

**2023**  
**GIRLS FASTPITCH SOFTBALL**  
**RULE BOOK**



The Suburban League girls' softball teams will be divided into three grade level divisions - 1st-2nd, 3rd-5th, and 5th-8th. The 1st-2nd grade league rules are available as a separate document.

Revisions for 2023 are highlighted in **Green**.

All divisions expose the players to the fast pitch softball format as played in the local area high schools. Batting the roster with unlimited substitution of defensive players emphasizes player development. Competitiveness is maintained by limiting scoring to five runs in an inning.

## LEAGUE OFFICIALS/CONTACTS

The officials of the Suburban League are:

Suburban Fastpitch Director  
Suburban 1st-2nd Commissioner  
Suburban 3rd-5th Commissioner  
Suburban 5th-8th Commissioner  
Suburban Co-Presidents

Adam Hablewitz 920-905-2445  
Lindsey Kraft 920-470-0213  
Chris Bossart 920-858-6671  
Paul Murphy 920-216-6339  
Adam Hablewitz 920-905-2445  
Tim Reitzner 920-213-1839

## GAME SCHEDULES

League games will be played Tuesday and Thursday evenings.

Players should arrive 30-45 minutes before the scheduled start of any game to allow proper warm up time.

Games postponed due to rain will be made up at the end of the scheduled season.

## DIAMOND LOCATIONS

See the Suburban Athletics website at: <https://www.suburbanathletics.com/fields>

## SUBURBAN LEAGUE FASTPITCH SOFTBALL RULES VERSION **2023**

### 1. OFFICIAL RULES FOR LEAGUE GAMES

WIAA High School softball rules will apply unless replaced by the rules listed herein. These specific rules of the Suburban League apply in place of overlapping or conflicting WIAA rules.

### 2. GAME CONDUCT

- a. Each girl will dress and act with respect for herself and all others in the league.
- b. Abusive or profane language by anyone connected with softball is prohibited.
  - i. Infractions may be considered unsportsmanlike-like conduct in which case paragraph (f) below may apply.
- c. The use of tobacco or alcohol in any form is prohibited on the playing field or in the area of the player's bench while conducting team activities.

- d. Misuse of facilities/equipment is prohibited.
  - i. Infractions may be considered unsportsmanlike-like conduct in which case paragraph (f) below may apply.
- e. Head Coaches are responsible for controlling their players, coaches, fans or parents associated with their players.
  - i. If an adult becomes unruly, the umpire will call time out. The head coaches and umpire will ask the individual to either curtail the objectionable behavior or leave the park. NOTE: The umpire will not resume the game until the incident is resolved.
- f. The umpire can eject a coach or player from the game for unsportsmanlike conduct.
  - i. An ejected player may sit on the bench.
  - ii. An ejected coach or manager must leave the playing field and may not coach from the spectator area.
  - iii. A coach may eject a player on his/her team for unsportsmanlike conduct.
- g. Players and coaches will not question the judgment of an umpire.
  - i. Umpires will consider questioning the judgment of an umpire as unsportsmanlike conduct, in which case section (f) above may apply.
  - ii. Umpires will call a timeout if interpretation of a rule is questioned. The two head coaches and the umpires will hold a conference. The game will continue upon mutual agreement on the proper rule interpretation.
- h. Coaches may request a timeout and in a sportsmanlike manner discuss with each other and the plate umpire what is expected for the strike zone for the age level of their players.

### 3. PLAYER ELIGIBILITY

- a. Grades 1st-2nd Division: Players currently in 1st or 2nd grade as of Jan 1, 2023.
- b. Grades 3rd-5th Division: Players currently in 3rd, 4th or 5th grade as of Jan 1, 2023.
- c. Grades 5th-8th Division: Players currently in 5th, 6th, 7th or 8th grade as of Jan 1, 2023.

### 4. EQUIPMENT

- a. All bats should be fast-pitch softball approved.
  - i. Maximum length-34 inches, lightweight bats 32 inches or shorter are recommended for youth fastpitch softball.
- b. Maximum diameter at thickest point- 2.25 inches.
- c. All bats must have a high friction handle material for a secure grip. The end knob of the bat should be of the same material as the body of the bat and securely attached. End knobs integrated with the grip material are prohibited.
- d. Girls will wear the proper protective equipment during practices and games.
  - i. Batting helmets with an approved facemask are mandatory when batting.
  - ii. Catcher's helmets, throat protector, chest protector and shin guards are mandatory attire when catching.
  - iii. Grades 3rd-5th Division: 1st, 2nd, 3rd, shortstop and pitcher are required to wear an approved fielding mask. It is highly recommended to wear a fielding mask at all defensive positions
  - iv. Grades 5th-8th Division: 1st, 3rd, and pitcher are required to wear an approved fielding mask. It is highly recommended to wear a fielding mask at all defensive positions

- v. Head Coaches are responsible for enforcing the use of protective safety equipment.
- e. The home team shall provide one new game ball and a suitable back-up ball.
  - i. 1st-2nd and 3rd-5th grade divisions shall use an 11-inch circumference softball.
  - ii. All others shall use a 12-inch circumference softball.
  - iii. Ball shall be optic yellow, leather and with raised seams.

## 5. GAME AND PRACTICE ATTIRE

- a. Girls will wear the team uniform as provided by their sponsoring organization. Shorts are acceptable however pants are preferred for sliding rule
- b. Shoes must have a rubber sole and heel.
  - i. Girls are encouraged to wear softball cleats, but canvas or leather athletic shoes are allowed.
  - ii. Safety concerns prohibit shoes with metal cleats.
  - iii. Safety concerns prohibit bare feet on the playing field or in the dugouts.
- c. Players will not wear jewelry. Players will tape pierced earrings to the ear that can't be removed. Players will securely tape medical bracelets or necklaces.

## 6. GAME SCHEDULE AND FORMAT

- a. Games start at different times at the various diamonds in the league.
  - i. No warm-up is to be conducted on the infield.
- b. The game umpire and the head coaches will decide the fitness of the groups for playing after rain.
  - i. Canceled games will be rescheduled for the week following scheduled league play.
- c. Games of less than 4 ½ complete innings, interrupted or suspended by weather, will resume at the point of interruption/suspension. The score book of the home team is official.  
Completed games consist of:
  - i. Six completed innings.
  - ii. In the case of severe weather:
    - 1. Four and one-half innings if Home team is leading, otherwise
    - 2. Five full innings.
  - iii. A game in which one team is leading by a run differential of 12 or more runs after four innings and 10 or more runs after five innings. The team that is ahead is declared the winner at the end of the said inning.
  - iv. Time limit on games is 1:30. The home plate umpire will announce the game start time to each head coach prior to the first pitch. No new inning shall start once time is met. Note: Time limit is based off of the 3rd out of an inning, not the start of the next inning.
- d. Any game played to the allowable time limit with an equal score is a TIE GAME.
- e. There is no minimum player rule to start, play or finish a game.

## 7. LEAGUE END OF SEASON WEEKEND TOURNAMENT

- a. League standings as of games recorded by the end of the regular league schedule will be determined by the following format:
  - i. Best win record

- ii. Head to head competition
  - iii. Least number of losses
  - iv. Fewest runs allowed in the head to head competition
  - v. Coin flip
- b. A tournament format will be determined by Suburban Athletics with input from all organizations.

## **8. ROSTER AND BATTING ORDER**

- a. The batting order will consist of all players present.
- b. Changes to the batting order are not permitted in any given game, with the following exceptions:
  - i. Late arriving players may be added to the end of the batting order.
  - ii. Player injury:
    - 1. A player may be deleted from the batting order for injury or for any reason causing a player to leave a game in progress. If a player leaves the game due to injury and said player's turn comes to bat she is **NOT** an automatic out. If a player re-enters the game she goes right back to her original batting order position.
    - 2. A player injured while batting may be replaced by the next legal batter. The replacement batter will assume the ball and strike count of the injured player.
  - iii. In the case of an interrupted/suspended game:
    - 1. Players previously deleted for any reason, other than ejection, may be reinstated in their original batting position upon resumption of the game.
    - 2. Players not in the original line-up shall be added to the end of the batting order.
    - 3. A team may play a maximum of 10 defensive players on the field.
    - 4. All girls present must play a minimum of 2 complete defensive innings (6 defensive outs) in the field.
    - 5. Defensive players may be freely substituted during the game.

## **9. UMPIRES AND SCOREKEEPERS**

- a. The home team is responsible for paying the umpires. The home plate umpire is in charge of the game.
- b. Each team will provide their own scorekeeper. The home team scorekeeper will be the official scorekeeper.
- c. The scorekeepers should compare score books after each completed inning to avoid differences.
- d. The winning team will be responsible to report the game online thru Sportsengine.

## **10. GROUND RULES**

- a. Time out can only be declared by the umpires
  - i. Players, head coaches and assistant coaches may request a timeout by directing such request to the umpires, but may not be granted until the ball becomes dead.
- b. Only one girl may be on deck at a time.
  - i. Umpires will suspend play until all other girls are in the dugout.
- c. Any fair ball hit under the fence, lodged in the fence or bouncing over the fence is a ground rule double.

- i. The defensive player closest to the ball should raise her hand requesting time out when the ball becomes unplayable.
- d. Any fair ball hitting the top of the fence on the fly and going over is a home run.
- e. A ball hit or thrown within the boundaries of the playing field (within the fence line or the backstop and its extensions) is in play and is a live ball unless an umpire declares a dead ball.
- f. If the ball goes out of bounds, into the dugout, behind the dugout, or any other equipment interferes with the playing of the ball, the ball becomes dead.
  - i. The defensive player closest to the ball should raise her hand requesting time out when the ball becomes unplayable.
  - ii. All runners are awarded one base beyond the last one legally touched at the time the ball is declared dead.
- g. Offensive play will be limited to five scored runs for the 3rd-5th & 5th-8th divisions, with unlimited runs in the declared last inning for all divisions.
  - i. A team's offensive half of an inning will be completed as of the scoring of the fifth run. NOTE: If the batter has not completed her at bat, the batter will be the first batter of the next inning starting with a clear ball & strike count.
  - ii. Unlimited runs will go into effect for 1) final scheduled inning of the game, or 2) any inning and all innings starting after 1 hour and 10 minutes of game time.
- h. A batter that is hit by a wild pitch which strikes the ground before hitting her, is still awarded her base if an attempt is made to avoid being hit (umpire's discretion).
- i. The 10<sup>th</sup> player is an outfielder. The four outfielders must be in the outfield at the release of the pitch. If in violation, a no-pitch is called and the batter will be awarded a ball.
- j. Bunt Attempt: The definition of a bunt attempt was changed to require the batter to withdraw the bat in order to take a pitch. Holding the bat in the strike zone without withdrawal will be considered a bunt attempt. You cannot fake a bunt, then swing at the ball.

## 11. PITCHERS/PITCHING

- a. Pitching rubber location
  - i. 3rd-5th Division: The pitching rubber shall be 35 feet from the back point of the plate to the front edge of the pitching rubber.
  - ii. 5th-8th Division: The pitching rubber shall be 40 feet from the back point of the plate to the front edge of the pitching rubber.
- b. Any player on the roster may pitch.
- c. A pitcher once removed from pitching can play another position or move to the bench. The pitcher may re-enter as the pitcher in the same or another inning.
  - i. An inning pitched is counted each time a pitcher enters or re-enters an inning.
  - ii. Delivery of a single pitch counts as having pitched an inning.
- d. A pitcher is eligible to pitch 3 innings per game.
  - i. A forfeit loss is declared if more than the allowed innings are pitched in a game.
  - ii. Pitching limits are not waived for playoffs or the league tournament.
- e. Both windmill and slingshot pitching styles are legal.
- f. The pivot foot may remain in contact with, or may push off and drag away from the pitching rubber.
- g. Pitching motion:

- i. The pitcher must present the ball by bringing the ball and their glove together before beginning the pitching motion. NOTE: The delivery of a pitch begins with the parting of the hands after presenting the ball.
  - ii. Due to the varying levels of skill in pitching development, prior to the start of the pitch, the pitcher may choose foot placement. The pitcher may choose to take a position with the pivot foot in contact with the rubber and the non-pivot foot behind the pitcher's rubber or both feet in contact with the pitcher's rubber. Prior to the start of delivery, both feet must be on the ground within or partially within the 24 inch length of the pitcher's rubber. This allows for personal preference and developing pitchers to work through levels of progression.
  - iii. All motion of the body is forward in the direction of the batter when delivering a pitch. NOTE: Any backward step from the starting stance is prohibited once the pitcher's hands are parted.
  - iv. Once the pitcher begins the pitching motion, any release of the ball, whether it slips from hand prior to pitcher's intent, is counted as a pitch.
- h. Illegal pitch
  - i. An illegal pitch as defined in the WIAA rules or the above restrictions is a ball to the batter. The ball becomes dead with any runners on base advancing one base determined by their location before the start of the pitch.
- i. Warm up pitches:
  - i. Five warm up pitches are allowed between innings.
  - ii. Seven warm up pitches are allowed for a new pitcher entering or re-entering the game.
- j. In ALL divisions if a pitcher hits a batter 3 times in an inning or 5 times in a game, that player must be removed from the pitcher's position for the remainder of the game. This "removed pitcher" can play any other position on the field after being removed from the pitching position.

## 12. INTENTIONAL WALKS

- a. No intentional walks. Pitchers must pitch to the batter and the catcher must remain in the catcher's box.

## 13. BATTING (3rd-5th Division ONLY)

- a. NO WALKS WILL BE ALLOWED. Upon receiving ball four, the batter will be pitched the remaining strikes by her coach. The batter will assume the strike count as it was at the time ball four was called and will get that many attempts to hit the ball. For example, if the batter has no strikes she gets three chances to hit the ball. If the batter has one strike, she gets two chances. If the batter has two strikes, she gets one chance to hit the ball. In the coach pitch situation:
  - i. A swing and a miss constitute a strike.
  - ii. The home umpire will remain behind home plate and call balls and strikes on the coach pitch. This is to prohibit girls from swinging at bad pitches. If it is determined by the umpire that the coach is throwing bad pitches to prolong the at bat, the batter will be called out.
  - iii. A foul ball is played as it would under normal circumstances (hitting a foul ball with two strikes would remain two strikes with another attempt).
  - iv. The batter and runners may advance as in a normal play.
  - v. NO BUNTING OR STEALING is allowed when coach is pitching.



- vi. The pitcher must remain next to the rubber on either side and in the pitching circle until the ball is hit.
- vii. The catcher must remain behind the plate, in the catching position (the crouch), with full gear on until the ball is hit.
- viii. The coach pitching does not play defense and tries not to interfere with plays.
- ix. The coach that pitches must be ready to come in to pitch upon ball four, delay will cause a strike to be awarded to the batter (keep the game moving!).
- x. Coach must pitch underhand with at least one foot on the rubber.

#### 14. BASERUNNING/STEALING

- a. A batter/runner who hits the ball and safely reaches first base followed by overrunning first base, may immediately return to first base without liability of a tag out provided she does not show an intent to advance to 2<sup>nd</sup> base.
  - i. Rounding first base with the intent of advancing to 2<sup>nd</sup> base puts the batter/runner in play, with liability of tag out if played upon.
  - ii. The judgment of the umpire on "intent to advance" will be final.
- b. A batter/runner failing to slide into a base is out if all three of the following apply:
  - i. There is contact with a defensive player.
  - ii. A properly positioned defensive player in possession of the ball or in a position to receive a ball in flight to the defensive player.
  - iii. In the judgment of the umpire, the contact could have been avoided by sliding.  
NOTE: The judgment of the umpire is final. This is a discretionary call to promote safety.
  - iv. There is no stealing home in the 3rd-5th division.
  - v. In the 3rd-5th division: Upon stealing 3<sup>rd</sup> base and the catcher throws the ball past the 3<sup>rd</sup> baseman, the runner cannot run home.
  - vi. In the 3rd-5th division, a runner can only steal one base per batter.
- c. A batter making a third strike is immediately out in the 3rd-5th division.
- d. Dropped third strike rule is in effect for the 5th-8th division: The batter becomes a runner when the catcher fails to catch the third strike before the ball touches the ground and there are:
  - i. Fewer than two outs and first base is not occupied at the time of the pitch (a baserunner attempting to steal at the pitch release still counts as the base being occupied at the time of the pitch), or
  - ii. Any time there are two outs.
- e. Leading off from base/stealing:
  - i. 3rd-5th divisions:
    - 1. Upon the pitched ball touching the ground, or
    - 2. Upon the pitched ball crossing home plate.
  - ii. 5th-8th divisions:
    - 1. Once the pitched ball leaves the pitchers hand
  - iii. After one warning for leading off early, the runner will be declared out. The ball is declared dead and a no pitch is declared.
  - iv. Runners that are not in contact with a base are subject to a tag out with the exception of running past first base as long as there is no attempt to advance to 2nd base.
  - v. Runners may advance (attempt to steal) to the next base provided the pitch does not result in a foul ball, batter hit by pitch, or any other dead ball situations.



1. 3rd-5th Division
  - a. No stealing on a coach pitched ball.
  - b. Runners are limited to one stolen base per batter
- vi. 5th-8th Division: A runner may try to steal home plate, with the liability of a tag out, only in the following circumstances:
  1. The pitcher does not catch the return throw from the catcher.
  2. The ball is either dropped or overthrown past the pitcher in typical cases.
  3. The catcher or pitcher throws the ball to another defensive player in an attempt to make a play on any base runner. NOTE: The catcher must throw the ball back to the pitcher; it cannot be handed from the catcher to the pitcher.
- vii. 3rd-5th Division: there is no stealing home no matter what situation.
- f. Advancing on an overthrown ball
  - i. 3rd-5th Division - Runners may attempt to advance 1 base on an overthrow
  - ii. 5th-8th Division - Runners may attempt to advance as many bases on an overthrow that stays in play.
- g. Look-back rule is in effect (per NFHS rule 8-7): When the pitcher has possession of the ball inside of the pitching circle, runner(s) may stop once, but then immediately return to base or attempt to advance to the next base. This rule is intended to eliminate base runners from dancing back and forth when the pitcher has the ball in the 16 ft pitching circle.

## **15. RUN RULES**

12 run rule after 4 innings and 10 run rule from the 5<sup>th</sup> inning on. The team that is ahead is declared the winner at the end of said inning.