

2024 NorthWood Youth Little League Rules

Girls Softball; Junior's age 7-10

Introduction:

This division for 7-10 year old girls (Juniors) is intended to be an instructional league. It is designed to establish the rudiments of teamwork and fundamentals of softball. The 7-10 year old Machine Pitch division is intended to be the league that transitions kids from tee ball/coach pitch baseball eventually to a kid pitch girls softball division. The 11-14 year old girls (Senior's) is intended to be slightly more competitive, but also a fundamental improvement league to be the next step towards full on kid pitch middle school age/High schools softball.

The Machine Pitch division is structured to represent a traditional softball game with the major difference being the use of the machine instead of a pitcher. Players still fill all traditional fielder roles, score is kept during the game, but the intent is upon player development and fun, and less on competitiveness. The machine will allow every pitch to be hittable, thus kids do not have to worry about being hit by a pitch, which will help dramatically improve their hitting skills and confidence to prepare them for the unpredictability of kid pitch divisions in the future. The machine also enables more balls to be put into play, which will keep fielders actively engaged and focused on the game. There are games in kid pitch where a pitcher may struggle, and fielders become disengaged as the walks begin to accumulate. In Machine Pitch, this does not happen, and can lead to a much more action packed game for everyone, which is more fun and helps develop a passion on interest for softball.

All of the traditional US High School Softball rules are in affect with some adjustments you'll see below. The combination of traditional rules and plenty of action helps players develop their knowledge of the game. They will come to understand the difference between a ground ball and a fly ball and when to run. They will understand difference between a force out and a need to tag out the runner. This league will create a comfortable and fun environment for the girls to learn about the game, and develop their overall skills and love for the game. This division helps to eradicate the common complaint of softball not being active enough or interesting enough to keep the players attention and continued participation in softball.

2024 Playing Rules:

Play Ball:

- If a team is short players, they may borrow from another team to fill the field. If you get to a game to find out you are short players, use rotating players from the opposing team to play the field only. Have them play the outfield. They will still bat in order (sub them out if needed) and play the field for their normal team.
- **Games are limited to 6 innings with a maximum duration of 1 hour and 15 mins. No inning should start after 1 hour and 15 minutes of play. But a new inning should be started if any time**

remaining on the game clock. A new inning starts with the last "out" of the prior inning. Not after warmups, those are part of the new inning.

- After 3 complete innings a game can be called due to inclement weather conditions, and will be considered a complete game.
- **Each inning is played with three outs, or Six runs. Whichever comes first. Except last inning, no run limit.**
- No Mercy rule, just keep to the 6 run limit per inning, with exception of final inning where unlimited runs may be scored until 3 outs is made if score is within 10 runs of each other. ** IF the top of Inning (visitor) team is ahead by more than 10 runs going into the final inning; if they score 6 runs in that inning and are now up by 16 or more runs, they are capped at those 6 and their half of inning is over. Home team still has unlimited chance to catch up (if they get 17 runs, to win the game.) Very unlikely.
- The official ball will be an 11" Diamond 11MBP for Juniors. Balls suitable for pitching machine use are easily identified by the red/blue striped stitching pattern. Do NOT put regular Synthetic covered balls into pitching machine or damage/buildup on wheel will occur, resulting in inaccurate pitching and damage to the wheels.
- An umpire may shall be provided by the league to feed the pitching machine and make all calls in the field. (If no official umpire is provided, the offensive teams coach should feed the machine, while a defensive coach makes the calls in the field.)
- Keep score during the game to keep kids engaged in playing their best. There will be no standings, but there will be a round of playoffs at the end of the season.
- **Pitching machine speed should be set at 37 MPH for Juniors.**
- Machine will be set up at the start of each game by the umpire in charge with both head coaches from each team, home catcher in full gear, and first batter from the visiting team at the plate with the batting helmet on and her bat extended from the batters naval over the home base. Once both coaches are satisfied with the consistent position of the balls being pitched, the game will commence.
- **Playoff games- there will be no time limit. Entire 6 inning game shall be played out.**

The Field:

- **The pitcher is the only position required to wear a faceguard, but it is recommended at all infield positions.**
- Field will be a regulation softball field. Bases are 60 ft. apart.
- Pitcher's mound is 40 feet from home plate. Place the pitching machine just inside or just inside the pitching plate. (towards home plate)
- **You may field up to 10 players, which allows for the use of 4 outfielders. Outfielders play the outfield. There is no short center fielder, space the outfielders apart equally. They may not fill the infield. There is no player assigned to stand on 2nd base.**
 - **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. They can make a put out in a "run down" (pickle) situation or any subsequent play following the first throw.**
- **Only 6 infielders including the catcher allowed on infield. Cannot crowd the infield. (1st base, 2nd Base, Shortstop, 3rd base, pitcher, and catcher. -Shift is banned. 😊)**

- You put only one player at the pitcher position. They stand on either side of the pitching coach/umpire and machine or behind (never in front). They must be positioned at the start of each "Pitch" perpendicular to the machine or behind the imaginary line extending towards 1st and 3rd base from the pitching machine, and touching the pitching circle.
- The pitcher must start touching the pitcher's circle (10ft diameter). Play is stopped when the pitcher has the ball within the pitcher's circle. Again, any contact with the circle will be considered inside the circle. **Any runner who has reached the halfway line or forced from the base may proceed to the next base WITHOUT risk of being put out.**
 - If the pitcher fields a ball in the circle, she MAY make a play on the runner at any base, however, upon the ball returning to the pitcher and her making any contact with the pitching circle, the ball is declared dead.
- Use a catcher if you have enough players. The catcher must wear all the gear. Since there is no umpire behind home plate, the catcher in Jr's (7-10) league may position themselves far enough back to catch the ball on a bounce.
 - It is allowed if coaches agree, to keep the game moving that a bucket be placed behind Homeplate by the fence, and up to 6 balls may be used in rotation so the catcher does not have to return the ball to the pitcher on every play. The umpire could have a bucket or basket to which they feed the 6 balls allowed out of, and then replenish after each batter.
- No player should play more than 3 innings at one position in a game. No permanent assignments.
- All players should get some playing time in the infield each game.
- All players may sit out only for a maximum of 6 outs per game (2 innings). There is no warning for violating this rule. A violation of this rule occurs for each out after 6 outs a player sits out. For each violation of this rule, at the beginning of the next inning after the violation, the violating team will start with an out for each violation (up to, including and over, three outs, in which case the violating team will skip at-bats), and during the inning of any violation, the non-violating team will have one run per violation added to its score. If the violation(s) occur during the last inning of a game or there are not enough innings left in the game to enforce all of the outs penalties, the penalties for outs and runs will be enforced and applied at the beginning of the violating team's next game. **Only exception to this rule is due to Injury or illness that requires a player to sit out remainder of the game.**
- IF the ball hits the machine or a coach, it is a dead ball. All runners advance one base or go to closest base if contact is result of a thrown ball, and not an initially batted ball.
 - Be sure to never reach under machine or make a play at a ball near the machine for Safety reasons.
- **When calling close plays, the tie goes to the fielders.** Hitting and running skills develop much faster. Fielding a ball, making the correct decision where to go with it, and then making the throw, catch, and tag or put out requires more effort at this age.
- There is No Infield Fly rule in play in either Juniors division.
- **Each batter gets maximum of 5 pitches (6th with a foul on final pitch).** They do not strike out after 5 pitches if swing and miss. Player can swing at all 5 pitches. But if they have not put ball into play after 5 pitches, they are considered out **(if they foul ball on the 5th pitch, they are**

allowed one additional pitch. If after that pitch they have failed to put it into play, regardless of another foul ball, they are **out**.

- **No bunting**
- All players from a team who are present at the game must be in the batting order, no matter how many are present.
- **The umpire may call a “no pitch” if the pitch is clearly out of the strike zone and the machine malfunctions and the batter does not swing.**
- A hit ball that hits the pitching machine, pitching coach/umpire, or that stops inside the circle around the machine is a dead ball single. All runners advance one base.
- All players from a team who are present at the game must be in the batting order, no matter how many are present.
- All children must always wear a helmet with a face mask when batting and running the bases.
- No on deck batters, on deck batters should be ready to go, but waiting on outside of the fenced gate or in the dugout area.
- Thrown Bat: 1st time warning. 2nd Time is an out. 3rd time you are removed from the game.

On the Bases:

- Half-way chalk line: A line perpendicular to the base path. The line is drawn halfway between first and second, second and third, and third and home.
- Any runner that crosses the halfway line while ball is live may advance to the next base.
- If runner crosses the halfway line and comes back, they must go back to the previously occupied base unless forced to advance.
- **No taking extra bases on a clear overthrow to “First Base”**
- **On an overthrow to any other base, the runner may take one additional base only. It is a dead ball if overthrow goes into outfield and runner gets next base. Ball returned to pitcher to resume play.**
- **No leading off base, and no stealing bases.**
- If there is a good hit, the base runners may take as many bases as the hit yields. That includes a homerun. Base running is NOT station to station.
- Baserunners must slide feet first. You may dive back into a base after rounding. Automatic out for sliding head first.
- Runner for the Catcher: When there are 2 outs, a pinch runner for the catcher is allowed. The pinch runner should be the last player who was out.

Manager and Coaches

- Only coaches in the dugout and on the field
- Base coaches allowed. They may be kids, but they must wear a helmet.

General Tips:

- *Try to simulate a traditional softball atmosphere as much as possible. That's why we do not want defensive coaches in the field. We want to teach the kids to know where to go with the ball to make a play.*
- *No taking extra bases on an overthrow to "First Base". The premise of this rule is we want to encourage fielders to make plays to first even if it isn't close. We don't want to penalize a fielding team for working on these skills by having all runners advance on overthrows to first base. It also keeps the force in play alive at second base and may help the fielders to get 3 outs. Again, more knowledge and skill development.*
- *Overthrows to bases other than first; runners may advance one base only for the same reasons mentioned above. However, if the fielding team tries to throw the runner out at the next base, the ball is still live and the runners can continue to advance.*
- *Basically kids should take the bases earned on the hits, not so much on the errors made by the fielders. Base coaches should not encourage aggressive base running. If an outfielder or infielder is making a throw to the pitcher, don't send a kid approaching third base on to home.*
- *The 5 pitch limit is intended to keep the game moving, not to punish the batter. Fielders and base runners will lose focus if the batter is not hitting. The batter will also begin to feel pressure if they are not hitting. Their arms get tired and they begin to have even more difficulty. It is better to sit them down, and let them try again when their turn comes around.*