

NTX Interlock Rule Modifications – Spring 2026

Rules for All Divisions Softball

All rules are governed by **USA Fast Pitch Softball** with the following exceptions/highlights:

1. UNIFORMS / EQUIPMENT:	<p>A. Uniforms – Uniforms (jersey tops) are expected to match. Shirts must be tucked in.</p> <p>B. Player numbers are required.</p> <p>C. No jewelry. (Exception: Earrings covered before game begins.)</p> <p>D. Bats – Must be USA/USSSA certified. (T-ball bats OK for 6U.)</p> <p>E. Helmets – All batters and runners must wear helmets and facemasks that are NOCSAE approved. Helmets shall have a non-glare (not mirror-like) surface. Chin straps are not required but may be worn and are recommended.</p> <p>F. Cleats – Rubber only. No metal cleats allowed.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">i Exception: 16U can wear metal cleats on non-turf surfaces.</p> <p>G. Catchers – Must wear NOCSAE approved helmet that covers both ears, mask, chest protector and shin guards.</p> <p>H. Pitchers – Must wear a face mask.</p>
2. BATTING:	Teams will bat their roster. Coaches will submit a batting lineup card to the opposing coach prior to each game. Players arriving late will bat but will be placed at the bottom of the lineup card once they arrive.
3. SUBSTITUTIONS:	Free and unlimited defensive substitutions for all positions.
4. RUN LIMIT:	5 runs per inning per team.
5. RAIN-SHORTENED GAME:	<p>A. A game is considered complete if:</p> <p>B. More than 4 complete innings have been played or 3.5 innings if the home team is ahead.</p> <p>C. If 60 minutes have elapsed off the game clock.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">i Suspended games will be picked up at the point of suspension and played to completion. It is the home team's responsibility to confirm with the plate umpire (official clock) and the visiting team remaining game time and place in the batting order where suspension occurred.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">ii It is the home team's responsibility to report game status to their league official for rescheduling purposes.</p>
6. SUBSTITUTION RUNNER RULE:	A team may put in a pinch (substitute) runner for their pitcher or catcher at any point while they are on base. It must be the last batted out. If an out has not occurred, then it will be the last batter in the line-up.
7. SHORT-HANDED RULE:	A team may start a game with as few as seven (7) players . There will not be any mandatory outs applied by the umpire for shorthanded play. However, coaches may not hold out players to gain a competitive advantage.
8. SELECT PLAYER LIMITS:	Each team is limited to 3 registered Select Players per team. <u><i>*Reference NTX Interlock League Policies and Code of Conduct, Article IV, Section 5 for additional information.</i></u>
9. PICK-UP PLAYER RULE:	If a team has less than 9 players (8 players for 8U), they may pick up a maximum of 2 players (8U teams can pick up 1 or 2 players to get to 10 players), with the requirement of them playing in the outfield and batting them at the bottom of the batting order. Pick-up players must also wear their original team jersey so they can be easily identified. Pick-up players must be registered in the same or younger age group. Pick-up players can be used from any other NTX Interlock organization.
10. GAME CLOCK	All games are limited by time and will be played as "finish the inning" if the score is within 5 runs for either team. All games will be 70 minutes for all ages except 6U. No inning may start with no time remaining on the clock. 5 run limit per half inning. Applicable tie breakers will utilize the International tie breaker rule.
11. MANDATORY ROTATION RULE:	No player shall be on the bench for two consecutive innings except for injury, illness, or disciplinary reasons. No player shall be on the bench twice in one game before all other players sit on the bench at least once – except for the pitcher and catcher positions in levels

	10U and up. There is no mandatory defensive rotation rule. However, coaches should provide the opportunity for each player to play multiple positions during the season based on their ability to play the position safely.
12. COACHES:	There will be a maximum of four (4) coaches/adults in the dugout during the game. Coaches are expected to treat the umpires with respect and are expected to know the rules. Coaches are to NEVER argue an umpire judgment calls and are expected to keep the team's parents in line. There is no tolerance for unruly coaches. Coaches that are out of hand will be thrown out of the game and will be given at least a one game suspension.
13. TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES:	The Home Team will provide an adult to keep the official scorebook. The visiting team will provide one adult to maintain the scoreboard. The league providing the host field will provide the game balls.
14. INTENTIONAL CONTACT:	A player's intentional and unnecessary contact with an umpire or opposing player, with the intention of causing harm, malice or in an attempt to jar the ball loose from a fielder's possession, will result in an immediate ejection of the offending player by the game umpire.
15. CHANTING:	Chanting in the dugout is allowed. However, coaches should not allow any chant with inappropriate content or chants that can be viewed as demeaning to the opposing players.
16. DISTRACTIONS:	Noisemakers (such as but not limited to air horns and clappers) are not allowed to be used by parents or players whether in the dugout or bleacher area. At no time are spectators, players or coaches allowed to make noises that are specifically designed to distract the pitcher or batter.
17. RUNNING UP THE SCORE:	The Interlock does not want any coach excessively "running up the score" on another team. This is recreational ball – respect each other and encourage other teams! Use this as an opportunity to play less talented players in positions they would not normally play.
18. SPORTSMANSHIP:	Coaches will be responsible for the conduct of their players, parents, and themselves. Poor sportsmanship or disrespect toward any umpire, opposing player or coach will not be tolerated. Coaches, parents, and players are to speak to all players in a positive and supportive manner. Violations will result in the umpire banning the coach to the dugout or, in severe cases, from the field area.
19. RUN RULE:	Run rule for all games are as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ 12 runs after three innings ❖ 10 runs after four innings ❖ 8 runs after five innings
20. BUNTING	<p>A. Bunting in 8U and below is prohibited.</p> <p>B. <u>Slashing</u> (showing bunt, then pulling back and taking a full swing) is prohibited in all divisions 12U and below. Any attempt to slash will result in the batter being called out and the play declared dead.</p> <p>C. <u>Slapping</u> (a controlled swing while moving toward first base, often from a bunting stance) is permitted in divisions 10U and up</p>

MODIFIED RULES FOR 4U/6U REC SOFTBALL

Game Time Limit	50 minute time limit – No Official Score Kept– Do Not Finish the Inning – Stop when time expires
Bat Metal Bats Only – Equipment	All Bats Must Be USA/USSSA Certified (T-Ball bats OK for 4U/6U) 4U/6U Pitchers Must Wear Face Mask. All Catchers Must Wear Head Gear/Mask/Chest Protector/Leg Guards (soft shin guards may be used in place of leg guards). All batters in 4U/6U must have helmet and facemask (chinstrap is not required but is highly encouraged for these age groups)
Jewelry	No Jewelry (rings, necklaces, bracelets) - Exception: Ear Studs may be taped.
Ball	USA/USSSA Certified - 11" - Easton IncrediBall - Yellow (or Synthetic Leather 11" Soft touch)
Distances	Bases at 60' - Coach Pitcher - 28'-35', but Floating Rubber
# Players	All Players in the Field - Six Infielders including pitcher and catcher - Rest in Outfield - 10' beyond baseline
Catchers	Catcher is Optional, not required.
Required # of Players	Suggested to have 5 to Play - Automatic Out Does Not Apply
Substitutes	Bat the Lineup - No One On the Bench. Each team will bat the number of batters that the team with more players has. Example. One team has 6 playing against a team with 10. The team with 6 will bat 10 each inning. The team with 10 bats the lineup. We want to keep 6U teams to 5-10 players. This will enable both teams to have a similar amount of time up to bat. Last batter runs the entire base path. For the second time at bat, the team with the fewer players starts in the line-up where they left off.
Coaches	Coach Pitcher should kneel or remove themselves from the field when ball is live Do not coach or touch runners – Do not touch live ball.
Offensive Coach Positioning	1 - Coach Pitcher / 2 - Behind Catcher (can help batter & catcher) / 3 & 4 - At First & Third Base
Defensive Coach Positioning	Maximum Three Coaches - All Behind the Outfield
Player Rotations	Rotate all players through all defensive positions during season.
Pitching	6U - Six Pitches Total: Suggested method: 3 Coach Pitch & 3 from the T - No Swinging Strikes (or any combination of 6 attempts to hit) 4U – Six swings all off of the tee, no coach pitching in 4U
Pitching:	Last Pitch Sixth pitch is an out - unless a "hit" - foul balls will result as another pitch on last pitch.
Bunting	No Bunting
‘Tight’ or ‘Loose’ Bases Tight -	Leave when ball is hit
Stealing	No Stealing
Wild Pitch / Passed Ball	No Stealing
Batter / Runner	One Base Limit on any hit ball declared fair.
Overthrows (Out of Bounds)	One Base Limit
Runner is Out	Outs DO Apply - Each Team Bats Lineup Each Inning. Once a player is put out at any base, she returns to the dugout. 4U – Coaches may decide to leave girls on base to practice running, not required to return to the dugout.
Play Over	When a defensive player has retrieved the ball, and all runners have ceased advancing to the next base.
Dropped Third Strike	Does Not Apply

MODIFIED RULES FOR 8U REC SOFTBALL

GAME TIME	ALL GAMES ARE LIMITED BY TIME AND WILL BE PLAYED AS "FINISH THE INNING" IF THE SCORE IS WITHIN 5 RUNS FOR EITHER TEAM. ALL GAMES WILL BE 70 MINUTES. NO INNING MAY START WITH NO TIME REMAINING ON THE CLOCK. NO TIE BREAKER FOR 8U, GAMES CAN END IN A TIE. 5 RUN LIMIT PER HALF INNING.
BALL	Use an 11" ball (375 compression / .47 core), optic yellow. USA/NFHS stamp effective Fall 2026.
PLAYERS	Maximum 10 players in defense with maximum 6 infielders including the pitcher and catcher. Outfielders are required to start each play at least 10' behind the base path.
PITCHERS	Kid Pitcher/Coach Pitcher Modified - 30' pitching distance - Face Mask Required. Two teams can agree to play a straight kid-pitch game if both coaches agree at the plate before the game. In 8U Kid pitch game, 4 balls is a walk. If there is any dispute at home plate as to whether it is to be a kid pitch game, then the default is modified coach pitch.
KID PITCHER	Kid pitcher pitches a normal strike count, up to a maximum of three called balls. Once three balls are called against the kid pitcher, then the coach pitcher enters the game (see next 2 steps)
ILLEGAL PITCH	During league play only, pitchers will be given warnings for illegal pitches. Umpire needs to call it a "No Pitch" No bases are awarded. The goal is to instruct the correct pitching form.
COACH PITCHER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The coach pitcher enters the game when the kid pitcher has three called balls / inherits the strike count from the kid pitcher - no "warm-up" pitches / not allowed to coach batters or runners / must leave the field immediately upon any hit. The 30' rubber must be used with a limit of one stride - slingshot or windmill method. Kid pitcher must stand at least slightly behind the coach pitcher and in the circle. During coach pitching, the last strike must be hittable. This is determined by the umpire. Balls over the batter's head, in the dirt, behind (or at) the batter are all considered "no pitch" and the coach gets another pitch, regardless of if the player swung or not. <p>A kid pitcher cannot switch positions with any other player on the field when the coach comes in to pitch.</p>
CATCHERS	Required to be in full gear, directly behind the plate, in a proper 'catching' position.
OFFENSIVE COACHES	One coach at 1B and one coach at 3B plus coach pitcher.
DEFENSIVE COACHES	Maximum 2 coaches behind outfielders & outside of foul lines. No coaching/comments regarding umpire's calls from coach behind umpire. This is a "Silent" coaching position to help speed up play by retrieving balls.
BATTER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No Walking / No Bunting / No Slap Hitting on Coach Pitch Batter will continue to hit on a last pitch foul ball (unlimited last pitch foul balls) Umpires may use a liberal strike zone to encourage batters to hit off of the kid pitcher.
HIT BY PITCH	<p>If a batter is hit by pitch, they should be awarded first base unless they lean into it on purpose. The batter is awarded first base as long as an attempt to get out of the way is made. If no attempt is made, then the pitch is considered a ball. A ball will be called instead of a hit by pitch if the pitch hits the ground first before hitting the batter.</p> <p>If three batters in a single inning are awarded first base due to a hit by pitch by a single pitcher, the offending pitcher must be replaced for the remainder of that inning. If a single pitcher is replaced in two innings of the same game for too many hits by pitches, the pitcher must be replaced for the remainder of the game.</p>
RUNNING LIMITS	<p>Play is dead once ball crosses the cylinder of the pitching circle on the attempt back to the pitcher. The pitcher must also have at least one foot inside the pitching circle for the play to be called dead.</p> <p>Infield Hit: The lead runner is limited to 3B on any hit and must be hit home from 3B. Outfield Hit: No limit on any runners; can advance until play is called dead. Runners may only advance one base on an overthrow. A hit (ground ball/in the air) is considered an outfield hit if it passes the baseline with no infielders making contact with the ball.</p>
STEALING	No stealing at any time
TIGHT/LOOSE BASES	<p>Kid Pitcher – Loose Bases (leave base when ball leaves pitcher's hand)</p> <p>Coach Pitcher - Tight Bases (leave base when ball is hit)</p>
DROPPED 3RD STRIKE	Not in effect.
INFIELD FLY BALL	Not in effect.

MODIFIED RULES FOR 10U REC SOFTBALL

GAME TIME	All games are limited by time and will be played as “finish the inning” if the score is within 5 runs for either team. All games will be 70 minutes. No inning may start with no time remaining on the clock. 5 run limit per half inning. In the event of a tie, one inning will be allowed as a tie breaker. (No extra innings on weeknight games.) *Tournaments can not end in a tie.
BALL	Use an 11" ball (375 compression / .47 core), optic yellow. USA or NFHS stamp effective Fall 2026.
PLAYERS	Maximum 9 players in defense per USA rules
PITCHERS	Straight Kid Pitch – 35’ pitching distance – Face Mask REQUIRED
ILLEGAL PITCH	Warning for 1st offense after that called per USA rules. Ball on batter and No Runners Advance on Illegal Pitch. Umpires should show some leniency when making calls regarding hopping, crow hopping, etc.
BUNTING	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ <u>Slashing</u> (showing bunt, then pulling back and taking a full swing) is prohibited in all divisions 12U and below. Any attempt to slash will result in the batter being called out and the play declared dead.○ <u>Slapping</u> (a controlled swing while moving toward first base, often from a bunting stance) is permitted in divisions 10U and up
OFFENSIVE COACHES	One coach at 1B and one coach at 3B
DEFENSIVE COACHES	All defensive coaches must remain "in" the dugout. Some fields may allow defensive coaches to be immediately outside the dugout.
HIT BY PITCH	<p>The batter is awarded first base as long as an attempt to get out of the way is made. If no attempt is made, then the pitch is considered a ball.</p> <p>If three batters in a single inning are awarded first base due to a hit by pitch by a single pitcher, the offending pitcher must be replaced for the remainder of that inning. If a single pitcher is replaced in two innings of the same game for too many hits by pitches, the pitcher must be replaced for the remainder of the game.</p>
INTENTIONAL WALKS	Pitchers cannot intentionally walk any player.
STEALING	<p>Stealing is limited to one base per pitch when stealing, including home. The batter must stop at</p> <p>1st base upon being awarded a walk (This counts as their one base per pitch)</p>
PLAY	Dead per USA rules.
DROPPED THIRD STRIKE	Not in effect unless agreed to by both coaches at home plate conference before game. <i>*2027 Spring Dropped Third will apply.</i>
INFIELD FLY BALL	Not in effect unless agreed to by both coaches at home plate conference before game.

MODIFIED RULES FOR 12U & 14/16U REC SOFTBALL

GAME TIME	All games are limited by time and will be played as “finish the inning” if the score is within 5 runs for either team. All games will be 70 minutes. No inning may start with no time remaining on the clock. 5 run limit per half inning. In the event of a tie, one inning will be allowed as a tie breaker. (No extra innings on weeknight games.) *Tournaments cannot end in a tie.
BALL	Use a 12" ball (375 compression / .47 core), optic yellow. USA or NFHS stamp required effective Fall 2026.
PITCHING	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ 12U = 40' pitching distance❖ 14/16U = 43' pitching distance.❖ Pitchers are required to wear a FACE MASK.
ILLEGAL PITCH	Per USA Playing Rules
BUNTING	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ <u>Slashing</u> (showing bunt, then pulling back and taking a full swing) is prohibited in all divisions 12U and below. Any attempt to slash will result in the batter being called out and the play declared dead.○ <u>Slapping</u> (a controlled swing while moving toward first base, often from a bunting stance) is permitted in divisions 10U and up
HIT BY PITCH	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ If three batters in a single inning are awarded first base due to being hit by pitch by a single pitcher, the offending pitcher must be replaced for the remainder of that inning. If a single pitcher is replaced in two innings of the same game for too many hit by pitches, the pitcher must be replaced for the remainder of the game.

MODIFIED RULES FOR ALL INTERLOCK TOURNAMENT GAMES

RULES	All Interlock tournament games will be played in accordance with the NTX Interlock Rule Modifications.
SEEDING	Tournament seeding will be set by the board at least two weeks before the tournament.
TIE BREAKER	Will be utilizing Internation tie breaker rule.
AGE DIVISION	A player must participate in Interlock tournaments in the same age division in which they were officially registered and rostered during the regular season. A player who was registered on a higher-division team (e.g., registered in 10U) may not play down in a lower division (e.g., 8U) for tournament play, even if their chronological age qualifies them for that lower division.