b. A player who is present for one or two innings must play at least one inning.
  - c. Coaches should make a reasonable attempt to achieve balanced playing time for each player during the first four innings and not rely on a five inning game to do so.
2. All players in attendance must bat in order. Players who come late to the game (after the batting orders have been exchanged) must bat at the end of the order.

### THE GAME

1. A regulation game consists of six innings. The home team bats last in each inning.
2. Games tied at the end of regulation will not go into extra innings.
3. No team shall be allowed to score more than six runs in any half-inning.
4. A game will be considered an official game regardless of # of players in attendance and if at least one full inning is completed. The score will revert to the last full-inning played should the home team not complete their half of the inning and be behind in the score.

5. The home team takes the first base-side bench. The home team is responsible for supplying and positioning game bases, pitching rubber, new 12" (44 COR, 375# compression) game ball, and umpire's equipment.
6. Coaches are responsible for keeping score and ensuring the opposing coach follows our player substitution rules.
7. A coach from each team must report the final score and # of innings pitched by each pitcher, to their commissioner within 24 hours.

### **TIMING OF THE GAME**

1. All players and coaches are expected to arrive at least twenty minutes before the officially scheduled starting time.
2. All infield practice must be completed ten minutes prior to the officially scheduled game time. This will ensure the coaches have sufficient time to exchange batting orders and start the game on time.
3. Coaches should have their line-ups and batting orders planned before arriving to the field.
4. The game begins *after* a coach from each team meets together with the umpire at home plate, to review "field" rules and exchange batting orders. The batting order sheet must list the name, uniform number, and place in the batting order of each player present for the game.
  - a. The name, uniform number, and batting position of any late-arriving player must be forwarded to the opposing team's coach before that player may enter the game.
5. Games should start on time and move along with as little delay as possible between half-innings.
  - a. Pitchers are limited to five warm-up pitches (with or without the catcher) between innings.
  - b. Catchers should be dressed and ready-to-go before the final out of the preceding half-inning. If they are on base it is requested that a courtesy runner (last batter to make an out) be inserted for them as a base runner or that a different catcher is used for the coming inning.
  - c. Coaches will be prepared to announce the defensive positions immediately after the third out is called.
6. Weekday games will begin at 5:45 pm. *On or before May 15*, no new inning shall start after 7:15 pm; *after May 15*, no new inning shall start after 7:30 pm.
7. Weekend games will begin at 5:00 pm and no new inning shall start after 6:45 pm.
8. The first scheduled game of the week cancelled due to rain will be rescheduled for the following Saturday at 5:00 pm. 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.
9. Playoffs will be held during the last two weeks of the season.
  - a. Any score of a regularly scheduled or make-up game not reported to the grade commissioner at least 48 hours before the playoff games are scheduled to begin will be recorded as a loss.
10. Once a game begins (first pitch is thrown), only the umpire has the authority to stop the game due to darkness, rain or for any other reason.

### **BATTING**

1. The original batting order is followed throughout the game regardless of substitutions made on the field.
2. No player shall throw the bat (intentionally or unintentionally) upon swinging at a ball. The first time a batter throws a bat that team will receive a *team warning*. The second and each subsequent time a batter on the offending team throws a bat, the batter will be ruled out and no runners may advance.
3. The strike zone is that space over home plate between the batter's armpits and knees when the batter assumes a normal stance. For close pitches, especially balls just wide or high of the strike zone, umpires will be instructed to give pitchers the benefit of the doubt, in order to reduce walks and encourage batters to swing.
4. A batter who is hit by a pitch outside the strike zone has the option of continuing her at bat or taking first base. If so, the pitch will be counted as a hit batter and a ball in the ball and strike count.
5. Intentional walks are not allowed. If the umpire believes that a pitcher is intentionally throwing a ball, they can call it a non-pitch.
6. Bunting and slap hitting is allowed. Slashing (showing bunt and then hitting away) is not allowed.

### **BASE RUNNING**

1. Base runners can leave the base as the ball leaves the pitcher's hand. Base runners leaving a base early shall be ruled out.
2. A play is considered dead and the *half-way rule* goes into effect when the pitcher has possession of the ball roughly within the pitcher circle.

- a. Halfway rule: base runners who are more than halfway to the next base may take that base; base runners who are less than halfway must return to the previous base.
- b. A by product of the dead ball rule is a base runner cannot bait the pitcher into starting a “pickle” play.
3. Base runners may only advance one base on an overthrown ball that stays in foul territory. Otherwise base runners may advance at will (except on an overthrown ball during a stolen base or “snap throw” to a base by the catcher) until the pitcher has possession of the ball within the circle.
4. In order to prevent injury and protect a defensive player attempting to make a play, the runner will be called out (runner interference) if they *crash* into a defensive player holding the ball, preparing to apply a tag or positioning herself to catch a thrown or hit ball. To avoid interference the runner can slide, jump over the top of the player, or run around the player without being called out (even if forced to go outside the base path). If the runner is called out for interference the ball becomes dead. In summary, it is the runner’s responsibility to avoid crashing into a defensive player.
5. Base runners are entitled to advance to the next base if a fielder obstructs the base runner from advancing while in the base path (fielder interference), unless the fielder is in the process of fielding a batted ball or has possession of the ball and ready to tag the base runner (see runner interference).
6. The base runner is out if she intentionally interferes with a thrown ball.
7. The base runner is out when struck with a fair, untouched batted ball while not in contact with a base.
8. A ball thrown by a fielder that hits the base runner is a live ball.
9. A batted or thrown ball hitting the umpire is in play.
10. The infield fly rule is not in effect. Players advance at their own risk on any infield fly.
11. A batter is out if the catcher catches a foul ball which goes over the batter's head or if she catches a third strike foul tip. The batter is out on a called third strike even if the catcher drops the ball.

## **BASE STEALING**

1. Base runners may steal second or third base providing they start the steal before the ball reaches the catcher. The goal is to increase the players’ skills in base running and catching; not to provide a base runner with a free base on a passed ball.
  - a. Coaches are encouraged to teach good, aggressive base running within this rule.
  - b. Umpires are encouraged to determine the intent of the base runner before deciding to rule the base stealer out or just sent back to second base without penalty.
2. A base runner that steals second or third may not advance to the following base on an overthrown ball to the base or to the pitcher.
  - a. A base runner on first may not advance to second unless they were also attempting to steal (left before the ball crossed the plate).
3. A base runner may steal one base on an attempted “snap throw” by the catcher.
4. Delayed steals or stealing of home are not allowed (except on a snap throw to third base).

## **PITCHING**

1. Pitching is done by players. Balls and strikes are called.
2. Pitchers, other than the designated pitcher (see below) may only pitch a maximum of three innings per game. If a pitcher delivers one pitch in an inning she shall be charged with one inning pitched.
3. Prior to the start of the game each team can select one player as their designated pitcher. The designated pitcher may, at the coach’s discretion, relieve another pitcher after 4 walks or two hit-batters in an inning. A hit-batter is considered a walk when determining walks per inning. This relief appearance will not count towards the maximum of 3 innings per game. There is no limit on the number of relief appearances by the designated pitcher.
4. Pitchers are limited to five warm-up pitches between innings. Relief pitchers are also limited to five warm-up pitches.
5. A pitcher must be removed for the remainder of the inning upon either hitting 3 batters in that inning or the second conference-visit to the mound by a coach. The pitcher may be reinserted in any subsequent inning.
6. Partial or full windmill pitching is encouraged but not mandatory. ASA rules stipulate that both feet of the pitcher be in contact with the pitching rubber at the start of the pitching motion. The pitcher is not allowed to step backward off the pitching rubber at any point during the pitching motion and her throwing-side foot must stay in contact with the pitching rubber as she is releasing the ball.

- a. We allow a beginner pitcher to place her glove-side foot behind the pitching rubber as long as she does not rock back and forth, and providing her throwing-side foot stays in contact with the rubber from the beginning of her motion until she starts to release the ball.
  - b. The placement of the pitching rubber will be at 38' instead of 40' for non-windmill pitchers.
  - c. The intent of this rule is to ensure the pitcher's safety while not gaining a significant competitive advantage from an illegal pitch as defined by ASA.
7. Discussions about the legality of a pitcher's motion must be undertaken quietly between the coaches and the umpire. If, in the umpire's opinion, the pitcher is being distracted by the conversation, the umpire shall declare the pitching motion legal for the remainder of the inning and no further discussion will be entertained during the game.
  8. A pitcher must demonstrate an ability to throw at least 50% of her pitches as strikes in practice, before being inserted into a game.

### **UMPIRE PROTOCOL**

1. Once the game begins, the umpire is in complete control of the game.
2. The league-supplied umpires shall stand behind the catcher and must wear covered shoes/sneakers plus shin guards, chest protector, and umpire's mask supplied by the home team.
3. A coach may talk to an umpire only between half-innings and in the presence of the other team's coach. The discussion must only take place behind home plate and with quiet voices. Regardless of the circumstance, coach/umpire conferences may only take place between half innings.
4. Umpires are not responsible for the violation of any special league rules such as pitching or playing time. If you believe the opposing team has violated any of our rules, you may call for a coach/umpire conference after the half inning or lodge a complaint to your grade commissioner after the game.
5. If an umpire does not arrive within 10 minutes of game time, the coaches must agree on a substitute umpire. If an agreement cannot be reached, the game will NOT be rescheduled. Please inform the umpire commissioner that your umpire was a no show.

### **SAFETY ISSUES**

1. Teams are encouraged to play games in light to medium rain. Games must be suspended at the first sight of lightning and play not resumed until 15 minutes after the last sight of lightening.
2. 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 team players and a designated safety-adult are allowed on or near the players' bench.
3. 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.
4. Batters and on-deck batters must wear helmets with an attached face-guard and chin strap. Base runners and player base-coaches must wear helmets at all times.
5. Catchers must wear shin guards, chest protector and catcher's mask.
6. Official, ASA sanctioned bats must be used.
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. Players should wear NGS softball shirts, pants, socks and visor to the game.
9. No jewelry including watches, rings, necklaces, or earrings (except small studs) may be worn during the game.
10. No juice breaks or snacks until the game is over. Water bottles on the bench are okay.
11. No dogs are allowed near the players' bench, even if on a leash. Dogs at the field must be leashed at all times.
12. No smoking or alcoholic beverages are allowed at the field.
13. 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 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, to be replayed in its entirety in the presence of league officials and without the offending person(s).