

Central Illinois House League Softball 2026

General Rules Summary

1. Official USA Softball rules (Formerly ASA) will apply unless otherwise stated in these Central IL House League rules. General CIHL rules will apply to all age groups. CIHL rules for a particular age group will apply only in that age group.
2. Players must be officially registered with the CIHL to participate in any CIHL sanctioned game. A player may be registered on only one team in the CIHL.
 - a) A player may be a substitute on a team above their rostered age division if that team is not able to compete because they are short players.
 - b) A player that has substituted up on any team and has played a total of 5 regular season games becomes officially rostered on the most recent team for which they substituted. They cannot play with their original team for the remainder of the season.
 - c) Participation in a CIHL tournament will count as 1 game toward the substitution limit of 5 games.
 - d) If a team needs an additional player to fill out a roster, that player must be from the same community and that player must play on a team in a lower division.
 - e) Rosters must be provided to the league coordinator before the annual coaches meeting before games begin. Rosters must contain the player's name and birth date.
3. A player may be rostered on a team below her age group under the following conditions:
 - a) The local organization determines that they should be at that age level because of her ability.
 - b) She is not more than 1 year past the limit for that age group. The CIHL board may grant exceptions to this under special circumstances. All players playing down must be declared on team rosters at the coaches meeting.
4. To pitch in a CIHL tournament, a player must be included in the pre-season roster, and she must have played in 5 regular season CHIL games. If requested, the coach must produce the team book as proof of games played.
5. Players should be taught how and encouraged to slide any time there is going to be a close play on them. However, a runner is entitled to come into any base either standing or sliding and will not be called out for simply not sliding. If a runner is deemed to be maliciously running or sliding into a fielder at any time, they will be called out and ejected from the game. Umpires must use discretion when making this call but must keep the game safe.
6. A player must have possession of the ball to block any base on a tag out. The result of blocking a base without the ball is obstructed by the defensive player.
7. Unlimited substitutions are allowed, including the pitcher. Innings do not have to be consecutive.
8. All players rostered for each game will be listed on the game roster and will bat in that order regardless of whether they are playing in the field.
9. No changes will be made in the starting batting order other than adding players to the bottom of the roster.
10. Any player batting out of order is automatically out. However, an injured player may be removed from the game, their turn at bat skipped without penalty, and then returned later to their original batting position.
11. There should be no heated, verbal arguments on the field under any circumstances.
12. Traveling league players may not play on house league teams. There are no pitching restrictions

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GAMES

13. Game start times will vary based on the venue. A team not present within 20 minutes of the scheduled game time will forfeit the game.
14. The game should end with a final, unlimited scoring inning. The inning that starts after the time limit of play (varies by division) shall be the final, unlimited scoring inning unless:
 - a) The game has reached the max inning count for a complete game (varies by division).
 - b) The game has reached the CIHL or local time limit.
 - c) The local darkness limit has been reached.
15. No inning will start after the set time per age division. In some cases, local rules may override the CIHL time limit, but only to shorten it. It is the home plate umpire's duty to note the starting time of the game.
16. In the case of a tie at the end of regulation play, play will continue with complete innings until the tie is broken or until the home plate umpire calls the game due to darkness or local time limits. Games in this case will result in a tie.
17. All schedule changes, except for weather, must be confirmed by both coaches 48 hours in advance.
18. A one-minute time limit will be allowed for a team to take the field and be prepared to play ball.
19. When a team plays a game shorthanded, or players are injured and cannot complete a game, no outs are charged.
20. Age description, division and game night table.

Age on August 31, 2025	Division	Typical game night
7-8	8U (coach pitch)	Tuesday / Thursday
9-10	10U	Monday / Wednesday
11-12	12U	Monday / Thursday
13-15	15U	Varies

FIELDS

21. Fields shall be set up to the following specifications:

Division	Pitching distance	Pitching circle	Base distance
8U	35 feet	8 foot radius	60 feet
10U	35 feet		
12U	40 feet		
15U	43 feet		

EQUIPMENT

22. Home team will be required to provide a one-piece, half orange/half white, safety bag at first base for CIHL games. Failure to have one will cause the home team to forfeit.
23. Catchers must wear a mask, chest protector, shin guards, and protective helmet.
24. Base runners and batters must wear full protective helmets with face mask.
25. No steel spikes are allowed.
26. The home team will furnish 2 balls for each game.
27. Ball requirements

Division	Size	Specifications
8U	11 inches	Optic yellow cover
10U		COR .470 or under

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12U	12 inches	Compression of 375.0 or less ASA or USA Softball logo
15U		

28. All equipment must be in compliance with the Official USA Softball rule. (Softballs, bats, helmets, etc.)

SEVERE WEATHER POLICY

29. At the first sound of thunder or sight of lightning, games will be suspended for 30 minutes.
30. The 30-minute suspension of play restarts every time lightning is seen or thunder is heard.

UMPIRES

31. The home team shall furnish umpire(s) for each game for all levels except 8U.
32. Home plate umpires must wear a protective face mask and chest protector.
33. It will be each community's responsibility to review the CIHL rules with their umpires.
34. The umpires shall meet with both coaches before the game to discuss any concerns and set clear guidelines on how they will be umpiring the game.

Suggestions for a successful and enjoyable league:

- Communities should make an effort to make teams equal. No stacking the deck to make a strong team and weaker teams. No club teams, no "old team" and "young team", etc.

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8U Division Rules

TEAMS

1. Any player who turned 9 years old on or before August 31st of the current year is not eligible to compete.
2. A team shall consist of 10 players, the tenth player being an outfielder who will play 15 feet behind the baselines. A team must field at least 7 players or forfeit the game.
3. The pitcher (who is an adult) must not interfere when the ball is hit.
4. Two coaches on the defensive team may be on the field but cannot interfere with the ball.
5. Only a pitcher, catcher, and four infielders will be allowed to play in the infield at any one time.

GAMES

6. Game length: no inning shall start after 1 hour and 15 minutes into the game. At this point, the current inning will be the final inning of the game.
7. A normal game will consist of 5 innings.
8. A maximum of 5 runs per team shall be allowed in one inning. The 5th inning and any inning after that shall be open innings with no limit on the number of runs scored.
9. The ten-run rule will apply after the 4th inning. Example: If the home team is at least 10 runs ahead after 3 1/2 innings, the game is over. If the visiting team is at least 10 runs ahead after the 4th inning, the game is over.
10. In case of rain, 3 complete innings constitute a game. Any incomplete games are completely replayed.
11. The use of umpires during regular season games will be at the hosting team's discretion. If an umpire is present, they must be at least 12 years old and must stand behind the pitcher.

BATTING

12. The coach pitching to their team batting must pitch within the 16-foot diameter circle that will be based on the 35 feet pitching distance. Ball must be released within the circle.
13. No player will be walked. The batter is out after 3 strikes whether the catcher catches the ball or not. No "called" strikes. The maximum pitch count to a batter is 10.
14. No intentional bunting is allowed. (Umpire's discretion.)
15. The infield fly rule will not be applied.

BASE RUNNING

16. When a ball that has been in play is returned from the outfield to the infield's diamond square (the diamond square is defined as the shape created by the basepaths), the play is over when a player has control of the ball. All base runners may continue to the base they were headed for when the ball is controlled (or called controlled by the umpire).
17. There will be no base stealing. Runners may not leave base until the ball is hit into play.
18. Batter cannot advance on an overthrow at first or any other base, even if played on.
19. Runner(s) can only advance as far as the batter advances because of their hit.

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10U Division Rules

TEAMS

1. Any player who turned 11 on or before August 31st of the current year is not eligible to compete.
2. A team shall consist of 10 players, the tenth player being an outfielder who will play 15 feet behind the baselines. A team must field at least 7 players or forfeit the game.
3. Only a pitcher, catcher, and four infielders will be allowed to play in the infield at any one time.

GAMES

4. A normal game will consist of 5 innings.
5. A maximum of 5 runs per team shall be allowed in one inning. The 5th inning and any after that shall be open innings with no limit on the number of runs scored.
6. The ten-run rule will apply after the 4th inning. Example: If the home team is at least 10 runs ahead after 3 1/2 innings, the game is over. If the visiting team is at least 10 runs ahead after the 4th inning, the game is over.
7. Game length: no inning shall start after 1 hour and 30 minutes into the game. At this point, the current inning will be the final inning of the game.
8. In case of rain, 3 complete innings constitute a game. Any incomplete games are completely replayed.
9. Plate umpires must be at least 15 years old. Base umpires must be at least 12 years old.

BATTING

10. Batter is out after 3 strikes. No advancement on a dropped 3rd strike.
11. Infield fly rule will not be applied.
12. No intentional walks.
13. No intentional bunting is allowed.
14. On a pitch that hits the ground before crossing the plate, the batter will only be awarded first base if she makes an attempt to get out of the way of the ball.

BASE RUNNING

15. Batter and runner(s) can only advance one base (at risk of being put out) because of an overthrow at first base only, even if a play is attempted at second base.
16. No base stealing including on pass balls/wild pitches.
17. Lead-offs are allowed. Runners may not leave the base until the ball leaves the pitcher's hand.
18. In the case of an overthrow off of the playing field, the ball is dead, and all runners advance one base. The playing field is defined by the home team ground rules.
18. A runner may only score if forced in by a walk/hit batter or on a hit.

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HYBRID COACH/PLAYER PITCH

1. There are no walks in this division. However, if the kid pitcher does hit the batter, the batter will be awarded first base.
2. If a player-pitcher delivers 4 balls before the ball is put in play or 3 swinging strikes (batter is out), the Coach Pitcher will finish the at bat for the batter (a coach entering the game to pitch is referred to as "Coach Rescue").
3. The batter will maintain his strike count when the Coach Pitcher takes over the at bat.
4. Coach Pitcher will deliver a maximum of 5 pitches, until 3 swinging strikes, or the ball is put into play.
5. A Foul Ball on the 5th pitch will grant the batter another pitch but they must swing or will be called out.
6. Coach Rescue rules will be enforced based on the following timeline:
 - **Start of the season – May31:** Full Coach Rescue "no walks" through the end of May. Hitting team's coach finishes the at bat inheriting the number of strikes on the batter.
 - **June 1-12:** 2 walk limit per inning per pitcher. Coach rescue will be used starting with the 3rd walk of the inning.
 - **June 13 - end of season (including tournament even if before June 13th):** No Coaches rescue. Player pitch only with applicable run rules per inning.

PITCHING

19. A pitcher is allowed only 3 innings per game. One pitch is considered one inning.
20. USA Softball pitching rules state that the pitcher shall take a position with their pivot foot in contact with the pitcher's plate and their non-pivot foot in contact with or behind the pitcher's plate. The pitcher shall bring their hands together for not less than one second and not more than 10 seconds before releasing the ball. A backward step may be taken before, simultaneously with or after the hands are brought together. The pivot foot must always remain in contact with the pitcher's plate prior to the forward step.
21. All other pitching regulations are covered by USA Softball rules.

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12U Division Rules

TEAMS

1. Any player who turned 13 on or before August 31st of the current year is not eligible to compete.
2. A team shall consist of 10 players, the tenth player being an outfielder who will play 15 feet behind the baselines. A team must field at least 7 players or forfeit the game.
3. Only a pitcher, catcher, and four infielders will be allowed to play in the infield at any one time.

GAMES

4. A normal game will consist of 6 innings.
5. A maximum of 5 runs per team shall be allowed in one inning. The 6th inning and any after that shall be open innings with no limit on the number of runs scored.
6. The ten-run rule will apply after the 4th inning. Example: If the home team is at least 10 runs ahead after 3 1/2 innings, the game is over. If the visiting team is at least 10 runs ahead after the 4th inning, the game is over.
7. Game length: no inning shall start after 1 hour and 30 minutes into the game. At this point, the current inning will be the final inning of the game.
8. In case of rain, 4 complete innings constitute a game. Any incomplete games are completely replayed.
9. Plate umpires must be at least 15 years old. Base umpires must be at least 14 years old.

BATTING

10. Batter can advance to first on a dropped 3rd strike when first base is unoccupied with less than 2 outs. The base is occupied if there is a runner on first base prior to the pitch. If there are 2 outs it does not matter if first base is occupied or not. A player must record the final out as the ball is live. The batter is not out until she enters the dugout.
11. Infield fly rule is in effect.
12. No intentional walks.
13. Bunting is allowed.

BASE RUNNING

14. After a hit, when the pitcher holds the ball within the pitching circle, a runner may continue to advance as long as she does not stop. If the runner stops on a base, she must stay there. If she stops after rounding a base before she reaches the next base, she must immediately return to the last base touched or she will be called out and she may be put out by a tag as she returns to the base.
15. A walk will be treated the same as a hit as far as a runner's right to continue past first base.
16. Lead-offs and stealing are allowed. Runner can leave the base when the ball leaves the pitcher's hand.
17. Stealing of second, third, and home will be allowed.
18. In the case of an overthrow off the playing field, the ball is dead, and all runners advance one base. The playing field is defined by the home team ground rules.

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PITCHING

19. A pitcher is allowed only 4 innings per game. One pitch is considered one inning.
20. USA Softball pitching rules state that the pitcher shall take a position with their pivot foot in contact with the pitcher's plate and their non-pivot foot in contact with or behind the pitcher's plate. The pitcher shall bring their hands together for not less than one second and not more than 10 seconds before releasing the ball. A backward step may be taken before, simultaneously with or after the hands are brought together. The pivot foot must always remain in contact with the pitcher's plate prior to the forward step.
21. All other pitching regulations are covered by USA Softball rules.

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15U Division Rules

TEAMS

1. Any player who turned 16 on or before August 31st of the current year is not eligible to compete.
2. A team shall consist of 9 players. A team must field at least 7 players or forfeit the game.

GAMES

3. A normal game will be 7 innings.
4. A maximum of 4 runs per team shall be allowed in one inning. The 7th inning and any after that shall be open innings with no limit on the number of runs scored.
5. The ten-run rule will apply after the 5th inning. Example: If the home team is at least 10 runs ahead after 4 1/2 innings, the game is over. If the visiting team is at least 10 runs ahead after the 5th inning, the game is over.
6. In case of rain, 5 complete innings constitute a game. Any incomplete games are completely replayed.
7. Umpires must be at least 16 years old.

BASE RUNNING

8. Batter can advance to first on a dropped 3rd strike when first base is unoccupied with less than 2 outs. The base is occupied if there is a runner on first base prior to the pitch. If there are 2 outs it does not matter if first base is occupied or not. A player must record the final out as the ball is live. The batter is not out until she enters the dugout.
9. After a hit, when the pitcher holds the ball within the pitching circle, a runner may continue to advance if she does not stop. If the runner stops on a base, she must stay there. If the runner stops after rounding a base, before she reaches the next base, she must immediately return to the last base touched or she will be called out and she may be put out by a tag as she returns to the base.
10. A walk will be treated the same as a hit as far as a runner's right to continue past first base.

PITCHING

11. Intentional walks can be pitched or declared.
12. A pitcher is allowed only 4 innings per game. One pitch is considered one inning.
13. USA Softball pitching rules state that the pitcher shall take a position with their pivot foot in contact with the pitcher's plate and their non-pivot foot in contact with or behind the pitcher's plate. The pitcher shall bring their hands together for not less than one second and not more than 10 seconds before releasing the ball. A backward step may be taken before, simultaneously with or after the hands are brought together. The pivot foot must always remain in contact with the pitcher's plate prior to the forward step.
14. All other pitching regulations are covered by USA Softball rules.