

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) occurs after the first three outs of the inning.
- C. Umpires will make the calls and umpire calls will be final.
- 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 (coming soon)**
- **12U (coming soon)**
- **14U**
- **HIGH SCHOOL**

Equipment

- A. **Bats** –10U & 12U must use USA-stamped bats or wood bats. 14U & High School must use BBCOR or wood bats.
- B. **Balls** – Will be provided by the facility. Teams may choose to play with their own balls insofar as they are approved by both teams (and the umpire) for the contest.
- 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/pants, 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 hard hair accessories 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 - 40 feet – teams may agree to pitch from 43 feet.
- C. 14U & High School – 43 feet

Pitching Mats

Pitching mats are required for all divisions. The league will provide a pitching mat in the field of play for game purposes. A team is allowed to bring a pitching mat for another pitcher to warm up on the sideline if space is available. No pitchers may warm up on the sideline without a pitching mat.

Official Game Determination

- A. Teams will be given a **75-minute window** to complete their games. A 15-minute warmup period begins at the scheduled game time, and the first official pitch will be thrown no later than 15 minutes into the window. Teams may choose to shorten the warmup period for a longer play time but must agree and let the umpire know.
- B. No new inning may start at a point exceeding **5 minutes** from the scheduled end time of the game.
 - a. Example: If a game is scheduled to go from 6-715pm, warmups start at 6pm, first pitch will be at 615pm, and no new innings will start after 710pm.
- C. At the 75-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 75-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 75-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 inning 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 & 12U – Closed bases. Players may attempt to steal once a pitch crosses home plate.
- 14U & High School – Leading and stealing allowed.

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. There is no stealing home on a passed ball in any age group.

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 & above – applies

Dropped 3rd Strike

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

Defensive Substitutions

Free defensive substitutions are permitted.

Hit-by-Pitch

- If a batter is hit by the ball, the play is called dead, and the batter takes their base.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

Dead Ball

- The ball is considered dead once the pitcher has control of the ball and has at least one foot on the pitching mat.
- 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

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- The "home team" is listed in the league schedule.
- There is no stealing home on a passed ball in any age group.
- If a team cannot field a full team, it is recommended that the team borrow players from the other team so those who showed up can play. The game will be considered a forfeit. A forfeit will be scored as the maximum run differential.
- Teams cannot add to their roster after the sixth game has been played. Maximum roster size is 20 players.
- Pitchers are given three warmup pitches between each half inning. A new pitcher is allowed up to five pitches.

Arguing Umpire Calls

The league strongly encourages healthy, age-appropriate competition. However, this ideal can only be reached through the principles of Good Sportsmanship. A zero-tolerance policy is just that; zero tolerance. This document serves as your

warning. The policy applies to anyone and everyone connected with the our Softball League, e.g. players, coaches, parents, fans and umpires.

An umpire's decision on fair/foul, safe/out and ball/strike is final. They are judgment calls and not subject to complaint, debate or protest.

- A. Coaches who argue or comment in a negative fashion are subject to ejection at the umpire's discretion. The ejection carries a minimum of a suspension for the remainder of the session. The league has the right to extend a suspension.
- B. Players who argue or engage in negative behavior are subject to ejection at the umpire's discretion. The player must serve a minimum two-game suspension. Players will be confined to their bench area as long as there are no additional disruptions, otherwise the player will be asked to leave the facility (or wait in the lobby if the parent is not around).
- C. Parents / Fans who argue or engage in negative behavior (yelling, teasing, taunting, etc.) shall be removed from the facility. Play will stop while this process is carried out. However, the time limit for the game will NOT be suspended. The umpire will work with the facility staff to identify and address the unruly fan(s) and inform them they must leave. If the parent or fan refuses to leave, the game will end with a forfeit charged against the offending team. The parent/fan in question will be suspended from attending games for the remainder of the session.
- D. Any argument or disagreement that becomes physical, in any way, will result in an immediate, indefinite suspension for any adult involved. Players involved in any physical misconduct will be suspended for the remainder of the session with potential longer suspensions added after investigation.
- E. One coach may ask for "time-out" to speak with the umpire regarding a question over a rule interpretation. A brief, respectful conversation is expected. If the situation remains unresolved, the team may exercise its right to play the game under protest based on the incorrect rulebook interpretation and the game outcome will be determined AFTER the game is played.

Team Benches & Fan Placement

Both team benches will be placed up the first base line in their designated area, unless otherwise specified. Fans and spectators are encouraged to sit in foul territory in right field or walk around (not through the field of play) to deep center field. Any batted ball which hits the spectator area in deep center field will be considered an automatic ground rule double.