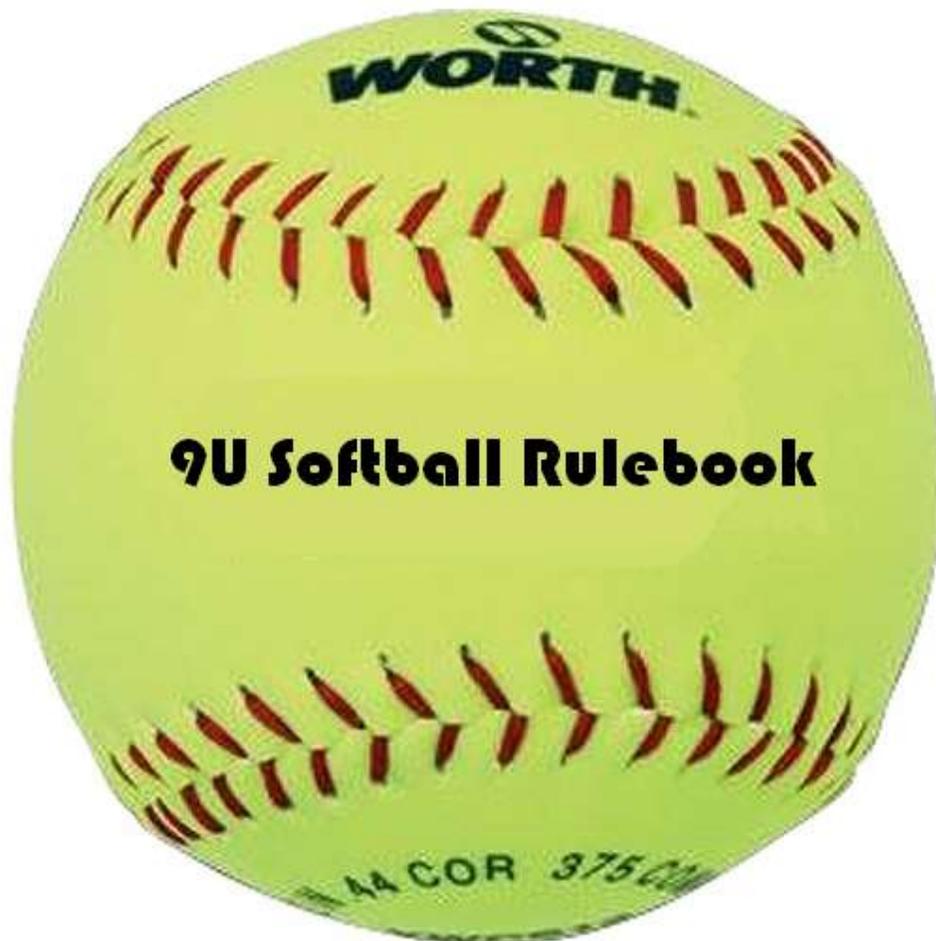




Oak Park Youth Baseball & Softball Spring Softball 2021



March 2021

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

OPYBS 2021 Spring Softball Rules

IN ADDITION TO THE RULES OUTLINED ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES, ALL PLAYERS, COACHES AND FANS NEED TO FOLLOW THE COVID-19/INFECTIOUS DISEASE GUIDELINES THAT ARE ON THE HOME PAGE OF OPYBS.ORG

Schedule

- Game schedules are created by the league using TeamSnap.
- 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. Be sure to follow the prompt for “affiliate youth baseball and softball,” NOT “park district youth sports programs.”

The Park Districts’ 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.

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 or at the discretion of the league president.
- 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 any Playoff Games.

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

- 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 uniforms 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 play with 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 5 innings or 4½ if the home team is ahead after the visitors have batted in the fifth inning. A tied score after 5 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 three 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.
- A new inning should not be started after playing 1 hour 45 minutes.
 - If there is another game scheduled immediately following, there will be a hard stop for the game at the 2-hour mark. If the inning is not complete at the 2-hour mark, the final game score would revert to the last full inning (both teams batted) and the winner or tie declared. (In cases where the home team has taken the lead but the inning is not complete, the home team shall be declared the winner).
 - If there is NOT another game following, game play can extend beyond 2 hours to complete the inning unless the umpire makes a decision otherwise due to weather, darkness, etc.
- 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 three innings were completed, it will be a complete game, even if it is a tie.
 - If the fourth 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 three complete innings or slaughter rule) the game will resume from the point at which it was suspended (both team should note in scorebook) until it is a regulation game (if the game figures in the final standings).
- 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 new pitchers and coach 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
- 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.
- Balls in play that hit the pitching coach are live and in play. If the ball strikes the pitching 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 of the day and the last game on any day are responsible for basic field maintenance (i.e. dragging the field).

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 different 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 3rd 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.
 - A team with only 8 players present can field a defense by removing the Short-Center position and playing with two outfielders.
 - During the regular season, a team playing with 8 players does not need to take an out for the missing 9th batter.

- During playoffs, a team playing with 8 players will need to take an out for the missing 9th batter.
- 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. THE ONLY EXCEPTION TO THIS RULE IS ON AN OVERTHROW TO FIRST THE RUNNERS AT ALL BASES CAN NOT EXCEED ONE ADDITIONAL BASE FROM WHERE THEY WERE HEADED WHEN THE BALL PASSES FIRST BASE. PLEASE NOTE THE BALL IS STILL LIVE AND DEFENSIVE PLAYERS CAN MAKE A PLAY ON THE RUNNERS AT ANY TIME. THIS RULE LIMITS THE BATTER TO AT MOST SECOND BASE ON AN OVERTHROW. THIS RULE IS TO ENCOURAGE THROW TO FIRST ON EVERY PLAY.**
- 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

- This league is a combination of player pitch and coach pitch.
- There are NO walks. If pitcher throws four balls, a coach from the hitting team will come to the mound to pitch.
 - If the pitcher had no strikes on the hitter before the fourth ball, the hitter will receive up to four coach pitched balls.
 - If the pitcher had 1 OR 2 strikes on the hitter before the fourth ball, the hitter will receive up to three coach pitched balls.
- Coach pitchers must pitch from within the pitcher circle. If the batter is not successful in putting any of the coach pitches in play, she is out.
 - If the coach throws an unhittable ball, the player doesn't swing, or the player hits a foul ball, it still counts as one of the coach pitches. And if any of these happens and it is the final coach pitched ball, the player is out.
- The coach pitcher must leave fair territory as soon as a ball is put in play.
- The coach pitcher should attempt to pitch at a speed that challenges players and not simple “lob” the ball. The speed of the pitch should generally match the speed of the average player pitcher in the league, and the arc of the pitch should be minimized. By 10U the average pitcher will be in the 35 mph range. Slow, high arc pitches will not prepare players for higher levels of play.
- No base is awarded for hitting the batter. However, in the event the girl pitcher hits a batter with a pitch, the coach will begin pitching immediately following that pitch. (Same rules as above apply about the number of coach pitched balls received.)
- 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 approximately the first third of the season, the first three innings of the game will be girl pitched (with the switch to coach pitch after four balls or a pitch that hits the batter). No player may pitch more than one inning (any part of an inning pitched is considered an inning).
 - For approximately the second third of the season, the first four innings of the game will be girl pitched (with the switch to coach pitch after four balls or a pitch that hits the batter). No player may pitch more than two innings (any part of an inning pitched is considered an inning). **The league president will determine and communicate the date that the second third of the season begins.**
 - For approximately the last third of the season and during playoffs, all five innings will be girl pitched (with the switch to coach pitch after four balls or a pitch that hits the batter). No player may pitch more than two innings (any part of an inning pitched is considered an inning). **The league president will determine and communicate the date that the last third of the season begins.**

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.

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.
- There is no dropped third strike.
- There are NO walks. If pitcher throws four balls, a coach from the hitting team will come to the mound to pitch.
 - If the pitcher had no strikes on the hitter before the fourth ball, the hitter will receive up to four coach pitched balls.
 - If the pitcher had 1 OR 2 strikes on the hitter before the fourth ball, the hitter will receive up to three coach pitched balls.
- No base is awarded for hitting the batter. However, in the event the girl pitcher hits a batter with a pitch, the coach will begin pitching immediately following that pitch. (Same rules as above apply about the number of coach pitched balls received.)
- 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.