

8U TOURNAMENT SOFTBALL RULES

Game Preliminaries-

- 2 Umpires per game for all State tournament games with one designated to handle all pitching machine issues (loading, adjusting, etc.). Adjustments should be made at the end of a complete inning, but may be adjusted during an inning if the machine throws 3 consecutive ‘unhittable’ balls or is bumped during play.
- A pitching machine will be used for all games & will be set up directly above the pitcher’s plate, 40 feet from home plate & set to a speed of **35 MPH** on the machine readout. If no mph read-out on machine, then it is to be radar gunned from where catcher’s glove would be to catch pitch & set to the same speed of **35 mph**.
- A “catcher’s area” will be marked prior to the game & will be from the front of the batter’s box and extend 6’ beyond the back of the batter’s box. It will be from the outside of one batter’s box to the outside of the other batter’s box.
- A “halfway line” perpendicular to the base path will be drawn halfway between first and second base, between second and third base, and between third base and home plate in order to establish enforcement of the “halfway rule”.
- If a team is forced to start a game with less than 9 players, the team must take an out in the batting order in a spot designated by the coach. Game must be played with 8 players or less, or forfeited.
- Before the start of each game, both coaches will be called either to the mound or home plate to ensure that all involved is in agreement as to where the machine is starting at, positioned & throwing at.

Batting-

- All players on the game line-up card available to play shall bat in the batting order, which allows for free defensive substitutions. There will not be a penalty for the loss of a player in game for injury or illness. However, if a player cannot complete a game then that player must also sit out the next game for recovery time.
- Each batter shall receive 5 pitches or 3 swinging strikes before being called out. If the fifth pitch is hit foul, the batter will continue the at bat until she does not swing, swings & misses, or hits the ball in play. No walks will be issued.
- If a batter is hit by a pitched ball, it shall be ruled as a no pitch and does not count towards the 5 pitch limit, unless swung at, & then it becomes a dead ball strike. If it happens again, the umpire shall adjust the machine as needed.
- Bunting is allowed, but once a batter squares to bunt, she may not pull bat back & swing. If batter swings after showing the bunt position, or attempts a slap or drag bunt, a dead ball will be called, batter is out & all runners return to previous base. The umpire has full discretion to interpret, warn & enforce as needed.
- If a batted ball makes contact with the pitching machine or umpire, the ball will be ruled dead with the batter awarded a single, and all runners will advance one base. Any ball that stops under the machine will be ruled a dead ball. The umpire has the final discretion on any calls with regard to safety around the machine, including thrown balls.
- 6-run rule per inning for first 5 innings. In 6th inning & beyond, unlimited runs may be scored until 3 outs are recorded
- Run rule – **16-run** lead after 3 innings & **10-run** lead after 4 innings shall constitute the mercy rule & a complete game

Defense-

- The defense may use 10 defensive players. No more than 6 players may start a play within the traditional infield dirt area. The tenth player is to be used as a 4th outfielder, not an extra infielder.
- Outfielders may not receive the first throw from a defensive player on a batted ball to make a put out at any base, whether by forcing or by tagging & cannot run to a base for a putout without a throw made first. They can participate in a ‘run-down pickle’ situation or any subsequent play following the first throw.
- The pitcher is considered a fielder; therefore, normal pitcher substitution rules do not apply.
- The pitcher must start within the pitcher’s circle (12’ diameter) and not closer to home plate than the pitcher’s plate. Any contact with the circle will be considered inside the circle either when ball is pitched or play is being made.
- Play is stopped when the pitcher has the ball within the pitcher’s circle, **OR if time out has been granted by the umpire after lead runner has been stopped on the base paths. Normal Baseball timeout guidelines apply.** Any runner that has reached the halfway line or forced from a base may proceed to the next base without the risk of being put out.
- If the pitcher fields a batted ball within the circle, she may make a play on a runner at any base from inside the circle. Otherwise, the play is dead when runners reach base safely. If the pitcher makes a play on a runner, the ball is declared dead once the ball is returned to the pitcher and she enters the pitcher’s circle. Once the pitcher re-enters the circle, she cannot make a play on any advancing runner, the play is dead, and the halfway rule applies.
- No infield fly rule. No defensive coaches will be allowed on the field during play.

Baserunners-

- Base stealing is permitted, but only if the pitched ball leaves the “catcher’s area.” **The runner may not leave the base at all until the ball leaves the catcher’s area.** A ball on the line is still considered to be in the catcher’s area. Any violation of this rule will be treated the same as the ‘leave early rule’, including the use of a ‘team warning’ for the first offense. **However, a team shall not be warned, or runner called out for leaving the base when there has been any contact with the batter’s bat & a pitched ball, such as a foul tip or foul ball.**
- Any runner who has established contact with or beyond the halfway line will be allowed to advance to next base.
- If a runner crosses the halfway line, then crosses it back to head back to a base, she would have to continue to the previously occupied base unless forced to advance.