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## 2026 Major League Softball Rules

**Rosters:** Official rosters of each team will be filed with the Little League Softball Assistant District Administrator before the first game. A maximum of 15 and a minimum of 12 players will be carried on each team. Roster changes will be submitted to the Little League Softball Assistant District Administrator within three calendar days.

**Number of Players:** Teams may begin and continue games with only eight players. The ninth spot in the batting order will be skipped over and no out recorded for it.

**Home Team:** The team listed second on the scheduled playing date is the home team and has the playing field for ten minutes at twenty-five minutes before game time (when available) for warm ups.

**Visiting Team:** The team listed first on the scheduled playing date is the visiting team and has the playing field for ten minutes at fifteen minutes before game time (when available) for warm ups.

**Playing Field:** Prior to the start of the Major League Softball season, each participating league will prepare ground rules that are unique to its fields. A copy of these ground rules will be supplied to the Little League Softball Assistant District Administrator. These ground rules shall be covered at the pregame conference with the umpires. Each league is responsible for the preparation of the fields.

**Softball:** Softballs will be 12", white or optic yellow, leather or synthetic leather.

**Pitching:** A pitcher who pitches in 5 or more innings in a game may only pitch in 4 innings or less in the next played game, no matter the number of days separating the games.

**Batting Order:** The batting order will be a Continuous Batting Order with free defensive substitutions.

**Mandatory Play:** Each player is required to meet mandatory play of six defensive outs and one at-bat.

**Batting:** Batters will keep one foot in the batter's box during their at-bat per rule 6.02(c).

**Courtesy Runner:** A team is allowed the option to use a courtesy runner for the pitcher and/or catcher of record provided there are two (2) outs in the half inning. The courtesy runner MUST be the player who made the last out. (Rule 7.14(b)).

**Uncaught Third Strike:** This rule is in effect.

**Stealing of Signs:** Rule 9.00(d) (Stealing Signs) will be enforced.

**Umpires:** The home team shall provide a minimum of two umpires, preferably 16-years or older and ideally adults. If only youth umpires are used, the game must have a game coordinator or the game will not be played (Rule 9.03d).

**Starting Time:** Weekday games will start at 5:30pm. Weekend games will start at the scheduled time. Every effort should be made to reschedule games not played due to weather. This is the responsibility of the participating leagues.

**Half Inning:** A half inning shall end when the defensive team has recorded three outs, or when the offensive team has scored 5 runs. If more than five runs are possible due to a hit ball put into play, only the fifth run will count and all subsequent runs are not counted. The 6th inning, and any subsequent inning, shall be played without the 5-run restriction.

**Time Limits:** There will be a 2-hour time limit on all games. Any inning begun prior to 2 hours will be completed, and no new inning may begin after 2 hours. If when the time limit expires a trailing team cannot possibly score enough runs in its half inning to win the game, the game will end immediately. If when the time limit expires and the home team is leading and up to bat, the game will end immediately. All games called for the time limit will be regarded as regulation, no matter the number of innings played. If a time-limit game ends in a tie, the game will not be continued at another date.

**Ending the Game:** The 15-, 10-, and 8-run rules will be used. Any team trailing by 15 runs or more after 3 innings (2.5 innings if home team is leading), or 10 or more runs after 4 innings (3.5 innings if home team is leading), or 8 or more runs after 5 innings (4.5 innings if home team is leading) will concede and the game will end. All run-rule games are considered regulation games (Rule 4.10e).

**Regulation Game:** A regulation game shall consist of a minimum of 4 innings. Interleague games that do not become regulation games will not be continued.

**Darkness:** Calling the game due to darkness is the sole judgment of the umpires and not managers or any local league rule. If youth umpires are used, only the game coordinator may call the game.

**Protest:** Protests will first be submitted on the field of play in accordance with playing rule 4.19. Protests are only considered when they involve interpretation of a playing rule or the use of an ineligible pitcher or player. The written protest must be e-mailed within one calendar day of the day of the game (2 days if it is a Saturday game) and sent to the Little League Softball Assistant District Administrator. His decision is final. **(Phil Raines at [praines22@yahoo.com](mailto:praines22@yahoo.com))**

**District Tournament of Champions:** Only the team from each league with the best record will represent its league in the District 4 Tournament of Champions. The roster and coaching staff will only be made up of players and coaches who appear on the regular season roster.

**Any rule not specifically mentioned here is covered by the rules of Little League Softball 2026. No manager agreements or local rules are allowed.**