



Southwest Suburban Girls Fastpitch Softball League
2024 League Rules and Policies

RULES

Official USA Softball Rules will govern play except for the following rules:

1. Official game

- a. Must complete 5 innings (4 ½ if the home team is leading) or one hour forty minutes. Once a game has reached official status, no new inning may begin after one hour and forty minutes from the start of the game, with the exception of a tie game, which will be played to its conclusion using the USA Softball tie-breaker rule. *(For clarification, last batted out at 2b, no outs, no count)*
- b. If a team is in the tie-breaker and the Short-Handed Rule is in effect, do not declare an out if the absent player is the one who should begin the half inning at second base. Instead, place on second base the player whose name precedes the absent player's name in the line-up.
- c. If a game is suspended before the start of the 5th inning, the game should be resumed at a later time/date at the point it was stopped and played to its natural conclusion. No game shall be started over.

If teams cannot find a mutual make-up date the game will not be scored. There would be no forfeit if the game cannot be finished.

2. When exchanging line-ups prior to a game, coaches must submit a complete line-up (number, last name, first initial) of all players expected to play in that game, including any players who are expected to arrive late.
3. A fifteen (15) minute grace period will be in effect for each team to field the required number of players before a forfeit is called. The game will still be 1 hour 40 minutes if time permits.

4. A team playing with eight (8) players will not incur an automatic out for the 9th player in the batting order.
5. If a player's turn at bat is reached and that player is not available, the coach has the option of taking an out to keep that spot open or scratching that player with no penalty as long as there are still at least eight (8) remaining players in the batting order.
6. If a player has one turn at-bat and then leaves the game, there will no penalty as long as there is a minimum of eight (8) players in the batting order. Said player may not return to the game.
7. If a player is injured during her at-bat and must leave the game, the player who made the last out will assume her count and finish the at-bat
8. All players must play a minimum of three defensive innings in a full seven-inning game, with the exception of players being benched for disciplinary reasons. (In-house only)
9. Continuous batting order (In-house – Mandatory, Travel – Encouraged) and free defensive substitution including the pitching position
10. Both the pitcher and catcher of record may receive a courtesy runner at any time. Last batted out is courtesy runner.
11. The batter is called out for throwing a bat, no warning.
12. Artificial noisemakers are not permitted at any games. Coaches, players, and parents are required to use appropriate language in appropriate tones at all times. At the umpire's discretion, continued violations will result in a warning followed by an ejection (the violator has 5-minutes to leave the facility subject to team forfeit).
13. Any manager or coach ejected from a game will be subject to an automatic one-game suspension for their next scheduled game.
14. The home team is the official scorebook.
15. The maximum number of runs a team may score in an inning:
 - a. 10u is five (5)
 - b. 12u-18u is six (6)
16. Mercy Rule. If a team is up by (x) runs after the losing team has batted in the (x) inning the game will be declared over.

- a. 10u
 1. 11 after 5
 2. 6 after 6
- b. 12u – 18u
 1. 13 after 5
 2. 7 after 6

17. In the event a game is played between a Travel team and an In-house team, In-House rules will apply.

18. If excessive or extreme heat warnings are issued by any local weather service, games will be suspended until such a time when this warning has been removed. Coaches should exercise the same judgment for excessive heat as they would for other extreme weather conditions when determining whether it is safe to play. Final decision on “playability” due to excessive heat shall rest with the home team (or tournament host if during SWS Tournament).

Amendments for Age Levels

10u: In-house

- Ten defensive players are allowed on the field (four outfielders). The four outfielders may be in any alignment providing they are all in the grass at the start of the play. (Teams do not need to use 4 outfielders if they do not want)
- Runners starting at 1st or 2nd base may advance or steal one base only per pitch. Runners at 3rd base may advance or steal home only if played upon. Runners are liable to be put out between bases, or if they advance beyond the one base they are entitled to. If a runner safely reaches a base beyond that which they are entitled to, when play ceases, they shall be returned to the previous base with no liability to be put out.
- A pitcher can pitch no more than **three innings (3) per game**, unless the game goes 7 innings, at which time a pitcher who has pitched three (3) innings may return (or continue) to pitch. Otherwise, the game is forfeited if a pitcher exceeds three (3) innings. The pitcher is credited with an inning when she throws one (1) pitch in that inning. Innings pitched for a regularly scheduled game that is called for any reason will count for that game.
- There is no drop third strike.
- Batter-runner may only advance to first base on a walk, no continuation.
- Pitching distance is 35’.
- Metal cleats are not permitted

10u: Travel

- **Nine defensive players**

- Batter-runner may do a continuous walk- Look back rule applies.
- No limit on positions played.
- Metal cleats are not permitted.
- Pitching distance is 35'
- Drop third strike permitted.
- Runners may advance multiple bases on a pitch or play.
- Stealing home allowed.

12u: In-house

- A pitcher can pitch no more than **four innings (4) per game**. The pitcher is credited with an inning when she throws one (1) pitch in that inning. The game is forfeited if the pitcher exceeds four (4) innings. Innings pitched for a regularly scheduled game that is called for any reason will count for that game.
- Pitching distance is 40'.
- Metal cleats are not permitted.

12u: Travel

- No limit on positions played.

14-18u: In-house

- Pitching distance is 43'
- Metal cleats allowed.

14-18u: Travel

- Batter-runner may do a continuous walk- Look back rule applies.
- No limit on positions played.
- Metal cleats are permitted.
- Pitching distance is 43'
- Drop third strike permitted.
- Runners may advance multiple bases on a pitch or play.
- Stealing home allowed.

Policies

1. Registration

- a. In January and August of each year (Summer and Fall season), registration will be opened utilizing a website-based online registration system. Organization reps are responsible for having each of their teams create an account where they will be required to accept SWS terms and conditions for in-house play and to enter an official roster. Each team manager will be responsible for maintaining their rosters throughout the season.
- b. Once registered online, each team or organization must submit the following to the SWS:
 - i. Payment of fees
 - ii. A copy of birth certificates to validate the age of each player
 - iii. Proof of general liability insurance
 - iv. Field locations and availability for the team
 - v. Block out dates
- c. SWS splits divisions into two separate groups based on the SWS division criteria. (Travel and In-House) These divisions play separate schedules and play separate tournaments. If there are not enough teams at each level SWS may combine divisions for regular season play.
- d. SWS policy is that the league will make the final decision on what division a team plays in. Teams attempting to register for the incorrect division will either be redirected to the correct division or denied SWS participation. SWS reserves the right to review each team's registration and place teams at the level deemed to be in the best interest of the team and the program. These guidelines will be flexible in order to allow the review committee an opportunity to best balance team ability and team numbers in each division.
- e. SWS follows the USA cut-off date of August 31st. This means the age a player is on August 31st is the level she is to play at for that year. For example: If a player is 12 on August 31st she will play at 12U for that year, even though she will be 13 during the season. To confirm please use the following age calculator <https://www.usasoftball.com/age-calculator-test/>
- f. SWS allows parents to register their girls 1 year above the level their actual age would dictate, providing they have the approval of the coach and home organization. In example, an 11-year-old by age would play in

the 12U division. Moving her forward one year would give her 12- year-old status, which would require that she still play in 12U. A 12- year-old by age would also play in 12U, but moving her forward 1 year gives her 13-year-old status, and makes her eligible to play in 14U. (The exception to playing up is the 18U division, which is open to girls ages 15 to 18)

- g. SWS does not allow girls to play below their designated age level under any circumstances

2. Games and schedule

- a. The official game schedules are maintained on the SWS website team pages by the Commissioner. All game changes and results are reported to the Commissioner within 48 hours. Managers must log into swsfastpitch.com with their Sports Engine account to view their team page.
- b. Standings will be kept during the regular season for the purpose of seeding the SWS tournament. Standings will be established by awarding teams 2 points for a win, 1 point for a tie, and 0 points for a loss. At the end of the season, the team with the highest accumulated point total will be awarded top seed, with the remainder of the seeds being awarded in descending order to each next highest point total. In case of a tie, head-to-head results are the first tiebreaker, followed by a coin flip. All unreported games will be assigned 0 points.
- c. It is the coaches' (not the commissioner's) responsibility to reschedule canceled games. If there is a problem finding an open field or date the division commissioner will assist. All canceled or rescheduled games should be reported to the division commissioner as soon as possible. If a scheduled game is canceled due to weather, or the lack of officials, it becomes a non-game for both teams. If it cannot be rescheduled (for any reason) the commissioner will record it as a non-game for both teams.
- d. If a scheduled game is canceled for ANY reason other than weather or no official in attendance, it is a forfeit for the team that canceled. If it is never rescheduled, regardless of the reason, it becomes a forfeit for the team that originally canceled. The score of a forfeit will be 7-0.
- e. If a rescheduled date can be worked out, then the game should be played. If not, the canceled-upon team gets the win by forfeit. A team that has had a game canceled on them is not obligated to reschedule that game. Regardless of the reason for the original cancellation, if a game is rescheduled, meaning both teams agree to reschedule and notify the

commissioner of the new date, it becomes a scheduled game with the same status as an originally scheduled game.

- f. In the case of two teams being prepared to play with no umpire in attendance, and no potential to secure an umpire in a timely manner (i.e., Umpire running late from an earlier assignment, traffic, etc.) the home team will not be held responsible. Coaches have the following options:
 - i. Cancel the game and reschedule
 - ii. Play the game with whatever form of officiating that the managers agree to. If the game is played under this option, the results will be official.
 - iii. This rule in no way supersedes the home team's determination of whether or not the field is playable, nor an umpire's decision to call a game off because of weather or other conditions.

3. Rostering and Substitutions

- a. Teams may edit their roster up until one week before games start. At that point the roster will be official.
- b. A maximum of 18 players are allowed to be on a roster.
- c. Once rosters are frozen, if a team has an official roster of 14 players or more, they are not permitted to add any more players unless they go below the 14-player minimum and wish to get back up to 14 players.
- d. Roster substitutions are allowed during the season in the event of injury (temporary or permanent) or a player permanently leaves the team but must be reported to the SWS Registrar with a birth certificate prior to playing.
- e. Teams are permitted to roster up to 3 players who are also rostered on another team. Such players must be identified on a team's official roster, and will be restricted to the same age or lower age level and skill classification.
- f. A player may not be a full-time rostered player on two teams (SWS or non-SWS).
- g. Players may fill-in/sub on a limited basis for a team for 5 games. Beyond 5 games the player will be considered an ineligible player to her original team and may become a permanent player on the team she filled in for.
- h. In-house players can sub for Travel, but no players of a Travel (A or B) level are permitted to sub in a in-house game.
- i. SWS defines an ineligible player as any player that is not on that team's official roster.
- j. Any infractions of the rostering rules will result in:

- i. The team will forfeit the game and the manager will be subject to a one-game suspension
 - ii. Forfeiture of all games that the ineligible player participated in
 - iii. For a second offense, the team will be excluded from tournament play subject to appeal to the SWS Board of Directors.
- k. Coaches are responsible for auditing opposing teams' lineups against official rosters and reporting violations to the SWS Registrar.

4. Game Protests

- a. Only a rule violation or a SWS policy may be protested. All protests must be handled in accordance with rule #9 of the USA Rulebook. A report must also be placed to SWS within 48 hours of the incident. All parties will be contacted with a ruling and explanation from the SWS Board. In order to file a protest, the disputed call must fall into one of the following categories:
 - i. Misinterpretation of playing rules by the umpire, per USA/SWS
 - ii. Ineligible player per USA/SWS
 - iii. Illegal player per SWS
- b. Any rules being disputed should be communicated to the umpire. If an agreement cannot be reached by both coaches and the umpire, the manager with the disagreement should alert the umpire and the opposing coach that the game is being played under protest.
- c. The game should always be played.
- d. A protest will not be considered effective if the team with the disagreement does not play the game. Instead, the team that refuses to play the game will be awarded a forfeit.

5. SWS Tournaments

- a. The SWS Tournament format shall be double elimination(Summer), single eliminate (Fall) with seeding derived from regular season records. SWS provides an official tournament bracket with seeding for all tournaments. If weather is a factor, summer will move to single elimination.
- b. Tournament requires an organization to volunteer as host at their home fields. SWS provides game balls, (trophies, and t-shirts). SWS will also reimburse communities for field preparation and umpire expenses.
- c. Highest seed is the home team for each game. In the championship game, the team advancing through the winner's bracket is the home team.
- d. Two umpires will officiate championship games (winner of Winner's Bracket vs winner of Loser's bracket).
- e. In order to participate in the end-of-season tournament, a player must have played in at least 50% of her team's regular season games (listed on

the lineup card and on the field for at least one pitch). The only exception is a documented injury (physician's note required).

- f. No registered travel teams through SWS will be permitted to play in in-house tournaments.
 - i. If there are 3 or more travel teams in a “combined” age level, there will be a separate bracket between those teams.
 - ii. If there are not enough travel teams, a partial refund will be awarded to the travel team.
- g. Only officially rostered players are allowed to play in the end-of-season tournament.
- h. Teams will be permitted to have one sub to make it to 9 players (Same level of play only). That player cannot be at the pitcher or catcher position.
- i. Use of an ineligible player in the tournament may result in suspension or expulsion from the league going forward, subject to appeal of the SWS Board of Directors, and all games forfeited where the ineligible player has participated.