

# DHYS SOFTBALL PLAYING RULES FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL

REVISED AND UPDATED SEPTEMBER 2019

ASA are the official rules with the below modifications

**Sportsmanship Statement:** For good sportsmanship to prevail, coaches, players and fans must display respect, fairness, honesty and responsibility before, during and after games. We encourage everyone to enthusiastically support their team, recognize outstanding performance of opponents, and always exhibit good sportsmanship in their words and actions.

## Playing Field

1. Bases are sixty (60) feet apart.
2. Pitchers plate/rubber is forty (40) feet from back of home plate
3. Pitcher's circle is an eight (8) foot radius from the back of the rubber.
4. There is no foul arc between home plate and the pitching circle.

## Game Duration

1. A complete game is seven (7) innings or one (1) hour and thirty (30) minutes. If less than 7 innings have been played, a new inning shall begin if any amount of time is left on the official game clock. There is no hard stop when the time limit has been reached (i.e. the current inning will be completed).
2. A new inning will start the moment the third out is made or the moment the max runs have been scored in the current inning.
3. An inning will be three (3) outs or three (3) runs for the first four innings and then three (3) outs or eight (8) runs for any subsequent innings.
4. Teams must be ready to take the field when the umpire has the coaches meeting at the plate. Game clock begins when the umpire starts the game timer at the end of the coaches meeting.
5. In case a game cannot be completed due to weather delays, darkness, etc, the game will be considered "official" after four (4) innings of play (or 3.5 innings if the home team is ahead). Incomplete games will be replayed completely at a later date.
6. Mercy Rule: If a team is ahead by 10 or more runs at the end of 4 innings (3.5 innings if home team is leading) or 8 or more runs after 5 innings (4.5 innings if home team is leading), the game is over.
7. The visiting team is the official scorekeeper.
8. Game tiebreakers for Middle School League:
  - a) Regular Season Games: No tiebreaker will be used during regular season games. A game tied at the end of a regulation game will be considered a tie.
  - b) Playoff and Championship Games: If a game is tied at the end of regulation, extra innings will be played until a winner has been declared.

## Players

1. Each team will field a minimum of eight players and a maximum of 10 players in the field. If a team falls below 8 players at any point in the game, a forfeit will be declared.
2. There is no short field position in Middle School softball.
3. A maximum of six (6) players may play in the infield including P, C, 1st, 2nd, 3rd and SS. All other players who are not in infield positions are to be positioned in the outfield, beyond the outfield line.
4. No more than four (4) players will be on either half of the infield as defined by a line between home and second base (i.e. there will be no "shifts").
5. The catcher will be in foul territory behind home plate and must wear chest, shin and face protection.
6. Outfield players are to be positioned in the grass and equally spaced.

7. Defensive Rotation. There is free substitution of players on defense, with the following exceptions:
  - a) Changing Pitchers: An individual player may only be brought into the pitcher's position twice throughout a game (two separate occasions). A team shall not be allowed to transfer a pitcher back and forth from pitching to a fielding position or from the bench to a pitching position in order to put a specific pitcher against a specific batter or batters throughout the entirety of the game. The player-pitcher is allowed to exit and re-enter the pitcher position ONCE in a game. Exception: A pitcher will be allowed to re-enter the game a 3rd time only in extra innings.
  - b) No player will sit out more than 1 inning in a game until all players have sat out 1 inning.

### **Pitching**

1. The pitcher must take a position with both feet firmly on the ground and with both feet in contact with, but not off the side of the pitcher's plate. The pitch starts when one hand is taken off the ball or the pitcher makes any motion that is part of the windup. In the act of delivering the ball, the pitcher shall not take more than one step, which must be forward, toward the batter, and simultaneous with the delivery of the ball to the batter
2. All pitcher players must wear a mask
3. If a pitch thrown by a pitcher-player hits a batter she is awarded first base as long as she makes an attempt to avoid being hit by pitch at umpire's discretion.
4. A pitcher CANNOT pitch more than four (4) innings in a regulation seven (7) inning game. Any part of an inning on the mound as a pitcher constitutes a complete inning pitched.
5. Coach pitch is not a part of the Middle School division. Bases on balls will be observed following normal ASA rules.
6. Each team will be allowed one (1) intentional walk per game. If a pitcher intends to intentionally walk a batter, all pitches must be legally delivered to the batter. If there are no runners on base, a pitcher wishing to intentionally walk a batter will be granted such by signaling the Umpire of her intention. No pitches need be thrown for an intentional walk to be granted in this situation.

### **Batting**

1. The batting order will consist of the entire roster of players present.
2. A foul ball by the batter on the third strike will be awarded another pitch assuming that the foul ball is not caught in the air for an out.
3. Batters and base runners must wear helmets with a face protector.
4. The batter "on-deck" must wear a helmet with a face protector.
5. Bunting is allowed. However, slashing or faking a bunt followed by a swing attempt on the same pitch is not allowed. Slap hitting is also not allowed.

### **Coaching**

1. On offense, each team may provide a first and third base coach for each at-bat.
2. Judgment calls by the umpires are not to be questioned.
3. Rule discussions will occur after play has stopped. Discussions will be attended by the opposing managers and restricted to only the head coaches.
4. Dugout coaches – No one other than designated coaches (maximum of 4) and players may be in the dugout.

### **Base Running / Conclusion of Play**

1. A base runner can leave the base upon release of the ball from the pitcher's hand. Players that leave the base prior to the release of the ball from the pitcher's hand shall be declared out by the umpire.
2. Any number of bases (including home) may be stolen.
3. Stealing home on a passed ball is allowed from third base.

4. Sliding or other effort must be made to AVOID CONTACT with the defensive player. If contact is made, it will solely be the umpire's determination if there was an attempt to avoid contact. If no play is being made, the defensive players must give way to the offensive player.
5. If there is an attempted play at the plate, players MUST slide into home plate. Players that do not slide, if a play is being made at plate, shall be called out. This will be a judgment call made by the umpire and their call will not be disputed.
6. No head-first slides are permitted unless the batter is returning back to a base and avoiding a tag. A head first slide otherwise will result in the runner being declared out.
7. When a batter is called out on a 3rd strike, any base runner(s) may steal and advance to the next base at their own risk of being put out (like any other pitch).
8. When a batter is walked, she may not attempt to take second base unless there is an overthrow to the pitcher.
9. Runners can advance on a batted ball until the pitcher has control of the ball in the pitching circle.
10. The ASA Look-Back Rule is in effect (Rule 8, Section 7 and Rules Supplement, Section 34).
  - a) The rule states that when a play is concluded and the pitcher has possession of the ball inside the pitching circle, any runners between bases may pause briefly, but then must immediately commit to a course of action. The runner must immediately advance to the next base or they must immediately return to the base they most recently occupied.
  - b) If the pitcher reacts to a runner's commitment to a course of action by leaving the circle, faking a throw, throwing the ball, or throwing the ball away during that defensive action, play is live again and all runners may advance at their own risk. In that case, the look-back rule does not apply again until that play has concluded and the pitcher regains control of the ball inside the pitching circle. Failure to immediately proceed to the next base or return to the original base after the pitcher has the ball in the circle results in the runner being called out.
  - c) Further, no runner may leave a base when the pitcher has possession of the ball in the circle and is not making a play on a runner. Exception: When a batter receives a walk, runners on 2nd or 3rd base can remain off their base until the batter-runner reaches 1st base. As soon as the batter-runner reaches 1st base and the pitcher has the ball in the circle, the other runners must return to their base or commit to the next base.
  - d) Note that the intent of this rule is to prevent a baserunner from 'baiting' the pitcher into making a play on the baserunner by dancing back and forth between bases.
11. The infield fly rule IS in effect.
12. Dropped third strike rule is NOT in effect.
13. Courtesy Runner: If a player is injured and unable to run the bases to the fullest extent, the manager may request a courtesy runner through the umpire. The most recently retired player will be the designated runner. A courtesy runner may also be requested for the catcher if there are two outs in an inning. This allowance is to speed game play by allowing the incoming catcher time to put on her gear.
14. Obstruction of the runner as well as offensive and defensive interference will be enforced.

### **Miscellaneous**

1. Pace: Dugout coaches are encouraged to ensure the batters are ready for their turn at bat.
2. Good sportsmanship should be displayed by coaches and players at all times. No one (including spectators) will be allowed to use cheers that taunt or insult the opposing team.
3. Coaches are responsible for the cleanup of the area immediately after games. Ask your parents in the stands to help with this. All trash must be picked up and placed in the appropriate receptacle.
4. Equipment: a standard 12" ball will be used. All bats must be regulation fastpitch softball bats.
5. All teams playing in a DHYS sponsored softball game – regardless of affiliation or sponsor must abide by these rules.