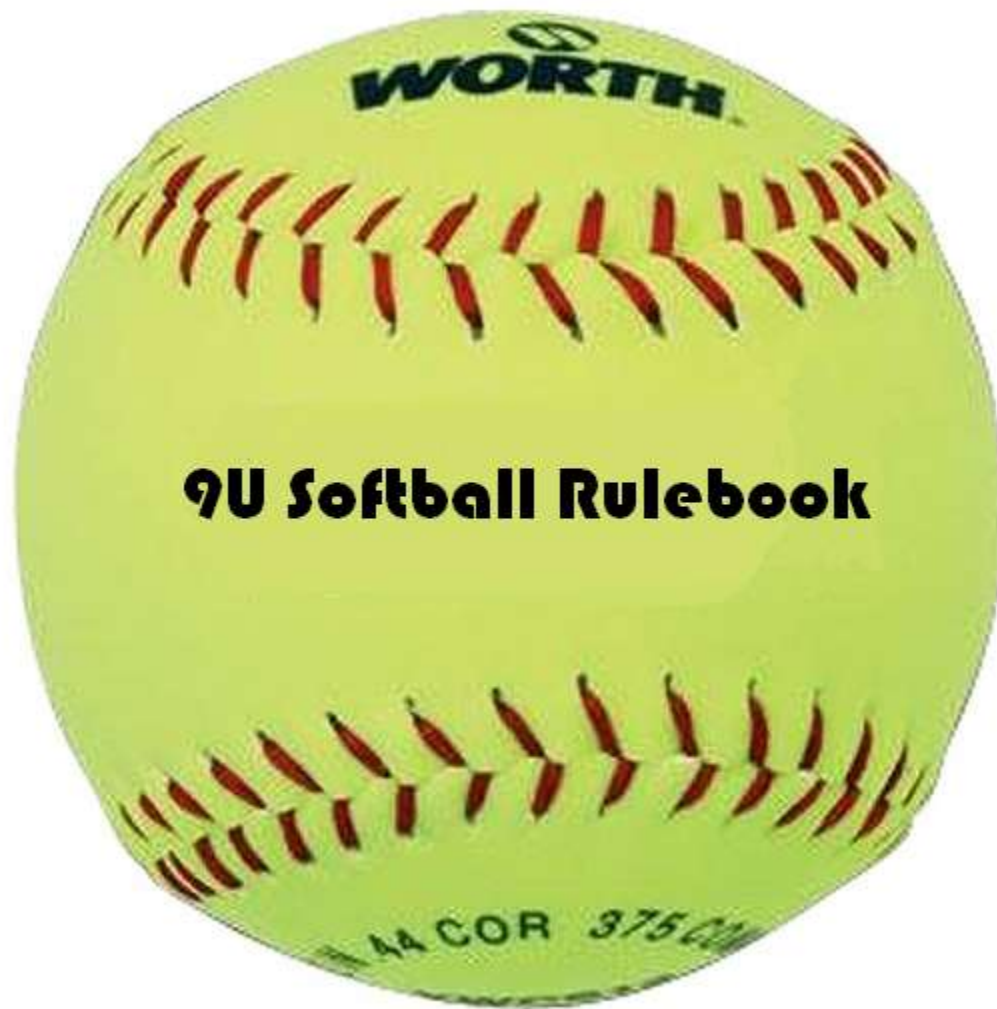




Oak Park Youth Baseball & Softball 2018



Updated 3/20/2018

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For more information, please see the Oak Park Youth Baseball and Softball website: www.opybs.org/

OPYB/S 2018 9U Softball Rules

United States Specialty Sports Association (USSSA) Official Fastpitch Rules & By-Laws for 9 and under apply except where modified by House League rules below. Link to 2013 USSSA Rules: <http://www.ussa.com/ussa/ussa-general/2013FPRules.pdf>

This Rule Book replaces any prior dated Rule Book. Rules changes must be proposed to the league president and approved by the OPYB/S Vice President of Softball.

Mission Statement

The purpose of 9U is to establish a competitive league, but one with a primary focus on developing and improving fundamental softball skills, that introduces pitching and hitting a pitched ball. It is a transitional league for girls coming out of T-Ball and appropriate for girls in this age range playing softball for the first time.

Eligibility

For 2018, girls born in 2008 and 2009 are eligible for 9U. Younger girls require approval, from league president and VP of softball. Fall 2009 birthdays (i.e. “older” second graders born between September and December of 2009) are encouraged to play up to 9U rather than T-Ball depending on ability.

“Player competition age” is determined by age on birthday in previous year. Girls whose 9th birthday was on or between January 1st and December 31st of the previous year are considered “player competition age 9” for the current softball season. Girls who are player competition age 9 and younger are eligible for the 9U league, with the following exceptions:

- (1) Girls who are player competition age 7 (born between January and August 2009) and younger require approval by the OPYB/S Vice President of Softball to “play up” to 9U league.
- (2) In cases of developmental or physical disabilities, older girls may play down to 9U league with approval by the OPYB/S Vice President of Softball

The League

The number of teams will vary from year to year, based on the number of girls enrolled in the league. Each team will have between 11 and 14 players, with girls divided evenly between teams and play in one division. All teams compete for the 9U Village Championship in a double-elimination playoff tournament at the end of the regular season.

The league currently attempts to accommodate requests of players (e.g. to play with friend(s), with girls of a specific school, for a specific coach, etc.) to a reasonable extent, but is in no way guaranteed and will not be applied to the extent it interferes with the ability to create balanced teams.

The regular season typically consists of 16 games scheduled for each team. A *minimum* of 12 complete games are necessary for seeding in the playoff tournament. A complete game is defined as a win, loss or tie. If a team has not completed 12 games by the end of the regular season, the games that were not played are counted as a loss in calculating the team’s winning percentage.

As this is an instructional league, coaches are strongly encouraged to reschedule rainouts, etc. to play as many games as possible. However, we recognize the limitations of player and field availability in determining minimum eligibility for the playoffs.

Seeding in the playoff tournament will be determined by winning percentage. Ties will be recorded as a ½ win and a ½ loss for both teams. If tied based on winning percentage, the first tiebreaker will be head

to head competition. If still tied, the playoff position will be determined by coin flip. There will be no ties in the playoffs.

An All-Star game will be played during or after the season. Head coaches must select their all-stars and provide to league president per direction and by deadline given. Head coaches for the two all-star teams will be determined by the teams that achieve the highest and second-highest winning percentages the week before the All-Star game (or through regular season if the All-Star game is at end of the year).

Schedule

- Game schedules are created by the league president using Team Snap.
- If games needed to be rescheduled due to cancellation or postponement related to weather, darkness or otherwise directed by the league, teams should contact the league president to work out another date, time and location, as well as secure an umpire.
- In case of games where one or both teams wish to reschedule NOT related to cancellations or postponements due to weather, darkness or otherwise directed by the league, the head coach of both teams must agree to the alternate date and then work with the league president. If both teams do not agree, the game will proceed at the regularly scheduled date and time. Failure to play on that date will result in a forfeit by the non-attending team(s) and count as a loss.

Weather and Field Conditions

Field Closures

The Park District of Oak Park maintains a hotline for field conditions: 708-524-0273. Their status supersedes any decision of the league for a game (i.e. if it changes after league has made a decision). Check it before practices after rain, as well, as fields might remain closed to avoid tearing them up. League president must be informed when a field is unusable due to weather for practice.

Cancellation or Postponement of Games

- When there is inclement weather prior to game time, the league president will target to communicate a decision to the head coaches 2 hours before scheduled games. If games are not cancelled by then, expect to play. The league and coaches should both continue to monitor the Park District's field condition hotline after a decision is made.
- No game may start or continue when the temperature falls below 45 degrees F.
- Further decisions at game time and during play are the discretion of umpire or league officials.
- If a game is cancelled or if the umpire postpones it during play, coaches should follow the procedures defined under the "Schedule" section above.
- Thunder and Lightning Guidelines
 - Play is terminated and shelter should be sought when lightning is 6 miles away or flash-to-bang time is 30 seconds or less. To use the flash-to-bang method, count the seconds from the time lightning is sighted to when the clap of thunder is heard. Divide this number by 5 to obtain how many miles away the lightning is occurring.
 - If lightning is seen, all must wait in a safe area for 30 minutes after the last lightning flash, or for 15 minutes for the sound of thunder before resuming a game. Safe waiting areas include fully enclosed vehicles with windows rolled up. Umpires will seek shelter in a vehicle with a coach or player's family if they do not have their own vehicle.
 - All must stay away from metal objects like fences, equipment boxes and bleachers. Avoid trees and open fields. If someone is struck by lightning, call 9-1-1 immediately.
 - Each time lightning is observed or thunder is heard, the 30 or 15 minute waiting period should start over. If the lightning has not passed after 45 minutes from the first lightning flash, the Umpire will call the game.

The Umpire

The Umpire is the ultimate authority on the field. All decisions by the Umpire are final. Once an umpire makes a call, it cannot be changed. The umpire should not be bullied into changing his/her call because s/he feels outnumbered or intimidated. If a coach disagrees with the call, s/he should demonstrate good sportsmanship and discuss the situation with the league president after the game.

The Umpire's primary objective is to ensure the safety of all players, coaches and spectators. The Umpire's secondary objective is to ensure a fair and evenly called game.

One Umpire will be at each Regular Season game. If possible, two Umpires will be at all Playoff Games. The Home Plate Umpire's decision is final except where the Home Plate Umpire defers to the Second Umpire.

If the league president (LP) or board member receives a complaint regarding a member, manager, coach, player or parent's behavior towards an Umpire, the LP will discuss the encounter with the Umpire and the person against whom the complaint was made. Depending on the situation, the LP may issue a warning to the member, manager, coach, player or parent. Additionally, depending on the nature and severity of the behavior or if a second complaint is made about the same person regarding behavior towards an umpire, the OPYBS Board reserves the right to suspend, discharge, or otherwise discipline the member, manager, coach, player or parent as provided in the OPYBS Bylaws.

Equipment

- Coaches and players must treat league equipment with care and respect. An umpire may eject a player for throwing equipment (regardless of if it is the league's equipment or their own).
- The catcher must wear full equipment at all times when playing defense on the field.
- The pitcher must wear a fielder mask (or a helmet with face mask) while playing defense.
- Aside from the pitcher, it is **STRONGLY** suggested that all infielders also wear face masks.
- Batters and base runners must wear a batting helmet with face mask.
- The home team will provide the game ball.
- The umpire has discretion to withhold permission to use a privately-owned bat if there is safety concern.
- Uniforms
 - Players are required to wear the league-issued jersey, softball pants and visor for games.
 - During inclement weather, players are encouraged to wear sweatshirts, thermal shirts, etc. under their jersey. Jackets or sweatshirts over the jersey are permissible, but should be color-coordinated so players the difference between offensive and defensive players in the field is easily identifiable by the umpire.
 - All players must wear athletic-type shoes. Wearing sandals or going barefoot is prohibited. The umpire will determine if any other type of footwear is acceptable based on a concern for safety.
 - No metal spikes or metal cleats.
 - Jewelry is permissible, but not anything loose or hanging and can be asked to be removed at the umpire's discretion. Hair should be secured out of a player's eyes for her own safety and the safety of other players.

The Game

- A standard 11" softball is used (i.e. not the spongy RIF version used in T-Ball).

- A team must play with 10 players in the field if available.
- Since this is still considered an instructional league a team can play with less than 10 players. A team can have 9 fielders without penalty. A team with 8 will be allowed to play according to USSSA “playing short” rules.
- A team needs at least 8 players to play a regulation league game. A team shall forfeit the game if they have only 7 players present 15 minutes after the scheduled start time for the game.
- The away team bats first in an inning and should be in the dugout on the first-base side. The home team should be in the dugout on the third-base side.
- Both teams should have an equal amount of time to warm-up on the infield before the game.
- A regulation league game consists of 6 innings or 5½ if the home team is ahead after the visitors have batted in the sixth inning. A tied score after 6 innings is a tie (except in playoffs).
- There is a maximum 4-run rule per team each inning, so a team bats until they get three outs or score 4 runs, whichever happens first.
- Games will be a minimum of four innings. Slaughter rule aka “maximum margin rule” occurs when it is mathematically impossible for the team behind in the score after 4 or more complete innings to score enough runs to win or tie (due to the 4-run per team/inning rule). However, if time and weather permit, coaches are encouraged to play as many innings as possible, even once an outcome is finalized, to maximize player development.
- Games should end after 2 hours. A new inning should not be started after playing 1 hour 45 minutes.
- In the event a game is called by the umpire (it is always the umpire’s call) on account of rain, lightning, darkness, or other reason the following rules apply:
 - If four innings were completed, it will be a complete game, even if it is a tie.
 - If the fifth or later inning was started and not completed when the game is called, the score will revert to the last full inning (both teams batted) and the winner declared.
 - If a game is called before it is a completed game (i.e. before four complete innings or slaughter rule) the game will resume from the point at which it was suspended (both teams should note in scorebook) until it is a regulation game (if the game figures in the final standings).
- As this is an instructional league primarily for players transitioning from T-Ball, a pitching machine is used most of the season for consistent pitching to allow hitters to develop.
 - For the first quarter of the season (as designated by the league president) the first inning will be player pitched (until 4 balls). The pitching machine will be used for innings 2 – 6. For the second quarter of the season (as designated by the league president) the first AND second innings will be pitched (until 4 balls). The pitching machine will be used for innings 3 – 6. For the second half of the season (and playoffs), the first three innings will be pitched (until four balls) and the pitching machine will be used for the final three innings. More details in subsequent sections below.
 - The offensive team coach will operate the pitching machine for his/her own players. When the defense is pitching, that coach will leave the field until needed to operate the machine again. No other coach (from either team) should be on the playing field during a play for any reason.
 - The pitching machine must be the model provided by the league (they are stored in the equipment boxes at 9U fields)
 - Speed setting on the 2018 model is 5.
- Scorekeepers for each team should compare and confirm scores between each inning and update the umpire.
- The winning coach must submit the score to the LP after every game (home team for tie).

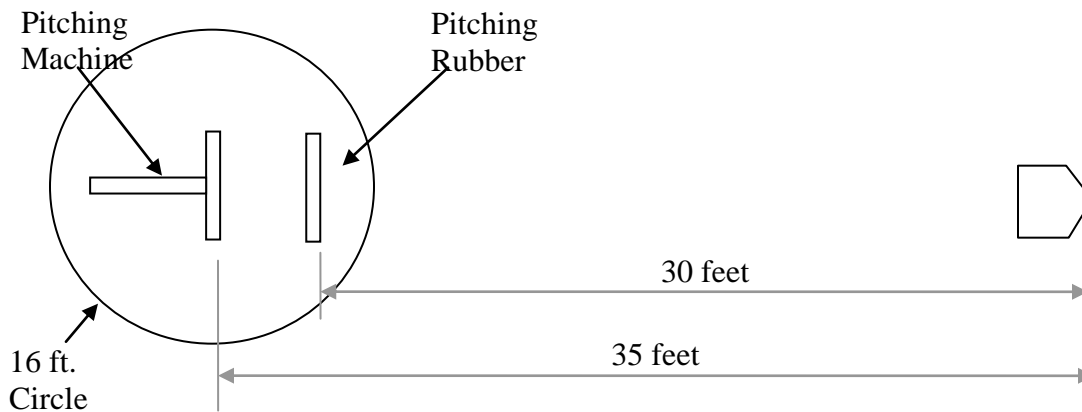
“Hurry-up” Rules

As this is an instructional league that utilizes a pitching machine and new pitchers, the games can run long. To ensure an efficient use of time, giving the girls as much time as possible to play, the following rules to speed the game up will be observed.

- Catcher on offense is ready in dugout before half inning ends, unless on base or the last batter
- Catcher keeps shin guards on in on deck circle unless she is guaranteed to come to the plate
- If the catcher is not ready to warm up the pitcher at the start of the inning, a coach (not another player without catching equipment on) will warm up the pitcher
- Pitcher gets three pitches between innings to warm up and then catcher throws down
- Offensive coach operating the pitching machine should be on the mound before defense is ready
- Courtesy runner is allowed for next inning’s catcher or pitcher at offensive coach’s discretion, if s/he informs opposing coach and umpire between at-bats. Runner must be the last out.

The Field

- Bases will be set at 60 feet apart, measured (for first and third base) from the apex of home plate to the back edge of base (closest to outfield).
- Double first base – a safety base will be placed next to first base in foul territory. Runners should aim for that base, fielders should utilize the base in play.
- Pitching distance is 30 feet, measured from apex of home plate to front of pitching rubber.
- Pitching machine is set up with front bracket at 35 feet from home plate.
- There will be a possession circle with an eight-foot radius around the pitching machine.



- Balls in play that hit the pitching machine or coach is live and in play. If the ball strikes the machine or coach and is caught before touching the ground it is a fly out. The coach should avoid interfering in the play.
- No defensive player, other than the catcher, will be positioned closer than 35 feet from home plate when the ball is pitched unless pitching. (If a batted ball is fielded by such a defensive player and an out is recorded, the manager of the offense may 1) accept the result or 2) have the pitch declared no pitch, the ball declared dead and the runners returned to the base which they occupied).
- The teams in the first game on Saturday and the last game on any day are responsible for basic field maintenance (i.e. dragging the field).

Defense

Fielding

Each player must play a minimum of 3 defensive innings each game and no player should sit out of defense two innings in a row. All players must play a minimum of 2 defensive positions. Because we are an instructional league and want to encourage many girls to learn many positions, ***no player may play 1st or Pitcher more than two total innings each per game, or three total innings combined (including extra inning playoff games). (For example, one player may play 2 innings at 1st and one at P, but not 2 innings at both 1st and P).*** All players must play at least one infield position prior to the end of the 4th inning. Infield is defined as P, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and SS (catcher is not included as an infield position). Additionally, no player can be on the bench in consecutive defensive innings

- Failure to do so may result in forfeit. The only exception is if the game ends early due to mathematical elimination (slaughter rule) or weather.
- The team playing defense should have 10 players in the field each inning. A team with only 9 players present can field a defense by removing the Short-Center position.
- Four players (including the Short-Center) must be positioned in the outfield prior to the pitch. The outfield will be defined by the grass past the infield on the standard Oak Park 9U fields or an agreed distance beyond the infield if playing on a non-standard field.
- All infielders must not position themselves in the baseline prior to the play,
- When receiving a throw at base, a fielder must provide the base runner a clear path to the base.
- There is no infield fly rule.
- From the USSSA rules: *Obstruction is the act of a defensive team member which hinders a runner or changes the pattern of play or when a catcher or fielder hinders a batter unless the fielder is in possession of the ball or making an initial play on a batted ball. The act may be intentional or unintentional, physical or verbal.*
 - A fake tag is considered obstruction.
 - This is a difficult call at this age, these are young girls who won't always be in the right place or have the proper awareness; please coach them up to take a defensive position out of the base path before the pitch, reminding them during the game, and coach them to not stand on the base or on either side of base in the base path when they don't have the ball once it is in play.
- When a ball is thrown out of bounds, any runners get the base they were going to plus one more base. So if there is a runner on first and an overthrow that goes out of bounds is made to first before the runner has made it to second, then that runner gets third base. If the runner was already past second and making an attempt to run to third when the ball goes out of bounds, that runner would get the base she was going to (third) and one more (home). **An overthrown ball that does not go out of bounds is still in play. The best direction here is to coach your players to go after the ball and get it to the pitcher until the umpire calls the play dead.**
- Maple North Ground Rule – the short fence protecting the dugout along both baselines is IN PLAY. Along first base, the long fence behind it is out of bounds. Along third base, a ball that passes the fence is out of bounds.
- Play ends if:
 - The ball is under the control of the pitcher within the possession circle and she is no longer attempting to make a play on a base runner. Inadvertently running through the circle with the ball to make a play will not stop the play. If the pitcher fumbles or the ball rolls away, she should gain control of the ball before it being called “dead”.
 - The ball has been thrown out of play and runners have advanced their maximum allowable number of bases.

- After a defensive player has stopped the lead runner and no other runners are advancing, the umpire should call the play “dead”.
- When in the judgment of the umpire, all play is complete and time has been called. This supersedes any above. Umpire ruling, regardless of circumstance on the field, is final.
- Three outs are recorded or 4 runs have been scored in an inning.
- Restroom substitutions are permitted but the restroom-breaking player must return to her position in the field immediately upon returning from the restroom.

Pitching

A league pitching machine will be used for innings 2-6, and player pitched for inning 1, for the first quarter of the season (as designated by league president). For the second quarter of the season the machine will be used for innings 3-6, and players will pitch for innings 1 and 2. For the second half of the season, players will pitch innings 1-3 and machine pitch starting in inning 4.

- For the first half of the season, no player may pitch more than one inning (any part of an inning pitched is considered an inning).
- For the second half of the season, a maximum 2 innings per pitcher (any part of an inning pitched is considered an inning). In general coaches should pitch as many players as possible, and a player pitching a second inning shall only be utilized in cases where other players are not interested in pitching. One of the goals of 9U should be for coaches to develop as many pitchers as possible.
- For the second half of the season, a “player competition age” 8 or younger (for 2018, born 2009 or later) must pitch one of the player pitched innings in each game.
- A pitcher may strike out a batter, but not walk them (four balls) and no base is awarded for hitting the batter.
- During any player-pitched inning, if a player pitcher records four balls, the pitching machine is utilized for the hitter. If a pitcher records four balls before recording three strikes, a maximum of one strike will be retained and the pitching machine will be used to complete the at bat (1-2 strikes in count before fourth ball = 1 strike; no strikes before fourth ball = 0 strikes).

Guidelines for Pitching Motion

While there are specific rules (and penalties) that apply in formal tournaments at this age, OPYB/S does not wish to discourage our young pitchers in their development in a house league. The intent of these guidelines is that minor flaws in a pitching motion that do not (1) create a dangerous situation or (2) a significant competitive disadvantage will be tolerated and are best left to be corrected in practice.

Where they do create either situation, the primary action by the umpire should be to declare “no pitch” and the play is dead. Recurring issues with the same player or team should be brought to the attention of the league president.

- Pitchers begin with both feet in contact with the pitching rubber and the ball inside the mitt. Umpires will not penalize pitchers if they fail to do this, but they may advise coaches (and pitchers) to work to correct this issue.
- After the pitcher presents the ball and separates her hands, she may not bring them together again. It is not unusual for new pitchers to struggle with this as they try to learn the proper pitching motion. Often, they realize they made a mistake, and start their presentation/windup over again. Pitchers should be trained to do this properly. If this “false start” occurs, umpires should declare NO PITCH in an effort to give both the batter and the pitcher time to reset. Umpires will do so at their discretion, and they will do so in as consistent a manner as possible. Frustrating as it may be, coaches may not appeal or identify an opposing pitchers' flaws.

- A pitcher should not step back off the rubber with her non-pivot foot during her motion. Umpires will not penalize pitchers if they fail to do this, but they may advise coaches (and pitchers) to work to correct this issue.
- A pitcher should keep her pivot foot in contact with the pitching rubber. She may push off only from the pitching rubber, and when she does, the pivot foot must remain in contact with the ground. Because this is an issue of safety, umpires will declare NO PITCH only if the pitchers' pivot foot BLATANTLY does not remain in contact with the rubber until the "push off" as the pitch is being delivered or she BLATANTLY becomes airborne with both feet off the ground.
 - The key word is blatantly. If the pitcher is airborne and winds up halfway to the batter before releasing the ball, we have (1) a safety issue because it is a dangerous situation and possibly (2) a competitive disadvantage, which is why it is addressed.
 - However, with only one umpire on the field (and at 9U, in particular, we often have NEW umpires), it will be impossible for them to know or see all instances of this rule being broken, particularly if the pitcher leaves the rubber early, but only by a small amount. Umpires may call NO PITCH at their discretion.
- NO PITCH means NO PITCH. It doesn't count, runners may not advance, it never happened.

Offense

Batting

- Continuous batting order including all players. An exception may be made if a batter is temporarily not available or able to bat. The opposing coach and scorekeeper must be informed in advance and then the hitter can be skipped in the order. The next batter will not be considered as batting out of order. The temporarily "disabled" batter may return to the game in her original place in the batting order, once the "disability" has passed.
- On-deck batters should use the on-deck circle facing the batters back when warming up.
- Three strikes are an out vs. a pitcher or the pitching machine.
 - There is no dropped third strike.
- There is no base on balls (walk).
 - Against pitching machine – the hitter bats until a ball is put in play or they strike out (including strikes not swung at). Balls are unlimited.
 - Against player pitcher – if a pitcher throws four balls, the pitching machine is brought in for the hitter. If the pitcher had 1 or 2 strikes on the hitter before the fourth ball, the hitter begins facing the machine with one strike. If the pitcher had no strikes on the hitter before the fourth ball, the hitter begins facing the machine with no strikes.
- No base will be awarded if a batter is hit by a pitched ball (player pitch or machine pitch).
- There is no bunting.
 - If the ball is bunted fair or foul, the bunter will be called out. If fair, the ball is dead and the runners must return to the base that they occupied.
 - A full swing taken resulting in a dribbler is not a bunt. The rule is specifically for batters who square up to bunt or simply hold the bat straight over the plate.
- A batter who makes contact with a batted ball in fair play on her way to first base is out.

Foul Ball

- A foul ball is a batted ball which:
 - Settles on foul territory between home and first base, or between home and third base.
 - Bounds past first or third base on or over foul territory.
 - First falls on foul territory beyond first or third base (note – a ball that first goes foul before first or third base and then bounces fair before it touches anything is a fair ball).

- While on or over foul territory touches the person of an umpire, a player or any object foreign to the natural ground or contacts the batter in the batter's box.
- Foul territory is that part of the playing field outside the foul lines and perpendicularly upwards.
- If a ball lands on the 1st or 3rd base chalk line, the ball is fair.

Thrown Bat

If a batter accidentally throws her bat, the umpire will immediately issue the first, and only “bench warning” to the offending team. Subsequent thrown bats by any member of that team will result in the batter being called “out”. If a batter from the opposing team throws a bat, the opposing team will receive a warning and the process will repeat itself. If a batter is called out for a thrown bat, the play shall be ruled dead. The Runners stay at their base. Any runners that advanced shall be returned to their previous base(s).

Base Running

- A batter must turn right after passing first base to be “out of play”. If the batter-now-runner turns toward second, intentionally or unintentionally, intent to advance is assumed and the player remains “in play” and eligible to be tagged out with the ball by any defensive player.
- No stealing or lead-offs. Runners must be in contact with base at the beginning of every play and cannot leave the base until the ball is hit. Runners leaving early will be called out, it is no pitch, the ball is dead and any runners not called out must return to the base which they occupied.
- Tagging up on fly balls is allowed. If the runner legally left the base on contact (per above), she may return, reestablish contact with the base, and leave once the ball is caught. If a player advanced multiple bases, they must each be retouched in order back to her original base.
- If a thrown ball strikes a runner, the umpire will call the play “dead” and the runner is safely awarded the base to which she is advancing or retreating.
- If a runner is hit by a batted ball after the ball has passed any defensive infielder besides the pitcher, she may advance without penalty. However, if the runner is struck by a batted ball in front of all defensive infielders (besides pitcher), she will be called out.
- If the third out is made on any force out, a runner advancing home does not score. If a third out is made in a situation that is not a force out, and the runner advancing home touches the plate before the out is made, then the run scores.
- More than one runner may not occupy the same base simultaneously. The runner who first legally occupied the base shall be entitled to it, unless forced to advance. The other runner(s) may be put out by being touched with the ball.
- No base runner may pass another base runner at any time. If one does pass the other, the originally “trailing” runner will be called out. Base runners may legally have contact with one another but they may not pass.
- No player may be touched by a base coach at any time while the ball is “in play”. If a coach touches a runner when the ball is in play, the runner will be called out by coach's interference.