

**Northern Valley Girl's Softball League Sophomore (3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> grade)**  
**Softball RULES 2019**

The United States Specialty Sports Association (USSSA) official regulations and playing rules will apply, except as they vary from the following which shall take precedence;

1. This is a girl's recreational and instructional fast-pitch softball league.
2. **Sportsmanship**; The actions of managers, coaches, parents, players and umpires must be beyond reproach. By agreeing to coach a girl's softball team in this league, all managers are agreeing to abide by the rules set forth by the NVGSL town directors, and agree to abide by the rulings set forth by the NVGSL town directors. Managers must conduct themselves as having the responsibility for the conduct of the entire game and not merely partisans of one team. In addition, managers are responsible for the sportsmanship and appropriate behavior of assistant coaches, parents, fans and the players. No one shall be permitted to stand at, near or behind the backstop at any time during a game. To set a positive example for the players, smoking anywhere on the premises of a practice or a game is prohibited. All managers, assistants must be Rutgers certified or equivalent.
3. **Use of profanity**; There shall be no warning for either manager, assistant, fans or players and the offending person shall be removed from the game and an incident report form shall be appropriately filed. If a fan is involved, they shall be ejected from the location and an incident report form shall be appropriately filed.
4. **Throwing bat or equipment**; A team will be warned once in a game if a player throws a bat or a helmet or when a base runner intentionally knocks off her helmet while the ball is in play. Every incident thereafter will result in the offending player being declared out. If a player, manager or assistant intentionally throws a bat or helmet, or otherwise abuses equipment, she shall be immediately ejected from the game and an incident report form shall be appropriately filed.
5. **Umpires**; Judgment decisions by the umpires are final. Carded umpires are to be used. The scorebook of the home team should note the name of umpire appearing. If an umpire does not appear for a game, the game may be played with such substitute umpire(s) upon whom the managers may agree. When an umpire does not show, that fact should be recorded in the home scorebook. **When an umpire does not show for a game it must be reported to the towns Softball Commissioner.** Ground rules are to be discussed with the umpire before the game begins. A copy of these rules should be available at each game for umpire review.

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6. **Balls**; Two new **Yellow** eleven inch (11') Cork **47 Compression** Core balls are to be given to the umpire before the start of the game by the home team manager. The home team manager should also be prepared to supply additional eleven (11) inch yellow softballs as necessary for the completion of the game.
7. **Batting order**; "Cinderella" batting order (everyone bats) shall be used. If a player arrives after the start of the game, she is to be added at the bottom of the order and the other manager must be advised. If a player gets injured or leaves the game before it is over for any reason, the empty spot in the order shall **NOT** be an out.
1. **Players**; Rosters must be submitted to the League prior to the scheduling meeting. Up to ten players may play in the field. If there is a short fielder used, that player must begin either 10 feet behind second base or on the outfield grass, whichever is further. A team may play with 7 players. Each player must play a minimum of three (3) innings in the field. **Borrowing players from the teams that are playing each other in order to meet the minimum of seven (7) players are both permitted and encouraged** The most important thing is that the children get to play the games.
2. **"Playing up"**; In the regular season, borrowing of players is allowed from teams at the same level, or the levels beneath (as defined below). Never from the level above. However, the players that are borrowed must be on the rosters that have been submitted prior the start of the season. If a team has less than 10 players, player(s) from 2<sup>nd</sup> grade may play up so as to allow the team to field 10 players. Any such 2<sup>nd</sup> graders are to bat last and play the outfield positions. If a team unexpectedly has 11 players or more, the 2<sup>nd</sup> grader(s) present may participate in the game.
8. **Catchers, batters and equipment**; Catchers must wear full protective gear when in position. This includes a mask, chest protector, throat protector (or catchers mask with an extended mask that protects the throat) and shin guards. Any player warming up a pitcher must wear a mask with throat protector (or catchers mask with an extended mask that protects the throat). A pinch runner (the last batted out) may be used for the catcher when there are two outs. The batter, on deck batter, all base runners and any player base coaches must wear approved batting helmets (facemask & chinstrap required). Chinstraps and

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helmets can be shared between teams. Only ASA approved bats are to be used. Shoes must be tie shoes with rubber soles (sneakers permitted). Only rubber spikes, no metal spikes, are allowed. No jewelry is to be worn (including rope bracelets). Managers and coaches are responsible for advising players' parents of the rule.

9. **Bench behavior**; All players not on the playing field, or on deck, must remain in the dugout, seated on the bench and NEVER with their fingers through the fencing. Only players, managers and assistants are permitted in the dugout or on the bench. No food, candy or gum is permitted on the playing field or in the dugout while the game is underway. Managers and coaches must remain in the dugout or in the coaching boxes and may never take a position on the side of, or in back of, the backstop. At the umpire's discretion, a coach may backup the catcher, but may NOT coach from this position.
10. **Bunting and "10' arc foul balls"**; Bunting is not allowed. The ball must be batted beyond a ten (10) foot radius arc from home plate to be a hit, otherwise, it is a foul ball.
11. **SLIDING**; Sliding is encouraged so as to avoid collisions. A base runner who intentionally runs into a fielder, who has the ball, will be declared out.
12. **Defensive Players**; Once the defensive team has taken the field for an inning, player's defensive positions, i.e. center field, first base, etc. will not be changed except in the case of an injury to a player or for a pitcher's substitution. All outfielders must start play on the outfield grass. For purposes of this rule, the short fielder is considered an outfielder until the ball is hit into the field of play.
13. **Cheering**; Dugout noise is to be limited to healthy encouragement.
14. **"Dropped third strike" rule**; The "Dropped Third Strike" rule is not in effect.
15. **Tagging up**; No tagging up is permitted.
16. **Infield fly rule**; The "infield fly" rule is not in effect.
17. **Continuous walk rule**; Continuous walk rule is NOT in effect (batters who walk must stop at first base).

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18. **Game length**; No inning will be allowed to begin more than 1 hour and 45 minutes after the scheduled start time of the game. As agreed by both head coaches, a game may be ended before the 6<sup>th</sup> inning.

A game consists of six innings and may go such extra innings as is necessary, unless the home team has a time limitation which is to be enforced. A game shall be considered official if it has gone four (4) innings (3 ½ if the home team is ahead) and therefore, not in need of rescheduling or completion. If the “No inning may start after 8 pm rule”, darkness or weather becomes an issue, the umpire may declare the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> inning the “last inning” for purposes of this rule. The umpire shall make such a declaration as soon as reasonably practical.

19. **Darkness, weather etc**; The home team is responsible for canceling a scheduled game in the event of inclement weather. Notice must be given to the visiting manager and the umpire at least one (1) hour before the game. The home team must supply two (2) alternate game dates. **ONCE A GAME HAD BEGUN**, it is the umpire’s decision to call any game because of darkness, bad weather, or adverse field conditions, regardless of the score. Managers shall take no purposeful action or inaction so as to delay a game for the purpose of winning or preventing the other team from winning due to darkness or weather. **If Thunder is heard or lightning spotted, the field must be cleared and all players and spectators should move to safer ground (i.e. cars, clubhouse, etc.). At this time, the game will be stopped for 30 minutes. If Thunder or Lightning is spotted during this time, the 30-minute clock will be reset. Example: If thunder has been heard the game is stopped for 30 minutes, if after waiting for 20 minutes another clap of thunder is heard or lightning is spotted, the clock will be reset and another 30 minutes will begin before you can retake the field. This will continue until it is too late to start an inning.**

20. **Base coaches**; There is to be a base coach for 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> base. Coaches must stand a minimum of three feet away from the baseline and may not touch runners as they approach or round the base during live ball play. If touched by a coach while the ball is in play, the runner shall be declared out. This is the umpire’s decision to call as he sees it.

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**21. Pitchers:**

At the beginning of every game, coaches or other Rutgers certified (or equivalent) adult will pitch to the players for one full time through the batting order of each team. This is to be completed by the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> inning, even if it is necessary to lengthen the 2<sup>nd</sup> by as many outs as needed for all the batters to have one at bat. If the coach completes pitching to the entire lineup in the middle of the inning, the coaches will complete the inning until 3 outs are recorded.

All Pitchers are required by rule to wear a face mask while pitching. A pitcher may pitch in as many games as scheduled, but can only pitch a maximum of three (3) innings. One (1) pitch thrown by the pitcher constitutes one (1) inning for the purposes of this rule. Once a pitcher has been substituted, they cannot return to the pitching position during the first six (6) innings of the game, with an exception for the starter, who may re-enter the game once in regulation.

In the event of extra innings, a pitcher who pitched earlier in the game may be used again for no more than three (3) consecutive innings. A pitcher who has pitched the last three (3) innings of the regular six (6) inning game, may not pitch the next inning in an extra inning game. There must be at least one full inning, consisting of three outs, before a pitcher may be reinserted (i.e.; if a pitcher pitches the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> innings and the game is tied, she may not pitch the 7<sup>th</sup> inning because that would be 4 consecutive innings. However, she could pitch the 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> innings of that game).

Managers may visit the mound twice per pitcher; on the third visit a pitching change must be made. Windmill pitching is allowed.

“Coach Pitch Rule” The coach will assist the pitcher when 4 balls have been thrown and AFTER the two walks per inning have been observed. The coach will pitch from the pitcher’s mound. If the batter has two strikes when the coach enters the game, the strike count will revert back to one strike. The coach will have the pitcher step aside and pitch to the batter until the batter either hits the ball or strikes out. The pitcher will then pitch to the next batter. Note - These innings will count toward the final score of the game with a maximum of 4 runs per inning (see Rule # 26 - Mercy Rule)

- 22. Pitching distance:** The pitcher’s rubber must be thirty-five (35) feet from the back of home plate and secured to the mound. If the pitching rubber is not permanent, a line (either lime or paint) must designate the thirty-five (35) foot mark.

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23. **Walks and hit by pitch and balls & strikes;** No more than four (4) walks per inning, per team and then each subsequent batter must hit the ball, strike out, or be hit by the pitch (the “hit or be hit” rule). Hit batswoman do not count as walks. Any pitcher who hits, directly or on a bounce, two batters in an inning or three in the regulation portion of a game, must be removed from the pitching position but may return to the pitching position in the event of extra innings. There is a reset of hit batswomen if the game goes into extra innings. Hit batswomen do not count as walks. A batter must make a reasonable effort to avoid being hit by a pitch or she shall not be awarded first base nor shall it count as a hit batswoman. It is the umpire’s discretion to make this call and there shall be no questioning same. **GO OVER THIS RULE BEFORE THE GAME SO THERE IS NO NEED TO INQUIRE OF THE UMPIRE DURING THE GAME.**

Three (3) strikes shall constitute an out and five (5) balls shall be a walk.

24. **Stealing, leading, and pinch runners;** Stealing is not allowed, and base runners may not leave the base until the ball has crossed home plate. On a lead, a throw to the base is a force and a runner may not advance on an overthrow. Pinch runners are not permitted except in the event of the injury. When there are two (2) outs, there is an option to pinch run for the pitcher or catcher who will be pitching or catching the upcoming ½ inning.
25. **Mercy Rule;** There is a maximum of four (4) runs allowed per team, per inning. Additional runs are not allowed even if scored on the same play on which the fifth run scored. The final inning is exempt from this rule. If time permits all (6) innings must be played.
26. **Cleanup;** Each team is responsible for cleaning up it’s dugout/bench area as well as the immediate vicinity at the conclusion of the game.
27. **Ending a play;** Runners may not advance when the ball has been returned to the pitcher or another player within the pitching area as the play is over at that time. The pitcher/player must be in possession, with control of the ball within eight feet of the pitching rubber for the play to be over and the ball to be declared dead and a play may not be made on a runner. The halfway rule is in effect. Once the ball is declared dead, runners who had not passed the halfway point between bases, shall be returned to the base from which the player came. Runners who make it to the next base & were more than halfway when the ball was declared dead, may keep the base to which they proceeded.

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If the umpire has not declared dead ball and a runner is advancing, the pitcher may make a play on the runner. If she chooses not to make a play and the umpire signals dead ball, the runners are subject to the halfway rule.

28. **Overthrows;** The runners will be permitted one (1) base on an overthrow at 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> base with the exception of a throw from the catcher on a pitched ball see rule 25. The ball is dead, runners are awarded one (1) base, and the ball is returned to the pitcher. It will be the umpire's responsibility to determine what constitutes an overthrow.
29. **Double Bag First base;** At first base a "double base" will be used. In the event that a double base is not available the game will still be played with a single base.
30. **Thunder and Lightning Rule;** **If Thunder is heard or lightning spotted, the field must be cleared and all players and spectators should move to safer ground (i.e. cars, clubhouse, etc.). At this time, the game will be stopped for 30 minutes. If Thunder or Lightning is spotted during this time, the 30-minute clock will be reset. Example: If thunder has been heard the game is stopped for 30 minutes, if after waiting for 20 minutes another clap of thunder is heard or lightning is spotted, the clock will be reset and another 30 minutes will begin before you can retake the field. This will continue until it is too late to start an inning.**
31. **Bats;** Composite bats are allowed in the Northern Valley Girl's Softball League, **PROVIDED** they have the USSSA stamp as shown below. All other composite bats are not permitted by the NVGSL.



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**32. Face Masks and Heart Guards:** as composite bats are allowed in the NVGSL, it is mandatory that all defensive players in the infield wear both facemasks and heart guards. While encouraged, facemasks and heart guards are not required to be worn by outfielders.

**33. Penalties:**

- a. Managers or coaches who willfully break league rules are subject to suspension, and possible expulsion from the league.
- b. Use of illegal players will result in an immediate forfeiture of the game and the game will canceled on the spot. Offending managers may face disciplinary actions from the league for using illegal players.
- c. Disciplinary hearings will be held with a minimum of 5 town representatives in attendance. Suspended coaches may not coach in any games until the disciplinary hearing is held.

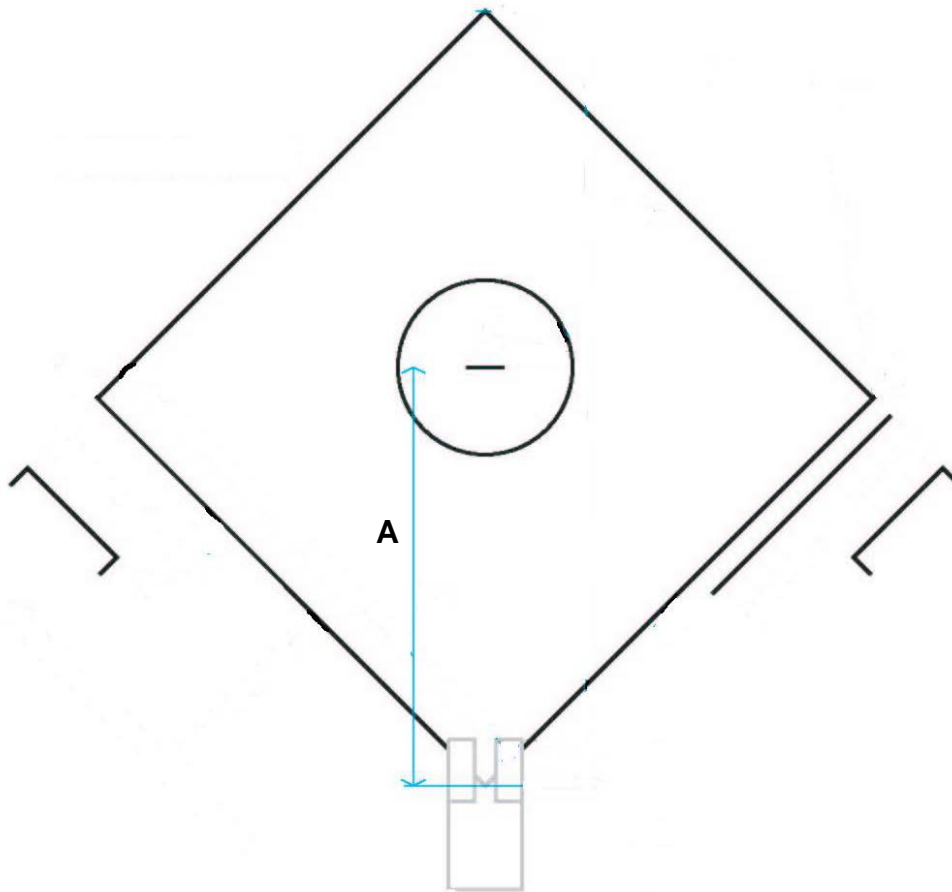
**34. Suggestions/Comments:**

- Attempt to give several players the opportunity to pitch in games during the season and give all players the opportunity to play all the defensive positions.
- Try to use three pitchers in a game (2-2-2) or (3-2-1), etc.
- Encourage players to run into dugout and out onto the field as that substantially shortens time between innings and allows for more game time for the players.
- Have lineup prepared before the game and post the batting order in the dugout.
- Be sure players have their shirts tucked in, laces tied and hats/visors worn properly.
- If you have a large lead (i.e. > 8 runs), try to control the situation so as to promote the dignity and self esteem of the players. (have players not take "the extra base, try an inexperienced pitcher, give fielders more opportunity to play all defensive positions, etc)



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## Pitching Rubber Distance



A = Distance from pitching rubber to back (point) of home plate.

Sophomore (3 & 4 grade) 35 feet

Junior (5 & 6 grade) 40 feet

Senior (7 & 8 grade) 40 feet