



2021
Rulebook
Playing
Rules

usfastpitch.com

2021-2022 Changes to Note

Step Back Pitching Rule Added

**Player's Seasonal Age Requirement for
all A, B and C Travel Teams clarified:**

**Our Season starts on August 1st and ends on
July 31st. The Player's age of eligibility is
Determined by the Player's age on January 1st
Of the Season**

Rules Modified

2-3

2-5

5-2

5-4

6-1

6-9

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10-15



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Classifications and Age Requirements

USFA Season begins on August 1st and ends on July 31st. The Player's age of eligibility is determined by the Players age on January 1st of the Season. This applies to A, B, and C Travel Teams.

Age	Team Classification				
	A	B	C	Rec All-Star	Open
6u/8u	X	X	X	X	X
9u				X	X
10u	X	X	X	X	X
11u				X	X
12u	X	X	X	X	X
14u	X	X	X	X	X
16u	X	X	X	X	X
18u	X	X	X	X	X

High School Division is 16u/18u Combined, with an Open Team Classification, or School Classification system, 1A thru 6A. Open Classification refers to all Team Classifications being combined into a single group. This is for some tournament purposes to offer all Team Classifications an opportunity to play an Open Classification Format.

USFA SEASONAL YEAR

Team registration will run from August 1st through July 31st. Tournament play begins on August 1st.



Players may participate in a higher age or classification, but cannot play in a lower age or classification.

Player rosters must be entered electronically and submitted prior to July 1st or the date of the USFA State Tournament whichever comes first. All rosters will be locked at that time.

Players may not participate on more than one team, regardless of age or classification during the same event or time period.

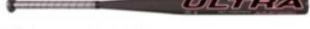
USFA Official Fastpitch Playing Rules

The following rules are the official United States Fastpitch Association rules that will be in effect at all State, Regional and National tournaments. Local areas may modify these rules to conform to their local high school and recreational league rules only. Optional rules are common in regards to coach pitch verses machine pitch in younger divisions. Using 10 or 11 defensive players in younger divisions is a recreational option designed to get more girls in the game. Some states allow high school pitchers to take a backward step during the pitching delivery. Local options are not necessarily endorsed by USFA, but demonstrate the flexibility and tolerance of USFA. USFA will always be about the “can do’s” and not the “can’t do’s”. Safety rules are **NOT FLEXIBLE**. We will adhere to all safety rules in their fullest, including safety rules that are mandated by the governing body of softball. In order to keep the USFA Rulebook as streamlined as possible, rules that are not addressed here should refer to the National Federation of High Schools (NFHS) rulebook for all rules and case studies that have been established throughout the evolution of the sport.

Non Approved Bat List

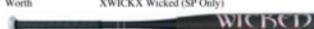
USA Softball Non-Approved Bat List with Certification Marks

3/8/2019

Bass	Quake	Combat	VRSP3 Lady Vins	Easton	SCN1
					
Easton	SCN11BH	Easton	SCN1B	Easton	SCN2B New
					
Easton	SCN3 New	Easton	SCN4B New	Easton	SCN5 New
					
Easton	SCN5B New	Easton	SCN6B New	Easton	SCN7 New
					
Easton	SCN7B New	Easton	SCN8 New	Easton	SCN8B New
					
Easton	SCN9 New	Easton	SCX14 New	Easton	SCX14B New
					
Easton	SCX2 Synergy New	Easton	SCX22 Synergy 2 New	Easton	SCX24B New
					
Easton	SCX3 New	Louisville Slugger	FP136	Louisville Slugger	FP136B New
					
Louisville Slugger	FP136B New	Louisville Slugger	FPC305 Catalyst (-8)	Louisville Slugger	SB304
					
Louisville Slugger	SB34 Genesis	Louisville Slugger	SB404	Louisville Slugger	SB73V TPS Voltage
					
Miken	MSF Freak	Miken	MSU Ultra	Miken	MSU2 Ultra II
					
Miken	MSUM Ultra Maxload	Nokona	Tomahawk	Schutt	Red/Silver Schutt Bat
					
Worth	EST9	Worth	QESTTP	Worth	SBWK(Wicked)
					
Worth	SBWKA	Worth	WWSC Wicked Comp. (SP Only)	Worth	WWSCA
					

USA Softball Non-Approved Bat List with Certification Marks

3/8/2019

Worth	XEST9X	Worth	XGold	Worth	XPST4
					
Worth	XRod	Worth	XWICKX Wicked (SP Only)		
					



Section 1. The Playing Field

Age Group	Pitching Distance	Base Distance	Fence Distance
6u	30/35 ft	55/60 ft	120-200 ft
8u,9u,10u	35 ft	60 ft	150-225 ft
11u,12u	40 ft	60 ft	180-225 ft
14u,16u,18u, HS	43 ft	60 ft	200-225 ft

- 1-1: There will be a 16 foot diameter circle drawn evenly around the pitching rubber.
- 1-2: The batter's box will be to the left and to the right of the plate. They will be 3 feet wide and 7 feet long. Four feet toward the pitching rubber from the center of the plate.
- 1-3: Base lines will extend out 3 feet on both sides of the base parallel to the centerline (total of 6 feet wide).
- 1-4: Coaching boxes and on deck batter's boxes are recommended.

Section 2. Equipment

This is the equipment to be used while playing in official United States Fastpitch Association events. As a rule, equipment must be standard approved equipment that is properly marked with "Official Softball" or similar markings that certify the equipment. All official safety equipment must be used and properly marked as certified.

- 2-1:** All bats must be unaltered official softball bats. The umpire will check all bats prior to the game. Any illegal bats will be removed from the dugout prior to the game. All bats must be stamped with BPF 1.20 or less OR a current ASA stamp and NOT be on the ASA NON-APPROVED bat list. The governing body of softball maintains a list of illegal bats and USFA will enforce this. Use of illegal bat will result in an automatic out and ejection of player using the bat.
- 2-2:** A USFA stamped game ball or the equivalent must be used in all USFA sanctioned events. All 12U-18U division balls must be 12" in diameter with .47 C.O.R. and .375 compression. 6U-10U must use 11" diameter with .47 C.O.R. and .375 compression. Color and stitching are optional, as long as all the balls are the same in color for any one game.
- 2-3:** All batting helmets and catching gear must be approved and in original condition. (Numbers and personalized designs are okay). Skull Caps are not authorized for Catchers and Batters.
- 2-4:** Shoes and socks must be worn and plastic cleats are recommended. Metal cleats are allowed for 14U-18U and High School divisions.
- 2-5:** Hats and visors are permissible. They are optional between each individual player. Must be properly worn by Players and Coaches.
- 2-6:** Uniforms should be similar in appearance. Numbers should be worn on uniforms with no 2 players on a team having the same number. In situations where 2 players have the same number, the lineup sheet should state a difference between the two players. **Example:** #12 red jersey, #12 black jersey.



- 2-7: All Helmets must have NOCSAE approved face guards. Defensive face guards are recommended and endorsed by USFA.
- 2-8: **Jewelry:** Players are permitted to wear certain jewelry items, such as a Medical alert necklace and or a Medical Alert bracelet. As a rule, items of jewelry worn on the finger is deemed as hazardous. Exposed jewelry that is judged to be hazardous to the well being of the player, or unsafe, in the judgement of the Umpire, is not permitted to be worn by the participating player during the game.
- 2-9: Noncompliance of equipment rules will lead to offending coach being ejected from the game.

Section 3. Definitions

- 3-1: **Altered Bat/Balls:** When the physical structure of a legal softball bat or softball has been changed.

Participation with or Encouraging the use of Altered Bat/Ball: Any player who participates with, or any adult who encourages the use of an altered bat or ball shall be suspended immediately from the event discovery is made. Said player, coach and player's parents may also be suspended indefinitely from all USFA activities and could be subject to **Child Endangerment Criminal and Civil Charges.**

- 3-2: **Appeal:** A play or rule violation on which the umpire does not make a ruling until requested by a coach or player.

- 3-3: Base Path:** The traditional path traveled by a runner who is attempting to advance to the next base. It is defined by a direct line between two bases and three feet on either side of that line, unless a fielder has the ball in her possession and she is within three feet of the runner and prepared to apply a tag. A base runner who attempts to avoid a tag by running more than three feet to either side of a fielder with the ball in her possession shall be declared out. NOTE: A runner establishes her own base path when she is not being played upon.
- 3-4: Base Runner:** The batterrunner is a player who has finished their time at bat and has left the batter's box (both feet touching completely outside the box) but has not yet been put out or reached first base.
- 3-5: Bunt, Attempted Bunt or Drag Bunt:** A bunt is a legally batted ball not swung at but intentionally tapped with the bat. Attempted Bunt: Any non-swinging movement of the bat intended to tap the ball into play. Holding the bat in the strike zone is considered a bunt attempt. In order to take a pitch, the bat must be withdrawn – pulled backward and away from the ball. Drag Bunt: A drag bunt is attempting to bunt the ball by running forward in the batter's box, carrying the bat with her. The movement of the bat is in conjunction with the batter's forward movement
- 3-6: Conference:** Anytime a head coach gets permission to suspend play to talk to the players. Only 1 offensive or defensive conference allowed per half inning without penalty. On the second defensive conference, the pitcher must be replaced. Replaced pitcher cannot return to pitch in the same inning that she was replaced. The new pitcher must pitch to at least one batter.



- 3-7: Five Minute Rule / Stalling:** Umpire has a right to end a conference early if the umpire determines a team is trying to stall a game. This call will not be questioned or appealed by a coach. Also, any stoppage of play within the last 5 minutes of a timed game will result in the game clock being suspended until play resumes.
- 3-8: Leap, Crowhop or Replant:** A “Leap” is defined as an act by the pitcher which causes the pitcher to be airborne on the initial move and move from the pitcher’s plate. “Pushing off” and dragging the pivot foot in contact with the ground is required. If a hole has been created, the pivot foot may drag no higher than the level plane of the ground.” A “Crow Hop” is defined as the act of a pitcher who steps, hops, or drags off the front of the pitcher’s plate, replants the pivot foot, establishing a second starting point, pushes off from the newly established point and completes the delivery.
- 3-9: Dead Ball:**When the ball is not in play. Umpire will declare, “Dead ball”.
- 3-10: Fake Tag:** An act by a defensive player that simulates an attempt to tag a runner. Faking a tag is always considered obstruction.
- 3-11: Foul Tip:** A foul tip is a batted ball that goes sharply and directly from the bat to the catcher’s mitt or hand and is legally caught by the catcher. It is a strike and remains a live ball.
- 3-12: Obstruction (Defense):**Obstruction is the act of the defensive team member that hinders or impedes a batter’s attempt to make contact with a pitched ball or that impedes the progress of a runner or batter runner who is legally running bases, unless the

fielder is in possession of the ball or is making the initial play on a batted ball. The act may be intentional or unintentional, physical or verbal.

- 3-13: Hit By Pitch:** When the pitched ball hits the batter and the batter is not swinging at the ball and a ball or a strike is not called and the pitched ball is entirely within the batter's box and it strikes the batter or her clothing. Dead ball results with the batter advancing to first base. No attempt to avoid being hit by the pitch is required. However, the batter may not obviously try to get hit by the pitch.
- 3-14: Illegal Bats:** An illegal bat is a bat that does not meet acceptable specifications.
- 3-15: Infield Fly Rule:** Infield fly rule is, when declared by the umpire, a fair fly (not including a line drive or an attempted bunt) that can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort when runners are on first and second or all three bases are occupied and with less than two outs in the inning. Any defensive player positioned in the infield at the time of the pitch shall be considered an infielder for the purposes of this rule. The rule does not preclude outfielders from being permitted to make the catch.
- 3-16: Interference:** Interference is an act (physical or verbal) by a member of the team at bat who illegally impedes, hinders or confuses any fielder; or when a runner creates malicious contact with any fielder with or without the ball, in or out of the baseline.
- 3-17: Live Ball:** Any and all times that the ball is in play or until the umpire calls "time" or "dead ball".



3-18: Three Foot Running Lane: The three foot running lane is a space defined by a line drawn 3 feet from and parallel to the first base foul line starting halfway between home and first base and extending to first base in foul territory. In all situations when the batter-runner is entitled to run (i.e., a batted ball, a base on balls or a dropped third strike), she must use the threefoot running lane. An award of first base on a base on balls does not negate the requirement to use the Three foot running lane. The batterrunner is out if she runs outside the three foot lane and, in the judgment of the umpire interferes with the fielder taking the throw at first base (there must be a throw); however, the batterrunner may run outside the three foot lane to avoid a fielder attempting to field a batted ball. A runner is considered outside the running lane if either foot is completely outside the lane and in contact with the ground. Players must understand that once they reach the running lane they should run completely inside it.

3-19 SLASH: To show Bunt, then pull Back at the last moment and take a full swing. This is illegal in 8u

3-20 SLAP: **ASLAP HIT** is a batted ball (often incorrectly called a bunt) that has been struck in a short, chopping motion, rather than a full swing.

The two most common types of a**SLAP HIT** are:

1. Those in which a batter takes her stance as if to bunt, but then either drives the ball into the ground with a quick, short swing or punches it over the infield.
2. Those in which a batter takes**RUNNING STEPS** toward the pitcher, before making contact with the ball.

Section 4. Playing the Game

These are the basic playing rules adapted by USFA. We will not mention the very basics, which are universal.

- 4-1:** The plate is considered fair territory. A hit ball that hits the plate and remains fair or rests on the plate is considered a fair ball.
- 4-2:** The strike zone is when a pitched ball crosses any part of the plate in width and crosses anywhere from the batter's knees to her solar plex.
- 4-3:** The game will be seven innings, unless a run rule comes into effect or the game has been established in advance with a time Limit.
- 4-4:** The run rule will be 12 runs after 3 innings, 10 runs after 4 innings, and 8 runs after 5 innings.
- 4-5:** Tie game after 7 innings or expired game time limit:
 1. Some leagues will play extra innings until a winner is determined.
 2. Tournaments will use International Tiebreaker. (The last completed at bat in the previous inning becomes a base runner at second base. Play until a winner is determined).
 3. Some tournament formats will leave games in a tie due to scheduling restraints and maintaining a daily tournament schedule.



- 4-6:** Determining home team:
1. Leagues may predetermine this on a schedule or use coin toss.
 2. Tournaments will use coin toss before the start of the game.

- 4-7:** When the ball is “dead”:
1. When “no pitch” is called by the umpire.
 2. When a fly ball in foul territory is not caught.
 3. Offensive interference.
 4. When the batter or base runner is hit by the batted ball before the ball is touched by a fielder.
 5. When the umpire calls “time”.

- 4-8:** When the ball is “live”:
- Any batted fair ball.
 - Any fair ball that is in the playable field of play.
 - Any and all times before an umpire calls “time”.
 - When an umpire is hit by a thrown ball or batted ball.
 - When a base coach is accidentally hit by a thrown ball.

Section 5. Players and Substitutes

USFA has adapted the following rules. The Official lineup rules for tournament play to be used for all State, Regional and National Play

The DP/FLEX rule has been eliminated in an effort to simplify the game, increase playing time for teams and give coaches flexibility and opportunities to involve more players.

5-1: Batting order shall list all players that are actually batting. A minimum of 9 players must be listed in the batting order. (See *NOTE for exception). There is no limit to the number of batters that can be used in the batting order. This batting order is for Offense. Players that are not batting will be listed on the lineup sheet as substitute players.

5-2: For Offense:

The substitute player can be used at any given time during the game. The original player (starter) can reenter the game at any given time. The starter and the substitute may each reenter one. All substitutes are tied to the player they are substituting for. Once Batting order is established, it can only change by legal substitution or a player being removed for injury or illness.

5-3: For Defense:

Free substitution on defense. Any 9 players listed on the lineup sheet can play Defense. The 9 players can be in the batting order or listed as a substitute. Defensive substitutions are not required to be reported. Additional Defensive substitutions can be made during a pitching conference, pitching change or due to injury or illness.

***NOTE:Shorthanded Rule**

Game can start with 8 players. An out will be recorded when the missing player's spot comes up to bat. When a 9th player arrives, they must enter game immediately.



5-4: Courtesy runners are allowed for pitchers/catchers. The Use of courtesy runner is highly encouraged when there are 2 outs and your catcher is on base. Courtesy runners for pitchers/catchers can enter at anytime.

Determination for the courtesy runner:

1. Any player listed on the lineup sheet that is not in the batting order or the last completed at bat not on base .
2. If the last completed at bat is a pitcher or catcher, the courtesy runner will revert to the batter immediately in the batting order not on base.
3. The lineup sheet must identify the starting pitcher and catcher for courtesy runner purposes.
4. If it is determined that the wrong courtesy runner is on base, the correct courtesy runner will be entered and there is no penalty.

5-5: All lineup sheets will be turned in at the start of the game. One copy will be given to the plate umpire and one copy will be given to the opposing team.

5-6: If a player is lost to injury or illness, that spot in the lineup will be deleted unless there are less than 9 players on the lineup sheet. In that case, the affected spot will be an out when that spot comes up in the order unless there is a substitute player available to go in that spot.

5-7: Any player ejected from the game will result in an out when that spot in the lineup comes up, unless there is a substitute player available to go in that spot. Minimum requirements for fielding a team are still active. A team must have a minimum of 9 players on the lineup card, but can finish with a minimum of 8 players. The missing player in the batting order would be an out. Less than 8 fieldable players on the team will result in forfeit for that team.

Section 6. Pitching Rules

6-1: A Legal Pitch to include Step Back Rule:

–Prior to starting the delivery of the pitch, the pitcher must take a position with pivot foot on the rubber and non-pivot foot either toeing the back of the rubber or slightly behind the rubber, hands down by her side; ball in hand

–Prior to the pitch, she will take a small step backward with her non-pivot foot while bringing her hands together.

–Once hands are together, she will begin her step forward with her non-pivot foot and start her delivery.

–the backward step will begin before the hands come together. The backward step may end before or after the hands come together.

–The Pitcher can also “Start Back” if she chooses. Per NCAA guidelines

1. Prior to pitching, the pitcher must take a position with shoulders in line with first and third base with the ball in the glove or pitching hand and the hands separated.

2. Pitcher must take or simulate taking signs while on the rubber from the catcher only.

3. After completing “2” above, the pitcher shall bring her hands together in front of the body for not less than one second and not more than 10 seconds before she releases the ball.

4. The pitcher shall not be considered in the pitching position unless the catcher is within the lines of the catcher’s box and ready to receive the pitch.

6. The pitcher may remove herself from the pitching position by stepping both feet away from pitcher’s plate. (Before hands come together).



About the Pitch:

- 6-2:** 1.The pitch begins when one hand is taken off the ball or the pitcher makes any motion that is part of the windup after the hands have been brought together.
2. Once the hands are together and are in the motion, the pitcher must take no more than one step which must be forward, towards the batter and simultaneous with the delivery.
- 3.The pivot foot may remain in contact with or may push off and drag away from the pitcher's plate prior to the front foot touching the ground, as long as the pivot foot remains in contact with the ground and within the 24 inch length. Pushing off with the pivot foot from a place other than the pitcher's plate is illegal.
- 6-3:** A legal delivery shall be a pitched ball that is delivered to the batter with an underhand motion.
- 1.The release of the ball and the follow through of the hand and wrist must be forward past the vertical line of the body.
- 2.The hand shall be below the hip and wrist not farther from the body than the elbow.
- 3.The pitch shall be delivered from the throwing side of the body and behind the back or through the legs.
- 4.The pitch is completed with a step toward the batter.
- 6-4:** Pitcher cannot stop her motion before the ball leaves her hand.
- 6-5:** If the pitcher stops her wind up (unless the umpire calls time) without releasing the ball, an **ILLEGAL PITCH** will be called and a ball will be awarded to the batter. Base runners will no longer advance due to illegal pitch.

- 6-6:** Pitcher cannot have anything distracting on her pitching arm, hand, or wrist. Any sweatband must be flesh in color on pitching wrist or arm. A pitcher is prohibited from wearing or using any item that, in the umpire's judgment, distracts the batter.
- 6-7:** Pitcher can ask the umpire for a different ball at any given time before the start of her pitch. During wet conditions, a coach may request permission to towel dry the balls for the pitcher.
- 6-8: Intentional Walk:** If the pitcher desires to intentionally walk a batter, she can do so (anytime during the at bat) by notifying the umpire of her intentions. The walk will be granted by the Umpire. No pitches need to be thrown. Intentional Walks are not permitted in Coach Pitch (8U) and below.
- 6-9:** The Pitcher shall not use tape or other substance on pitching hand or fingers. A Pitcher who licks her fingers must wipe them dry before touching the ball. Powdered rosin, approved drying agent and dirt are okay to use. Rock Rosin is not legal.

Section 7. Batting/Base Running

USFA will use the following basic for batting and base running:

- 7-1:** The girl is considered the batter when she takes her place in the batter's box.
- 7-2:** The batter can request time by lifting her hand and stepping one foot out of the box. The umpire can grant the batter time out if the pitcher has not started her pitch. If time is not granted, she will take the called pitch.



7-3: Batting out of order:

- 1. Infraction appealed during illegal batter:** the correct batter takes over and assumes the pitch count.
- 2. Infraction appealed after illegal batter has batted but before next pitch:** the girl that should have batted is out and any base advances will return to their position prior to the illegal batter's bat. The correct spot in the lineup will be the batter that follows the girl called out. Example: (Batter #5 is the girl called out. The correct spot in the lineup would now be Batter #6.)
- 3. Infraction appealed after illegal batter has batted and after next pitch:** the play stands. All base runners remain where they are.
- 4. Batter positions on the lineup sheet are determined by the player's name and not the jersey number. Improperly recorded position numbers and player numbers are correctable errors**

7-4: The batter is out when the:

1. Batter steps on the plate when hitting the ball in fair or foul territory.
2. Batter steps out of the batter's box when hitting ball in fair or foul territory.
3. Batter fouls off third strike while trying to bunt. Catcher catches third strike foul tip.

7-5: The batter can advance to first base when the:

1. Batter is pitched 4 balls.
2. Batter is hit by pitch (unless the ball is in the strike zone or swung at).
3. Catcher drops third strike with one or less outs and no base runner occupying first base or with two outs regardless of occupation of first base.

Exception to dropped 3rd strike: If the batter enters the dead ball area, she will be called out.

4. Catcher interferes with the batter's bat while batter is swinging at the pitched ball, or anytime during a pitch. If the ball is put in play during the interference, the offensive coach has the option to take the result of the play or the interference

7-6: The base runner must run the bases in order when advancing or retreating.

7-7: When a base runner misses a bag, the play is appealable to the umpire by the defensive coach or any player on the field. Appeal must be made before the next pitch (except coach pitch) is delivered.

7-8: If a base runner attempts to advance to the next base while the pitcher has possession of the ball in the pitcher's circle, she must continue to the next base. Any attempt to retreat back to the previous base (without pitcher attempting to make a play on the base runner) will result in the base runner being called out. This is called "hesitation" or "look back" rule. The base runner can turn the corner and immediately look for the ball. This is not an attempt to advance to the next base.

7-9: Base runners may attempt to steal only after the ball leaves the pitcher's hand during her delivery of the pitch.



7-10: Base runner cannot run out of the base path to avoid a tag. This will result in base runner being called out.

Base Path:The path between the bases. 3 ft on both sides of the bag that run parallel from the base pad and centerline. Base runner's position also establishes base path.

7-11: Base runner should avoid contact with the defensive player at any base if there is a defensive play being made. (This is for the safety of the girls). Any aggressive act will result in base runner being called out. Neither the catcher nor any other defensive player may block a base or home plate without having possession of the ball.

7-12: Base runner cannot interfere with a defensive player making a play on the ball. This results in the runner being called out and all base runners returning to previous bag before the interference occurred (unless forced to advance). The batter/runner is deemed safe at first base.

7-13: If a batted ball hits a base runner prior to passing or being touched by a defensive player (non-pitcher), the base runner is called out. In addition, if the runner interferes with an attempt by the defense to field the ball, the base runner will be called out.

7-14: Base runner cannot leave her base during a caught fly ball until the ball is touched by defensive player's glove or body.

Section 8. Umpires

Below are guidelines adapted by USFA that govern the Rights and responsibilities of the Umpires

- 8-1:** The umpire is responsible to keep control of the game.
- 8-2:** The umpire can suspend play for any reason: Acts of nature, unruly conduct, etc.
- 8-3:** Unsportsmanlike conduct from fans, players or coaches may place the entire team in jeopardy of possible forfeit.
- 8-4:** Protests must be made verbally with the umpire by the offended team at the time of the play and before the next pitch. A fee of \$100.00 cash (refunded if protest is upheld) must accompany the protest. Only decisions involving the misinterpretation or misapplication of a rule may be protested. No protest shall be allowed in matters involving solely the umpire's judgment. All decisions made by the site director and/or UIC shall be final. Protests not allowed in non seeding pool games.
- 8-5:** A head coach can appeal to the plate umpire in the case of a batter on whether or not a check swing was checked or not. (The field umpire might have a better view). The plate umpire does not have to grant the appeal.



Section 9. League Play Guidelines

These are the guidelines adapted by the United States Fastpitch Association for running leagues. Local directors may make modifications to accommodate local needs.

1. All teams and umpires must be sanctioned with USFA. Umpires must sanction individually to receive proper insurance coverage.
2. Teams should be picked in a manner to ensure parity in the league. There is nothing worse than having a stacked team among a group of inexperienced teams. League parity assures better games and a better chance of fair play.
3. At the end of the season, all-star teams can be picked and they should represent the best players that each individual team has to offer.
4. Local all-star tournaments should be rotated between the local area parks on a year-to-year basis.
5. A mid-season tournament is always a good way to raise money for local leagues. The tournament should consist of all league teams within the area.
6. Fundamentals should be taught to the players at all age groups and divisions. Clinics should be arranged for all new coaches.
7. Sportsmanship and fair play should be stressed to all players and coaches.
8. Sponsors should be appropriate for our youth to be associated with.
9. Coaches should try to keep the game fun. Never degrade or belittle a player. Be positive in all aspects of the game.

Section 10.1 8U Rules (Coach Pitch)

- 10-1:** 8 runs or 3 outs per $\frac{1}{2}$ inning. Following the 3rd out or 8th run scored, all play is stopped so as to prevent injury.
- 10-2:** There will be 10 defensive players allowed on the field. There must be no more than 6 infielders. The outfielders must play at least 10 feet beyond the bases.
- 10-3:** 5 pitches or 3 swings, 5th and consecutive fouls will not be counted against the 5 pitch count.
- 10-4:** If Coach-Pitcher is hit by a pitch, a dead ball will be called. All runners will revert to their previous base and the batter will assume the previous pitch count.
- 10-5:** Player Pitcher must have at least one foot within the pitcher's circle until the ball is pitched. The Coach-Pitcher may pitch at any distance inside the 8 ft pitching circle and within the boundaries of the 24 inch pitching rubber. To clarify, the Coach-Pitcher must be touching or be directly in front of the pitching rubber and use a straight ahead pitching approach. Coach-Pitchers may not pitch from either side of the pitching rubber so as to gain the advantage of a directional hit.
- 10-6:** Penalty: If at any time prior to release of the ball, the Coach-Pitcher steps outside of the pitching circle or is outside the imaginary 24 inch pitching rubber boundaries, a strike will be called on the batter.



10-7: While the ball is in play, all runners are free to advance at their own risk. Play is stopped on defense by stopping the lead runner. Once the lead runner has been stopped, the ball is no longer in play, the ball is thrown to the pitcher's circle and no runner may advance.

Example #1: Runner "A" is at 2nd base when the batter (Runner "B") hits the ball. Runner "A" then runs and reaches third base safely, while the ball is fielded and is thrown to the 3rd baseman that now possesses the ball and is capable of tagging Runner "A" out if she was to attempt to advance. The Umpire declares play stopped. The ball is then thrown to the pitching circle and Runner "B" is halted at 1st base.

Example #2: Using the same scenario as Example #1, Runner "A" is at 2nd base when the batter (Runner "B") hits the ball. Runner "A" however is tagged out prior to reaching 3rd base. In this scenario, the ball is not dead, but rather Runner "B" would now become the lead runner and may continue to advance at her own risk until she is declared out or her progress is stopped by the defense, resulting in the umpire stopping play and the ball being thrown to the pitching circle.

10-8: Balls must be 11" diameter with .47 C.O.R. and .375 Compression.

10-9: Two coaches can stand in the outfield foul ball area only, one on each side (left field and right field).

- 10-10:** Girls can leave the base when the coach releases the pitch.
- 10-11:** The run rule will be 12 runs after 3 innings, 10 runs after 4 innings, and 8 runs after 5 innings
- 10-12:** Please refer to Section 5. Players and Substitutes for lineup and substitution rules where applicable.
- 10-13:** No stealing or bunting. Slapping is allowed. Penalty for **BUNT** is ruled a **DEAD BALL OUT**
- 10-14** Infield Fly Rule and Intentional Walks do not apply to this age Group.
- 10-15** **Slash** (To show Bunt then pull back at the last moment and take a full swing) is illegal in 8u. Results in **Dead Ball Out**
- 10-16** **PICKOFFS** are not allowed in 8u, since Stealing is not allowed.



Section 10.2 8U Rules (Machine Pitch)

8u Machine Pitch League's emphasis is **instructional**. We want the Players to learn the concept of fastpitch and develop skills that will Carry them to the next levels. We also realize that the scoreboards are Turned on, and it is a competitive game at all levels.

Teaching of Sportsmanship begins here for Players, Coaches, and Fans

Practice/Game

- The game will be either 6 innings long, or subject to a time limit
- Speed up rules will be used. If your next inning catcher is on base with 2 outs, the player who made the last out will substitute run for her.
- A maximum of 5 pitches per batter, can foul off 5th pitch without penalty
- A maximum of 6 runs per ½ inning

Pitching Machine

- The pitching machine will straddle the pitching rubber.
- **“Free Hit Zone”**: A 16 ft Diameter/ 8 ft Radius circle drawn around the machine, as well as a line on both the first and third base Sides of the circle to mark the pitcher's position.
- No player may enter the ‘free hit zone’ at any time. It is the responsibility
- of the Coach to operate the Pitching Machine, and see that no player enters
- the “Free Hit Zone”. The coach may physically prevent any player from going into the “Free Hit Zone”
- Pitcher must not cross imaginary line from 1st to 3rd. She must have one foot either on the pitchers circle line or within the pitchers circle. Failure to comply gives offense the option of the result of play or a do over.
- No player may feed the pitching machine at any time.

Section 10.2 8U Rules (Machine Pitch) continued

Hitting

- Each batter gets 5 pitches to put the ball into play. Batter can foul off 5th pitch without penalty
- There are no Walks.
- A tick foul, that goes over the the batters head and is caught by the catcher, is an out
- When ball hits machine or coach: it is a Dead Ball. Batter is awarded one base. No base runners may advance unless forced.
- Bunting and Slapping are allowed. A fouled 3rd strike bunt is an out
- NO FAKE BUNTS ALLOWED (Shows Bunt, then swings away) penalty for fake bunt is a dead ball out and warning. 2nd offense results in ejection of player and coach. This is a safety issue.
- No “Infield Fly Rule” in this division
- Over throws into foul territory, ball is dead, all players advance one base
- Over throws into fair territory, ball is live.
- Play is dead when the lead runner has been stopped from advancing
- Half way points between bases will be drawn
- When play is called dead by the umpire, the runners are awarded the next base if they are beyond the half way point. If not, they must retreat to previous base.
- All batters, base runners, and on-deck batters must wear protective Helmets.
- In the Umpires judgement, if the coach intentionally interferes with a live ball (not ducking, yelling at defense, etc) the batter runner is called out. Pitcher cannot give signs or instruction. Pitcher may be removed from pitching by umpire, if there are more than two infractions in a single game.



Section 10.2 8U Rules (Machine Pitch) continued

Base Running

- No Base Stealing is allowed
- Runners cannot lead off the base until the ball crosses the plate
- Taking multiple bases on a good hit is allowed and encouraged, but
- Coaches need to show good sportsmanship on when to send players
For extra bases. Running up the score is bad sportsmanship

A runner will be called out for:

- Running out of the baseline to avoid a tag
- Making contact with a fielder while coming into a base or home
Without sliding (No contact, no penalty)
- Sliding head first, Except when returning to a base

Double 1st base rules

- Runner should use colored base on initial play, unless the fielder is
- Drawn to the colored side of the base, in which case, the runner
Would go to the white base and the fielder the colored part.
However, the runner is never out for touching the white side of
The base, unless it results in the runner colliding with a fielder
Attempting to make the play

Section 11. 10u Rules

- 11-1:** Official game ball will be 11” diameter with .47 C.O.R. and .375 Compression.
- 11-2:** Slapping has been approved for 10u Coach Pitch in Tournament Play. It can be used in League play at discretion of Local League
- 11-3:** 10u division will play by the same rules as the older divisions. With the exception of 11” ball size, and 35 ft pitching distance

**Certain leagues may incorporated overthrow rules and place Certain offensive and defensive limitations to lower level Classification teams to better meet the needs of the girls.

Section 12. Sportsmanship Guidelines

1.If a player gets hurt (especially a head injury), “Dead Ball” will be called by the umpire. Safety is taken very seriously and should be monitored by all coaches and umpires.

2.Unsportsmanlike behavior will not be tolerated.

3.Umpires should be fair, impartial, use good judgment and never speak rudely or out of turn to a player, coach or fan. An umpire puts a human element into the game. They are subject to making errors the same as coaches and players are subject to making mistakes. In the spirit of fair play and sportsmanship, we will not allow anyone to show disrespect towards them because of their decisions. USFA will do their part by pursuing the best decision makers to call USFA events.

4.Coaches will follow the rules of sportsmanship, never stall a game, be a graceful winner and loser, and never speak rudely or out of turn to a player, coach, fan or umpire. Coaches are also responsible for the sportsmanship of their own players and fans. Coaches should not tolerate unsportsmanlike conduct from their own players or fans.

5.Most importantly, our motto is **COMPETITIVE FUN**. It is everyone’s responsibility to keep the game **FUN**. It is a game and games are supposed to be fun. Play hard, coach hard, and umpire hard. Spectators should enjoy the game and support their team when they are playing both good and bad.



Section 13. World Series Qualification

1. Teams must be USFA Sanctioned.
2. All teams must submit online Roster. Roster will be locked prior to the start of your State Tournament. You can add 2 players with the add on roster form for World Series play.
3. Teams must do at least one of the following:

- a. Attend the State Tournament or USFA Showcase in your home state.
- b. Attend a State Qualifier or World Series Qualifier Tournament in your home state.
- c. Receive an at large berth if your state does not offer a State Tournament or World Series Qualifier **and** your team is not within 200 miles of a World Series Qualifier in another state.

Note: State Tournaments do not have to be limited to teams within that State. There are many teams that live closer to the tournaments offered across the border in their neighboring state. Be gracious to your neighbors.

14/16U/18U ONLY:Can be granted an Automatic berth, if the Teams High School activities or Team recruiting activities prevent the team from participating in the State Programs that are being offered. Remember that the World Series is seeded by the amount of points that the Team earns. The Team is encouraged to participate in it's State programs as much as possible to earn Team points.

****** If your State Director is offering Showcase as part of the State Tournament or National Qualifier program, no waiver will be granted for Team recruiting activities, as this effort to provide recruiting service for your team has been fulfilled.

4. Roster: Up to two pickup players may be added to a team's roster after qualification berth has been awarded. If a projected pickup player is on another USFA roster the following applies:

- If the projected pickup player's current team will not be attending the USFA World Series, no action is required other than adding the player via roster add-on form.
- If the projected pickup player's current team will be attending the USFA World Series, the player must be released and deleted from the current roster. This needs to be done by the current team coach and the projected team coach.
- Pickup players previous team must be the same classification as the team that they are being added to.
- However, A Pickup player can play up, but not play down. The pickup player can play for a higher classification team.

5. Any player that is currently competing or signed to compete at a Division I college, must compete for a Team that has an A Classification.



Section 14. National Tournament Guidelines

1. Time Limit is 1 hour 10 minutes (finish the inning) for pool Games. We normally (finish the inning during World Series Events. When pool games are not used for seeding, Pool games can end in a tie.
2. All elimination games will be : no new inning after 1 hour 15 minutes. International Tie Breaker is in effect after time has expired, or number of required innings have been played. Championship games are 7 inning for 12U thru 18U. Championship games are 6 innings for 6U thru 10U.
3. Showcase pool games will be 70 minutes. Remember, this is a time for players to show their skills to the College Coaches, so enjoy the format and be patient. The outcome of these games are not so much the score, but individual performances for the players.
4. Run rules will be in effect for all Pool, Bracket and Championship Games, (with the exception of Showcase pool games). Run rules are: 12 runs after 3, 10 runs after 4, and 8 runs after 5. Run rules are in effect for all games, including championship games. Pool games will have a 5 run max per half inning for “C” Class Divisions only.
5. There will be no warmups on the field prior to game.

Home team will be decided by coin toss. Home team will be official scorekeeper.

6. Game schedule may be altered for inclement weather. Games may be canceled or rescheduled accordingly. It is up to the individual team to check posted schedules.

7. Games canceled due to inclement weather may or may not be made up, but every effort will be made to play all scheduled games.

8. Coaches must check their team in at the Team Managers/ Coaches meeting (time and location to be announced).

9. Hydration, Hydration, Hydration!! Keep an eye on your girls. If there is any question about a girl's health on the field, please tell the umpire to stop the game so we can assure the well being of the girls. Also, Coaches need to keep an eye on the Umpires. Players need to keep an eye on the Coaches and Fans need to keep an eye on each other. We want everyone to stay healthy and Have Fun!! Wear your SUNSCREEN, you will be glad that you did!

Some USFA official events have Action Photo Sponsors. In the event of fair play to the sponsor, we only allow official Photographers inside the playing field fence lines.

