

In-House Minors

3rd - 4th grades

As usual our first emphasis is on having **fun**. Always remember our **AYF Mission Statement**: foster love of the game, stress sportsmanship, teach fundamentals, and encourage community involvement. Nothing in here about your team going undefeated.

General Game Rules:

- Good sportsmanship while creating a **supportive positive environment** for girls to have fun and learn softball is priority number one.
- Players should all arrive a minimum of **15 minutes prior to** the start of game time.
- **No bunting.**
 - Coach's discretion as the season goes on.
- Defense can play 9 or 10 fielders (3 or 4 in the outfield). **Outfielders** need to play deep enough so as to not create a wall of infielders. After the ball is hit, they are welcome to charge up and help.
- **Bench coach's** job is to help keep the kids focused and ready for their spot in the order. Everyone should know where they are going out on defense and should huddle together before hustling out together on defense.
- Remind the girls to **cheer** for each other. Give them specific things to cheer about. Call out teammates when they do something good and make a point to recognize them.
- Coaches/parents/players **meet afterward** to share positive statements, recognition of players, and treats.

Game Timing:

- The games will be **5 innings** or 75 minutes.
- **No new inning** will be started in the last 10 minutes.
- **Maximum of 5 runs** allowed per inning except no run limit in the final inning.
 - ◊ Change on 5 runs or 3 outs.
 - ◊ Your entire lineup bats in the games.
- **No Mercy rule explanation:** We want the girls to play as much as possible. We have inning run limits as well as a time limit so no overall "mercy rule" will be in effect. Coaches should always be practicing good sportsmanship and communicating with one another.

Equipment/apparel:

- **Helmets** must be worn at all times for hitter, on-deck hitter, and in-the-hole hitter.
- All players should wear a **softball/baseball pant** or some other long pants.
 - ◊ Note: please no shorts from a safety standpoint and as you need pants to wear the catcher's gear.
- **Rubber spikes only.** No metal cleats. No tennis shoes as they are too slippery.
- **Infield masks** shall be worn by all players in the infield and will be supplied.
- **Catchers'** equipment must be worn and will be supplied by the league.
- Each girl needs to bring their own **glove**. We have few extras.
- It is acceptable to use your own equipment, however, please mark them in somehow so they don't end up donated to AYF.

Pitching:

- Player pitch from **35 ft.**
- **Coach takes** over the count if **ball 4** is thrown. The umpire will still call balls and strikes with the coach pitching so that the hitter is not forced to swing at an accidental bad pitch.
 - Example:
 - Count: 3-1 then Pitcher throws ball 4. Coach comes in with count: 3-1 intact.
 - 1st coach pitch – strike, no swing. Count: 3-2
 - 2nd coach pitch – ball, no swing. Count: 3-2
 - 3rd coach pitch – foul ball, Count: 3-2
 - 4th coach pitch – swing and miss, Strike 3, Out.
 - ◇ The coach should make every attempt to deliver a flat pitch from as close to 35 ft as they can. Moving closer to 30 ft will be allowed if necessary to deliver a hittable pitch.
- First base will not be awarded if **hit by pitch**. Instead, coach will immediately come in to pitch and the hitter will be given a fresh count (no strikes).
 - ◇ After 3 hit batters by one pitcher, any future hit batters will be given the option to immediately take first base. They can decline this option and hit off coach if they wish.

Baserunning:

- Only **stealing** of 2nd base is allowed. No stealing if up by 6 or more runs.
 - ◇ coaches decide together prior to game if you want any stealing early in the season
- **No advance** to 1st base on a dropped 3rd strike.
- Runner **may lead off** from the base once the ball leaves the pitcher's hand.
- On balls hit to the outfield, encourage your players to run as far as they want to risk. Once the ball is possessed (by any player) in the infield dirt, all runners must stop at their closest base.
- **Overthrows:** runners can try to advance 1 base only at their own risk after a hit ball and an overthrow to a base.

Umpires:

- We may have **umpires** for this level if we can.
 - ◇ They will largely be made up of upper level softball and baseball players.
- We have to constantly remind everyone that they are to only treat the umpires with **respect and gratitude**. As adults we will need to model the behavior for our athletes.
- Anyone mistreating any umpire will be **warned** 1st and then asked to leave. We are confident this won't be an issue.
- If **no umpire** is available, then head coaches will ump from behind the pitcher.

Weather:

- In the case of inclement weather, the **head coaches will be responsible** for communicating with each other and their teams.
- Decisions should be made by no later than **1.5 hour before practice/game** and parents notified.

Most Important Rules:

- Keep the **energy high and positive**.
- Always **end the night** with positive statements, recognition of players, and treats.
- If the girls are having fun, they'll **come back** for more!