



PORTAGE YOUTH SOFTBALL

WWW.PORTAGEYOUTHSOFTBALL.ORG

5TH ANNUAL SUMMER SOFTBALL TOURNAMENT – GAME RULE MODIFICATIONS

WWW.PORTAGEYOUTHSOFTBALL.ORG/TOURNAMENT-RULES

This tournament will follow the rules set forth by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) and the Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association (WIAA) except as modified and/or clarified below. The official tournament rule book shall be the **2024 NFHS Softball Rules Book** which shall be referred to as the “**Rules Book**”. The **2024 NFHS Softball Case Book** and the **2024 and 2025 NFHS Softball Umpires Manual** can be used for additional reference. However, those two reference books are written for the **Rules Book** without tournament modifications so any examples may or may not apply as written.



For rules related resources, including a list of USA Softball vs. NFHS rule differences, visit www.portageyouthsoftball.org/tournament-rules or scan the QR Code above.

RULE CHANGES & POINTS OF EMPHASIS

THE RULE CHANGES LISTED BELOW ARE DIRECTLY FROM THE NFHS RULES BOOK AND INCLUDE MAJOR CHANGES PUBLISHED IN THE 2024 NFHS SOFTBALL RULES BOOK. TOURNAMENT RULE MODIFICATIONS MAY FURTHER MODIFY THESE RULE CHANGES. ONLY CHANGES APPLICABLE TO TOURNAMENT PLAY ARE INCLUDED.

2024 SOFTBALL RULES CHANGES

- **1-8-6** – Permits electronic information to be transmitted to the dugout from anywhere outside of live ball territory.
- **3-2-5** – Removed the color restriction for headbands and ribbons.
- **3-2-7** – Defines where a wristband with a playbook/playcard may be worn. If worn by the pitcher, the wristband with a playbook/playcard must be worn on the non-pitching wrist or arm.
- **4-2-7, 10-2-3e, h** – The umpire may call (end) a game if playing conditions in or around the facility become unacceptable to safely continue the game.
- **6-1-2c, 2-47** – The pitcher may now have both feet off the ground at the same time as long as both feet remain within the 24-inch width of the pitcher’s plate and the pitcher does not replant the pivot foot. A definition for a replant was added.
- **6-2-2** – Pitchers shall only use dirt, powdered rosin or comparable drying agents that are listed on the USA Softball’s certified equipment webpage to dry the hand.

2024 SOFTBALL POINTS OF EMPHASIS (ABBREVIATED)

- **Game Management** – Coach and umpire communication should be conversational, not confrontational. There has to be a mutual respect for each other and a professionalism that is followed by both coaches and umpires to maintain the working relationship that is imperative to have a successful game.
- **Unacceptable Conditions** – Umpire jurisdiction is limited to the confines of the field of play. Items outside of the field of play, like spectator behavior, is monitored and controlled by event management. However, if conditions become unacceptable for play due to spectator conduct, umpires have the authority to call (end) the content.
- **Unreported vs. Illegal Substitutions** – An illegal substitute is a player who is ineligible to occupy a position in the lineup. An unreported substitute is a player that could legally occupy the position they are in the lineup but has simply failed to report that they are entering the game. All substitutions and courtesy runners are required to be reported to the plate umpire upon entering the game.
- **Pitching Mechanics** – The allowance for both feet to disengage from the playing surface while delivering a pitch has increased the concern about pitching mechanics involving a replant of the pivot foot. A replant during the delivery would result in an illegal pitch.

5TH ANNUAL SUMMER SOFTBALL TOURNAMENT – GAME RULE MODIFICATIONS

TOURNAMENT MODIFICATIONS TO THE RULES BOOK

RULE MODIFICATIONS LISTED BELOW REFER TO THE RULE, SECTION, AND/OR ARTICLE AS FOUND IN THE **RULES BOOK**.

UMPIRES RESERVE THE RIGHT TO ENFORCE/INTERPRET RULES THAT ARE NOT SPECIFICALLY LISTED ON THIS DOCUMENT.

RULE 1 – FIELD AND EQUIPMENT

- **1-1-2b** – The pitcher’s plate for 14U games will be 43 feet from home plate. The pitcher’s plate for 12U games will be 40 feet from home plate.
- **1-1-3** – The Portage High School Softball Fields shall be deemed legal for play even if they do meet all NFHS recommendations.
- **1-1-4** – The catcher’s box, coaches’ boxes, and the three-foot running lane to first base may or may not be marked.
- **1-1-6** – Players must use the on-deck circle directly behind the current batter even if that on-deck circle is not in front of their team’s dugout. Taunting opposing players is prohibited. Players should access the on-deck circle in front of their opponent’s dugout by going around the backstop and not within the field of play unless the ball is dead.
- **1-1-7** – Media and all non-approved personnel shall be prohibited from being within the field of play and dugouts which includes fair and foul territory. Only approved coaches and players as well as tournament staff shall be permitted in such areas.
- **1-2-1 NOTE** – A double first base will be used on all fields for all games in all divisions.
- **1-2-3** – See **1-1-2b**.
- **1-6-3** – In addition, any players outside of the dugout on the offensive team must wear a legal batting helmet. Standing in the opening of the dugout is considered out of the dugout for the purpose of this rule. Defensive players standing in the dugout openings must also wear batting helmets.

RULE 2 – DEFINITIONS

- **2-5-3** – See **1-1-6**.
- **2-10-2** – See **1-1-4**.
- **2-13** – See **1-1-4**. Base coaches for the offensive team shall remain in the appropriate location where a coach’s box would be located regardless of whether or not it is marked.
- **2-14-2** – Pregame conferences need only involve one umpire and may be conducted outside the field of play prior to the game to save time. If the pregame conference is held outside the field of play prior to the game, the time limit clock shall start once teams receive access to the playing field after the conclusion of the preceding game. If the pregame conference occurs on the field, the time limit clock shall start at the conclusion of the pregame conference.
- **2-25-3 – Regulation Game**
 - **Pool Play Games:** All pool play games shall be a maximum of six (6) innings and be limited to no new inning starting after one (1) hour (60 minutes). Pool play games can end in ties and there shall be no extra innings. Games that are tied at the end of six (6) innings or the time limit shall remain ties.
 - **Bracket Games:** All non-championship bracket games shall be a maximum of six (6) innings and be limited to no new inning starting after one (1) hour and ten (10) minutes (70 minutes). Bracket games cannot end in ties and the Tie Breaker Rule below shall be followed if required.
 - **Championship Games:** All championship games shall be a maximum of seven (7) innings and be limited to no new inning starting after one (1) hour and thirty (30) minutes (90 minutes). Championship games cannot end in ties and the Tie Breaker Rule below shall be followed if required.
 - **Run Ahead Rules:** All games shall also be regulated by the following run-ahead rules: 15 runs after 3 innings, 12 runs after 4 innings, and 8 runs after 5 innings.
 - **Tie Breaker Rule:** This rule takes effect after the maximum number of innings or the first full inning after the time limit expires, whichever comes first. The last scheduled player in the line-up for the current half-inning is placed on second base with no outs and another inning is played with the first scheduled player in the line-up for the current half-inning at-bat. If the player placed at second base is the pitcher or catcher of record and a full roster continuous batting order is used, the next preceding player can be placed at second base instead at the head coach’s option. If the pitcher placed at second base is the pitcher or catcher of record and a standard line-up option (9 players or 10 with DP/FLEX) is used, courtesy runners may be used

5TH ANNUAL SUMMER SOFTBALL TOURNAMENT – GAME RULE MODIFICATIONS

at the head coach's option. Standard substitution rules apply and can be used to place a pinch runner at second base only for teams using a standard line-up option (9 players or 10 with DP/FLEX). This process should continue to be used until a winner is determined.

- **Time Limits:** The home plate umpire shall start a timer at the conclusion of the pre-game conference once both teams have access to the playing field. If the home team is winning and at-bat when time expires, the umpire shall call the game after the current batter. No new inning may start after reaching the time limit, except for in accordance with the Tie Breaker Rule above.
- **2-30** – For pool play games, a half-inning is over after the offensive team scores eight (8) runs. There is no per-inning run limit in bracket/championship games.
- **2-36** – See **1-1-6**. If on-deck circles are not marked, players should take a position where an on-deck circle would normally be located.
- **2-41** – Teams using a full roster continuous batting order are unable to use pinch hitters or pinch runners since they have no substitutes available.
- **2-54** – If using a full roster continuous batting order, all eligible players listed on a team's game roster are considered "Starting Players".
- **2-57** – If using a full roster continuous batting order, a team has no substitutes.
- **2-59** – Team personnel consist of all team representatives located within the "Confines of the Field", including dugouts, warm-up areas, and the field of play. Team representatives shall include all players, coaches, scorekeepers, and other volunteers that are listed on the team's official tournament roster and coaching staff sheet during tournament check-in. Parents, siblings, friends, and other personnel not on the team's official roster and coaching staff sheet are prohibited from entering the "Confines of the Field." Tournament staff, first responders, umpires, and other approved Portage Youth Softball representatives are exempt from this requirement. All coaching must be done by team personnel within the "Confines of the Field."
- **2-60** – See **1-1-4**.

RULE 3 – PLAYERS, SUBSTITUTES AND COACHES

- **3-1-1** – For pool play games, teams must use a full roster continuous batting order where all eligible players listed on the game roster are listed on the batting order. With a continuous batting order, free defensive substitutions are permitted, and no offensive substitutions can be made. For bracket/championship games, teams shall have the option of using a full roster continuous batting order or following standard NFHS substitution rules with either nine (9) players or ten (10) players using the DP/FLEX on their starting line-up. The choice of substitution option must be decided at the pregame conference in bracket/championship play and cannot be changed once line-ups are submitted to the umpires.
- **3-1-3** – If using a full roster continuous batting order, the lineup card shall only require the defensive position for the pitcher and catcher due to courtesy runner restrictions. No substitutes may be listed when using a full roster continuous batting order.
- **3-2-2** – Teams may alter uniforms as required to prevent duplicate numbers (i.e., adding a tape number to the uniform to create a different number). Teams should avoid duplicate numbers if possible. Abuse of this allowance for a competitive advantage may result in a team forfeiting a game.
- **3-2-3** – No logo requirements on uniforms or related equipment will be enforced.
- **3-2-11** – Metal cleats are permitted only for 14U games and are prohibited for 12U games.
- **3-3-5** – If using a full roster continuous batting order, there are no offensive substitutions allowed, but free defensive substitutions are allowed. However, players must remain in their location in the batting order.
- **3-3-6** – The use of the DP/FLEX option is only permitted in bracket/championship games if declared at the pregame conference.
- **3-3-8** – If using a full roster continuous batting order and a runner advancing on an awarded base or after reaching base is unable to continue:
 - The previous batter not on base is allowed to replace that player as a temporary runner until she is put out, scores, or the half-inning ends. If this replacement runner is the pitcher or catcher of record, the next preceding batter not on base can be used instead per the courtesy runner rules.

5TH ANNUAL SUMMER SOFTBALL TOURNAMENT – GAME RULE MODIFICATIONS

- When the player who could not continue is scheduled to bat, an out shall be called for that player's next at-bat and the player shall be removed from the game. Subsequent at-bats should not be assessed an out as the player has been removed from the remainder of the game.
- Alternatively, the head coach may elect to take an out for the player unable to continue at the time the player is unable to continue instead of using a replacement runner. If the player does not play defense after this out and they are unable to continue during their next at-bat, they can be removed from the game without an out or penalty since an out was already assessed against that player. The player would then be removed from the remainder of the game. However, if the player plays defense after being ruled out or faces any pitches during their next at-bat, they are deemed able to continue and must remain in the game. Should be player be unable to continue after being deemed able to continue, the injury rules should be followed again as stated above.
- **3-6-13** – In addition, jeering, chanting, and noise making to cause distraction or frustration of another player or team is prohibited. Cheering and supportive comments are encouraged by all coaches, fans, and players. Any action, cheer, jeer, chant, or noise making deemed excessive by the tournament coordinator or umpire is prohibited and must be stopped immediately upon warning. Subsequent violations will result in the offender being restricted to the dugout for the remainder of the game or being ejected at the umpire's discretion. Teams playing music must ensure that the volume is not distracting to other games. Additionally, all music must be turned off while the ball is in play or when the batter and/or pitcher assumes their position. If in the opinion of the umpires, music is delaying the game or is too loud, umpires reserve the right to ban music for that team and/or game.
- **3-7-1** – There shall be no limit to defensive charged conferences within a single game so long as conferences are not used for an unfair competitive advantage as determined by the umpires. All defensive conferences shall be limited to a maximum of one (1) minute unless for an injury.

RULE 4 – STARTING AND ENDING A GAME

- **4-1-1** – The Tournament Coordinator shall decide whether the grounds are suitable for starting the game.
- **4-1-3** – Ground Rules shall be determined by the Tournament Coordinator and/or umpires and enforced by umpires.
- **4-1-4** – For all pool play games, the home team shall be assigned per the official tournament schedule. For bracket/championship games, the home team shall be the team listed as the home team on the official online tournament bracket. If a bracket game does not have a home team assigned, the team with the higher pool play seed shall be the home team. If both teams have the same pool play seed (i.e., A1 & B1), the home team shall be determined by a coin flip administered by the home plate umpire at the pre-game conference. It shall be the responsibility of the head coaches on each team to ensure the home team is determined correctly according to the online schedule.
- **4-2-1** – A game ends when the team behind in score has completed its turn at bat in the last scheduled inning, any extra inning if tied (bracket/championship play only), or after the time limit has expired. If the home team scores a go-ahead run in the bottom of the last scheduled inning or any extra inning, the game is terminated at that point. If the home team scores a go-ahead run after the time limit has expired, the current at-bat shall be completed and then the game shall be terminated.
- **4-2-2, 4-2-3, 4-2-4, 4-2-5, 4-2-6, 4-2-7** – Games suspended or called early due to inclement weather or field conditions shall be handled on a case-by-case basis by the Tournament Coordinator. The Tournament Coordinator reserves the right to cancel games due to time constraints and to determine the outcome of a game if a game is not completed and is unable to be resumed and finished.
- **4-3** – In addition, teams that have not checked-in and/or teams that do not have submitted liability waivers on file for all team personnel shall forfeit their games until they have completed these requirements.
- **4-4** – Protests shall be prohibited. Umpire decisions are final.

RULE 5 – DEAD BALL AND SUSPENSION OF PLAY

- **5-2-1** – The Tournament Coordinator may direct the umpires to suspend games due to inclement weather or field conditions and may also declare any game ended.

RULE 7 – BATTING

- **7-5-1** – See **1-1-6**.

5TH ANNUAL SUMMER SOFTBALL TOURNAMENT – GAME RULE MODIFICATIONS

RULE 8 – BATTER-RUNNER AND RUNNER

- **8-9-1** – In addition, if using a full roster continuous batting order, the courtesy runner shall be the previous player on the batting order that is not on base (either put out or scored). If that player is the pitcher or catcher of record, the next preceding player in the line-up can be used.
- **8-9-3** – If using a full roster continuous batting order, players are allowed to be a courtesy runner in addition to playing other offensive or defensive positions.

ADDITIONAL RULES REMINDERS

- Both teams are expected to fill out a score book for each game. The home team will keep the official book. If in the opinion of the home plate umpire, the home team book is not reliable, the away team book can be used as the official book. Scoreboards are not official and are for the convenience of the fans only. If a coach or player is unsure of the ball-strike count, they should ask one of the umpires.
- The dropped third strike rule is in effect for all age levels.
- Stealing is allowed, including home, after the release of the pitch.
- Head coaches are responsible for ensuring their team is using safe and legal equipment.
- The infield fly rule is in effect.
- No infield warmups/practice are allowed except for warm up pitches and players throwing balls around. No hitting balls to infielders. Warm up time is limited to one (1) minute between each half inning.
- All helmets must have a permanently affixed NOSCAE approved face mask. Helmet chin straps are optional but must be worn if attached to helmet.
- Teams have one minute after the conclusion of a half inning to have a batter ready to bat or to have their team ready to play defense (including pitcher and catcher). Players should hustle on and off the field.
- Home and away teams are assigned for most games. The online schedule should be referenced as home/away assignments are based on pool play seeds and which team stayed in the winner bracket longer.