



WPPA Youth Softball Rules 2022

2022 WPPA Softball Rules

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Note Regarding 2022 Rule Changes

Please be aware that there have been several, significant rule changes implemented at all levels of softball for 2022. Please take the time to familiarize yourself with the rules of your division even if you have coached before.

Welles Park Parents Association softball rules are based on the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) softball rules—modifications and exceptions to NFHS softball rules are identified in this document. This document also includes additional Welles Park-specific softball rules that govern such items as uniforms, coach/parent conduct and more. These rules will be in place until season’s end unless determined by the commissioner in collaboration with division coaches that a change is needed.

Unless otherwise specified, the rules below apply to all levels of Softball.

1. FIELDS

1. Base paths: 60’
2. Pitching plate:
 - a. **8U and 10U:** 35’ from the back tip of home plate to the front of the pitcher’s plate.
 - b. **12U:** 40’ from the back tip of home plate to the front of the pitcher’s plate.
 - c. **14U:** 43’ from the back tip of home plate to the front of the pitcher’s plate.
3. Pitcher’s circle: 16’ in diameter around the pitcher’s plate.
4. No WPPA softball divisions draw or use the diagonal line on the field in front of home plate. The fields should not be marked with this line. If the line is drawn, umpires—and players—should ignore.
5. Batter’s boxes are marked at 7’ long and 3’ wide. The front line of each box shall be 4 feet in front of a line drawn through the center of home plate. **Note:** this is larger than the batter’s box for a baseball game.
6. **8U and 10U:** Halfway chalk marks will be drawn on all base paths except from home plate to first

2. EQUIPMENT

A. Uniforms

1. WPPA-provided uniforms should be worn at all games—this includes official shirts, pants and socks.
2. In the event of extreme cold, players should prioritize warmth over uniform compliance.
3. **8U and 10U:** In the event of extreme heat, and at the discretion and announcement of the softball commissioner, shorts will be allowed. Uniform socks should still be worn to protect players’ legs.

4. Sliding pants are optional but recommended.
5. WPPA coaches must wear WPPA shirts for all games. Parents volunteers (“helping coaches”) helping coach 1st and 3rd base do not need to wear coaching shirts.

B. Helmets

1. Supplied by league; players are also allowed to use their own.
2. Batters, on-deck batters, and runners must wear helmets. All helmets must have approved facemasks.
3. Helmets must be worn by batters, on-deck hitters and base runners.
4. Base runners must keep helmets on until they leave the field and return to the bench or dugout. If a base runner’s helmet is deliberately removed before time has been called by the umpire, the runner will be called out
5. Catchers must wear team’s catching equipment (catcher’s helmet, chest protector, shin guards). Catchers may not wear their batting helmet while catching.

C. Facemasks

1. Players are also allowed to use their own.
 - a. **8U and 10U:** two face masks will be provided by the league
 - b. **12U and 14U:** three face masks will be provided by the league
2. Required to be worn by:
 - a. Pitchers must wear a face mask at all levels.
8U: Face masks must also be worn by the player fielding first base
3. Strongly suggested for players at 1st and 3rd base.
4. Optional for players at other positions.

D. Shoes

Cleats are recommended but not required. Players may only wear cleats with plastic or rubber cleats. No metal cleats allowed.

- **Chase Park Only:** no plastic or rubber cleats allowed – gym shoes only.

E. Bats

1. Softball bats must be furnished by players.
2. Bats must be alloy and must say “official softball” and include “ASA” or “USSAA” softball logo
3. No oversized barrels (over 2.25” in diameter) are allowed.
4. If a bat is judged by an umpire to not comply with the above rules (or to be considered “unsafe” for any reason), it will be removed from play with no penalty to the batter.
5. If a ball is put into play with an illegal bat, the batter shall be out and all baserunners shall return to previous bases unless they were put out on the basepaths.

F. Softballs

1. Players will use a 12” ball.
 - a. **8U & 10U:** players will use a 11” ball
2. The league will provide two (2) game balls for each game, distributed at the beginning of the season to each coach.
3. Each coach will bring one WPPA-supplied game ball to each game. Before each game begins, each coach will give the game ball to the umpire.

3. GAMES

A. Pre-game & starting a game

1. The home team is responsible for setting up and removing bases (if necessary) and always occupies the 3rd base side of the field.
2. Before each game, the head and assistant coaches from each team must identify themselves (and any helping coaches) to the umpire. (A “helping coach” is anyone that will be helping coach players on the field during the game.)
3. When the field is available to do so, each team will have 10 minutes to warm up on the field. The home team takes the field first; the visiting team takes the field second. Both teams should be off the field 5 minutes before the official game time. If warmup time is cut short due to an overlapping game or weather, etc., each team will evenly divide the time available before the game to warm up on the field.
4. Each head coach must make him or herself available to the umpire for a pre-game meeting at home plate 5 minutes before the start of the game and after both teams have finished warming up on the field.

5. Before game time, each head coach must provide the opposing head coach with his or their line up, including the names of all players in attendance. Any players not present at the time of the pre-game meeting, but who are expected to arrive, must be placed at the bottom of the lineup.

B. Rain delays/lightning/cancellations/make-up games

1. Approximately thirty minutes prior to the first game of the day, the softball commissioner will determine if the grounds and other conditions are suitable for starting the game. If the softball commissioner is not available to make the decision, another board member shall make the decision.
2. In the event a game is cancelled, the commissioner will notify both head coaches.
3. After a game is cancelled, the commissioner will alert both teams that a make-up game needs to be scheduled, and provide available dates/times/fields. If neither team makes a concerted effort to schedule a makeup game within a week of receiving options, the commissioner will assign a date/time and field.
4. The WPPA adheres to the IHSA Severe Weather Safety Guidelines. When thunder is heard or lightning seen, play must be suspended for at least 30 minutes. Once play has been suspended, teams should wait at least 30 minutes after the last thunder is heard or lightning witnesses prior to resuming play. Any subsequent thunder or lightning after the beginning of the 30-minute count will reset the clock and another 30-minute count should begin. The 30-minute count is to be maintained by the umpire, including whether to reset the clock based on subsequent thunder or lightning.
5. With regard to field availability, makeup games will be given priority over regularly scheduled practice, at the discretion of the commissioner.

C. Time & inning limits

1. Game limits
 - **8U:** 5 innings or 2 hours
 - **10U, 12U, and 14U:** 6 innings or 2 hours
2. No full inning may be started after 1 hour 45 mins past the scheduled start time unless modified by the Commissioner.
3. Any full inning started at 1 hour 45 mins from the scheduled start time will be played as the final open inning with no run cap. The umpire should announce to both head coaches that the inning is uncapped.

4. **In the regular season**, any game still being played five minutes before the scheduled start time of the following game will end immediately and revert to the score at the end of the previous inning, unless the home team is ahead at the time the game is called, or unless the home team, having been behind at the end of the previous inning, has tied the game. Time limits still stand even if game is not followed by another game.
 - A game that is tied at the end of the last inning will be continued until a winner is determined, unless time limits, darkness or inclement weather intercedes. If an official regular season game is tied and cannot be continued because of time limits, weather or darkness, the game will remain a tie. (Note: For league standings, a tie game counts as one half of a win and one half of a loss.)
5. **In the playoffs**, a full game based on the age level must be played—there are no time limits.
6. An inning may not be “uncapped” once the first pitch has been thrown. An inning can never be capped for the visiting team and then become uncapped for the home team, even due to time restraints.
7. Because the time limit typically occurs before the inning limit, the umpire and coaches will discuss IN ADVANCE when they are moving to the open inning, which will then become the final inning of the game.

D. Speed-up rules

1. Time elapsed between the third out and the start of the next half inning shall be no longer than 3 minutes. Umpires will ask coaches to move more quickly as 3 minutes approaches.
 - a. **8U:** 5 minutes is permitted.
2. This time includes warm up pitches for pitchers returning to the mound from the previous inning.
3. Pitchers new to the mound for the game may have 6 warmup pitches, even if 3 minutes have already passed.
4. Coaches for the batting team shall instruct their catcher for the next inning to suit up after the 2nd out and be ready to play immediately after the 3rd out is made.
5. When there are two outs and the catcher is on base, it is required that coaches send in a courtesy runner for the catcher so that they may put on their equipment. Runner will be the player who made the last out.

E. Complete/official game

1. A full game is 3.5 innings if the home team is winning; four (4) if the visiting team is winning. (i.e., in case of rain or time limit has been reached).

2. If the game must be called because of darkness, inclement weather or time limit before it is considered complete/official, an attempt will be made to make it up and replay it from the point at which it was called (same score, same inning, etc.). If rescheduling is impossible, the score will stand as it was at the end of the last full inning played. This applies to both regular season and playoff games.

F. Minimum players & penalties

1. A full team is composed of 9 players.
2. Eight (8) players are required to start the game. No mandatory out will be recorded for the team with 8 players.
3. If one team has fewer than 8 players when the game is scheduled to start, that team will forfeit, although the teams may play a scrimmage game if they choose.
4. If a team starts with 8 players and drops to 7 players during the game, one automatic out will be recorded each time the dropped player's place in the lineup is reached.

G. Borrowed players

1. Borrowed players must be borrowed:
 - **8U:** from other 8U teams or from junior baseball
 - **10U:** from 8U
 - **12U:** from 10U
 - **14U:** from 12U
2. Teams may only borrow enough players to reach a roster of up to 10 players, but no less than 8.
3. Borrowed players must bat at the bottom of the order.
4. Borrowed players may play:
 - **8U and 10U:** second base, short centerfield or outfield
 - **12U:** second base or outfield only.
 - **14U:** Any position (including pitcher).
5. If both teams are short players, borrowed players will be distributed evenly among the teams to help both teams field 9 players before either team has 10 players.
6. Borrowed players must be played the minimum infield innings applicable to all players.
7. No official player may sit out more innings than a borrowed player.
8. Teams *may* call up the same farm team player more than once during both the regular season and playoffs.

H. Injured players

1. In case of any injury to a defensive player, they may be replaced by a player from the bench.
2. A coach should seek to apply immediate first aid and/or seek emergency medical care as necessary for the injured player. If a parent or guardian is not present, they should be notified as soon as possible.
3. If appropriate, a player may return to the game after a rest of at least the remaining half inning in which the injury occurred.
4. In case of any injury to a batter who cannot continue the plate appearance, the at-bat shall be vacated and will not count. No out is recorded. The next batter starts with a new count.

I. Run limits & slaughter rule

1. Maximum of 5 runs per inning before the last inning; no maximum runs in the last inning (or mutually agreed-upon final inning, should a complete game be impossible)
2. The umpire will declare a “slaughter rule” in effect if one team is ahead:
 - a. **8U:** by 15 or more runs after three innings at the end of a half inning (if the home team is ahead) or after a complete inning (if the visiting team is ahead).
 - b. **10U, 12U and 14U:** by 15 or more runs after four innings at the end of a half inning (if the home team is ahead) or after a complete inning (if the visiting team is ahead).

4. BATTING

A. Batting order/lineup

1. Continuous batting order—everyone bats.
2. All able and eligible players, including called up players, will constitute the batting order and all players will bat during the entire game in the order established by the lineup. The only exception to this rule exists if a player is temporarily or permanently removed from the game due to injury, illness or disciplinary action, or must leave the game early for personal reasons.
3. Any player arriving after the beginning of the game is added to the end of the batting order.
4. There are no designated hitters in WPPA softball.

B. Tee (8U only)

1. Beginning with the first game of the season and continuing for all games played (as opposed to scheduled) through and including Memorial Day weekend, the tee will be used for one complete rotation through the batting order. All batters will hit off the tee the first time through the lineup. Coach pitch will commence when the team begins its second time through the lineup. All batters for that team will use coach pitch for the remainder of the game.
2. There may be only one practice swing taken with a coach assisting the batter when the batter is at the plate. No ball can be placed on the tee for this purpose.
3. There are no strikeouts off of the tee.
4. The coach or a designated person from the team on offense shall be present on the team bench to remove the tee for safety reasons after the ball has been hit and put into play. There must be a regular home plate under the tee. If the tee is not removed, it will be considered interference and no base runner from 3rd base may advance. If the bases are loaded, or the runner on 3rd base attempts to advance some, such runner will be out and all other base runners will advance one (1) base unless a putout is otherwise made on such play.

C. Strike zone

1. The strike zone is the space over home plate, between the batter's forward armpit and the top of the knees when the batter assumes a natural batting stance. Any part of the ball passing through the strike zone in flight shall be considered a strike. The umpire shall determine the batter's strike zone according to the batter's usual stance.
2. Any ball that touches or bounces in front of or on home plate shall not be considered a strike by the umpire unless the batter swings.

D. Hit by pitch (10U, 12U and 14U)

1. If the pitched ball hits the batter or their clothing while they are positioned within the batter's box, the batter is awarded 1st base.
2. A player is considered "hit by pitch" even if the ball is on the bounce (i.e., has hit the ground first).
3. No movement to avoid the pitch is required if it is headed toward the batter while they are in the batter's box, although batters are encouraged to do so to avoid injury.

4. If the batter is hit by a strike either by swinging or by moving into the strike zone—as determined only by the umpire—the ball is dead. The pitch is called a strike and the batter remains at bat unless it is strike three and the batter is out.
5. **10U and 12U only:** If the batter is hit by a pitch delivered by the coach pitcher, the ball is a dead ball and the pitch doesn't count against the 4-pitch coach-pitch limit. The batter is not awarded a base.

E. Bunting & slapping

1. **8U and 10U:** bunting and slapping are not allowed

12U and 14U:

2. A batter may bunt or slap the ball.
3. No bunting/slapping is permitted during coach pitch
4. Holding the bat in the strike zone is considered a bunt attempt. To take a pitch, the bat must be withdrawn—pulled backward and away from the ball—and the umpire will call the pitch a ball or strike. If the bat is not withdrawn, the pitch will be called a strike regardless of the ball's location in the strike zone (as a shown bunt not withdrawn is considered a swing).
5. A batter may not show a bunt and then pull back for a full swing (or “slashing”). The batter will be called out and the play will be dead.
6. Batter is out when a bunt on a third strike is foul.

F. Dropped 3rd strike

8U, 10U and 12U: There is no “dropped 3rd strike” provision. If a third strike is called on the batter, the batter is called out—even if the catcher drops the ball.

14U:

1. The “dropped 3rd strike rule” is in effect if:
 - There are two outs, or
 - There are zero or one out and 1st base is unoccupied.
2. If there are two outs or if no runner occupies first base, the batter is not out unless the third strike is caught by the catcher. If the third strike is dropped, the batter is entitled to try to reach first base before being tagged or thrown out.

3. In this situation, the ball is considered live and all runners may advance at their own risk, including on overthrows to first base. An overthrow into the outfield remains a live ball with no restriction on the runner. Overthrows out of the field of play are subject to the standard overthrow rule and all runners advance one base.

G. Thrown bat

1. If a batter throws their bat (unintentionally), their team will receive one warning from the umpire, but the play will stand.
2. If the same or any other player from the team that has been warned throws a bat during the remainder of the game, the player who has thrown the bat will be called out and the umpire will call a dead ball. There are no more warnings for that team.
3. If a batter throws their bat intentionally, they will be called out immediately and subject to ejection from the game by the umpire.

5. GROUND RULES

Welles Park Senior Diamond:

- If a ball on the fly hits the foliage of a tree in fair territory, it is a home run.
- If a ball gets stuck in the space behind the Welles Park Senior Field backstop padding, it is a dead ball and we will enforce it as follows: On a pitched ball that lodges behind the backstop, baserunners on 1st or 2nd get a base, not the runner on 3rd base (14U only: unless it lodges during a dropped 3rd strike with the bases loaded, in which case the runner at 3rd must advance and scores). A thrown ball (from outfield or infield) that lodges behind the backstop is a dead ball. A runner halfway to the next base shall be awarded the base; otherwise, a runner must return to their original base.

Welles Park Major Diamond:

- If the field does not have a home run fence, any ball is playable off the wall.
- If the field does not have a home run fence, and a batted ball goes into the stairwell untouched, it is a double. If the ball has been touched, it is a triple.
- If a batted ball on the fly hits the tree in fair territory, it is a double; if a ball on the fly hits the tree in fair territory and carries over the fence, it is a home run.
- If a batted ball is hit onto the top of the building, it is a home run.
- If a batted ball hits on or directly above the smaller building it is a home run.
- SUGGESTION: If the field does not have a home run fence, and a batted ball hits or goes under the bleachers in center field the ball will continue to be in play and the umpire will not call dead ball. The ball is live.

Home run fences:

For all leagues, in any situation where a temporary or permanent home run fence is in place, a ball traveling over the fence (even if it hits/touches the fence or a player) without first hitting the ground is a home run; a ball bouncing on the ground before reaching the fence, and then traveling over the fence is a ground rule double; a ball rolling under the fence is a ground rule double. (The batter and each base runner are given 2 bases with a ground rule double).

Legion Park:

If a ball is hit on a fly over the bike path, it is a home run; if a ball lands before the bike path but carries past the bike path, the batter shall be awarded the base they are running to plus one base.

Chase Park:

If a ball is hit on a fly over the bike path, it is a home run; if a ball lands before the bike path but carries past the bike path, the batter shall be awarded the base they are running to plus one base.

6. BASE RUNNING RULES:

A. Leadoffs

1. No Leadoffs.
2. **10U:** Runners may leave the base when the ball crosses the plate
3. **12U and 14U:** Runners may advance at their own discretion once a ball leaves a kid pitcher's hand.
 - a. **12U exception:** During coach pitch, runners may not leave the base until the ball reaches the plate.
4. A runner leaving early will prompt a team warning. The next time any runner from a team that has been warned leaves a base early, they will be called out. If the ball is hit, it will be called a no-pitch. If a strike or a ball is called, the runner will be called out and the pitch will count as called.

B. Runners advance / "Look-back" rule

1. **8U:** Runners may advance only one base on an infield hit. A hit that does not reach the outfield grass on the fly, is considered an infield hit. The runner may advance as many bases as possible on a hit that reaches the outfield, including on a ground ball that reaches the outfield.

2. **10U:** Runners may advance on a played ball until the infielder has control of the ball (“Infield” includes short center). At that time, the ball is declared “dead.” Runners will be allowed to advance to the next base if the runner is past the halfway chalk line in the base path. If there is no pitcher’s circle drawn, umpires must consistently call dead ball when the pitcher is within 8 feet of the pitcher’s plate. If they are not past the halfway mark, the umpire will send the runners back to their last occupied base.
3. **When a ball is hit**, play is live (and runners may advance) until the pitcher has control of the ball with both feet touching or within the pitcher’s circle. (If there is no visible pitcher’s circle drawn, umpires must make sure pitchers are within an 8-ft radius of the pitcher’s plate.)
4. **12U and 14U:**
 - a. Once the pitcher has control of the ball inside the pitcher’s circle then:
 - i. Any runner who is already on a base must remain at that base.
 - ii. Any runner in between bases must immediately **return** to the last base or **advance** to the next.
 - iii. Failure to immediately return nonstop to the previous base or advance to the next base will result in a runner being called out.
 - iv. Once a runner stops at a base for any reason they will be declared out if they leave that base.
 - b. When all runners have gone back (or forward) and the umpire has declared each runner safe or out, the umpire will call time.
 - c. When runners are still in motion, defensive players may continue to make plays on those runners. A lifted arm/fake throw is considered a play.

Note: There is no requirement for the pitcher to actually look back, despite the name of the rule.

C. Advancing to 2nd on a walk

1. **14U only:** A runner may attempt to continue from first to second on a base on balls at the runner’s own risk. However, the player must not hesitate, stop, or delay their motion from home to second base if the pitcher has the ball in the circle. If the pitcher does not have the ball in the circle—or if a player makes a play on a runner—the ball is still live and the runners may advance at their own risk. NOTE: This rule does not apply when a batter has been hit by a pitch.
2. **12U only:** A runner may not attempt to continue from first to second on a base on balls or hit by pitch.

D. Stealing

1. During coach pitch, a runner may not steal or advance on a wild pitch or passed ball.
2. **8U:** No stealing
3. **10U:**
 - a. During kid pitch only, stealing 3rd base is allowed—no stealing of 2nd base or home plate is permitted.
 - b. There is no overthrow penalty for throwing to 3rd on a steal of 3rd base (i.e., there is a “wall” at 3rd). Runners stealing 3rd base cannot advance home.
 - c. “Delayed steals” are not allowed. Runners may not break toward/advance to the next base after the catcher releases the ball in a throw back to the pitcher.
 - d. Overthrows from catcher to pitcher are considered a dead ball and runners may not advance.
4. **12U:**
 - a. During kid pitch only, stealing 3rd and home are allowed—no stealing of 2nd base is permitted.
 - b. There is no overthrow penalty for throwing to 3rd on a steal of 3rd base (i.e., there is a “wall” at 3rd). Runners stealing 3rd base cannot advance home.
 - c. Runners may steal a base after the catcher throws the ball back to the pitcher (or on an overthrow from catcher to the pitcher), as a return exchange to the pitcher from any fielder is a live-ball situation.
 - d. Runners may advance from 2nd base to 3rd base or from 3rd base to home on wild pitches/passed balls (including those that lodge in or go under, over or through the backstop), but may not advance from 1st base to 2nd base.
5. **14U:**
 - a. Stealing of all bases is allowed.
 - b. Runners may steal a base after the catcher throws back to the pitcher (or on an overthrow from catcher to pitcher), as a return exchange to the pitcher from any fielder is a live-ball situation.
 - c. Runners may advance on wild pitches/passed balls.

E. Pickoffs

1. **8U:** No pickoffs
2. **10U:**
 - a. The fielding team may attempt to pick a runner off at any base at any time.

- b. Runners cannot advance a base on a pickoff attempt. They must return to their base even in the case of an overthrow; i.e., there is no penalty to make the throw. (Note: The “wall” at each base in the case of a pickoff attempt is intended to encourage players to attempt the throw and teach the runners how to get back.)

3. 12U and 14U:

- a. The fielding team may attempt to pick a runner off at any base at any time.
- b. A pickoff attempt puts the ball in play and the ball is live.
- c. Runners at all bases can advance at their own risk if a pickoff attempt is made.
- d. There is no safety wall at 1st, 2nd or 3rd base on a pickoff attempt.

F. Infield fly rule

1. **8U, 10U and 12U:** No infield fly rule is in effect.

2. **14U:**

- a. When declared by the umpire, an “infield fly” is a fair fly ball that can be caught by an infielder (this includes the pitcher, catcher or any outfielder positioned in the infield) with ordinary effort when:
 - i. Runners are on first and second or
 - ii. When all three bases are occupied and before there are two outs in the inning.
- b. The batter is automatically called out (whether the ball is caught or not), which removes the force play at all other bases. The ball is considered live, so runners may advance at their own risk.
- c. The infield fly call/signal must be made by the umpire while the ball is in the air. It cannot be retroactively applied if not called before the ball is touched by a fielder or drops to the ground.
- d. If a declared infield fly becomes foul, it is treated as a foul ball.

G. Overthrows

1. Out-of-play boundaries must be clearly identified and agreed upon prior to the game by coaches and umpire(s).
2. **8U:** No penalty on overthrows. No extra bases are awarded.

3. **10U:** No penalty on overthrows to 1st base, even if the ball goes out of play. No extra base will be awarded, and the ball is declared dead. In the case of an overthrow to 3rd in which the ball goes out of play, the umpire will award one extra base—one base beyond the base to which the runner(s) were headed at the time the ball went out of play—to the runner(s).
4. **12U and 14U:** In the case of an overthrow to 1st or 3rd in which the ball goes out of play, the umpire will award one extra base to the runner(s)—one base beyond the base to which the runner(s) were headed at the time the ball was released by the defensive player who threw the ball.

H. Sliding

1. **8U and 10U:** Runners are not required to slide into home or any other base and will not be automatically called out if they don't.
2. No head-first slides while advancing to the next base are allowed. The runner will be called out if they do it.
3. A player may, however, slide head-first when returning to a base previously occupied.
4. If the runner is approaching the base at the same time a play is being made at that base, the runner must avoid contact with the fielder (sliding is recommended but not required). If the fielder is in a legal position (meaning, appropriately allowing the runner the right of way to the base), and the runner makes contact with that fielder, the runner can be called out.

I. Courtesy runner

1. When there are two outs and the catcher is on base, a courtesy runner must be used for the catcher so that they may put on their equipment. (Courtesy runner must be the player who made the last out.)
2. Coaches are allowed to bring in a courtesy runner when a batter has been hit or otherwise injured during their at-bat.

7. DEFENSIVE RULES

A. 8U and 10U:

1. Ten (10) players are allowed on the field. Two options:
Option 1 - play 4 outfielders on the grass.
Option 2 - Play 3 outfielders on the grass and one short center. Short center must play on or behind second base.
2. Outfielders must start the play on the grass and may not enter the dirt until the ball is put into play.

3. If the game is being played on a baseball field (e.g., senior diamond at Welles) and the infield is significantly larger than on a traditional softball field, coaches and umpires should pace it out, and agree to an approximation of where the “grass” line should be.
4. Each player must play 1 of the first four innings per game in the infield and 2 total infield innings if a full 6-inning game is played. Catcher and short centerfield are considered infield positions.
 - a. **8U only:** No player may play more than three (3) innings total at pitcher and/or first base positions each game.
5. Infielders cannot play more than two steps in front of the base path.
6. Fielders may not block the base paths—runners have the right of way to the plate/base. If players do not move/relocate, a coach can ask the umpire to call “time” and ask the defensive coach to adjust the fielder’s position.

B. 12U and 14U:

1. Nine (9) players are allowed on the field. Only 3 players are allowed in the outfield at any time; no short center may be used, and outfielders may not play an infield position (i.e., may not cover second base and receive a ball) in a force play situation.
2. Outfielders must start the play on the grass and may not enter the dirt until the pitcher releases the ball.
 - a. If the game is being played on a baseball field (e.g., senior diamond at Welles) and the infield is significantly larger than on a traditional softball field, coaches and umpires should pace it out—infield arc radius for ASA fields is **12U** (55’) and **14U** (60’) from the center of the pitcher’s plate— and agree to an approximation of where the “grass” line should be.
3. Unless a fielder has possession of a ball and is in the process of making a play, a fielder may not block the base paths—runners have the right of way to the plate/base.
4. If play is being made on the runner involved in obstruction, and in the umpire’s judgment that runner would have reached the base had the obstruction not occurred, a dead ball is called, the runner is allowed to advance and is also awarded the next base. No penalty awarded if no play is being made on that runner.
5. **12U only:** Each player must play 1 of the first four innings per game in the infield and 2 total infield innings if a full 6-inning game is played. Catcher is considered an infield position.

C. Sitting out

Based on a 6-inning game, no player may sit out a second inning before all other players have sat out at least one.

D. Pitcher putouts

1. **8U:** Pitcher may not herself run to bases to make force outs. Pitcher must throw ball to *all* bases, including home. However, a pitcher may run to home to make an out if the player's natural momentum when fielding the ball is taking them towards home.
2. **10U:** Pitcher may not herself run to bases to make force outs, with the exception of 1st base and home when forward momentum makes that play the smartest/safest. Pitcher must throw ball to 2nd and 3rd bases for force outs.
3. **12U and 14U:** Pitchers may run to any base to make force outs.

E. Catcher

1. Catcher will assume position behind the plate for all pitches.
2. Coaches, opposing coaches, umpires, and other players have the right to suggest to the umpire that s/he move the catcher back to ensure their safety.

8. PITCHING RULES

A. Coach Pitch (8U only)

1. The transition from tee to coach pitch may occur at any point during an inning.
2. A coach-pitcher may throw up to 6 pitches per batter.
3. The umpire will not call strikes unless the batter swings.
4. A batter will strike out after a third missed swing.
5. If the batter does not reach base safely by the sixth pitch, the batter is out.
6. In the case of a foul ball on the sixth pitch or any subsequent pitch that is fouled, another pitch is thrown.
7. No base will be given and no runners will advance when the batter is hit by a pitch during coach pitch.

B. Pitching rules for coach pitch (coaches) (8U only)

1. The offensive team will provide a coach-pitcher who will pitch to his/their own team.
2. The coach-pitcher must have his/their pivot foot on the pitching plate until the ball is released.
3. Coach will not lob the ball and will pitch with little discernible arc.
4. The coach-pitcher must attempt to get into foul territory as soon as the batter makes contact with the ball. If the coach-pitcher is hit by the batted ball, the ball is dead.
5. The coach-pitcher may coach the batter but may not coach the other players on the team while acting as the pitcher. The coach pitcher can direct the batter on how to stand, etc, but may not tell the batter when to swing the bat.

C. Coach Pitch (10U Only)

1. Coach Pitch is in place for one full run through the batting order.
2. A coach-pitcher may throw up to 6 pitches per batter.
3. The umpire will not call strikes unless the batter swings.
4. A batter will strike out after a third missed swing.
5. If the batter does not reach base safely by the sixth pitch, the batter is out.
6. In the case of a foul ball on the sixth pitch or any subsequent pitch that is fouled, another pitch is thrown.
7. "Modified Kid Pitch" is in place for the remainder of the game.
8. No base will be given and no runners will advance when the batter is hit by a pitch during coach pitch.

D. Modified Kid Pitch (10U)

1. Modified kid pitch will begin after one complete run through the batting order. Modified Kid pitch will be in place for the remainder of the game.

2. During Modified Kid Pitch, the umpire will call balls and strikes while a player is pitching until the ball is put in play, there is a strikeout, or there are 4 balls. After 4 balls, the coach finishes the at-bat. Strikes accumulate throughout the entire at-bat (i.e., coach pitch can start with 0, 1 or 2 strikes).
3. **The Coach Pitcher assumes the pitch count and the umpire will call** swinging strikes and called strikes.
4. Coach pitchers will have a four-pitch limit; that is, if the batter has not struck out or otherwise made contact with the ball after four coach pitches, the batter will be called out. **Exception: if the batter hits a foul ball on the fourth pitch or any subsequent pitch that is fouled; then they receive another pitch.**
5. If a pitcher hits three batters, they may not pitch for the remainder of the game. The coaches and/or scorekeepers should keep track of this to assist the umpire in making this decision.

6. There are no walks during modified kid pitch

E. Pitching rules for coach pitch and modified kid pitch (coaches) (10U)

1. The offensive team will provide a coach-pitcher who will pitch to his/their own team.
2. The coach-pitcher must have his/their pivot foot on the pitching plate until the ball is released.
3. Coach will not lob the ball and will pitch with little discernible arc. If the coach lobs the ball, the umpire will issue a warning and that warning will result in a dead ball declared. If the coach continues, the umpire will call lob pitches as strikes. If the batter hits a lob pitch after a warning, the ball will be declared dead and the batter will be called out.
4. The coach-pitcher must attempt to get into foul territory as soon as the batter makes contact with the ball. If the coach-pitcher is hit by the batted ball, the ball is dead.
5. The coach-pitcher may not coach any players (batters or defenders) or bases while acting as the pitcher.

F. Modified Kid Pitch (12U)

1. Modified kid pitch will be in place for the first two innings of each game. Kid pitch will be in place for the remainder of the game. Mid-season (after 6 games) coaches and commissioner will evaluate eliminating the 2-inning modified kid pitch accommodation.

2. During modified kid pitch, all plate appearances start with kid pitch. The umpire will call balls and strikes while a player is pitching until the ball is put in play, there is a strikeout, or the batter reaches four balls. If ball four is pitched by the kid pitcher, no base on balls will be awarded the batter. Instead, the hitting team's coach pitcher will come in to finish the at-bat.
3. The coach pitcher assumes the pitch count and the umpire will call strikes (including non-swinging strikes). Coach pitchers will have a four-pitch limit; that is, if the batter has not struck out or hit the ball after four coach pitches, the batter will be called out. **Exception: if the batter hits a foul ball on the fourth pitch or any subsequent pitch that is fouled; then they receive another pitch.**
4. While the coach pitches, the kid pitcher must have both feet inside the pitching circle.
5. There are no walks during modified kid pitch.

G. Kid Pitching (12U only)

1. After two innings of modified kid pitch, kid pitch will begin. Umpires will call balls and strikes during kid pitch, and **bases on balls (walks) will be awarded when four balls are called on a batter.**
2. Players will pitch—without the coach stepping in—for the remainder of the game (unless a team walks 3 batters in one inning).
3. A team may only walk 3 batters per inning. After the third walk in one inning, any subsequent ball four thrown will result in modified kid pitch rules being re-applied. The coach pitcher will then re-enter the game to pitch to batters after any subsequent ball four. To clarify, the three-walk maximum applies to the entire inning, not to each pitcher.
4. Kid pitch will restart the following inning.

5. 12U Pitching rules for coach pitch & modified kid pitch (coaches)

- a. The offensive team will provide a coach-pitcher who will pitch to their own team.
- b. The coach-pitcher must have their pivot foot on the pitching plate until the ball is released.
- c. The coach-pitcher is not to interfere with the play of the ball during a game. They must attempt to get into foul territory as soon as the batter hits the ball. If the batted ball strikes the coach-pitcher, the ball is considered dead and the pitch does not count (re-do). If the coach pitcher is ruled by the umpire to have intentionally interfered with a play, the batter will be called out.

- d. The exchange of the ball from the coach pitcher to the catcher is a dead ball exchange unless the batter hits the ball. The return exchange of the ball from the catcher to the coach pitcher is also a dead ball exchange. The exchange of a ball from the player in the defensive pitching position to the coach pitcher is a dead ball exchange.
- e. The coach-pitcher may not coach any players (batters or defenders) or base runners while acting as the pitcher.

H. Kid Pitching (14U only)

There are no modifications for pitching at the 14U level. This means: No limits on walks and no coach pitching.

I. Player pitcher position & motion (10U, 12U and 14U modified or regular kid pitch)

1. For a pitch to be considered legal without penalty:
 - a. Pitchers must begin with their pivot foot in contact with the pitcher's plate and the non-pivot foot in contact with or behind the pitcher's plate. A pitcher's pivot foot must remain in contact with the ground throughout the delivery until the ball is released. A pitcher may take one step back with their non-pivot foot.
 - b. Pitchers may not step forward with their pivot foot or push off from a point in front of the pitcher's plate—no leaping/crow hopping is allowed.
 - c. Once the ball is released, there is no restriction on the pitcher's motion or pivot foot.
 - d. Pitchers may not throw lob pitches. Pitches must be thrown with no discernible arc.
 - e. A pitcher's windup must be a continuous motion without interruption, stop or reversal of the forward motion.
 - f. The ball must be delivered underhand, below the hip. No side-arm pitches.
2. If the umpire deems a pitch illegal, the pitcher will receive a warning, and the pitch will be called a ball, whether the batter swings at the ball or not. On the second offense, the umpire will award a ball to the batter and all runners on base will advance one base without penalty. If the illegal pitch is hit and all runners reach their base safely, no penalty is declared.
3. A slingshot/non-windmill pitching motion is legal. However, coaches are reminded that this is a developmental/instructional league. Windmill pitching is expected at the advanced levels and allowing/encouraging a slingshot will not prepare your players for competitive softball.

J. Intentional Walks

There will be no intentional walks, neither automatic nor with the delivery of four intentionally wide (or rolled, etc.) pitches. The pitcher must attempt to pitch to all batters. If the umpire feels this rule is being violated, they will warn the head coach of the defensive team—any further violation can result in the head coach being ejected.

• **K. Modified and regular kid pitch & inning limits (10U, 12U and 14U)**

1. A player may only pitch:
 - **10U:** 2 innings max per game during regular season. 3 innings max during the playoffs.
 - **12U:** 3 innings max per game during regular season and playoffs.
 - **14U:** 4 innings max per game during regular season and playoffs.
2. There is no weekly inning limit and no “rolling” week during playoffs. Number of pitches are not tracked in WPPA softball.
3. A pitcher may be withdrawn from the game and re-entered **once**.
4. If a pitcher throws one pitch it is deemed an “inning.”
5. A pitcher who hits 3 batters in a game must be removed and is not permitted to pitch for the remainder of the game.

9. STANDINGS TIE BREAKERS

Tie-breakers for team placement for the playoffs:

- Head-to-head competition will be compared.
- Record versus common opponents will be compared.
- Runs against will be compared (lower runs against breaks the tie).
- If all of these criteria result in a tie, a coin toss will determine who plays where in the playoffs.

10. UMPIRING

1. Umpires are selected, trained, scheduled and compensated by the WPPA. Eligibility is determined by the WPPA Board of Directors and managed by the Umpire Coordinator, who is a duly elected officer of the board. No umpire outside of the WPPA organization is authorized to participate in the program unless authorized by the board.
2. **Umpires should only communicate with the head coach. Assistant and helping coaches should direct all questions through the head coach.**
3. Umpires needing to clarify rules should speak with both head coaches only.

4. Umpires will be provided for the games whenever possible. In the event an umpire is not provided or doesn't show up, each team will provide a coach volunteer to umpire. They may umpire in tandem throughout the game (plate/field) or umpire alone for half the game each.

11. COACH/HELPING COACHES/PLAYER POSITIONING & CONDUCT

A. Coach positioning

1. Offensive coaches may position one coach (or parent volunteer if necessary) at first base and one at third to assist runners. Coaches are responsible for communicating those guidelines to helping coaches and enforcing them as well.
2. No more than 3 coaches may coach a team each game. Coach pitcher in 12U must also coach either 1st or 3rd base or be the bench coach. Additional coaches are not allowed.
3. No coaches may coach from the outfield or infield.
 - a. **8U only:** Two (2) coaches may be in the field for the first three (3) innings of each game. After the third inning, coaches may not coach from the outfield or infield.
4. Defensive coaches must remain on, near or behind their players' bench and may not interfere with offensive coaches who are coaching base runners.
5. Coaches not coaching a base, supervising a warming-up batter or pitcher must remain in the dugout/bench area while the game is being played.

B. Bench rules

1. Only team members and their respective identified coaches are allowed on the team bench or in the team's dugout area while a game is being conducted.
2. All players are to remain on the bench except for the player at bat, the "on deck" player, the "player in the hole" and a pitcher and/or catcher warming up.
3. **8U and 10U:** Players are encouraged to cheer for their teammates in a positive manner. Cheering against or disparaging the other team will not be tolerated.

C. Coach conduct

1. A coach or player ejected for any reason will sit out the next game. If the same coach or player is ejected from a second game, in the same or any other WPPA league, within the same season, they will be suspended indefinitely and will be required to appear before a disciplinary committee made up of board members before reinstatement.

2. A coach shall not use, or be under the influence of drugs or alcohol at any game or practice. Violation will mean immediate and permanent dismissal from coaching in WPPA.
3. **Only head coaches may talk to the umpires.**
4. **Any head coach who has a complaint about how an umpire conducts him or herself in games is to submit that complaint in writing to the board by emailing the division commissioner.** No one should address the umpire directly with complaints.

12. PARENT/SPECTATOR CONDUCT

- A. Coaches for both teams are responsible for ensuring that parents and spectators follow these guidelines.
- B. Parents/spectators may not stay on or behind the player bench unless they are actively volunteering as head/assistant coach, base coach or scorekeeper. Spectators are not allowed on a team bench for any reason.
- C. Parents/spectators may not intentionally stand behind the backstop (at home plate) to coach their player or make comments for or against either team or to the umpire. (Taking photos or videos is an exception to this.)
- D. Parents/spectators may not cheer *inappropriately* for or against either team to the point of antagonizing or distracting pitchers, batters or other players. Parents/fans who violate this rule will be asked by the coach to remove themselves from the earshot of both teams.
- E. For the safety of players, non-players, parents, et al, non-players may not warm up or otherwise be in fair territory (including the outfield), even if believed to be far enough away from the field as to not interfere. Parents and coaches should make sure siblings of players and other non-players remain safely in foul territory throughout the course of the game.
- F. At the end of a game, coaches and parents/spectators must quickly clean up and empty out each dugout area before the next team enters the dugout area. They are also responsible for cleaning up any litter left in the viewing stand area from the spectators watching the game.
- G. Parents who don't comply with this conduct may result in future ban from attending Welles Park games.
- H. **Any parent/spectator who has a complaint about how an umpire conducts him or herself in games is to submit that complaint in writing to the board via the division commissioner.** No one should address the umpire directly.

13. GENERAL WPPA GUIDELINES

- A. All previous unwritten rules, “gentlemen’s agreements”, or understandings as practiced by veteran coaches and players are hereby null and void unless endorsed by their written inclusion in these rules. These rules are intended to achieve the goals stipulated herein and are reviewed and modified on an annual basis to make the games in each league consistent with these goals and to provide a more meaningful experience for all participants.
- B. The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Softball Rules Book shall act as the basis of the WPPA Youth Softball program except for any revisions and additions as stated herein. Rules that are specific to Slow Pitch (S.P.) do not apply to this league unless otherwise stated and shall automatically be omitted without notation. To the extent any conflicts exist between the NFHS rules and these WPPA rules, the WPPA rules shall prevail. Head coaches are responsible for knowing NFHS and WPPA rules and for having a copy of each rule book in his or their possession during every game.
- C. The WPPA Youth Softball Program emphasizes the highest standards of ethics and sportsmanship and expects that all players, parents, coaches, umpires and spectators will maintain and endorse these high standards. The ethics and sportsmanship of the players, coaches, officials, spectators and others associated with the game must be exemplary and beyond reproach. Everyone participating must conduct himself or herself in a way that is a credit to the league and community.
- D. All coaches, parents, and spectators are reminded that alcohol is not permitted on Park District property. This rule is enforced by Chicago Ordinance and subject to the City's enforcement policy.
- E. A coach shall not use, or be under the influence of drugs (including, but not limited to marijuana and THC or CBD-based products) or alcohol at any game or practice. Violation will mean immediate and permanent dismissal from coaching in the WPPA. IHSA rules prohibit use of tobacco and tobacco-like products (including vapes) near the field.
- F. Objectives of the WPPA**
 - 1. To provide a meaningful athletic experience for children while providing them the opportunity to have a good time.
 - 2. To teach teamwork and respect for teammates, opponents, coaches and umpires, and to emphasize good sportsmanship.
 - 3. To teach the fundamentals and rules of softball and sharpen existing softball skills.
 - 4. To teach the players to strive hard to win—fairly!