

# NHSM Indoor Softball Rules



The following rules relate to all league play within New Hampshire Sports Management softball leagues. Anything not found in the following pages by default resort to the game's governing body rules or basic, reasonable common-sense ruling.

We are always open for suggestions changes, additions, omissions, or requests, and will consider any communications on the rules so long as it's consistent with our core values and the Laws of the Game.

## General League Rules for all divisions

- A. Game length will be maximum 6 innings or when time runs out, whichever comes first (see rule on "official game determination").
- B. Each team gets three outs an inning. Teams may agree on 6-out innings to provide more game play time and reduce the amount of time "changing sides." In this occasion, a reset (bases clear) after the first three outs of the inning.
- C. Umpires will be coaches of the teams that are participating. Honor system applies.
- D. A minimum of 8 players is required for a team to start a game in every division

## Age

Age determination is based upon the player's age as of May 1st of the year following indoor play. If a player wishes to play in a division "above" their age level, they may do so. A player may not play "down" an age group.

Divisions being offered are:

- **10U**
- **12U**
- **14U**
- **HIGH SCHOOL**

Age determination is based upon the division that the player's age **on the players age as of May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023** (for games played September 2022 through April 2023) and will be May 1<sup>st</sup> for all subsequent years.

## Equipment

- A. **Bats** –10U & 12U must use USA-stamped bats or wood bats. 14U & High School must use BBCOR or wood bats.
- B. **Balls** –Only softballs with the official softball insignia are to be used for game play. All game balls are supplied by home team at the beginning of each game.
- C. **Batting Helmets** – All batters, on-deck batters, and base runners are required to always wear protective batting helmets. A player who in the judgment of the umpire intentionally removes a helmet while base running during a live play will be called out.

## Uniforms

Each player must be in proper uniform to participate. A players' uniform consists of the standard team uniform shirt, shorts, hat, and safety equipment. Uniform shirts should be tucked into the player's shorts or pants. Sliding pads or softball pants are suggested for players as this is played fully on turf.

**No jewelry or hair combs are allowed to be worn during game play.** Medical alert jewelry is permitted and must be discussed with umpire prior to the start of the game.

## Base lengths

- A. 60 feet between bases for all divisions

## Pitching Distance

- A. 10U - 35 feet – teams may agree to hit off a tee to allow for more defensive actions and a faster pace of play.
- B. 12U & older - 40 feet

## Official Game Determination

- A. Teams will be given an **85-minute window** to complete their games.
- B. No new inning may be started at a point exceeding **75 minutes** from the scheduled start time of the game.
- C. At the 85-minute limit, the game is official, and the results will be counted, including ties.
- D. In a case where the inning is not completed due to the drop dead 85-minute rule, the final score will revert to the last completed inning.
- E. Coaches will not delay a game in the final inning.
- F. A full game (six full innings) completed inside of the 85-minute window will be considered complete.

## Scoring

Scoring will be a **maximum of 5 runs per inning.**

## Mercy Rule

- 10U - The Mercy Rule can be enforced if a team is leading by 8 or more runs after 4 innings or 3 1/2 if home team is leading. For scoring purposes, a maximum run differential of 8 will be recorded, the game will be considered complete, and the teams may continue to play for the rest of their allotted time at the coach/umpire's discretion.
- 12U & older - The Mercy Rule can be enforced if a team is leading by 15 or more runs after 4 innings or 3 1/2 if home team is leading. For scoring purposes, a maximum run differential of 15 will be recorded, the game will be considered complete, and the teams may continue to play for the rest of their allotted time at the coach/umpire's discretion.

## 9 Batter Rule

A half inning will be considered complete once it reaches 3 outs or 9 batters, whichever comes first. When the 9th batter comes to the plate - no matter how many outs there are - the count moves to 2 outs. Only runs that score due to a hit or error will count.

**Example 1:** If the 9th batter hits the ball with a runner on third and the play results in the batter being thrown out at the base...the runner on third crosses home plate... the run DOES NOT COUNT.

**Example 2:** If the batter hits the ball and is safe at first and the runner at third crosses the plate then the run counts because the batter was safe. Once the ball is back to the pitcher all runs end and the inning is complete.

## Continuation

Run continuation will be in effect during play.

**Example:** 4 runs have already scored, and bases are loaded, the batter hits a homerun.... all runs count and the team is awarded 8 runs for that inning.

## Last Inning

In the last inning, or the inning that the coaches/umpire declares will be the last inning (the coaches/umpire must declare this before the first pitch of that inning is thrown), the 9 batter or 5 run rule is no longer in effect. There will be unlimited runs and unlimited batters until three outs have been made or time has expired.

## Courtesy Runner

If a player is injured and unable to fully run the bases, the coach/manager may request a courtesy runner. The most recently retired player will be the designated runner. If there are two outs and the catcher gets on base, a courtesy runner should be used in the same manner to allow the catcher time to put on their protective gear. By default, the courtesy runner shall be the player who made the final out of the previous inning OR the final batter from the previous inning.

## Lead Offs / Stealing

- 10U – Closed bases. Players may attempt to steal once a pitch crosses home plate. Little league rules apply.
- 12U & 14U – Leading and stealing allowed. Cal Ripken rules apply.
- High School – Lead and stealing allowed. High School Federation rules apply.

NOTE: In all divisions a runner must slide/avoid contact with the defensive player.

**There is no walk continuation or walk into a steal allowed. The runner will be called out in this occasion.**

## **Sliding**

As noted above, in all divisions, all players must make any attempt possible to avoid contact with other players.

## **Bunting**

Is allowed in all divisions.

## **Slap Hitting**

- 10U - Not allowed
- 12U & above – Allowed

## **Infield Fly Rule**

- 10U – does not apply
- 12U & 14U – applies

## **Dropped 3rd Strike**

- 10U – No dropped third strike rule
- 12U & above – The dropped third strike rule applies

## **Pick Offs**

Are allowed in all divisions.

## **Defensive Substitutions**

Free defensive substitutions are permitted.

## **Pitching**

- A. The pitcher shall take a position with both feet in contact with the pitching rubber.
- B. The pitcher may not step backwards at any time.
- C. The pitcher may only step into a pitch.
- D. The pitcher must not make any motion to pitch without immediately delivering the ball to the batter.
  - 10U – A pitcher cannot pitch more than 3 innings in a 6-inning game.
  - 12U – A pitcher cannot pitch more than 4 innings in a 7-inning game (if game goes to extra).
  - 14U & above – There is no limit on the number of innings that one player can pitch.

The above inning limits do not have to be consecutive innings. One pitch in an inning counts as a full inning pitched.

## Hit-by-Pitch

- A. If a batter is hit by the ball, the play is called dead, and the batter takes their base.
- B. If the umpire rules that the batter did not attempt to avoid the pitch, and does not award the batter first base, then it will not count as a hit batter. The umpire will be solely responsible for this determination which is a non-arguable judgment call.
- C. **If a pitcher hits 2 batters in one inning, the pitcher must be replaced for the remainder of that inning.** The pitcher may return to pitch subsequent innings if they have not fulfilled the divisions pitching inning limit.
- D. **If a pitcher hits three batters in a game, the pitcher may not pitch at any time during the remainder of the game.**

Before the game, the managers should discuss with each other and/or the umpires the hit-by-pitch rule and make it clear that is a safety rule and that it is solely the umpires' call. No one will discuss or attempt to influence the umpire's decision.

## Strike Zone

- A. The strike zone will be defined as the area over home plate, between the armpit and the bottom of the knees.
- B. Managers should speak before the game as to what they intend to use as the strike zone. This serves to clarify the strike zone for all parties.
- C. If a manager feels that the umpire's strike zone has shifted during game play, the manger has a right to call a conference with the umpire and the other manager to discuss the situation.

## Dead Ball

- A. The ball is considered dead once the pitcher has control of the ball and is within the designated pitching circle.
- B. Once the ball is dead, no runner may advance. Any runner who has not gone past the halfway point to the next base must go back to the preceding base.

In the event of an obvious injury to a player, the umpire may declare the ball dead and call a time out. The umpire will be responsible for the judgment as to the position of the runners.

## NHSM / Dome Specific Rules

- A. No team shall be allowed to compete in any games without making full payment for their team's registration to NHSM or the New Hampshire SportsDome.
- B. Any ball hit and deemed to be in play that results in getting stuck in the netting, field equipment, or another object that is deemed disruptive, where the defensive player is unable to field the ball cleanly, will be considered a ground rule double.
- C. Any ball that hits the ceiling above the field of play in fair territory will be played live, regardless of where the ball hits the turf. Any ball caught after hitting the ceiling will be considered an out.
- D. A home run is a ball which travels in the air and hits the dome wall above the "shadow" on the dome walls. Any ball that hits the wall below the "shadow" is a live ball and considered in play.