

UNITED STATES

FASTPITCH ASSOCIATION



2026 - 2027

RULEBOOK

August 14, 2026

usfastpitch.com

USFA 2026-2027 RULEBOOK

2027 Points of Emphasis

- **Simulating taking a signal from the catcher**
- **Sportsmanship**
- **Safety**

2027 Rule Changes

- **One Way Communication**
- **Deflected batted ball off any player**
- **Courtesy Runner for Pitcher or Catcher in the top of first inning requiring them to participate in one pitch in the bottom half has been removed**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Classification and Age Requirements	4
USFA Seasonal Year	4
Safety	5
USFA Official Playing Rules	5
Section 1 – The Playing Field	5
Section 2 – Equipment	8
Section 3 – Definitions	9
Section 4 – Playing the Game	12
Section 5 – Players and Substitutes	18
Section 6 – Pitching Rules	21
Section 7 – Batting/Base Running	21
Section 8 – Umpires	22
Section 9 – League Play Guidelines	22
Section 10 – 7/8u Rules (Coach Pitch)	23
Section 11 – 7/8u Rules (Machine Pitch)	24
Section 12 – Sportsmanship Guidelines	26
Section 13 – World Series Qualifications	27
Section 14 – National Tournament Guidelines	27

USFA 2026-2027 RULEBOOK

1. Classification and Age Requirements

a. A Player's age of eligibility is determined by the chart below. This applies to A, B, and C Travel Teams, as well as Rec/All-Star teams.

b. The following chart is in effect for August 1, 2026 - July 31, 2027. Odd age groups will play in older even age groups in events without enough teams for a split (e.g. 7u will play 8u, 9u will play 10u, etc.)

	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JuN	JuL	AUG	
7u Division	2018	2018	2018	2018	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	7u Division
8u Division	2017	2017	2017	2017	2018	2018	2018	2018	2018	2018	2018	2018	8u Division
9u Division	2016	2016	2016	2016	2017	2017	2017	2017	2017	2017	2017	2017	9u Division
10u Division	2015	2015	2015	2015	2016	2016	2016	2016	2016	2016	2016	2016	10u Division
11u Division	2014	2014	2014	2014	2015	2015	2015	2015	2015	2015	2015	2015	11u Division
12u Division	2013	2013	2013	2013	2014	2014	2014	2014	2014	2014	2014	2014	12u Division
13u Division	2012	2012	2012	2012	2013	2013	2013	2013	2013	2013	2013	2013	13u Division
14u Division	2011	2011	2011	2011	2012	2012	2012	2012	2012	2012	2012	2012	14u Division
15u Division	2010	2010	2010	2010	2011	2011	2011	2011	2011	2011	2011	2011	15u Division
16u Division	2009	2009	2009	2009	2010	2010	2010	2010	2010	2010	2010	2010	16u Division
17u Division	2008	2008	2008	2008	2009	2009	2009	2009	2009	2009	2009	2009	17u Division
18u Division	2007	2007	2007	2007	2008	2008	2008	2008	2008	2008	2008	2008	18u Division
19u Division	2006	2006	2006	2006	2007	2007	2007	2007	2007	2007	2007	2007	19u Division
	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JuN	JuL	AUG	

c. The High School Division is 16u/18u Combined, with all Open Team Classifications combined into a single group. This allows teams to play in tournaments in an Open Classification Format.

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

e. Player rosters must be entered electronically and submitted prior to tournament play.

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

2. USFA Seasonal Year. Team registration runs from August 1st through July 31st. Tournament play begins on August 1st.

USFA 2026-2027 RULEBOOK

3. Safety.

- a. In all USFA sanctioned events Safety of the staff, players, coaches, umpires, and fans is non-negotiable.
- b. USFA will adhere fully to all safety rules, including those mandated by the governing body of softball.
- c. Inclement weather. In the event of inclement weather, the tournament director and uIC will monitor an approved weather application to help determine the severity and location of the weather. If there is lightning within 5 miles suspend play and have teams take appropriate cover. Play shall be suspended for at least 30 minutes and until the lightning is outside the 5-mile radius. The USFA mandatory minimum distance for inclement weather is 5 miles, but USFA will adhere to distances between 5-10 miles based on regional, municipal, and private facility standards.

4. USFA Official Playing Rules

- a. USFA rules are in effect at all State, Regional and National tournaments.
- b. Local organizations can only modify these rules to conform to their local high school and recreational league rules.
- c. using 10 or 11 defensive players in younger divisions is a recreational option designed to get more girls in the game.
- d. 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”.

Section 1. The Playing Field

1.1 Pitching/Base/Fence Distances. Refer to the chart below.

Age	Pitching Distance	Base Distance	Fence Distance
7u, 8u, 9u 10u	35 ft	60 ft	150-225 ft
11u, 12u	40 ft	60 ft	180-225 ft
13u, 14u, 16u, 18u, High School	43 ft	60 ft	200-225 ft

1.2 The playing field is drawn to the specifications outlined in the diagram below.

1.3 Pitching circle is a 16-foot diameter circle drawn evenly around the pitching plate.

1.4 Batter’s boxes are 3 feet by 7 feet and drawn 6 inches from the plate. If the tournament is played on a turf field and the batter’s boxes are shorter than required, the plate umpire will make an allowance for batters being out of the box at bat ball contact and address it at the pregame plate conference.

1.5 Foul Lines. First and third base foul lines are drawn from home plate to the bottom of the playing field fence and perpendicularly upwards.

USFA 2026-2027 RULEBOOK

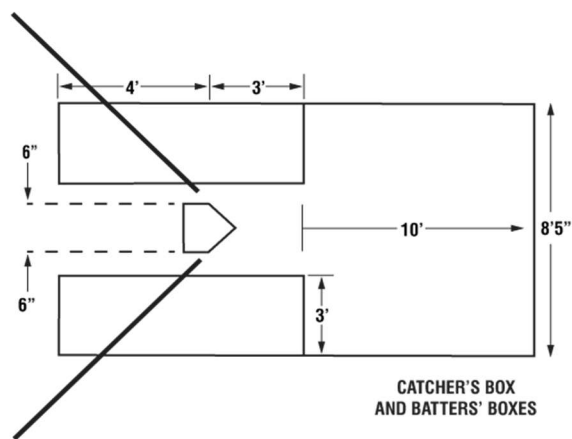
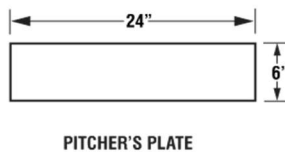
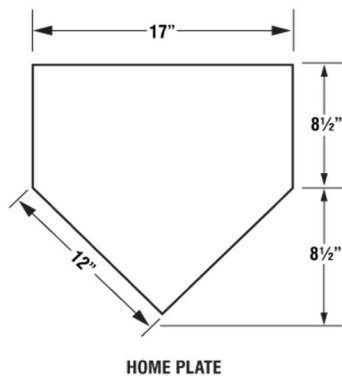
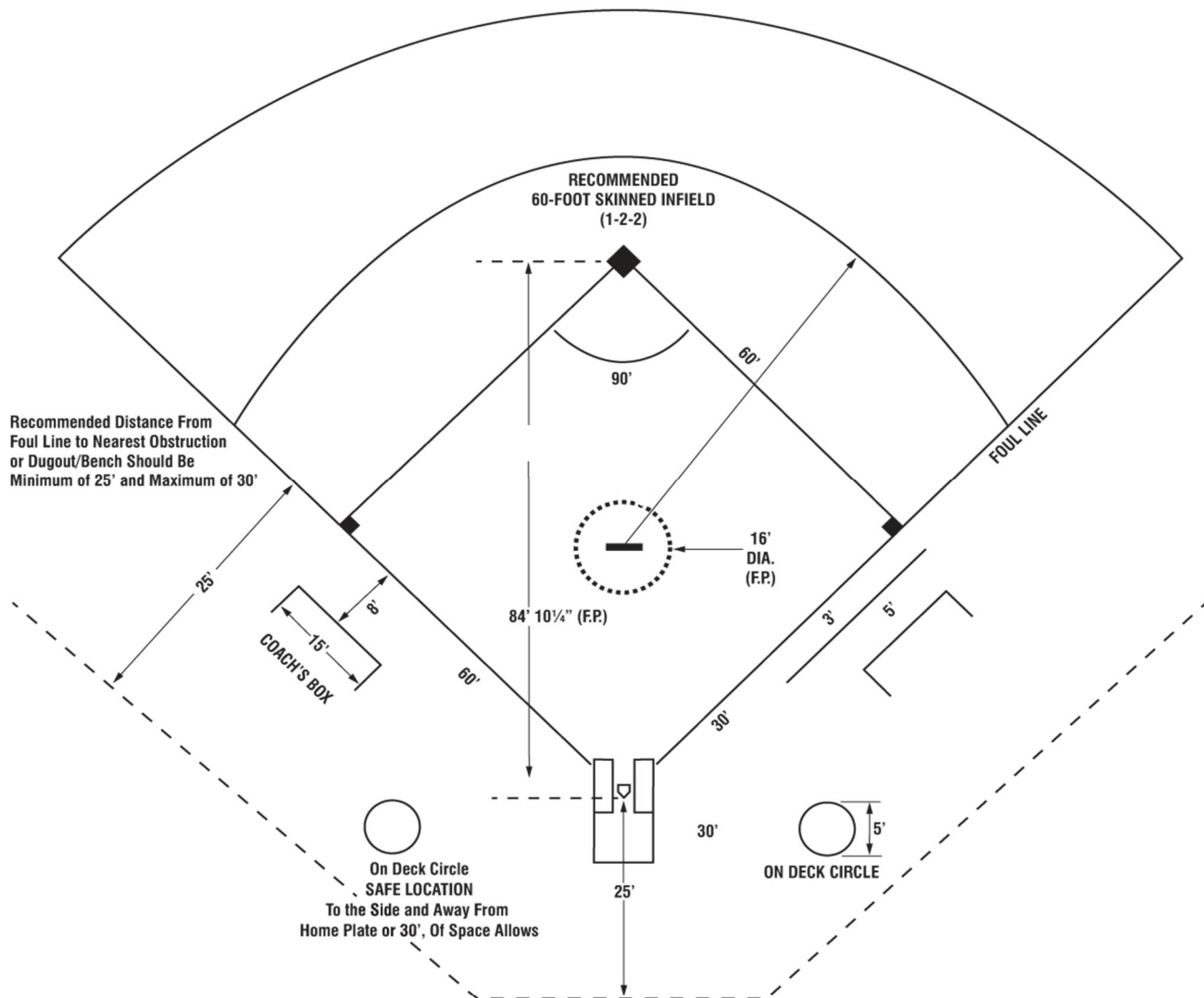
1.6 Runners Lane. The runner's lane is the area that is the last half of the distance between home plate and first base where a batter-runner must run to avoid interfering with a fielder's attempt to receive a thrown ball. It is bounded by a 30-foot line drawn in foul territory parallel to and 3 feet from the first base line, starting at a point halfway between home plate and the back edge of first base.

1.7 Bases. First, Second, and Third bases shall be 15 inches square; be made of canvas or other suitable material and not more than five inches in thickness. The double base shall be used at first base during all tournaments. (Note: League rules determine the use of a double base.) This base is 15 by 30 inches, and both sides of the double base shall be equal in height (5" max). Half the base is white (over fair territory), and half is of contrasting color (over foul territory).

1.8. Coaches' boxes and on deck circles are recommended.

USFA 2026-2027 RULEBOOK

OUTFIELD FENCE – ARC OF EQUAL DISTANCE – ALL FIELDS



USFA 2026-2027 RULEBOOK

Section 2. Equipment

2.1 Equipment will meet the standards outlined in the NFHS rulebook. Exceptions are:

2.1.1 Non-USA Stamped Easton Gold Ghost bat is allowed if it meets all the other bat requirements.

2.1.2 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. 7u-10u must use 11" diameter with .47 C.O.R. and .375 compression. Color of stitching is optional if the C.O.R. and compression are stamped on the ball.

2.1.3 All batting helmets and catching gear must be approved and in original condition and contain the NOCSAE symbol. A jawbone attachment to the batting helmet is not allowed.

2.1.4 Defensive face guards are recommended and endorsed by USFA. A defensive face guard must be non-tinted if permanently attached. If tinted, the face shield must be attached magnetically.

2.1.5 Shoes and socks must be worn and plastic cleats are recommended. Metal cleats are allowed for 13u-18u and High School divisions.

2.1.6 uniforms should be similar in appearance. Numbers should be worn on uniforms, and it is preferred no 2 players on a team having the same number. In situations where 2 players have the same number, the coach should annotate on the lineup and state a difference between the two players at the pregame plate conference.

2.1.7 Noncompliance of equipment rules will lead to offending coach being ejected from the game.

2.2 USFA Softball permits one-way electronic communication devices such as earpieces for the catcher (only) or electronic bands between coaches and players. This technology is exclusively for coaches to transmit signals to catchers on defense and to batters and baserunners on offense. Players are strictly prohibited from transmitting or corresponding back.

2.2.1 One-Way Only. Any device associated with signal calling must be strictly one-way; two-way devices, cell phones, or smart watches on the field are prohibited.

2.2.2 Offensive and Defensive Exceptions. Coaches can send messages to catchers and fielders during defense and to offensive players (batters/runners) from the dugout or coach's box.

2.2.3 Timing. Coaches must stop using one-way devices on defense once the pitcher initiates their throwing motion. Penalty: After a warning, the offender is ejected for the remainder of the game.

Section 3. Definitions

3.1 Altered Bat. A bat that was once legal, but has been structurally changed including, but not limited to: shaving, rolling or artificially warming the bat barrel.

3.1.1 Effect. use of an altered bat will result in both coach and player being ejected from the game.

NOTE: 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. 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. A line directly between a base and the runner's position and 3 feet on each side of the line at the time a defensive player is attempting to tag that runner.

NOTE: A runner establishes her own base path every time she changes direction.

3.3.1 Effect. A base runner who attempts to avoid a tag by running outside the base path shall be declared out.

3.4 Blocked Ball. A blocked ball is a live ball, pitched, batted or thrown, which is touched, stopped or handled by a person not engaged in the game; or touches any object which is not part of the official equipment or official playing area; or touches loose equipment.

3.4.1 Effect. The ball becomes dead and bases are awarded of penalties enforced based on the play and who caused the block ball.

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. 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.

USFA 2026-2027 RULEBOOK

3.7 Five-Minute Rule/Stalling. umpires have the right to end a conference early if they determine a team is trying to stall a game. This call cannot 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.

3.7.1 Offensive Coaches are not allowed to extend the game and start a new inning by **overtly (yelling)** telling a runner to step off the base prior to the pitcher releasing the ball or the batter to step on the plate while contacting the pitched ball.

3.7.1.1 Effect. The ball dead, the runner returns to the base last occupied, the batter's action negated, a warning issued to the offending coach, and the game continues. Any further attempt to prolong the game will result in the coach being ejected and the game continued.

3.8 Replant. Is defined as the act of a pitcher who disengages from the playing surface, replants the pivot foot, establishing a second starting point, pushes off from the newly established point and completes the delivery.

3.8.1 Effect. Delayed dead ball is called for an illegal pitch. The offended coach has the option to take the results of the play or a ball on the batter.

3-9 Fake Tag. An act by a defensive player simulating an attempt to tag a runner without the ball.

3.9.1 Effect. Faking a tag is always considered obstruction.

3-10 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.

3.10.1 Effect: It is a strike and remains a live ball.

3.11 Illegally Batted Ball. When a batter steps completely out of the batter's box or steps on the plate while contacting a pitched ball.

3.11.1 Effect. The batter is out when they:

- a. Step on the plate contacting the pitch hitting the ball in fair or foul territory.
- b. Batter steps out of the batter's box when hitting ball in fair or foul territory.

3.12 Obstruction (Defense). Obstruction is the act of the defensive team member hindering or impeding a batter's attempt to make contact with a pitched ball or 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.

3.12.1 Effect. The umpire will signal a delayed dead ball and after the play is complete will award the base to the runner they would have made if no obstruction had occurred.

USFA 2026-2027 RULEBOOK

3.13 Hit by Pitch. No attempt to avoid being hit by the pitch is required if the pitch is completely within the batter's box. However, the batter may not obviously try to get hit by the pitch.

3.13.1 Effect. If the ball is completely within the batter's box, the batter is granted first base. If the ball is not completely within the batter's box and the batter makes no attempt to get out of the way, then it is a ball or strike.

3.14 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.

3.14.1 Effect. The ball is live, the batter is out, which removes the force, but runners may advance at their own risk.

3.15 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.

3.15.1 Effect. The ball is dead and the runner is out. All other runners must return to the base legally occupied at the time of the pitch if not forced to advance.

3.16 Live Ball. All times that the ball is in play or until the umpire calls "time" or "dead ball".

3.17 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 or a dropped third strike), she must use the three-foot running lane.

3.17.1 Effect. The batter runner 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 batter runner 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 last contacted the ground completely outside the lane. Players must understand that once they reach the running lane, they should run completely inside it.

3.18 SLASH. It is illegal in 7/8u to show Bunt, then pull back at the last moment and take a full swing.

USFA 2026-2027 RULEBOOK

3.19 SLAP. A slap 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 slap hit are: 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. Those in which a batter takes running steps toward the pitcher, before contacting the ball.

Section 4. Playing the Game

4.1 These are the basic playing rules adapted by USFA. We will not cover the very basics, which are universal. Anything not specifically addressed will revert to NFHS Softball Rules (nfhs.org).

4.2 The plate is considered fair territory. A batted ball that hits the plate and remains fair or rests on the plate is considered a fair ball.

4.3 The strike zone is the space over home plate which is between the batter's forward armpit to the top of the knees when the batter assumes a natural stance.

4.4 All games above 10u are 7 innings, unless a run rule comes into effect or the game has been established in advance with a time limit.

NOTE: 7u, 8u and 10u are 6 inning games.

4.5 Game Timing. Game time limits are determined by the Tournament Director based on the type of tournament / game being played (i.e. round robin, showcase, single/double elimination, pool, bracket, practice, showcase, or championship).

4.5.1 Stopping the Game Clock. The game clock will stop when:

- a. When an injury on the field requires an extended amount of time to treat the player/s.
- b. When the Tournament Director or UIC is called to a field to deal with a situation, a protest, or make a rules interpretation.
- c. When inclement weather delays a game.
- d. When a stoppage of play occurs during the last 5 minutes of game time remaining.
- e. Then umpires should use best judgement to determine when to stop the game clock.

4.6 The run rule is 12 runs after 3 innings, 10 runs after 4 innings, and 8 runs after 5 innings unless modified by the Tournament Director.

4.7 Tie game after 7 innings or expired game time limit:

4.7.1 Some leagues will play extra innings until a winner is determined.

USFA 2026-2027 RULEBOOK

4.7.2 Tournaments.

- a. Pool Play. Games can end in a tie.
- b. Bracket Play. Tiebreaker format used. Play until a winner is determined.
 1. National Tournaments. Uses the standard Tiebreaker with the last completed at bat in the previous inning becomes a base runner at second base with zero outs.
 2. State and Local Tournaments. Tournament Directors can utilize the Tiebreaker format explained above or can use a Progressive Tiebreaker format with the last completed at bat in the previous inning becomes a base runner at second base and the player in front of her in the lineup goes to third base with zero outs.
- c. Some tournament formats (i.e. showcase) can have games end in a tie due to scheduling restraints and maintaining a daily tournament schedule.

4.8 Determining home team:

- a. Leagues may predetermine this on a schedule or use coin toss.
- b. Tournaments will use coin toss before the start of the game for pool or seed play.
- c. Tournaments may continue to use a coin toss in bracket play or the high seed from pool play can be determined to be the home team. Once a team is in the "losers" bracket of a double elimination tournament, coin toss will determine home team.

4.9 Appeals. A play or rule violation on which the umpire does not make a ruling until requested by a coach or player.

4.9.1 Types of appeals:

- a. Missing a base, either advancing or returning (live or dead-ball appeal).
- b. Leaving a base on a caught fly ball before the ball is first touched (live or dead-ball appeal).
- c. Batting out of order (dead-ball appeal only).
- d. Attempting to advance to second base after making the turn at first base overrunning first base (live-ball appeal only).

4.9.2 Methods by which an appeal may be made:

- a. **Live.** An appeal may be made during a live ball by any fielder in possession of the ball touching the base missed or left too soon on a caught fly ball, or by tagging the runner committing the violation if the runner is still on the playing field (even if the runner is standing on another base).
- b. **Dead.** The dead-ball appeal may be made:
 1. Once all runners have completed their advancement and time has been called, the coach or any defensive player, with or without the ball, may make a verbal appeal on a runner missing a base or leaving a base too soon on a caught fly ball. The responsible umpire should then decide on the play.
 2. If the ball has gone out of play, runners must be given the opportunity to complete their base running responsibilities before the dead-ball appeal can be made.
 3. If the pitcher has possession of the ball and is in contact with the pitching plate when making a verbal appeal, no illegal pitch is called.
 4. If "play ball" has been declared by the umpire and the pitcher then requests an appeal, the umpire would again call "time" and allow the appeal.

USFA 2026-2027 RULEBOOK

4.9.3 When. Appeals must be made:

- a. Before the next legal or illegal pitch;
- b. At the end of a half-inning, before all infielders have left fair territory and the normal fielding position has been vacated by the catcher; or
- c. On the last play of the game, before the umpires leave the field of play.

NOTE: If any situation arises which could lead to an appeal by the defense on the last play of the game, umpires should not leave the field until all infielders have left fair territory and the normal fielding position has been vacated by the catcher. Once teams line up to shake hands there is little chance for an appeal even if the defensive infielders have not crossed the foul line. umpires can leave the game at this point. No appeal can be made once the umpires have left the field.

4.9.4 Advance. Runners may advance during a live-ball appeal play. If the ball is not dead in fast pitch, runners may leave their base when the pitcher no longer has possession of the ball within the 16-foot circle, or when the pitcher makes a play on any runner. If the ball is thrown out of play on a live-ball appeal, appropriate bases should be awarded but the appeal can still be made as a dead-ball appeal once runners have taken their award. If a play is made on a runner prior to completing the live-ball appeal, the appeal can still be made after the play. If time-out is requested for an appeal, the umpire should grant it in either fast pitch or slow pitch, and runners may not advance until the next pitch.

4.9.5 May Not Return. A runner may not return to touch a missed base or one left too soon on a caught fly ball if:

- a. The runner has reached a base beyond the base missed or left too soon and the ball becomes dead.
- b. The runner has left the field of play; or
- c. A following runner has scored.

4.9.6 Awards. Awarded bases must be touched. An appeal must be honored even if the base missed was before or after an award.

4.9.7 More Than One Appeal. More than one appeal play may be made, but guessing games should not be allowed.

EXAMPLE: The runner misses second base by a step but just touches the corner of third base. Even though an appeal is made at third base (the umpire called the runner safe), an appeal may be made at second base on the same runner.

4.9.8 Plate and Missed Tag. If a runner misses home plate and the catcher misses the tag; the umpire should hesitate slightly. If no tag is made, the umpire should declare the runner safe. If an appeal play is then made by tagging either the runner or home plate, the umpire should then rule on this appeal play.

USFA 2026-2027 RULEBOOK

4.9.9 Missing First Base Before the Throw Arrives. If a runner passes first base before the throw arrives, the runner is considered to have touched the base unless an appeal is made. If an appeal is made, it must be made prior to the runner returning to first base while the ball is live.

4.9.10 Force Out. If an appeal is honored at a base to which a runner was forced to advance, no runs would score if it was the third out.

4.9.11 Tag-ups. If a runner leaves a base too soon on a caught fly ball and returns to retag, this is considered a timing play and not a force out. If the appeal is the third out, all runs scored by runners in advance of the appealed runner and scored before the legal appeal would count.

4.9.12 Fourth-out Appeal. An appeal may be made after the third out if it is made properly. (i.e. one out with runner on first and third bases. The batter hits a fly ball that is caught. Both runners leave their base before the caught ball is touched. An appeal is made at first base for the third out. The defensive team then makes an appeal at third base before the infielders leave the infield. The runner on third base would then be declared out also, and the run would not count.)

4.10 Dead Ball Awards. See table below for all dead ball situations.

USFA 2026-2027 RULEBOOK

TABLE 5-1

BALL DEAD IMMEDIATELY

DEAD-BALL TABLES

Activity	References	Awards or Penalties	References
1. Pitch touches batter (F.P.).	5-1-1a	Batter awarded first base, except when an effort to avoid a pitch is required or the pitch is determined to be a strike.	7-2-1g, 7-3-2, 8-1-7, 8-1-8
2. Legally batted ball.	5-1-1b	Batter is out. Runners return.	7-4-3, 7-4-2
3. Ball hit twice in fair and sometimes foul territory.	5-1-1b	Batter is out. Runners return.	7-4-1c, 8-2-6
4. Uncaught foul.	5-1-1d(3)	Runners return to bases occupied at time of pitch.	3-3-2 EXC.
5. Spectator interference.	5-1-1d, f, g	Umpire judgment in awarding bases or imposing penalty to nullify interference.	8-5-10
6. Interference by runner.	5-1-1e	Interferer is out. Other runners return to base occupied at time of infraction.	8-7-10
7. Interference by retired runner.	5-1-1e	Runner closest to home is out. Other runners return.	8-7-10c
8. Interference by runner (foul fly).	5-1-1m	Interferer is out. Other runners return. Foul ball on the batter.	8-7-10b
9. Interference by coach or others connected with the team (thrown ball).	5-1-1g	For interference by coach, runner is out. For interference by others connected with the offensive team, see 3-4-5 PENALTY and 8-7-10.	3-4-5, 7-5-4, 8-7-10
10. Interference by coach or other nonplayers connected with the team (batted ball).	5-1-1g	If interference prevented possible double play, the batter and runner closest to home would be declared out.	3-4-6, 7-5-4, 8-7-10
11. Fair ball over fence in flight or prevented by spectator or player's detached equipment.	5-1-1f	Award all runners home plate.	8-5-4, 8-5-6
12. Fair ball touches a spectator.	5-1-1f	Award all runners appropriate number of bases in umpire's judgment.	8-5-10
13. Fair ball bounces over, through or lodges in fence.	5-1-1f	Award all runners two bases.	8-5-7
14. Fair ball touches runner before it touches a fielder or after it passes any fielder other than the pitcher and another fielder has a play.	5-1-1f	If runner is out. Batter is awarded first base and credited with a fielder's choice. Others return to base occupied at time of interference unless runner intentionally interferes with ball or fielder.	3-1-6, 8-7-11
15. Fair ball touches umpire before it touches an infielder or passes any infielder except the pitcher.	5-1-1f	Runners return to bases occupied at time of interference unless forced by batter-runner. Batter awarded first base and credited with a single.	8-1-6

USFA 2026-2027 RULEBOOK

16.	A thrown ball, not a pitch, which becomes a blocked ball.	5-1-1g	Award all runners two bases from point of release.	8-5-5
17.	A pitched ball that becomes blocked (F.P.).	5-1-1g	Award all runners one base from time of pitch (F.P.).	8-5-3
18.	Umpire handles live ball or calls time to inspect the ball or for other reasons, including 5-2-1.	5-1-1h	Runners return to bases they had reached or passed when ball becomes dead.	5-2-1
19.	Fair or foul ball is caught by fielder, who then leaves the field of play with one or both feet.	5-1-1i	Award all runners one base from time the ball became dead except when caught: ball is third out.	5-1-1i, 8-5-8
20.	A live ball is intentionally carried, kicked, pushed or thrown into dead-ball territory.	8-5-9	Award all runners two bases from the time the ball became dead.	8-5-9
21.	Offensive team personnel calls "Time" or uses any other command or commits an act for the purpose of trying to cause the opposing pitcher to violate the pitching rule.	5-1-1j	No runners are allowed to advance. Team warning for first offense. Subsequent offenders ejected.	3-5-9 PEN.
22.	After each strike or ball or as soon as the ball hits the ground (S.P.).	5-1-1k	All runners return to bases they occupied at time of pitch.	8-6-7
23.	Infielder intentionally drops fair fly, fair line drive or fair bunt in flight with at least first base occupied and less than two outs.	5-1-1l	Batter-runner is out. Runners return to their base.	8-2-10
24.	Illegal pitch but not released, or released to a base.	5-1-1o, p; 6-2-7 PEN. (F.P.); 6-2-2	Batter remains at bat and is awarded a ball.	6-2-7 PEN., 6-4-12
25.	Award intentional base on balls.	2-65-2, 5-1-1k	Batter awarded first base. Runners remain at bases occupied at time of walk unless forced to advance.	8-1-3
26.	Base runner leaves base before pitcher releases pitch (F.P.).	6-2-4c	No pitch is declared and runner is out.	8-7-18
27.	Base runner leaves base before pitched ball reaches home plate (S.P.).	6-4-9b (S.P.)	No pitch is declared and runner is out.	8-7-17
28.	Quick return pitch before batter has taken position or is off balance.	6-2-4b (F.P.), 6-4-9 (S.P.)	All subsequent action on pitch is cancelled. No pitch is declared.	6-2-4 (F.P.) PEN., 6-4-9c (S.P.) PEN.
29.	Fielder loses possession and ball enters dead area.	8-5-5, 8-5-7	All runners awarded one base past last base touched at time ball enters deadball territory.	8-5-5 PEN. EXCEPTION 1
30.	Batted ball hitting runner while touching base.	8-1-6 EFFECTS	Batter awarded first base. Runners remain at base occupied at time of pitch unless forced to advance.	8-1-6 EFFECTS
31.	Illegal slide.	8-7-13	Runner is out. Other runners return to last base touched prior to interference.	8-7-13
32.	Malicious interference.	8-7-14	Runner is out and ejected. Other runners return to last base touched prior to interference.	5-1-1a, 3-5-18
33.	Batter-runner steps backward toward home plate.	3-2-5	Batter-runner is out. Runners return to bases occupied at time of infraction.	8-2-5
34.	For ball hitting loose equipment on field of team at bat.	5-1-1g	Runner being played on is out. Otherwise runners return to bases occupied at time the ball is declared dead.	8-7-15 PEN.
35.	For ball hitting loose equipment on field of team on defense.	5-1-1g	All runners advance two bases.	3-5-5 PEN.
36.	Interference by batter when attempted putout is by the catcher.	5-1-1p	Ball dead immediately. Batter is out. Runners return to last base touched at time of interference.	7-4-4
37.	Batter-runner fails to advance to first base and enters team area.	3-2-4	Batter-runner is out. Runners return to bases occupied at time of infraction.	8-2-4

USFA 2026-2027 RULEBOOK

4.11 Delayed Dead Ball Awards

DELAYED DEAD BALL				
Activity		References	Awards or Penalties	References
1.	Illegal pitch released (F.P.).	5-1-2a	The batter is awarded a ball unless the batter reaches first base safely and each other runner advances at least one base, the illegal pitch is nullified. Or if the batter does not reach first base safely or if any base runner fails to advance at least one base, the coach of the team at bat shall have the option of the result of the play or the penalty of the illegal pitch.	6-1-1, 6-1-2, 6-1-3 PEN.
2.	Illegal pitch released (S.P.).	5-1-2a, 6-4-12	The pitch is ruled a ball. However, if the batter swings, there is no penalty for the illegal pitch.	6-4 (S.P)
3.	Obstruction of batter by catcher or fielder.	5-1-2b	If batter and all runners do not advance at least one base, award batter first base and advance all other runners only if forced or result of play.	8-1-4
4.	Intentionally touching batted ball with detached player equipment over fair territory.	5-1-2b	Award batter-runner and runners three bases if not made.	8-5-4
5.	Intentionally touching thrown ball with detached player equipment.	5-1-2b	Award runners two bases if not made.	8-5-4
6.	Interference by umpire with catcher throwing a non-batted ball (F.P.).	5-1-2c	If runner is not put out, runners return.	8-6-6
7.	Obstruction.	2-36, 5-1-3	If obstructed runner and all other runners hindered by the obstruction do not reach bases they otherwise would have reached, award runner or runners such bases.	8-5-2
8.	Contact of any ball with illegal glove or mitt.	8-9-15	The offensive team will have the choice of the result of the play or having the penalty imposed.	8-9-15
9.	Deliberately removing batting helmet in live-ball territory while the ball is live.	5-1-2e	Team warning. Subsequent players and head coach on that team to violate rule are restricted to dugout/bench for the duration of the game.	8-5-1 PEN.

Section 5. Players and Substitutes

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

5.1.1 THERE IS NO DP/FLEX.

5.2 Batting order shall list all players that are 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 ONLY. Players that are not batting will be listed on the lineup card as substitute players.

NOTE: Shorthanded Rule. Game can start with 8 players. An out will be recorded when the missing player's spot comes up to bat. Less than 8 fieldable players on the team will result in forfeit for that team. When a 9th player arrives, they must enter game immediately.

USFA 2026-2027 RULEBOOK

5.2.1 Examples of Line up cards.

Storm Head Coach Tom Stevens				
Date: July 23, 2026			Opponent: Glory	
B/O	NO	Name	POS	SUBS
1	2	A. Smith		
2	5	B. Jones		
3	7	D. Sims	C	
4	8	S. Blake		
5	22	K. Arnold		
6	32	J. Davis		
7	55	E. Rice		
8	4	K. Holden		
9	10	C. Clawson		
10	25	W. White		
11	26	H. Johnson		
12	14	J. Arrington	P	
13	23	F. Cooper		

Storm Head Coach Tom Stevens				
Date: July 23, 2026			Opponent: Blaze	
B/O	NO	Name	POS	SUBS
1	2	A. Smith		
2	5	B. Jones		
3	7	D. Sims	C	
4	8	S. Blake		
5	22	K. Arnold		
6	32	J. Davis		
7	55	E. Rice		
8	4	K. Holden		
9	10	C. Clawson		
		SUBS		
	25	W. White		
	26	H. Johnson		
	14	J. Arrington	P	
	23	F. Cooper		

USFA 2026-2027 RULEBOOK

5.3 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 reenter once. 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.

5.4 For Defense. Free substitution on defense. Any 9 players listed on the lineup card 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 without penalty. If the coach calls time and stops play for a substitution, then they are charged with a team conference.

5.5 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 any time. [The requirement that the pitcher and catcher listed on the starting lineup card must face the first batter while on defense in the bottom half of the first inning is removed.]

Rationale. This change simplifies the administration of the courtesy runner rule and eliminates a provision that applied only during the transition between the top and bottom halves of the first inning.

5.5.1 Determination for the courtesy runner:

- a. Any player listed on the lineup sheet that is not in the batting order or the last completed at bat not on base.
- b. 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.
- c. The lineup card must identify the starting pitcher and catcher for courtesy runner purposes. If it is determined that the wrong courtesy runner is on base, the correct courtesy runner will be entered and there is no penalty.

5.6 All lineup cards will be turned in at the pregame plate conference. One copy is given to the plate umpire, and one copy is given to the opposing team.

5.7 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 card. In that case, the affected spot will be an out when it comes up in the order unless there is a substitute player available to go in that spot.

5.8 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.

Section 6. Pitching Rules (NFHS.org)

6.1 USFA utilizes NFHS pitching rules.

6.2 As a point of emphasis if the pitcher takes the signal off the pitchers' plate once they step on the plate they must simulate (pause) taking a signal from the catcher.

Section 7. Batting/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, the pitch shall be called a strike.

7.3 Batting out of order:

- a. Infraction appealed during illegal batter: the correct batter takes over and assumes the pitch count.
- b. If a runner advances because of a stolen base, wild pitch or passed ball while the illegal batter is at bat, such advance is legal.
- c. Infraction appealed after illegal batter has batted but before next pitch; the player 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 player called out. Example: (Batter #5 is the player called out. The correct spot in the lineup would now be Batter #6.)
- d. Infraction appealed after illegal batter has batted and after next pitch; the play stands. All base runners remain where they are.
- e. Batter positions on the lineup card are determined by the player's name. Improperly recorded position numbers and player numbers are correctable errors.

7.4 Catcher interferes with the batter's bat while 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.

7.5 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 to the previous base (without the 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.

USFA 2026-2027 RULEBOOK

7.6 Once a fair batted ball has touched any fielder, including the pitcher, it is treated as a deflected ball rather than an untouched batted ball for purposes of determining interference and subsequent play responsibilities.

Rationale. This clarification promotes consistent rule application, reduces confusion for umpires, coaches, and players, and ensures that deflected batted balls are treated uniformly throughout NFHS Softball rules.

Section 8. Umpires

8.1 The umpire is responsible for keeping 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 \$150 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 are not allowed in non-seeding pool games.

8.5 A head coach or catcher can appeal to the plate umpire in the case of a batter on whether a check swing was checked or not. The plate umpire does not have to grant the appeal.

Section 9. League Play Guidelines

These are the guidelines adapted by the USFA for running leagues. Local directors may make modifications to accommodate local needs.

9.1 All teams and umpires must be sanctioned with USFA. umpires must sanction individually to receive proper insurance coverage.

9.2 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 assumes better games and a better chance of fair play.

9.3 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.

9.4 Local all-star tournaments should be rotated between the local area parks on a year-to-year basis.

USFA 2026-2027 RULEBOOK

9.5 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.

9.6 Fundamentals should be taught to the players at all age groups and divisions. Clinics should be arranged for all new coaches.

9.7 Sportsmanship and fair play should be stressed to all players and coaches.

9.8 Sponsors should be appropriate for our youth to be associated with.

9.9 Coaches should try to keep the game fun. Never degrade or belittle a player. Be positive in all aspects of the game.

Section 10. 7/8u Rules (Coach Pitch)

This section has been adopted by USFA for 7/8u coach pitch.

10.1 8 runs or 3 outs per ½ inning. Following run limit or 3rd out all runners will be stopped to prevent injury.

10.2 Ten defensive players allowed on the field with not more than 6 in the infield.

a. Outfielders must be 10 feet beyond the bases.

b. 2 defensive coaches are allowed in the outfield in foul territory 10 feet or more behind the bases.

10.3 5 pitches or 3 swings are allowed for each at bat. If the 5th pitch is fouled off the batter can continue until striking out or putting the ball in play.

10.4 Bunting and slapping are allowed.

10.5 Slashing is not allowed. Slashing is showing bunt and then pulling back and swinging. The penalty for slashing is dead ball out.

10.6 The coach pitcher must pitch from the pitching plate and stay within the 24" plate. If the coach pitcher is hit by the ball unintentionally, it will be a dead ball do-over.

a. If the coach pitcher gets outside the 24" pitching plate at release, a strike will be called.

b. The coach pitcher must move from the plate for safety and to let the player pitcher have access to cover the bunt.

10.7 The coach pitcher can talk to players but cannot hold up the game. When the ball is put in play, the coach pitcher must exit the field as soon as possible so as not to interfere with the play on the ball.

USFA 2026-2027 RULEBOOK

10.8 Player pitcher must have at least one foot in the circle and be no closer than the pitching plate at the time of the release of the pitch.

10.9 Pickoffs are not allowed.

10.10 Runners can leave the base at release of the pitch. No stealing is allowed.

10.11 Runner leaving early is a dead ball out. No warning is issued.

10.12 No infield fly or intentional walking is allowed.

10.13 Run rules apply – 12/10/8 after 3/4/5.

10.14 Even if mathematically impossible to tie or win, the home team may elect to complete the last inning at the director's discretion.

10.15 Based in the umpire's judgement, a play we stopped when the lead runner is stopped, and runners have achieved the base closest to them. This is based on the umpire's judgment.

Examples:

- a. Runner 1 at third base. Ball hit to F5 who holds Runner 1 at third base. As soon as the batter runner touches first base the umpire will kill the play.
- b. Runner 1 at third base. Ball hit to F6, batter runner achieves first base and continues to second base prior to Runner 1 being stopped or scoring. umpire will delay killing the ball until the batter runner is stopped or stops at second base.
- c. Ball will stay live as long as the lead runner is still advancing and has not given up.

Section 11 7/8u Rules (Machine Pitch)

7/8u 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 the scoreboards are turned on, and it is a competitive game at all levels.

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

11.1 Practice/Game

- a. The game will be either 6 innings long, or subject to a time limit.
- b. 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.
- c. A maximum of 5 pitches per batter, can foul off 5th pitch without penalty.
- d. A maximum of 6 runs per ½ inning.

USFA 2026-2027 RULEBOOK

11.2 Pitching Machine

- a. The pitching machine will straddle the pitching plate.
- b. "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.
- c. 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."
- d. Pitcher must not cross the 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 replay.
- e. No player may feed the pitching machine at any time.

11.3 Hitting

- a. Each batter gets 5 pitches to put the ball into play. Batter can foul off the 5th pitch without penalty.
- b. There are no Walks.
- c. A batted ball that goes over the batter's head and is caught by the catcher, is an out.
- d. When ball hits machine or coach: it is a dead ball. Batter is awarded one base. No base runners may advance unless forced.
- e. Bunting and Slapping are allowed.
- f. A fouled 3rd strike bunt is an out.
- g. NO SLASHING 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.

11.4 Defense

- a. No "Infield fly rule" in this division.
- b. Overthrows into foul territory, ball is dead, all players advance one base.
- c. Overthrows into fair territory, ball is live.
- d. Play is dead when the lead runner has been stopped from advancing.
- e. Halfway points between bases will be drawn.
- f. When play is called dead by the umpire, the runners are awarded the next base if they are beyond the halfway point. If not, they must retreat to their previous base.
- g. All batters, base runners, and on-deck batters must wear protective helmets.
- h. In the umpire's 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 instructions. Pitcher may be removed from pitching by umpire, if there are more than 2 infractions in a single game.

USFA 2026-2027 RULEBOOK

11.5 Base Running

- a. No Base Stealing is allowed.
- b. Runners cannot lead off the base until the ball crosses the plate.
- c. 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
- d. A runner will be called out for:
 1. Running out of the baseline to avoid a tag.
 2. Contacting a fielder while coming into a base or home without sliding (No contact, no penalty).
 3. No sliding headfirst, except when returning to

Section 12 Sportsmanship Guidelines

12.1 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.

12.2 Unsportsmanlike behavior will not be tolerated.

12.3 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.

12.4 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.

12.4.1 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 Qualifications

13.1 Teams must be USFA Sanctioned.

13.2 All teams must submit online rosters prior to July 1st or the beginning of their State Tournament. Roster will be locked prior to the start of your State Tournament. You can add 2 players for World Series play. If any more than the 2 players are needed to be added an exemption request with detailed reasoning must be submitted to the region director or home office for approval. Goal is to prevent "team building" after the state tournament is completed.

13.3 Teams must do at least one of the following:

- a. Attend the State Tournament or USFA Showcase in your home state. (Mandatory to play in your market's summer State Tournament for 7u, 8u, 9u, 10u 11u, & 12u).
- b. Attend 1 World Series Qualifier Tournament.
- 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 qualifying event.

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.

13.4 13u, 14u, 16u, and 18u divisions at USFA World Series do not require qualifying- Register and come play. We are also no longer going to be setting the brackets by points at the World Series; this year we are shifting to seeding it out of pool play.

13.5 Pick up players.

- a. 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.
- b. 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.
- c. Pickup players previous team must be the same classification as the team that they are being added to. A Pickup player can play up but not play down. The pickup player can play for a higher classification team.
- d. Any player 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

14.1 Time Limit is 1 hour 10 minutes (finish the inning) for pool.

14.2 World Series Events. Pool games can end in a tie.

USFA 2026-2027 RULEBOOK

14.3 All elimination games will be no new inning after 1 hour 15 minutes. Tie Breaker is in effect after time has expired, or number of required innings have been played. Championship games are 7 innings for 12u thru 18u. Championship games are 6 innings for 6u thru 10u.

14.4 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 is not so much the score, but individual performances for the players.

14.5 Run rules will be in effect for all Pool, Bracket and Championship Games, (except for Showcase pool games). Run rules are: 12 runs after 3, 10 runs after 4, and 8 runs after 5.

14.6 There will be no warmups on the field prior to game.

14.7 Home team will be decided by coin toss. Home team will be official scorekeeper. In the event of a discrepancy, you must have a paper book and/or electronic score keeping device.

14.8 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.

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

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

14.11 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 wellbeing 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!!

14.12 Wear your SUNSCREEN, you will be glad that you did!

14.13 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.