

2023



SFRB23

SOFTBALL

RULES BOOK

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS



2023 NFHS SOFTBALL RULES BOOK

Dr. KARISSA L. NIEHOFF, Publisher
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NFHS Publications

To maintain the sound traditions of this sport, encourage sportsmanship and minimize the inherent risk of injury, the National Federation of State High School Associations writes playing rules for varsity competition among student-athletes of high school age. High school coaches, officials and administrators who have knowledge and experience regarding this particular sport and age group volunteer their time to serve on the rules committee. Member associations of the NFHS independently make decisions regarding compliance with or modification of these playing rules for the student-athletes in their respective states.

NFHS rules are used by education-based and non-education-based organizations serving children of varying skill levels who are of high school age and younger. In order to make NFHS rules skill-level and age-level appropriate, the rules may be modified by any organization that chooses to use them. Except as may be specifically noted in this rules book, the NFHS makes no recommendation about the nature or extent of the modifications that may be appropriate for children who are younger or less skilled than high school varsity athletes.

Every individual using these rules is responsible for prudent judgment with respect to each contest, athlete and facility, and each athlete is responsible for exercising caution and good sportsmanship. These rules should be interpreted and applied so as to make reasonable accommodations for athletes, coaches and officials with disabilities.

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2023 Softball Rules Changes

(For comments on the 2023 rules changes, see page 88)

1-4-1 — Removes the number of color restrictions on a glove, including laces and seams, and does not allow any panels of the glove to match the color of the ball.

2-20-1g — A fair ball is a batted ball that while over fair territory, an offensive player interferes with a defensive player attempting to field a batted ball.

3-2-12, 3-6-11 — Removes language prohibiting the wearing of jewelry.

4-2-1 — Defines the protocol for when a fair batted ball clears the home run fence to end the game. All runs are allowed to score before the game is terminated.

8-2-7 — New language clarifies batter-runner interference on a fly ball over foul territory.

Each state high school association adopting these rules is the sole and exclusive source of binding rules interpretations for contests involving its member schools. Any person having questions about the interpretation of NFHS rules should contact the rules interpreter designated by the respective state high school association.

The NFHS is the sole and exclusive source of model interpretations of NFHS rules. State rules interpreters may contact the NFHS for model rules interpretations. No other model rules interpretations should be considered.

2023 Softball Editorial Changes

2-25-1e, 7-1-2 PENALTY 1, 7-4-1, 7-4-11, 8-1-1 EFFECTS 2, 8-4-3d

2023 Softball Points of Emphasis

(For comments on the 2023 Points of Emphasis, see page 86)

1. Sportsmanship
2. Time Between Innings
3. Jewelry and Electronic Communication
4. Comparable Drying Agents

REMINDER:

Balls manufactured with the former specifications will be permitted through 2024, to allow for manufacturers and schools to reduce current inventory. The new ball specifications are permitted for use during the 2022-23 season and will be required by January 1, 2025.

DISCLAIMER – NFHS Position Statements and Guidelines

The NFHS regularly distributes position statements and guidelines to promote public awareness of certain health and safety-related issues. Such information is neither exhaustive nor necessarily applicable to all circumstances or individuals, and is no substitute for consultation with appropriate health-care professionals. Statutes, codes or environmental conditions may be relevant. NFHS position statements or guidelines should be considered in conjunction with other pertinent materials when taking action or planning care. The NFHS reserves the right to rescind or modify any such document at any time. Please see pages 92-95 for these position statements.

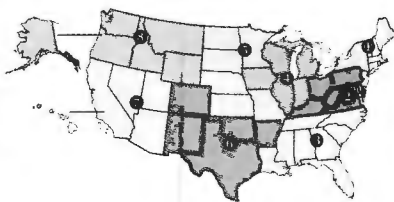
FACILITIES

Because facilities used for high school athletics come in many shapes, sizes and conditions, on-site event management may on occasion conclude that compliance with NFHS directives about event configuration is not feasible. Under all circumstances, on-site event management should utilize set-ups that minimize risk. If a given facility cannot be made reasonably hazard-free, the event should be relocated.

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Table of Contents

Rule 1. Field and Equipment.....	6
Rule 2. Definitions.....	16
Rule 3. Players, Substitutes and Coaches.....	30
Rule 4. Starting and Ending Game.....	41
Rule 5. Dead Ball and Suspension of Play.....	44
Rule 6. Pitching.....	50
Rule 7. Batting.....	57
Rule 8. Batter-Runner and Runner.....	62
Rule 9. Scoring and Record Keeping.....	76
Rule 10. Umpiring.....	81
Rules by State Association Adoption.....	85
Points of Emphasis.....	86
Comments on the Rules.....	88
Improper Conduct Penalty Summary Chart.....	89
Official NFHS Softball Signals.....	90
Appendices.....	91
Index.....	110

THE INTENT AND PURPOSE OF THE RULES

The restrictions which the rules place upon the players are intended to create a balance of play; to provide equal opportunity between the offense and the defense; to minimize risk; to create an atmosphere of sporting behavior and fair play; and to emphasize cleverness and skill without unduly limiting freedom of action of individual or team play on either offense or defense.

Therefore, it is important to know the intent and purpose of a rule so that it may be intelligently applied in each play situation. A player or a team should not be permitted an advantage which is not intended by a rule. Neither should play be permitted to develop which may lead to placing a player at a disadvantage not intended by a rule. It is the policy of the NFHS Softball Rules Committee that there is no deviation from the rules unless experimental approval has been granted by the NFHS.

THE GAME – In softball each team is permitted seven turns at bat during which it attempts to score runs by having its batters become base runners that advance to and touch first base, second base, third base and home plate. The team in the field attempts to end each turn at bat of the opponent by causing three of its batters or base runners to be out.

Rule **1** Field and Equipment

The NFHS does not perform scientific tests on any specific items of equipment to determine if the equipment poses undue risks to student-athletes, coaches, officials or spectators. Such determinations are the responsibility of equipment manufacturers.

SECTION 1 THE FIELD

ART. 1 . . . The softball field shall be free of obstructions between the foul lines, level and contain an infield diamond and an outfield area that may or may not be enclosed by a fence.

ART. 2 . . . Mandated field distances are designated as follows:

- Bases shall be 60 feet apart for games using the 12-inch ball and 65 feet for games using the 11-inch ball.
- (F.P.) The rear tip of home plate and the front edge of the pitcher's plate shall be 43 feet for female fast pitch softball and 46 feet for male fast pitch softball.
- (S.P.) The rear tip of home plate and the front edge of the pitcher's plate shall be 46 feet for males or females playing slow pitch softball when using the 12-inch ball, and 50 feet for female slow pitch using the 11-inch ball.

NOTE: By state association adoption in slow pitch, the pitching distance shall be 50 feet when using a 12-inch ball.

- d. (F.P.) A circle 16 feet in diameter shall be drawn with its center at the mid-point of the front edge of the pitcher's plate.

ART. 3 . . . Recommended field distances are designated as follows:

- a. From home plate to the nearest obstruction on fair ground may uniformly range from:
1. 185 feet-235 feet for female or male fast pitch
 2. 250 feet-275 feet for female slow pitch
 3. 275 feet-300 feet for male slow pitch
- b. From the top of the outfield fence to the ground should be 6 feet to 8 feet.
- c. Outside (foul ground) the foul lines and between home plate and the backstop – an unobstructed area with a distance of 25 feet to 30 feet.
- d. On-deck circles shall be a safe distance from home plate with a recommended distance of 30 feet, if space allows.
- e. The width of all chalk lines is recommended at 2½ inches.
- f. Foul lines extend from the batter's boxes, beyond the bases, to the outfield fence. When an outfield fence is not present, foul lines should extend to a minimum of 185 feet.

ART. 4 . . . The catcher's box, bases, coaches' boxes, batter's boxes, and the three-foot running lane to first base, shall be marked. (Figure 1-1, 1-2 and 1-3)

ART. 5 . . . The infield and outfield, including the boundary marks from the rear tip of home plate to first and third bases, and extended foul lines, are fair ground. All other area is foul ground.

ART. 6 . . . While the on-deck circle does not have to be occupied, a player desiring to warm up shall use that area, provided it is safely away from home plate. Neither team's players shall warm up in the other team's on-deck circle.

ART. 7 . . . Media shall be prohibited from being in live-ball area.

ART. 8 . . . The outermost edge of each line is the restricting boundary and shall meet the dimensions defined in the rules. All lines on the field shall be white and marked with a material that is not injurious to the eyes or skin. Lime or caustic material is prohibited.

ART. 9 . . . Any game started on a non-regulation facility shall not be protested for this reason. Once a game has started, if it is discovered by or brought to the attention of the umpire that the pitching distance, base distances or batter's boxes are incorrect, the correction shall be made immediately. The game shall continue and shall not be protested for this reason.

ART. 10 . . . When planning a new field, the following factors should be fully studied and applied: protection for contestants (batter, catcher, pitcher and others in that order); comfort and safety for spectators; season of use; latitude (North to South); East-West geographic location within time zone; prevailing winds; daylight savings time; background and obstacles or barriers.

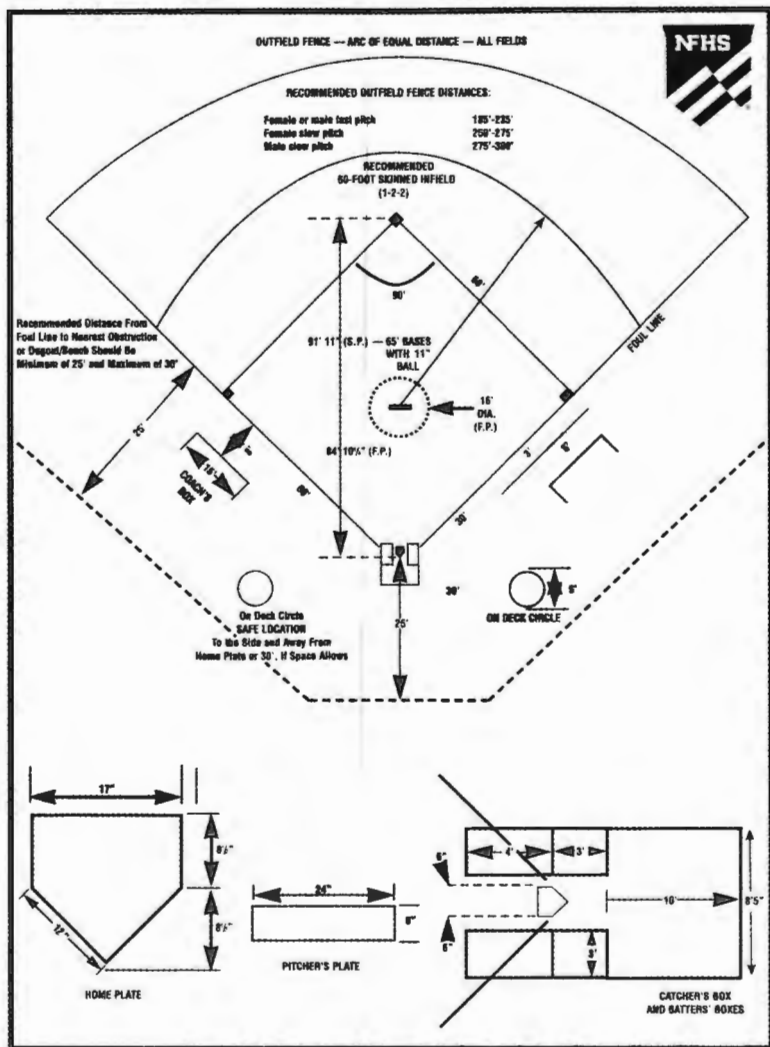


Figure 1-1

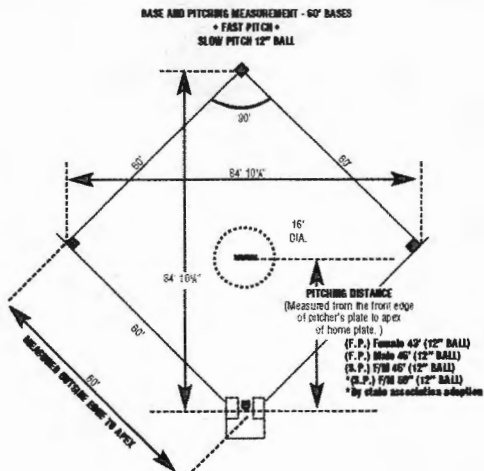


Figure 1-2

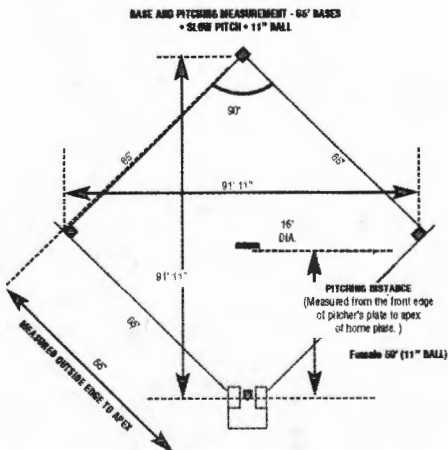


Figure 1-3

ART. 11 . . . When laying out a new softball diamond, it is recommended that the line from home plate through the pitcher's plate to second base run east-northeast. Designate a point for the apex (rear tip) of home plate. Using a steel tape or a strong cord which will not stretch, measure in an east-northeast direction exactly 84 feet 10¼ inches for fast pitch (60-foot bases) or 91 feet 11 inches for slow pitch (65 foot bases and 11-inch ball). This will be the center of second base. With the tape still secured at the rear point of home plate, measure 60 feet toward the first-base area and mark a short arc. Measure 60 feet toward the third-base area and mark a short arc. Fasten the tape at the center of second base and measure 60 feet toward first and third bases and strike arcs. Where these arcs intersect the first two arcs struck at first and third bases will be where first and third bases will be located. (See Figure 1-1 to see how first and third bases are placed and also how second base is different by being centered on the 60-foot distance from each of first and third bases.) When measuring the distance to first base or third base, measure from the apex of home plate to the back edge of the base. If a skinned infield is used (which is recommended), the area is determined by measuring a 60-foot arc from the front center of the 46-foot pitcher's plate, even if other pitching distances are used.

SECTION 2 BASES, PLATES

ART. 1 . . . First, second and third base shall be white bags made of canvas (filled with a soft material), molded rubber or synthetic material and shall be securely attached to the ground or an anchor system. Bases shall be 15-inches square, two to five inches thick, may have tapered edges, and may be designed to disengage from their anchor system.

NOTE: By state association adoption, a double first base is permitted. The base shall be a one- or two-piece unit, 15 inches by 30 inches and manufactured to be of equal height. The base in foul territory shall be a color other than white. (8-10)

ART. 2 . . . Home plate shall be a 5-sided slab of whitened rubber or other suitable similar material. It shall be a 17-inch square with two of the corners filled in so that one edge is 17 inches long, two are 8½ inches and two are 12 inches. It shall be set flush with the ground in fair territory with the two 12-inch edges coinciding with the foul lines extending from home plate to first base and third base and with the 17-inch edge facing the pitcher's plate.

ART. 3 . . . The pitcher's plate shall be a rectangular slab of whitened rubber or suitable material, 24 inches by 6 inches. It shall be set in the ground with the top flush with the playing surface as shown in Figure 1-2 so that the distance between the nearer edge of the pitcher's plate and the apex of home plate shall be 43 feet for female fast pitch, 46 feet for male fast pitch and male and female slow pitch, and 50 feet for female slow pitch using an 11-inch ball.

SECTION 3 SOFTBALLS

ART. 1 . . . The ball(s) shall be an optic yellow sphere formed by either solid core or number one long-fiber Kapok or yarn wound around a small core of cork, rubber, polyurethane or similar material, and covered with a flat surface or a smooth seam stitch.

ART. 2 . . . The cover of the ball shall be made of number one chrome-tanned, horsehide or cowhide that will be solidly cemented to the ball. The cover is also sewn on the ball with a waxed cotton or linen thread. Synthetic composition material may also be used for the cover.

ART. 3 . . . The ball specifications shall be as stated in Table 1-1. The new ball specifications are currently permissible and will be required January 1, 2025, for high school competition. Balls manufactured with the current specifications will be permitted for use through 2024.

TABLE 1-1

PLAY	SIZE	COR	COMPRESSION	WEIGHT & CIRCUMFERENCE
Slow Pitch	11"	.44 max	375 lbs. max	5 ⁷ / ₈ to 6 ¹ / ₈ ounces 10 ⁷ / ₈ to 11 ¹ / ₄ inches
Slow Pitch	12"	.44 max	375 lbs. max	6 ¹ / ₄ to 7 ounces 11 ⁷ / ₈ to 12 ¹ / ₄ inches
Fast Pitch	12"	.47 max	375 lbs. max *325 lbs. +/-50	6 ¹ / ₄ to 7 ounces *6 ¹ / ₄ to 7 ounces 11 ⁷ / ₈ to 12 ¹ / ₄ inches

*Mandatory January 1, 2025

NOTES:

1. The dynamic stiffness of 12" softballs shall not exceed 7,500 pounds/inch and 11" softballs shall not exceed 9,500 pounds/inch when tested under current ASTM test methods.
2. (S.P.) By state association adoption, an 11-inch ball shall be used in girls slow pitch and the bases shall be 65 feet. (1-1-2a)

ART. 4 . . . The coefficient of restitution (COR) and compression shall be labeled on all balls.

ART. 5 . . . The specifications of color, COR and compression shall be identical for all balls used for each game.

**Figure 1-4**

ART. 6 . . . Any defacing, treatment or device that would change the ball specifications listed in 1-3-3 are prohibited and render the ball illegal.

ART. 7 . . . The home team shall provide enough new balls to permit the game to proceed without unnecessary delay.

ART. 8 . . . The NFHS Authenticating Mark shall be on each ball as shown in Figure 1-4. The mark can be displayed in either format. A current list of NFHS authenticated products can be found on the website, nfhs.org.

SECTION 4 GLOVES/MITTS

ART. 1 . . . Gloves/mitts shall:

- Not be the color of the ball including lacing and seams.
- Not have an optic-colored marking on the outside or inside that gives the appearance of the ball.
- Be permitted to have one American flag not to exceed 2 inches by 3 inches.
- Not be judged as distracting by the umpire.

ART. 2 . . . The catcher shall wear a glove/mitt of any size. Gloves/mitts shall be worn by all other fielders and conform to the following maximum specifications (Figure 1-5):

- Height measured from the bottom edge or heel straight up across the center of the palm to a line even with the highest point of the glove/mitt: 14 inches;
- Width of palm measured from the bottom edge of the webbing farthest from the thumb in a horizontal line to the outside of the little finger edge of the glove/mitt: 8 inches.
- Webbing measured across the top end, or along any line parallel to the top: 5¾ inches.

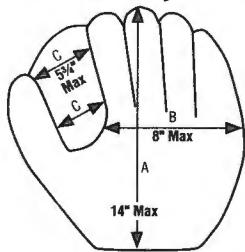


Figure 1-5

ART. 3 . . . Gloves/mitts shall not be designed or altered to create an adhesive, sticky and/or tacky surface.

ART. 4 . . . An illegal glove/mitt shall be replaced immediately subject to penalty. (8-8-15)

SECTION 5 BATS

ART. 1 . . . The bat shall:

- Be one piece, multi-pieces and permanently assembled, or two pieces with interchangeable barrel construction.
- Not have exposed rivets, pins, rough or sharp edges or any form of exterior fastener that would present a hazard.
- Be free of rattles, dents, burrs, cracks and sharp edges that might deface the ball. These bats are considered damaged and removed from the game without penalty.



Figure 1-6

- d. Bear either the 2000, 2004 or the USA Softball All Games certification mark (Figure 1-6). In addition to bearing one of these marks, the bat must not appear on USA Softball's Non-Approved Bats with Certification Marks list (www.usasoftball.com). Bat barrels made entirely of wood are permitted and need not bear a certification mark, but shall not exceed $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter.
- e. Not contain materials inside the bat or treatments/devices used to alter the bat specifications and/or enhance performance (e.g. shaving, rolling or artificially warming the bat barrel).

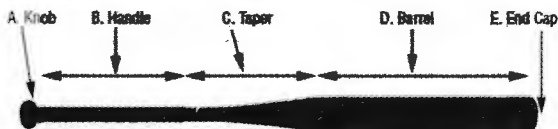


Figure 1-7

ART. 2 . . . The bat shall consist of the following components (Figure 1-7):

- a. Knob. The knob may be molded, lathed, welded or adjustable, but must be permanently fastened. Devices, attachments or wrappings that cause the knob to become flush with the handle are permitted. The knob may be covered with grip tape. A one-piece rubber knob and bat grip combination is illegal.
- b. Handle/Grip. The bat handle is the area of the bat that begins at, but does not include the knob and ends where the taper begins to increase in diameter. The handle shall have a round or oval cross-section. The grip shall extend a minimum of 10 inches, but not more than 15 inches, from the small end of the bat. A safety grip shall be made of cork, tape (no smooth, plastic tape) or composition material (commercially manufactured). Rosin, pine tar or spray substances to enhance the hold are permitted on the grip only.
- c. Taper. The taper is the transition area which connects the narrower handle to the wider barrel portion of the bat. The taper shall have a conical shape. Its length and material may vary.
- d. Barrel. The barrel is the area intended for contact with the pitch; the barrel shall be round and cylindrically symmetric with a smooth contour.
- e. End Cap. The end cap is made of rubber, vinyl, plastic or other approved material. It shall be firmly secured and permanently affixed to the end of the bat so that it cannot be removed by anyone other than the manufacturer,

without damaging or destroying it. A one-piece construction bat will not have an end cap.

ART. 3 . . . Warm-up bats used in the on-deck circle shall have all parts permanently and securely attached at the time of manufacture and at the time of use. No more than two bats shall be used when warming up in the on-deck circle. Devices added to a bat for warm-up purposes shall be commercially manufactured specifically for a softball bat and shall be securely attached, so as not to disengage during use. Such devices shall take, but not exceed, the general shape and size of a bat including the grip.

SECTION 6 BATTING HELMETS

ART. 1 . . . A batting helmet with a permanently affixed NOCSAE stamp (Figure 1-8) and legible exterior warning label is mandatory for each batter, on-deck batter, players/students in the coach's boxes, runners and retired runners. The exterior warning label may be affixed to the outside of the helmet, which includes both sides of the bill, in either sticker form or embossed (at the time of manufacture). The batting helmet shall have a non-glare (not mirror-like) surface.

ART. 2 . . . The batting helmet is required to be worn while the ball is live and in live-ball territory until the ball enters dead-ball territory without being touched by a fielder or after being touched, goes directly into dead-ball territory. (3-6-1)

ART. 3 . . . Non-adult bat/ball shaggers shall wear batting helmets while in live-ball area, even if the ball is dead. A violation while in live-ball area shall result in a warning to the coach of the team and the individual. A subsequent violation shall result in the individual and coach not being permitted on the field.

ART. 4 . . . The batting helmet shall have extended ear flaps which cover both ears and temples.

ART. 5 . . . Batting helmets that are broken, cracked, dented, or that have been altered are prohibited from use.

ART. 6 . . . All fast-pitch batting helmets shall be equipped with a NOCSAE-approved face protector. The phrase, "Meets NOCSAE Standard at the time of manufacture" must be permanently affixed to the face protector.

ART. 7 . . . If an eye shield is worn attached to the batting helmet, it must be constructed of a molded rigid material that is clear and permits 100 percent (no tint) allowable light transmission.

SECTION 7 CATCHER'S EQUIPMENT

ART. 1 . . . The catcher shall wear a catcher's helmet and mask combination that meets the NOCSAE standard at the time of manufacture. The helmet shall bear the permanent NOCSAE seal (Figure 1-9). A throat protector that is part of or attached to the mask shall be worn and extend far enough to adequately protect

Manufacturer Certifies



Figure 1-8

the throat. An attached throat protector shall be commercially manufactured, properly attached, unaltered and worn properly. Plastic visors attached to the catcher's helmet are prohibited. If an eye shield is worn as part of the catcher's helmet, it must be constructed of a molded, rigid material that is clear and permits 100 percent (no tint) allowable light transmission. The catcher's helmet shall have a non-glare (not mirror-like) surface.

ART. 2 . . . The catcher shall wear a body protector, baseball/softball protective shin guards, and a protective cup (male).

ART. 3 . . . (F.P.) Any non-adult warming up a pitcher at any location within the confines of the field shall wear an approved catcher's helmet and mask combination and throat protector.

SECTION 8 OTHER EQUIPMENT

ART. 1 . . . Non-traditional game equipment must be reviewed by the NFHS Softball Rules Committee before it will be permitted.

ART. 2 . . . Defective equipment shall be repaired or replaced immediately.

ART. 3 . . . Loose equipment of the teams may not be on or near the field. A discarded bat by the batter or the catcher's mask and helmet are not examples of loose equipment and are considered part of the playing field.

ART. 4 . . . Defensive players are permitted to wear face/head protection in the field, except as in 3-2-14, and as specifically required in 1-7. If an eye shield is worn attached to the face/head protection, it must be constructed of a molded, rigid material that is clear and permits 100 percent (no tint) allowable light transmission. Face/head protection worn by defenders shall have a non-glare (not mirror-like) outer surface.

ART. 5 . . . All equipment shall be worn properly and as designed by the manufacturer. Any equipment judged by the umpire to be potentially dangerous is illegal.

ART. 6 . . . The use of electronic devices by team personnel to transmit or record information pertaining to their players or team's performance shall be permitted within the team's dugout/bench area only. Information obtained from an electronic device may be used for coaching purposes during the game.

Manufacturer Certifies



Figure 1-9

Rule 2 Definitions

SECTION 1 APPEALS

ART. 1 . . . A play or rule violation on which the umpire does not make a ruling until requested by a coach or player. (7-1-2, 8-3-1, 8-3-2, 8-6-6, 8-6-7, 8-6-8, 8-6-9, 8-10-1)

ART. 2 . . . Types of appeals:

- Missing a base, either advancing or returning (live or dead-ball appeal).
- Leaving a base on a caught fly ball before the ball is first touched (live or dead-ball appeal).
- Batting out of order (dead-ball appeal only).
- Attempting to advance to second base after making the turn at first base overrunning first base (live-ball appeal only).

ART. 3 . . . Methods by which an appeal may be made:

- Live** – An appeal may be made during a live ball by any fielder in possession of the ball touching the base missed or left too soon on a caught fly ball, or by tagging the runner committing the violation if the runner is still on the playing field (even if the runner is standing on another base).
- Dead** – The dead-ball appeal may be made:
 - Once all runners have completed their advancement and time has been called, the coach or any defensive player, with or without the ball, may make a verbal appeal on a runner missing a base or leaving a base too soon on a caught fly ball. The administering umpire should then make a decision on the play.
 - If the ball has gone out of play, runners must be given the opportunity to complete their base running responsibilities before the dead-ball appeal can be made.
 - If the pitcher has possession of the ball and is in contact with the pitching plate when making a verbal appeal, no illegal pitch is called.
 - If "play ball" has been declared by the umpire and the pitcher then requests an appeal, the umpire would again call "time" and allow the appeal.

ART. 4 . . . **When** – Appeals must be made:

- before the next legal or illegal pitch;
- at the end of a half-inning, before all infielders have left fair territory and the normal fielding position has been vacated by the catcher; or
- on the last play of the game, before the umpires leave the field of play.

NOTE: If any situation arises which could lead to an appeal by the defense on the last play of the game, umpires should not leave the field until all infielders have left fair territory and the normal fielding position has been vacated by the catcher. **Once** teams line up to shake hands there is little chance for an appeal even if the defensive infielders have not crossed the foul line. Umpires can leave the game at this point. No appeal can be made once the umpires have left the field.

ART. 5 . . . Advance – Runners may advance during a live-ball appeal play. If the ball is not dead in fast pitch, runners may leave their base when the pitcher no longer has possession of the ball within the 16-foot circle, or when the pitcher makes a play on any runner. If the ball is thrown out of play on a live-ball appeal, appropriate bases should be awarded but the appeal can still be made as a dead-ball appeal once runners have taken their award. If a play is made on a runner prior to completing the live-ball appeal, the appeal can still be made after the play. If time-out is requested for an appeal, the umpire should grant it in either fast pitch or slow pitch, and runners may not advance until the next pitch.

ART. 6 . . . May Not Return – A runner may not return to touch a missed base or one left too soon on a caught fly ball if:

- the runner has reached a base beyond the base missed or left too soon and the ball becomes dead.
- the runner has left the field of play; or
- a following runner has scored.

ART. 7 . . . Awards – Awarded bases must be touched. An appeal must be honored even if the base missed was before or after an award.

ART. 8 . . . More Than One Appeal – More than one appeal play may be made but guessing games should not be allowed.

EXAMPLE: The runner misses second base by a step but just touches the corner of third base. Even though an appeal is made at third base (the umpire called the runner safe), an appeal may be made at second base on the same runner.

ART. 9 . . . Plate and Missed Tag – If a runner misses home plate and the catcher misses the tag, the umpire should hesitate slightly. If no tag is made, the umpire should declare the runner safe. If an appeal play is then made by tagging either the runner or home plate, the umpire should then make a decision on this appeal play.

ART. 10 . . . Missing First Base Before the Throw Arrives – If a runner passes first base before the throw arrives, the runner is considered to have touched the base unless an appeal is made. If an appeal is made, it must be made prior to the runner returning to first base while the ball is live.

ART. 11 . . . Force Out – If an appeal is honored at a base to which a runner was forced to advance, no runs would score if it was the third out.

ART. 12 . . . Tag-ups – If a runner leaves a base too soon on a caught fly ball and returns in an attempt to retag, this is considered a time play and not a force out. If the appeal is the third out, all runs scored by runners in advance of the appealed runner and scored before the legal appeal would count.

ART. 13 . . . Fourth-out Appeal – An appeal may be made after the third out as long as it is made properly. (i.e. one out with runner on first and third bases. The batter hits a fly ball that is caught. Both runners leave their base before the caught ball is touched. An appeal is made at first base for the third out. The defensive team then makes an appeal at third base before the infielders leave the infield. The runner on third base would then be declared out also, and the run would not count.)

SECTION 2 BALL, BATTED, BLOCKED, DEAD, DELAYED DEAD, FLY, GROUND, PASSED, ROTATION

ART. 1 . . . Ball – The ball is one of the playing implements. The term is also used to designate a pitch that is not a strike.

ART. 2 . . . Batted Ball – A batted ball is any pitch that comes in contact with the bat. Contact may result in a fair or foul ball and need not be intentional.

ART. 3 . . . Blocked Ball – A blocked ball is a live ball, pitched, batted or thrown, which is touched, stopped or handled by a person not engaged in the game; or touches any object which is not part of the official equipment or official playing area; or touches loose equipment.

ART. 4 . . . Dead Ball – A dead ball is a ball not in play.

ART. 5 . . . Delayed Dead Ball – A situation in which a violation of a rule occurs and is recognized by the umpire by giving a delayed dead-ball signal, but is not ruled upon until the ball becomes dead.

ART. 6 . . . Fly Ball – A fly ball is a batted ball that rises an appreciable height above the ground.

ART. 7 . . . Ground Ball – A ground ball is a batted ball that is either fair or foul and bounces along the ground.

ART. 8 . . . Passed Ball – A passed ball is a pitch the catcher fails to stop or control when the catcher should have been able to do so with ordinary effort on which a runner (other than the batter) is able to advance.

ART. 9 . . . Ball Rotation – Ball rotation determines which of the balls should be in play.

SECTION 3 BASE LINE, PATH

ART. 1 . . . Base Line – A direct line between two consecutive bases.

ART. 2 . . . Base Path – The traditional path traveled by a runner who is attempting to advance to the next base. It is defined by a direct line between two bases and 3 feet on either side of that line, unless a fielder possesses the ball and is within 3 feet of the runner and prepared to apply a tag. A base runner who attempts to avoid a tag by running more than 3 feet to either side of a fielder in possession of the ball shall be declared out.

NOTE: A runner establishes a base path when the runner is not being played upon.

SECTION 4 BAT: LEGAL, ILLEGAL, DAMAGED

ART. 1 . . . Legal Bat – A bat that meets the specifications. (1-5)

ART. 2 . . . Illegal Bat – A bat that does not meet the specifications in Rule 1-5 and subject to penalty as in Rule 7-4-2, including:

- Altered Bat** – A bat that was once legal, but has been structurally changed including, but not limited to: shaving, rolling or artificially warming the bat barrel.

- b. **Non-approved Bat** – A bat that does not meet USA Softball specifications or has been placed on the current USA Softball Non-Approved Bats with Certification Marks list (www.usasoftball.com).

ART. 3 . . . Damaged Bat – A bat that was once legal but is broken, cracked, dented, rattles or has sharp edges that might deface the ball. Damaged bats when initially detected shall be removed from the game without penalty as in Rule 7-4-2 PENALTY NOTE. If this damaged bat that was removed from play by an umpire is detected a second time in the game, the batter shall be called out. The batter and head coach are also restricted to the dugout for the remainder of the game. (7-4-15)

SECTION 5 BATTER, BATTER-RUNNER, ON-DECK BATTER

ART. 1 . . . Batter – The batter is the player of the team at bat who is entitled to occupy either of the two batter's boxes.

ART. 2 . . . Batter-runner – The batter-runner is a player who has finished a time at bat until the batter-runner is put out or playing action ends.

ART. 3 . . . On-deck Batter – The on-deck batter is a player of the offensive team entitled to occupy the on-deck circle closest to the player's team dugout. A single on-deck batter shall remain in the on-deck circle while the opposing pitcher is warming up. (7-5)

SECTION 6 BATTER'S BOX

The batter's box is the area, including the lines, in which the batter is positioned when batting. (Figure 1-2)

SECTION 7 BATTING ORDER, OUT OF ORDER

ART. 1 . . . Batting Order – The batting order is the official list of starting offensive players presented in the order in which they are to bat and recorded on a lineup card.

ART. 2 . . . Batting Out of Order – Batting out of order is failing to bat in proper sequence as listed on the official lineup card.

SECTION 8 BUNT, ATTEMPTED BUNT, DRAG BUNT

ART. 1 . . . Bunt – A bunt is a legally batted ball not swung at but intentionally tapped with the bat.

ART. 2 . . . Attempted Bunt – Any non-swinging movement of the bat intended to tap the ball into play. Holding the bat in the strike zone is considered a bunt attempt. In order to take a pitch, the bat must be withdrawn – pulled backward and away from the ball.

ART. 3 . . . Drag Bunt – A drag bunt is attempting to bunt the ball by running forward in the batter's box, while carrying the bat. The movement of the bat is in conjunction with the batter's forward movement.

SECTION 9 CATCH

ART. 1 . . . A catch is the act of a fielder who, with the hand(s) and/or glove/mitt, securely gains possession of a batted, pitched or thrown ball.

ART. 2 . . . In establishing the validity of the catch, the fielder must prove control of the ball and that the release of the ball is voluntary and intentional.

ART. 3 . . . If the fielder has made the catch but drops the ball either in transferring it to the throwing hand or in making a throw, the ball shall be ruled caught.

ART. 4 . . . For a legal catch, a fielder must catch and have secure possession of the ball before stepping, touching or falling into a dead-ball area. A fielder who falls over or through the fence after making a catch shall be credited with the catch. A fielder who catches a ball while contacting or stepping on a collapsible fence, which is not completely horizontal, is credited with a catch.

ART. 5 . . . A catch shall not be credited if:

- A fielder catches a batted, pitched or thrown ball with anything other than the hand(s) or glove/mitt in its proper place.
- Immediately following a catch, the fielder collides with another player, umpire or fence or falls to the ground and fails to maintain possession of the ball.
- The fielder uses any equipment or part of the uniform that is displaced from its proper position.
- An entire foot is touching dead-ball territory at the time of the catch.
- The ball strikes anything or anyone other than a defensive player while it is in flight. In this case the ball is ruled a ground ball.
- The fielder traps the ball. A batted fly ball or line drive is considered trapped if it hits the ground or a fence on a short hop before being caught. A thrown ball is considered trapped if it is on the ground and the glove/mitt or hand is over it, and the player does not have control. A pitched ball is considered trapped if it is a strike but touches the ground on a short hop before being caught by the catcher.

ART. 6 . . . A ball prevented from hitting the ground by a player's equipment (providing it is in its proper place) or body shall not be ruled caught until the ball is securely held in the player's hand(s) or glove/mitt.

SECTION 10 CATCHER, CATCHER'S BOX

ART. 1 . . . Catcher – The catcher is the player to whom the pitcher throws when delivering the ball to the batter. When the catcher is in position to receive a pitch, the catcher must be in the catcher's box.

ART. 2 . . . Catcher's Box – The catcher's box is the area to which the catcher's feet are restricted from the time the pitcher is in contact with the pitcher's plate until the pitcher releases the pitch. The catcher's box is a rectangle 10 feet deep from the rear outside corner of the batter's boxes and is 8 feet, 5 inches wide. (Figure 1-1)

SECTION 11 CHECKED SWING

A checked swing is the restraining action taken by a batter to stop an attempted hit/slap/bunt. As an aid in determining a checked swing, the umpire shall note whether the swing carried the barrel portion of the bat in front of the batter's body and in the direction of the infield. However, the final decision is based on whether the bat actually struck at the ball.

SECTION 12 CHOPPED HIT BALL (S.P.)

A chopped hit ball (S.P.) is an illegally hit ball which is struck with a downward motion.

SECTION 13 COACHES BOX

The coaches box is the area to which the two base coaches (one per box) are restricted prior to release of the pitch. (Figure 1-1)

SECTION 14 CONFERENCES: CHARGED, PREGAME

ART. 1 . . . Charged Conference – A charged conference is when the coach or dugout/bench personnel requests and is granted a time-out to meet with offensive or defensive personnel.

ART. 2 . . . Pregame Conference – A pregame conference is a meeting involving the umpires and head coaches near home plate (4-1-2). Team captains may also attend.

SECTION 15 CONFINES OF THE FIELD

The confines of the field includes the field of play, the designated dugout/bench area, and any enclosed or clearly marked area designated as a warm-up area that is adjacent to the field and within the view of the umpire(s).

SECTION 16 CROW HOP

A crow hop is the replant of the pivot foot prior to delivering the pitch. The crow hop is an illegal pitch.

SECTION 17 DUGOUT (BENCH AREA)

The dugout is the area reserved for team personnel engaged in the game.

SECTION 18 EFFECT

The effect is the result or consequence of a play, action or rule application.

SECTION 19 EJECTION

An ejection is the exercise of an umpire's authority to remove team personnel from further participation in a game.

SECTION 20 FAIR BALL

ART. 1 . . . A fair ball is a batted ball that:

- settles or is touched on or over fair territory between home and first base or home and third base.
- touches or bounds over a base.
- touches first, second or third bases.
- while on or over fair territory, touches the person of any umpire or player or clothing or equipment.
- while over fair territory, passes out of the playing field in flight.
- first falls or is first touched on or over fair territory beyond first, second or third base.
- while over fair territory, an offensive player interferes with a defensive player attempting to field a batted ball.

ART. 2 . . . A fair fly shall be judged according to the relative position of the ball and the foul line, including the foul pole, and not as to whether the fielder is in fair or foul territory at the time the fielder touches the ball. It does not matter whether the ball first touches fair or foul territory as long as it does not touch anything foreign to the natural ground in foul territory and complies with all other aspects of a fair ball.

SECTION 21 FAKE TAG

An act by a defensive player that simulates an attempt to tag a runner. Faking a tag is always considered obstruction.

SECTION 22 FIELD OF PLAY, FAIR TERRITORY, FOUL TERRITORY, DEAD-BALL TERRITORY

ART. 1 . . . Field of Play – The field of play is the area within which the ball may be legally played and fielded.

ART. 2 . . . Fair Territory – Fair territory is that part of the playing field within and including the foul lines from home plate to the bottom of the home run fence (if applicable) and vertical. Home plate, the foul lines and poles are considered part of fair territory.

ART. 3 . . . Foul Territory – Foul territory is that part of the playing field outside the first and third base lines from home plate to the bottom of the home run fence (if one is used) and perpendicularly upwards.

ART. 4 . . . Dead-ball Territory – Dead-ball territory is the area beyond any real boundary, such as a fence, rope, chalk line, any stands, bleachers, dugouts, player's bench or designated media area, or any imaginary boundary line as determined in the pregame conference. If a ball becomes lodged in a fence or backstop, it is considered to be in dead-ball area.

SECTION 23 FIELDERS, INFELDERS, OUTFELDERS

ART. 1 . . . Fielders – Fielders are any players of the team in the field.

ART. 2 . . . Infielders – Infielders are usually the first baseplayer, second baseplayer, third baseplayer, shortstop, pitcher and catcher. The pitcher and catcher are also known as the **battery**.

ART. 3 . . . Outfielders – Outfielders are usually the left fielder, right fielder and center fielder (and short fielder in S.P.).

SECTION 24 FORCE PLAY

ART. 1 . . . A force play is a play in which a runner (or two or three runners) loses the right to the base occupied and is forced to advance because the batter becomes a batter-runner.

ART. 2 . . . For a given runner, a force play ends as soon as the runner touches the next base or a following runner is put out.

ART. 3 . . . If a batted ball is caught before it touches the ground there can be no force play(s).

ART. 4 . . . If a forced runner, after touching the next base, except home, retreats for any reason towards the base first occupied, the force play is reinstated and the runner may again be put out if the defense tags the base to which the runner is forced.

SECTION 25 FOUL BALL, FOUL TIP

ART. 1 . . . Foul Ball. A foul ball is a batted ball that:

- settles or is touched on or over foul territory between home and first base, or between home and third base;
- bounds past first or third base on or over foul territory;
- first falls to the ground or is first touched on or over foul territory beyond first or third base;
- while on or over foul territory, touches the person of an umpire, a player or any object foreign to the natural ground;
- while over foul territory, an offensive player interferes with a defensive player attempting to field a batted ball;
- touches the batter or the bat in the batter's hand(s) a second time while the batter is within the batter's box;
- goes directly from the bat to any part of the catcher's body or equipment and is caught by another fielder. [5-1-1d(2)]

ART. 2 . . . Foul Tip – A foul tip is a batted ball that goes sharply and directly from the bat to the catcher's mitt or hand and is legally caught by the catcher. It is a strike. In fast pitch, the ball remains live, but in slow pitch, the ball becomes dead.

SECTION 26 GAME: HALTED, SUSPENDED, CALLED, REGULATION, FORFEITED

ART. 1 . . . Halted, Suspended Game – A halted or suspended game is a game that is temporarily suspended by the umpire with the intent that it will be continued at some later time or date. If the state adopts the suspended game procedure, the game shall be resumed from the point of suspension. (4-2-3)

ART. 2 . . . Called Game – A called game is a game that is ended by the umpire. (4-2-3, 4-3-1, 5-2-1b, 5-2-1b NOTE)

ART. 3 . . . Regulation Game – A regulation game is a game that is seven innings (terms at bat) unless extra inning(s) are necessary because of a tie score, or unless shortened because the home team does not require its half of the seventh inning or only a fraction of it (4-2-1), or because of weather or darkness. (4-2-2)

ART. 4 . . . Forfeited Game – A forfeited game is a game awarded to the opponent of the offending team. (4-3)

SECTION 27 ILLEGALLY BATTED BALL

ART. 1 . . . Illegally Batted Ball – An illegally batted ball is a pitch contacted by the batter:

- with an illegal bat.
- when any part of either foot is in contact with the plate at the time of contact with the ball.
- when one or both feet are on the ground and entirely outside the lines of the batter's box at the time of bat-ball contact.

SECTION 28 IN FLIGHT

A ball in flight is any batted, thrown or pitched ball that has not touched the ground, an object or a person other than a player.

SECTION 29 INFIELD

The infield is that portion of the field in fair territory that is normally skinned and covered by the pitcher and infielders.

SECTION 30 INFIELD FLY RULE

Infield fly rule is, when declared by the umpire, a fair fly (not including a line drive or an attempted bunt) that can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort when runners are on first and second or all three bases are occupied and before there are two outs in the inning. Any defensive player positioned in the infield at the time of the pitch shall be considered an infielder for the purposes of this rule. The rule does not preclude outfielders from being permitted to make the catch. The ball is live, the batter is out, which removes the force, but runners may advance at their own risk. The runners may tag up and advance as soon as the batted ball is touched by a fielder. If a declared infield fly becomes foul, it is treated as a foul ball, not an infield fly.

SECTION 31 INNING

An inning is that portion of a game within which the teams alternate on offense and defense and in which there are three outs for each team. A new inning begins immediately after the final out of the previous inning.

SECTION 32 INTERFERENCE (OFFENSE)

ART. 1 . . . Interference is an act (physical or verbal) by a member of the team at bat who illegally impedes, hinders or confuses any fielder; or when a runner creates malicious contact with any fielder with or without the ball, in or out of the baseline.

ART. 2 . . . Other types of interference involve equipment, umpire and spectator.

SECTION 33 LEAP

A leap is when both feet are airborne by the pitcher prior to delivering the pitch. A leap is an illegal pitch.

SECTION 34 LINE DRIVE

A line drive is a batted ball which travels parallel or near to the ground through most of its flight.

SECTION 35 MALICIOUS CONTACT

Malicious contact is an act that involves excessive force with an opponent.

SECTION 36 OBSTRUCTION (DEFENSE)

Obstruction is the act of the defensive team member that hinders or impedes a batter's attempt to make contact with a pitched ball or that impedes the progress of a runner or batter-runner who is legally running bases, unless the fielder is in possession of the ball or is making the initial play on a batted ball. The act may be intentional or unintentional, physical or verbal.

SECTION 37 ON-DECK CIRCLE

The on-deck circle is a circle for each team, 5 feet in diameter, located at a safe distance to the side and away from home plate. This circle should be at least 30 feet away from the home plate if space allows. (Figure 1-1)

SECTION 38 OUT, FORCE OUT, TAG OUT, PUTOUT

ART. 1 . . . Out – An out is a declaration by the umpire indicating an offensive player has been retired. Each team is entitled to three outs per inning.

ART. 2 . . . Putout – The act of a fielder retiring an offensive player.

ART. 3 . . . Force Out – A force out is a putout during which an offensive player who is being forced to advance is tagged out, or is put out by a fielder who holds the ball while touching the base toward which the forced runner is advancing.

ART. 4 . . . Tag Out – A tag out is putting out an offensive player, who is not touching a base, by touching the runner with a live ball or with the glove or hand when the live ball is securely held therein by a fielder. The ball is not considered as having been held securely if it is juggled or dropped after the touching unless the runner deliberately knocks the ball from the hand of the fielder.

SECTION 39 OUTFIELD

The outfield is that portion of fair territory that is beyond the infield.

SECTION 40 OVERSLIDING, OVERRUNNING, OVERWALKING

Oversliding, overrunning or overwalking are acts of an offensive player, who after advancing to a base, loses contact and goes past it.

SECTION 41 PENALTY

A penalty is the loss assessed by the umpire against a player or team for a rule infraction.

SECTION 42 PINCH HITTER, PINCH RUNNER

ART. 1 . . . Pinch Hitter – A pinch hitter is a player who is inserted into the lineup in the place of the batter. The pinch hitter will stay in the lineup until replaced by the player for whom the pinch hitter hit or another substitute.

ART. 2 . . . Pinch Runner – A pinch runner is a player who is inserted into the lineup in the place of a base runner. The pinch runner will stay in the lineup until replaced by the player for whom pinch runner ran or another substitute.

SECTION 43 PITCH, ILLEGAL, NO PITCH, QUICK

ART. 1 . . . Pitch – A pitch is a live ball delivered to the batter by the pitcher with a legal underhand motion.

ART. 2 . . . Illegal Pitch – An illegal pitch is a violation of the pitching rule.

ART. 3 . . . No Pitch – No pitch is a declaration by the umpire that halts play and nullifies the pitch. (6-2-4)

ART. 4 . . . Quick Pitch – A quick pitch is a pitch delivered that catches the batter off balance or otherwise unprepared to bat. (6-2-4b)

SECTION 44 PITCHER

The pitcher is the player who is responsible for delivering (pitching) the ball to the batter.

SECTION 45 PITCHER'S 16-FOOT CIRCLE (F.P.)

The 16-foot circle is used for the look-back rule (8-7). A pitcher is in the 16-foot circle when both feet are within or partially within the line. The feet may touch the line and extend outside the line. (1-1-2d)

SECTION 46 PITCHER'S PIVOT FOOT

The pitcher's pivot foot is that foot which is in contact with the ground, as opposed to the non-pivot foot with which the pitcher steps toward home plate. (6-1-2c)

SECTION 47 "PLAY BALL," MAKE A PLAY, INITIAL PLAY

ART. 1 . . . "Play Ball" – The directive given by the umpire when it is time for the game to begin or to be resumed after having been suspended when "time" was granted.

ART. 2 . . . Make a Play –

- Any action by the pitcher intended to cause a reaction from the runner(s) as it pertains to the look-back rule (F.P.).
- Any action by a fielder who is attempting to catch or gain control of a batted or thrown ball.
- An attempt by a defensive player to retire a runner or a batter-runner.

ART. 3 . . . Initial Play – A fielder is considered to be making an initial play on a fair batted ball when the fielder:

- Has a reasonable chance to gain control of a ground ball that no other fielder (except the pitcher) has touched. (8-6-10a)
- Has a reasonable chance to catch the ball in flight or catch the ball in flight after it touches another fielder.
- Fails to gain control of the batted ball and is within a step and a reach (in any direction) of the spot of the initial contact.

SECTION 48 RESTRICTED TO THE DUGOUT/BENCH AREA

"Restricted to the dugout/bench area" is the term used to indicate that a participant has been confined to the dugout/bench area for the remainder of the game, generally as a result of an infraction of a playing rule (not a major unsporting act).

SECTION 49 RUN

A run is scored when an offensive player legally advances to and touches home plate. (9-1)

SECTION 50 RUNNER, RETIRED RUNNER

ART. 1 . . . Runner – A runner is an offensive player who is advancing to, touching or returning to a base.

ART. 2 . . . Retired Runner – A retired runner is a player who has scored, or who has been put out and who is still in live-ball territory.

SECTION 51 SLAP HIT

ART. 1 . . . A slap hit is a batted ball (often incorrectly called a "slap bunt") that has been struck with a short, chopping motion rather than with a full swing.

ART. 2 . . . The two most common types of slap hits are:

- Those in which the batter takes a stance as if to bunt but then either drives the ball into the ground with a quick, short swing or punches it over the infield.
- Those in which the batter takes running steps toward the pitcher before making contact with the pitch.

SECTION 52 SLIDE: LEGAL, ILLEGAL

ART. 1 . . . Legal Slide – A legal slide may be either feet first or head first. If a runner slides feet first, at least one leg and buttock shall be on the ground. If a runner slides, the runner shall be within reach of the base with either hand or a foot when the slide is completed.

ART. 2 . . . Illegal Slide – A slide is illegal if:

- the runner uses a rolling or cross-body slide into the fielder;
- the runner's raised leg is higher than the fielder's knee when the fielder is in a standing position;
- the runner goes beyond the base and makes contact with or alters the play of the fielder;
- the runner slashes or kicks the fielder with either leg; or
- the runner tries to injure the fielder.

SECTION 53 SQUEEZE PLAY (F.P.)

A squeeze play is a play in which a runner advances toward home plate from third base, following the release of the pitched ball, and during which the batter bunts or attempts to bunt to score the runner.

SECTION 54 STARTING PLAYERS

One of the first nine, 10 (if the DP/FLEX is used in fast pitch) or 11 players (if the EP is used in slow pitch) submitted to and accepted by the plate umpire before the start of the game.

SECTION 55 STOLEN BASE

A stolen base is the advance of a runner to the next base without the aid of a base hit, a putout, a fielding error, a passed ball or a wild pitch. A double or triple steal involves two or three runners, respectively.

SECTION 56 STRIKE, STRIKEOUT, STRIKE ZONE

ART. 1 . . . Strike – A strike is any pitch that either enters the strike zone without first touching the ground or is swung at by the batter and missed. A strike also may be called by the umpire for specific actions by the batter or offense. (2-8-2, 3-6-17, 7-2-1, 7-3-1)

ART. 2 . . . Strikeout – A strikeout is the result of a third strike charged to a batter.

ART. 3 . . . Strike Zone (F.P.) – The strike zone (F.P.) is the space over home plate which is 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.

ART. 4 . . . Strike Zone (S.P.) – The strike zone (S.P.) is the space over any part of home plate which is between the batter's highest shoulder and 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 when swinging at a pitch.

SECTION 57 SUBSTITUTE, UNREPORTED, ILLEGAL

ART. 1 . . . Substitute – A substitute is a player not listed on the lineup as a starter but who may legally replace a starting player; any player who enters or reenters the game; the DP when the DP plays defense for the FLEX; or the FLEX when the FLEX plays offense for the DP.

ART. 2 . . . Unreported Substitute – An unreported substitute is a substitute who has a legal right to participate in the game but has not reported to the umpire prior to participation (3-3-4, 3-6-7). All substitutions must be reported to the umpire.

NOTE: A courtesy runner is not a substitute, but must be reported to the umpire. (8-9-7)

ART. 3 . . . Illegal Substitute – An illegal substitute is a player who enters or re-enters the game without eligibility to do so (illegal re-entry); a player who re-enters the game in the wrong position in the batting order; (F.P.) the FLEX who enters the game as a batter or runner in a different position in the batting order than the DP; or a player who violates the courtesy runner rule.

ART. 4 . . . Projected Substitute – A projected substitute is the act of entering a substitute without first removing a player from that position in the lineup.

SECTION 58 TEAM MEMBERS

Team members are players listed on the team's roster and lineup as submitted to the umpire at the pregame meeting.

SECTION 59 TEAM PERSONNEL

Team personnel consist of all school representatives located in the team dug-out, including but not limited to coaches, managers, certified athletic trainers and scorekeepers.

SECTION 60 THREE-FOOT RUNNING LANE

The three-foot running lane is the space defined by a line drawn 3 feet from and parallel to the first base foul line starting halfway between home and first base and extending to first base in foul territory.

SECTION 61 "TIME" OR "TIME-OUT"

"Time" is the term used or directive given by the umpire to suspend play. The ball becomes dead when it is given.

SECTION 62 TIME AT BAT

The time at bat is the period beginning when a batter first enters the batter's box and continues until put out or the batter becomes a batter-runner.

EXCEPTION: A batter is not charged in the record with a time at bat when the batter makes a sacrifice hit, is hit by a pitched ball, is awarded a base on balls, is replaced before being charged with two strikes, is replaced after being charged with two strikes and the substitute does not strike out, or when the batter advances to first base because of obstruction by a fielder.

SECTION 63 TIMING PLAY

A timing play is a play when the last out of an inning is not the result of a force out and the exact time of the out may or may not allow a run to score. If a runner should touch home plate an instant before the last out (which is not a force out) is made, then the run would be scored. If a runner should touch home plate an instant after the last out then no run would be scored.

SECTION 64 TOUCHING

Touching is contact with the ball, equipment or a person. There is no distinction between the act of touching and being touched. It applies to a pitched ball touching a batter, a batted ball touching the batter or any runner, catcher touching the bat, player touching a base, or ball touching a player or non-player. The term applies to contact with any part of the person or clothing if the clothing is reasonably well fitted.

SECTION 65 WALK, INTENTIONAL WALK (BASE ON BALLS)

ART. 1 . . . Walk – A walk is four pitches thrown out of the strike zone awarding the batter first base.

ART. 2 . . . Intentional Walk (Base on balls) – A request made to the umpire by the defensive coach, pitcher or catcher, for the purpose of awarding the batter first base. The request may be made prior to or during the at bat. For the purposes of an appeal:

- an intentional walk is considered a time at bat, therefore, an appeal of the previous play cannot be made following the intentional walk.
- when an intentional walk is awarded by the umpire, it is considered the same as throwing a pitch.

Rule **3** **Players, Substitutes and Coaches**

SECTION 1 PLAYERS, POSITIONS

ART. 1 . . . Each of the two teams must start with nine players (S.P. – 10 players). In slow pitch only, a team may use an 11th player called the Extra Player (EP). In fast pitch only, a team may use the Designated Player/Flex option (DP/FLEX). The use of a DP/FLEX (F.P.) and the EP (S.P.) is optional.

NOTE: (S.P.) In slow pitch, the extra player (EP) is able to go on defense at any time unless the EP takes the pitcher's position. In that case the pitcher shall have met the requirements set for the pitcher (3-3-2 NOTE). When entering the game, the EP need only report to the umpire and declare who is being replaced.

ART. 2 . . . One or more players may be designated captain. The captain may represent the team in communications with umpires, provide the plate umpire with the team's lineup card, and inform all players as to special ground rules as announced by the plate umpire.

ART. 3 . . . The team's lineup card shall include first initial and last name, jersey number, position and batting order of each starting player and shall include each eligible substitute. Lineups become official after they have been exchanged, verified and then accepted by the plate umpire during the pregame conference.

PENALTY: After the lineup card has been submitted to and verified by the umpire and a change is subsequently made to a player/substitute name or number, or if a player/substitute is added to the lineup card, the umpire shall issue a team warning to the head coach of the team involved. Any further changes made to a player/substitute name or number results in the head coach being restricted to the dugout/bench area for the remainder of the game.

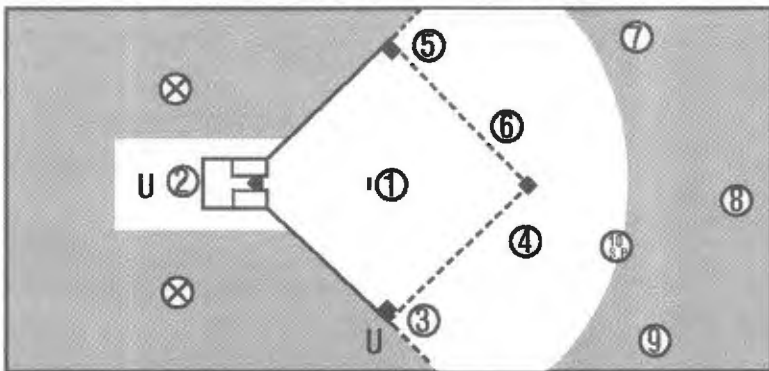


Figure 3-1

KEY: 1 (Pitcher); 2 (Catcher); 3 (1st Baseplayer); 4 (2nd Baseplayer); 5 (3rd Baseplayer); 6 (Shortstop); 7 (Left Fielder); 8 (Center Fielder); 9 (Right Fielder); 10 [Short Fielder (S.P.)]; U (Umpire).

ART. 4 . . . A player is designated in the scorebook by name, jersey number and by fielding position. A customary arrangement of the fielders is shown in Figure 3-1.

ART. 5 . . . At the time of the pitch, all fielders shall be on fair ground except the catcher who shall be in the catcher's box. (6-2-9)

ART. 6 . . . A player may change to a different fielding position at any time, except as in 3-3-2 NOTE.

SECTION 2 UNIFORMS, PLAYER EQUIPMENT

ART. 1 . . . Uniforms of all team members shall be of the same color and style. State associations may, on an individual basis, permit a player to participate while wearing a different style uniform for religious reasons, inclement weather, etc.

ART. 2 . . . A number on the back of each player's jersey is required and shall be at least 6 inches high. The number must be of solid color contrasting with the color of shirt. The numbers may have a contrasting color border, which shall not exceed $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. No players on the same team shall wear identical numbers (0 and 00 are considered the same number).

ART. 3 . . . The school's official uniform (including uniform jersey, and/or pants/shorts/skirts, etc., visible undergarments, socks, stockings, caps and headwear) may bear only a single manufacturer's logo/trademark/reference (partial or whole) that does not exceed $2\frac{1}{4}$ square inches with no dimension exceeding $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches on each item.

ART. 4 . . . One American flag (2 inch x 3 inch maximum) may be worn or occupy space on the jersey. By state association adoption, for special occasions, a commemorative or memorial patch, not to exceed 4 square inches, may be worn on the jersey.

ART. 5 . . . Headwear (caps, visors, headbands, ribbons, etc.) may be mixed.

- If worn, headwear must be white, black, beige or school colors (the colors are not required to be the same for team members). The logo may be any color.
- Plastic visors and bandannas are prohibited.
- Any head coverings worn for religious reasons must be made of non-abrasive, soft materials and must fit securely so that the head coverings are unlikely to come off during play. Head coverings worn for medical reasons require state association approval.

NOTE: The state association shall be notified after the contest if there is a concern as to whether or not the head covering was worn for religious reasons.

ART. 6 . . . Uniform sleeve lengths may vary among players. However, sleeves of each individual player shall be approximately the same length and shall not be ragged, frayed or slit.

ART. 7 . . . Exposed undergarments, if worn, are considered part of the official uniform. All exposed undergarments shall be a solid, single color: black, white, gray or a school color.

- For individual players, exposed upper-body undergarments do not have to be the same color as exposed lower-body undergarments.
- For all team members, exposed upper-body undergarments shall be the same solid, single color, and all exposed lower-body undergarments shall be of the same solid, single color.
- Garments other than team uniforms – such as arm sleeves, leg sleeves, and tights – are permissible. Anything worn on the arm or leg is a sleeve, except a brace, and shall meet the color restrictions.

EXCEPTION: Any wristband with a playbook/playcard attached shall be considered equipment and is permitted as long as it is a single, solid color, and it is not optic yellow. It does not have to match the color of the upper garment. It shall only be worn on the non-pitching arm.

ART. 8 . . . A uniform shall not have any dangerous or reflective buttons or ornaments.

ART. 9 . . . A pitcher shall not wear any item on the pitching hand, wrist, arm or thighs which may, in the umpire's judgment, be distracting to the batter.

ART. 10 . . . Players shall wear/utilize uniforms/equipment properly and as designed by the manufacturer.

PENALTY: (Arts. 1 through 10) Illegal equipment shall be removed. If the uniform violation can be corrected in a reasonable amount of time (as determined by the umpire), the violation shall be remedied before the player(s) may participate. If the violation cannot be corrected, the player(s) may participate and the umpire shall notify the head coach of the infraction upon discovery and refer the infraction to the state association.

ART. 11 . . . Shoes are required equipment. All players must wear shoes with plastic, nylon, canvas, leather or similar synthetic material uppers. The soles may be smooth, have soft or hard rubber cleats or rectangular metal cleats. Metal cleats shall not extend beyond $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch from the sole and shall not be round. Shoes with detachable rubber or metal cleats that screw into the sole of the shoes are permitted.

NOTE: Metal toe plates are permitted.

ART. 12 . . . Hard and unyielding items (guards, casts, braces, splints, etc.) must be padded with a closed-cell, slow-recovery foam padding no less than $\frac{1}{2}$ " thick. Knee and ankle braces which are unaltered from the manufacturer's original design/production do not require any additional padding/covering.

NOTE: Each state association may, in keeping with applicable laws, authorize exceptions to NFHS playing rules to provide reasonable accommodations to individual participants with disabilities and/or special needs, as well as those individuals with unique and extenuating circumstances. The accommodations should not fundamentally alter the sport, heighten risk to the athlete/others or place opponents at a disadvantage.

ART. 13 . . . Any equipment judged by the umpire to be potentially dangerous is illegal.

PENALTY: (Section 2) See 3-6-1 PENALTY.

SECTION 3 SUBSTITUTING

ART. 1 . . . A player who is not listed as an eligible substitute on the lineup card shall not be prohibited from playing. (3-1-3 PENALTY)

ART. 2 . . . A substitute may replace any player when the ball is dead or time has been called. The substitute or coach shall report to the plate umpire at the time of the change by stating name and shirt number of the:

- player entering the game for the first time.
- player re-entering.

- c. FLEX who is batting for the DP.
- d. DP who is playing defense for the FLEX.
- e. player being replaced in the batting order and the position to be occupied in the field if the player is not a courtesy runner.

NOTE: A pitcher may be removed as a pitcher and return as a pitcher only once per inning provided the return does not violate either the substitution or charged conference rule.

ART. 3 . . . The plate umpire shall record all substitutions on the lineup card and then announce immediately any change(s) to the opposing team's head coach. Projected substitutions are not permitted. If there is no announcement of substitutions, a substitute has entered the game when:

- a. a runner takes the place of a runner who has been replaced.
- b. a pitcher takes a position on the pitcher's plate.
- c. a fielder reaches the position usually occupied by the fielder who has been replaced.
- d. a batter takes a position in the batter's box.
- e. and, in each of the above situations, when the ball is declared live by the plate umpire.

ART. 4 . . . A substitute or courtesy runner shall not enter the contest unreported. (3-6-7 PENALTY, 8-9-7)

ART. 5 . . . Any player, starter or substitute may be withdrawn from the game and re-entered once, provided such player occupies the same batting position whenever in the lineup. A starter and any substitute for a starter may not be in the game at the same time. A violation results in illegal substitution.

ART. 6 . . . (F.P.) A team may use the DP/FLEX option provided it is made known at the pregame conference.

- a. The DP's name is indicated on the lineup as one of the nine hitters in the batting order.
- b. The name of the player for whom the DP is batting (FLEX) will be placed in the 10th position in the lineup.
- c. The DP must remain in the same position in the batting order for the entire game.
- d. The DP may be substituted for at any time by a legal substitute or the FLEX may play offense for the DP. In either case, the DP will leave the game. If replaced by a substitute, the DP position remains in the lineup. A starting DP may re-enter one time, provided the DP returns to the original position in the batting order.
 1. If replaced by the FLEX, this reduces the number of players from 10 to nine. The game may legally end with nine players.
 2. If the DP re-enters or a substitute enters as the DP and the FLEX was batting in the DP's spot, the FLEX can: a) return to the number 10 position and play defense, or b) leave the game if the DP plays defense for the FLEX.
- e. The DP may play defense at any position. Should the DP play defense for a player other than the FLEX, that player will continue to bat but not play defense, and is not considered to have left the game. The DP may play defense

for the FLEX and the FLEX is considered to have left the game, reducing the number of players from 10 to nine.

- f. The FLEX may be substituted for at any time by a legal substitute or the DP may play defense for the FLEX. In either case, the FLEX will leave the game. If replaced by a substitute, the FLEX position remains in the lineup. The FLEX may re-enter the game one time provided the FLEX returns to the 10th position in the lineup.
 1. If replaced by the DP, this reduces the number of players from 10 to nine. The game may legally end with nine players.
 2. If the FLEX re-enters or a substitute enters as the FLEX and the DP was playing defense in the FLEX player's spot, the DP can return to batting only, play defense for another player or leave the game if the FLEX plays offense for the DP.
- g. Placing the FLEX into one of the first nine positions for someone other than the DP's position is considered an illegal substitution. The illegal substitute shall be removed from the game and restricted to the dugout/bench. (2-57-3, 3-4 PENALTIES)

ART. 7 . . . (S.P.) By state association adoption, a team may use an 11th player called an Extra Player (EP).

- a. An Extra Player is optional. If one is used, it must be made known prior to the start of the game and the player must be listed on the lineup card in the regular batting order.
- b. The EP must remain in the same position in the batting order for the entire game.
- c. If the EP is used, all 11 players must bat and any 10 may be used on defense. Defensive positions may be changed, but the batting order must remain the same.
- d. The EP may be substituted for at any time, either by a pinch runner or by a pinch hitter, who then becomes the EP. The substitute must be a player who has not been in the game. The starting EP may re-enter in the same spot in the batting order.

ART. 8 . . . If a team is playing with nine (F.P.), 10 (S.P. or F.P. if DP/FLEX is used) or 11 (S.P. if an EP is used) players, and there are no available substitutes when a runner advancing on an awarded base or after reaching base is unable to continue:

- a. The previous batter not on base is allowed to replace that player as a temporary runner until the runner is put out, scores or the half-inning ends.
- b. When the player who could not continue is scheduled to bat, an out shall be called.
- c. When the half-inning ends and the team assumes a defensive position. (4-3-1g)
- d. Once a team has gone short-handed if an eligible player becomes available, that player may fill the empty space in the lineup.

ART. 9 . . . Any player who exhibits signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion (such as loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion, or balance problems) shall be immediately removed from the game and shall

not return to play until cleared by an appropriate health-care professional. (NFHS Suggested Guidelines for Management of Concussion, Appendix B.)

ART. 10 . . . A coach or athlete who is bleeding, has an open wound, has any amount of blood on the uniform, or has blood on their person, shall be directed to leave the game until the bleeding is stopped, the wound is covered, the uniform and/or body is appropriately cleaned, and/or the uniform is changed before returning to competition. If medical care or treatment can be administered in a reasonable amount of time, the individual does not have to leave the game. The length of time that is considered reasonable is umpire judgment. The re-entry rule would apply to players taken out of the game for this rule. (Communicable Disease Procedures, Appendix D)

SECTION 4 ILLEGAL SUBSTITUTE

ART. 1 . . . Illegal offensive or defensive players may be discovered by the umpire or either team anytime after the ball becomes live and an illegal substitute has taken a position as:

- a runner the illegal substitute has replaced or as a batter in the batter's box;
- a pitcher on the pitcher's plate, or as a fielder reaching a position usually occupied by the fielder being replaced; or
- a courtesy runner if that player has violated the courtesy runner rule.

PENALTY: (Art. 1) Restricted to the dugout/bench for the remainder of the game. (Art. 1a, c) The player is also called out.

ART. 2 . . . Illegal offensive players may be discovered:

- a. when in the batter's box, the ball is live and/or before the batter-runner reaches first base, or is put out and before a pitch is delivered to the next batter of either team;
- b. when the illegal batter-runner or runner advances, scores or causes a play to be made that allows another runner(s) to advance or score, and the infraction is detected before the next pitch by either team;
- c. when an illegal batter-runner or runner advances, scores or causes a play to be made that allows another runner(s) to advance or score, and the infraction is detected after the next pitch by either team;
- d. in a game-ending play prior to all infielders and/or umpires leaving the diamond.

PENALTY: (Art. 2) The illegal substitute is restricted to the bench/dugout for the remainder of the game. (Art. 2a, b) The player is called out. (Art. 2c, d) If still on base, the player is called out. (Art. 2a) The proper batter is considered to have lost the turn at bat. The next proper batter shall bat. (Art. 2b, d) Play is nullified. Outs made on play stand. Runners not put out return to base(s) occupied at the time of the pitch. (Art. 2c) Play stands.

NOTE: The penalty for illegal substitution takes precedence over the batting-out-of-order penalty.

ART. 3 . . . Illegal defensive player is discovered before the next pitch to either team when:

- involved in a play with batted ball;
- a non-batted ball is handled or touched by an illegal substitute that leads to a runner being put out;
- a non-batted ball is handled or touched by an illegal substitute that alters the play, but no runner is put out (i.e., on an overthrow on a stealing runner, the illegal substitute retrieves ball and prevents runner from advancing farther).

PENALTIES: (Art. 3)

- The illegal player/substitute shall be restricted to the dugout/bench for the remainder of the game. (Art. 3a, b) Team on offense has option of taking the play or accepting the penalty (out is nullified, runners return to base occupied at time of pitch.) (Art. 3c) Umpires may award bases based on judgment and the circumstances concerning the play. (Art. 3a) The batter is allowed to bat again with the same count. (Art. 3b, c) The pitch is canceled if it is a strike or stands if it is a ball.**
- After another pitch, all play stands but the illegal player/substitute is still restricted to the dugout/bench for the remainder of the game.**
- Any time a non-batted ball is handled or touched by an illegal substitute and does not lead to a runner being put out or after a play, the play stands and the illegal substitute is restricted to the dugout/bench.**

SECTION 5 COACHING

ART. 1 . . . Prior to the start of the game at the pregame conference, the head coach shall be responsible for verifying to the plate umpire that the lineup card is correct, all players are legally equipped, and that players and equipment are in compliance with all NFHS rules.

PENALTY: (Art. 1) The game may not begin until the head coach attends the pregame conference and fulfills the responsibilities noted above. (3-1-3)

NOTE: Although umpires have the right to inspect equipment, the responsibility for proper equipment rests with coaches, student-athletes and the parents/guardians.

ART. 2 . . . Any member of the team at bat who has not been restricted or ejected may occupy each coach's box while that team is at bat. The person in the coach's box may address base runners or the batter.

ART. 3 . . . Any time a coach is in a live-ball area to confer with players or an umpire, or to occupy a coach's box, the coach shall be attired in a school uniform or jersey/coaching shirt with slacks, shorts or other leg coverings in school colors or colors of khaki, black, white or gray. Cut-offs or any type of jeans are prohibited. Jackets are not considered part of the coach's uniform.

PENALTY: (Art. 3) A coach not dressed in appropriate attire shall not be permitted in the field of play following the pregame conference for the duration of the game or until the situation has been remedied.

ART. 4 . . . A coach shall not physically assist a runner during playing action.

PENALTY: (Art. 4) The runner is out and the ball is in play. (8-6-5)

ART. 5 . . . Offensive team personnel, other than the base coach, shall not be near a base to which a runner is advancing or returning; nor shall anyone fail to vacate any area (including a coach's box) needed by a fielder in an attempt to put out a batter or runner. (8-6-16)

PENALTY: (Art. 5) The ball is dead. The runner closest to home is out and all runners not out must return to the last base touched at the time of the interference.

EXCEPTION: If a thrown live ball accidentally touches a base coach in the coach's box, or a pitched or thrown ball touches an umpire, the ball is live and in play.

ART. 6 . . . Offensive team members (excluding a runner or retired runner) shall not interfere with a fair batted ball or foul fly ball.

PENALTY: (Art. 6) The ball is dead immediately and the batter is out. If, in the judgment of the umpire, the interference prevented a possible double play, the batter and runner closest to home shall be declared out. Other runners shall be returned to the last base touched at the time of interference. (7-4-12, 7-5-4, 8-6-16)

ART. 7 . . . A coach may leave the bench/dugout to attend to a player who becomes ill or injured if recognized by the umpire.

SECTION 6 BENCH AND FIELD CONDUCT

ART. 1 . . . Team personnel shall wear or use legal and/or required equipment. (1-4, 1-5, 1-6, 1-7, 1-8, 3-2, 3-5-1)

PENALTY: (Art. 1) Illegal equipment shall be removed or made legal. The umpire shall issue a team warning. The next offender and the head coach shall be restricted to the dugout/bench for the remainder of the game. (7-4-2)

ART. 2 . . . A player shall not fake a tag without the ball.

ART. 3 . . . A team member shall not carelessly throw a bat.

ART. 4 . . . Hitting the ball to teammates on defense is prohibited after the game has started.

ART. 5 . . . Entering the area behind the catcher while the opposing pitcher and catcher are in their positions is prohibited.

ART. 6 . . . Only the batter, runner(s), on-deck batter, coaches in the coach's box, bat/ball shaggers or one of the nine players on defense (S.P. 10) are permitted to be outside the designated dugout/bench or designated warm-up areas. (3-5-7)

NOTE: Bench personnel are permitted to engage in throwing and running activities during the one minute designated for the pitcher to throw five warm-up pitches at the beginning of each half inning.

ART. 7 . . . Players and substitutes shall not enter the contest unreported.

ART. 8 . . . Use of amplifiers, electronic devices that amplify the voice or bull-horns for coaching purposes during the course of the game is prohibited.

ART. 9 . . . Team personnel shall not call "time" or use any command or commit any act for the purpose of causing an illegal pitch. (6-2-4e)

ART. 10 . . . Objects, other than stopwatches and scorekeeping materials/devices, in the coach's box are prohibited.

PENALTY: (Arts. 2 through 10) The umpire shall issue a team warning to the coach of the team involved and the next offender on that team shall be restricted to the dugout/bench for the remainder of the game. (Art. 2) A fake tag without the ball is obstruction (8-4-3b). (Art. 7) The head coach is also restricted to the dugout/bench for the remainder of the game for a second violation. (Arts. 8, 9, 10) For coaches who violate, depending on the severity of the act, the umpire may issue a warning, restrict the offender to bench/dugout for the remainder of the game or eject the offender.

ART. 11 . . . Electronic devices ~~may be used within the dugout~~ for coaching purposes during the course of the game. (1-8-6)

ART. 12 . . . No participant, coach or administrator shall use alcohol or any form of tobacco product (e-cigarette or similar items) beginning with arrival at the competition site until departure following the completion of the contest.

ART. 13 . . . Unsporting acts shall not be committed, including, but not limited to:

- use of words or actions to incite or try to incite spectators to demonstrate.
- use of profanity, intimidation and/or deceitful tactics, baiting or taunting; or
NOTE: The NFHS disapproves of any form of taunting which is intended or designed to embarrass, ridicule or demean others under any circumstances, including race, religion, gender or national origin.

c. behavior in any manner not in accordance with the spirit of fair play.

ART. 14 . . . Team personnel shall not charge an umpire.

ART. 15 . . . Arguing ball and strike calls or other umpire judgment calls is prohibited.

ART. 16 . . . Team personnel shall not deliberately throw bats, helmets or any other piece of equipment.

PENALTY: (Arts. 11 through 16) The umpire shall eject the offender from the game, unless the offense is judged to be of a minor nature. If minor, the umpire may warn the offender and eject if the offense is repeated (Art. 13). For coaches who violate, the umpire may restrict the offender to bench/dugout for the remainder of the game, or eject the offender.

ART. 17 . . . Team personnel shall not intentionally remove any lines of the batter's box or on the field of play.

PENALTY: (Art. 17) A strike shall be called on the batter if a member of the offense intentionally removes the line and a ball awarded to the batter if a member of the defense intentionally erases a line. A team warning shall be issued, with the next offense resulting in a strike/ball, the offender and the head coach being restricted to the dugout.

ART. 18 . . . Initiating malicious contact is prohibited.

ART. 19 . . . Team personnel shall not participate in a fight or leave their position/bench area when a fight has broken out or may break out. Coaches who enter the field to restrain combatants from their team shall not be considered to have violated this rule.

NOTE: Fighting is any attempt by a player or non-player to strike or engage an opponent in a combative manner unrelated to softball. Such acts include, but are not limited to, attempts to strike an opponent(s) with the arm(s), hand(s), leg(s) or foot (feet), whether or not there is contact.

PENALTY: (Arts. 18, 19) Considered serious offenses, the offender shall be ejected. (Art. 18) If by the offense, the play is dead immediately, the offender is declared out unless the player has already been put out or scored and all runners return to the last base touched at the time of the malicious contact (8-6-14). If by the defense, the offender is ejected at the end of playing action.

ART. 20 . . . Any participant restricted to the bench/dugout for the remainder of the game shall be ejected for subsequent misconduct. A player who is restricted or ejected shall remain in the dugout/bench area. A coach who is ejected shall leave the vicinity (out of sight and out of sound) of the playing area immediately and is prohibited from any further contact (direct or indirect) with the team during the remainder of the game. Failure to comply with the rules of ejection shall result in the game being forfeited.

NOTE: State association policies will determine the conditions under which a game may or may not continue if the coach is ejected, and shall determine penalties to be imposed if an ejected coach violates the rule.

ART. 21 . . . Batters shall not use a damaged bat that was previously removed from the game by an umpire.

PENALTY: The batter shall be called out and the offender and head coach shall be restricted to the dugout for the remainder of the game.

SECTION 7 CHARGED CONFERENCES

ART. 1 . . . Each team, when on defense, may be granted not more than three charged conferences without penalty during a seven-inning game to permit coaches or their representatives to confer with a defensive player or players. In any extra-inning game, each team shall be permitted one charged conference without penalty each inning while on defense. The number of charged conferences permitted is not cumulative. A request for time for a conference may be made by a coach, player, substitute or bench personnel. Time granted for an obviously incapacitated player shall not constitute a charged conference. A conference is not charged when the pitcher is removed as pitcher. This defensive team charged conference rule coverage is effective when the ball first becomes live at the start of each half-inning.

NOTE: If the incoming pitcher has already pitched in the game, the pitcher will receive five warm-up pitches, unless returning to pitch in the same half-inning. When a pitcher

is removed by rule and the incoming pitcher has not pitched in the game, the umpire is authorized to permit additional warm-up pitches.

PENALTY: (Art. 1) After three charged conferences in a seven-inning game, or for any charged conference in excess of one in each extra inning, the pitcher shall be removed as pitcher for the duration of the game.

ART. 2 . . . Each team, when on offense, may be granted not more than one charged conference per inning to permit the coach or any of that team's personnel to confer with base runners, the batter, the on-deck batter or other offensive team personnel. The umpire shall deny any subsequent offensive team requests for charged conferences. This offensive team charged conference rule coverage is effective when the ball first becomes live at the start of each half inning. Time granted for an obviously incapacitated player shall not constitute a charged conference.

ART. 3 . . . When either team has a charged conference, the other team may also have a conference which is not charged, provided the non-charged conference concludes when the opposing team's charged conference concludes, thus not delaying the game.

Rule **4** Starting and Ending Game

SECTION 1 STARTING A GAME

ART. 1 . . . The home coach shall decide whether the grounds and other conditions are suitable for starting the game.

ART. 2 . . . Pregame Conference – The pregame conference shall take place no later than five minutes prior to the game and before the home team takes the field. During the pregame conference:

- There shall be no balls hit or thrown in live-ball territory.
- The home team and then the visiting team shall deliver their respective lineup cards, in duplicate, to the plate umpire. The umpire shall then permit inspection by both captains/coaches. The substitution regulations as in Rule 3 are then in effect.
- Ground rules, as in 4-1-3, shall be announced.
- Umpires shall ask head coaches to verify that their players are legally and properly equipped and shall remind participants about proper sporting behavior.

ART. 3 . . . Ground Rules – If there are unusual conditions, such as spectators or obstacles too near the playing field, the home coach shall propose special ground rules. If sanctioned by the visiting team, these shall be enforced. If the teams cannot agree, the umpires shall formulate ground rules. Ground rules shall not supersede an NFHS softball rule.

- The field should be clearly marked. Markings may include flags on foul poles along the foul lines past first and third base and vertical foul-line markings on any wall that limits the outfield.
- When a fair or foul ball fly lands near a stand or fence, Rule 7-4-11 applies. If there is a screen behind the catcher or any permanent obstruction in front of the stands, a batted ball that goes behind these becomes dead. It is recommended that no such obstruction be less than 25 feet from the diamond.
- Wild pitches, overthrows and batted balls that go over or through a fence or into a dugout are governed by Rule 8-4-3; if the field has unusual obstructions, ground rules should attempt to be similar to this rule.
- For special field conditions, such as a drain pipe that makes a spot where it is impossible or very difficult for a fielder to retrieve the ball, the ball should become dead if it goes to that area, and each runner's advance should be limited to two bases.
- For an unfenced field, a chalk or imaginary out-of-bounds line should be established to define live-ball area. If cars are parked along the out-of-play lines, umpires should consider these the same as bleachers and the ball becomes dead if it bounces into the line of cars. The umpires should anticipate such a situation and announce the ground rule in advance.

ART. 4 . . . The visiting team shall be the first to take its turn at bat. On a neutral field or by agreement, either team may be designated as Home Team.

ART. 5 . . . The game begins when the umpire calls "Play Ball."

ART. 6 . . . After the game starts (when the umpire calls "Play Ball"), the umpires are sole judges as to whether conditions, including grounds, are fit for play, and as to whether conditions are suitable for starting the second game of a scheduled doubleheader (two games between the same teams during the same day).

SECTION 2 ENDING A GAME

ART. 1 . . . A game ends when the team behind in score has completed its turn at bat in the seventh inning or in any extra inning. If the home team scores a go-ahead run in the bottom of the seventh inning or in any extra inning, the game is terminated at that point.

EXCEPTION: If a fair batted ball clears the home run fence in flight, all runs score before the game is terminated. (8-4-3f)

ART. 2 . . . If a game ends because of weather conditions, or darkness interferes with play so that the game is called (ended) by the umpire, it is a regulation game provided:

- five full innings have been played; or if the home team has scored an equal or greater number of runs in four or four and a fraction turns at bat than the visiting team has scored in five turns.
- play has gone beyond five full innings and is called when the teams have not had an equal number of completed turns at bat. The score shall be the same as it was at the end of the last completed inning; unless the home team, in its half of the incomplete inning, scores a run (or runs) which equals or

exceeds the opponent's score, in which case, the final score shall be as recorded when the game is called.

ART. 3 . . . A state association may adopt game-ending procedures that determine how games are ended, including suspended games. However, if a state association does not have established game-ending procedures, by mutual agreement of the opposing coaches and the plate umpire, any remaining play may be shortened at any time or the game terminated.

NOTES:

1. If a state association has adopted game-ending procedures, only those game-ending procedures may be used should the opposing coaches wish to terminate a game.
2. By state association adoption, the number of innings for one or both games in a doubleheader may be scheduled for less than seven innings. Current state association game-ending procedures still apply.

ART. 4 . . . If a game is called before completion of the number of innings and conditions as specified in 4-2-2, the umpire shall declare the contest "no game" unless play is terminated by 4-2-3.

ART. 5 . . . If a regulation called game has a tie score when ended as in 4-2-2, it is a tie game unless the state association has any prescribed game-ending procedures. Batting and fielding records are counted, but the game is not counted in computing percentages of games won and lost.

ART. 6 . . . By state association adoption, a tie-breaker procedure may be instituted at a point in the game specified by the state association.

SECTION 3 FORFEITED GAME

ART. 1 . . . A game shall be forfeited to the offended team by the umpire when a team:

- a. is late in appearing or in beginning play after the umpire calls "Play Ball." State associations are authorized to specify the time frame and/or circumstances before a forfeit will be declared for a late arrival by one of the teams.
- b. refuses to continue play after the game has started.
- c. delays more than one minute in resuming play after the umpire calls "Play Ball" or in obeying the umpire's order to remove a player or coach for violation of the rules.
- d. persists in tactics designed to delay or shorten the game.
- e. willfully and persistently violates any one of the rules after being warned by the umpire.
- f. cannot provide 9 players (F.P.), 10 players (S.P.) or 11 players (S.P. if an EP is used) to start the game.
- g. cannot provide 8 players (F.P.), 9 players (S.P.) or 10 players (S.P. if an EP is used) in the batting order to finish the game. An out is called in that spot of the batting order (7-4-1). If that player has safely reached base, then the most recent batter not on base is allowed to run for that player, until that player is put out, scores, or the half-inning ends.
- h. on its home field, fails to comply with the umpire's order to put the field in condition for play.

ART. 2 . . . Score of a forfeited game is 7 to 0 unless the game is forfeited after the number of innings required for a regulation game and the offending team is behind. Then the score remains as recorded. If the offending team is leading, the score shall be 7 to 0; otherwise, the score shall be the score at the time of the forfeit if the team ahead at the time of the forfeit is not the offending team. All individual and team averages shall be included in the official records, except that no pitcher shall be credited with a victory or charged with a loss in such a game if it is not a regulation game. (4-2)

SECTION 4 PROTESTED GAME

It is optional on the part of a state association as to whether protests are permitted. When allowed, protests are permitted regarding rules one through nine only. When protests are submitted to organizations which do allow the filing, such protest shall be submitted using a prescribed procedure (10-2-3i). All individual and team averages shall be included in the official records, except that no pitcher shall be credited with a victory or a loss in such a game if the game is not completed.

Rule 5 **Dead Ball and Suspension of Play**

SECTION 1 DEAD BALL

ART. 1 . . . Ball becomes dead immediately when (Table 5-1):

- a. a pitch touches a batter or the batter's clothing. (8-1-2b, c)
NOTE: (F.P.) The ball becomes dead even though the batter strikes at it.
- b. the ball is illegally batted (7-4-8, 7-4-2) or comes in contact with the bat a second time. (7-4-13)
- c. the batter enters the batter's box with an illegal bat. (7-4-2)
- d. any batted ball, while on or over foul ground,
 1. touches any object other than the ground or any person other than a fielder;
 2. goes directly from the bat to the catcher's protector, mask or person without first touching the catcher's glove or hand; or
 3. becomes an uncaught foul.
- e. there is interference by a runner or a retired runner (7-4-4, 8-1-2a, 8-2-5, 8-2-6, 8-6-10, 8-6-11, 8-6-12, 8-6-14, 8-6-18) or by any person. (3-5-4, 3-5-5, 8-6-16)
- f. a fair batted ball, which is on or over fair ground,
 1. touches a runner or an umpire before touching any fielder and before passing any fielder other than the pitcher (8-1-2a, 8-4-1f, 8-6-11);
 2. touches a runner after passing through or by a fielder and another fielder could have made an out;
 3. touches a spectator; or
 4. goes over, through or wedges in the field fence.

TABLE 5-1**BALL DEAD IMMEDIATELY****DEAD-BALL TABLES**

Activity		References	Awards or Penalties	References
1.	Pitch touches batter (F.P.).	5-1-1a	Batter awarded first base except when no effort to avoid pitch is required.	8-1-2b, c; 7-3-2
2.	Illegally batted ball.	5-1-1b	Batter is out. Runners return.	7-4-8, 7-4-2
3.	Ball hit twice in fair and sometimes foul territory.	5-1-1b	Batter is out. Runners return.	7-4-13, 8-2-6
4.	Uncaught foul.	5-1-1d(3)	Runners return to bases occupied at time of pitch.	8-3-2 EXC.
5.	Spectator interference.	5-1-1d, f, g	Umpire judgment in awarding bases or imposing penalty to nullify interference.	8-4-3j
6.	Interference by runner.	5-1-1e	Interferer is out. Other runners return to base occupied at time of infraction.	8-6-10
7.	Interference by retired runner.	5-1-1e	Runner closest to home is out. Other runners return.	8-6-16c
8.	Interference by runner (foul fly).	5-1-1m	Interferer is out. Other runners return. Foul ball on the batter.	8-6-10b
9.	Interference by coach or others connected with the team (thrown ball).	5-1-1g	For interference by coach, runner is out. For interference by others connected with the offensive team, see 3-5-5 PENALTY and 8-6-16.	3-5-5, 7-5-4, 8-6-16
10.	Interference by coach or other nonplayers connected with the team (batted ball).	5-1-1e	If interference prevented possible double play, the batter and runner closest to home would be declared out.	3-5-6, 7-5-4, 8-6-16
11.	Fair ball over fence in flight or prevented by spectator or player's detached equipment.	5-1-1f	Award all runners home plate.	8-4-3d, 8-4-3f
12.	Fair ball touches a spectator.	5-1-1f	Award all runners appropriate number of bases in umpire's judgment.	8-4-3j
13.	Fair ball bounces over, through or lodges in fence	5-1-1f	Award all runners two bases.	8-4-3g
14.	Fair ball touches runner before it touches a fielder or after it passes any fielder other than the pitcher and another fielder has a play.	5-1-1f	Hit runner is out. Batter is awarded first base and credited with a fielder's choice. Others return to base occupied at time of interference unless runner intentionally interferes with ball or fielder.	8-1-2a, 8-4-1f, 8-6-11
15.	Fair ball touches umpire before it touches an infielder or passes any infielder except the pitcher.	5-1-1f	Runners return to bases occupied at time of interference unless forced by batter-runner. Batter awarded first base and credited with a single	8-1-2a

16.	A thrown ball, not a pitch, which becomes a blocked ball.	5-1-1g	Award all runners two bases from point of release.	6-4-3e
17.	A pitched ball that becomes blocked (F.P.).	5-1-1g	Award all runners one base from time of pitch (F.P.).	8-4-3c
18.	Umpire handles live ball or calls time to inspect the ball or for other reasons, including 5-2-1.	5-1-1h	Runners return to bases they had reached or passed when ball becomes dead.	5-2-1
19.	Fair or foul ball is caught by fielder, who then leaves the field of play with one or both feet.	5-1-1i	Award all runners one base from time the ball became dead except when caught ball is third out.	5-1-1i NOTE, 8-4-3h
20.	A live ball is intentionally carried, kicked, pushed or thrown into dead-ball territory.	8-4-3h	Award all runners two bases from the time the ball became dead.	8-4-3j.
21.	Offensive team personnel calls "Time" or uses any other command or commits an act for the purpose of trying to cause the opposing pitcher to violate the pitching rule.	5-1-1j	No runners are allowed to advance. Team warning for first offense. Subsequent offenders ejected.	3-6-9 PEN.
22.	After each strike or ball or as soon as the ball hits the ground (S.P.).	5-1-1k	All runners return to bases they occupied at time of pitch.	8-5-7
23.	Infielder intentionally drops fair fly, fair line drive or fair bunt in flight with at least first base occupied and less than two outs.	5-1-1l	Batter-runner is out. Runners return to their base.	8-2-10
24.	Illegal pitch but not released, or released to a base.	5-1-1o, p; 6-2-7 PEN. (F.P.), 6-2-2	Batter remains at bat and is awarded a ball.	6-2-7 PEN., 6-4-12
25.	Award intentional base on balls.	2-65-2, 5-1-1k	Batter awarded first base. Runners remain at bases occupied at time of walk unless forced to advance.	8-1-1c
26.	Base runner leaves base before pitcher releases pitch (F.P.).	6-2-4c	No pitch is declared and runner is out.	8-6-18
27.	Base runner leaves base before pitched ball reaches home plate (S.P.).	6-4-9b (S.P.)	No pitch is declared and runner is out.	8-6-17
28.	Quick return pitch before batter has taken position or is off balance.	6-2-4b (F.P.), 6-4-9 (S.P.)	All subsequent action on pitch is cancelled. No pitch is declared.	6-2-4 (F.P.) PEN., 6-4-9c (S.P.) PEN.
29.	Fielder loses possession and ball enters dead area.	8-4-3e, g	All runners awarded one base past last base touched at time ball enters deadball territory.	6-4-3e PEN. EXCEPTION 1
30.	Batted ball hitting runner while touching base.	8-1-2a EFFECTS	Batter awarded first base. Runners remain at base occupied at time of pitch unless forced to advance.	8-1-2a EFFECTS
31.	Illegal slide.	8-6-13	Runner is out. Other runners return to last base touched prior to interference.	8-6-13

32.	Malicious interference.	8-6-14	Runner is out and ejected. Other runners return to last base touched prior to interference.	5-1-1e, 3-6-18
33.	Batter-runner steps backward toward home plate.	8-2-5	Batter-runner is out. Runners return to bases occupied at time of infraction.	8-2-5
34.	For ball hitting loose equipment on field of team at bat.	5-1-1g	Runner being played on is out. Otherwise runners return to bases occupied at time the ball is declared dead.	8-6-15 PEN.
35.	For ball hitting loose equipment on field of team on defense.	5-1-1g	All runners advance two bases.	8-4-3e PEN.
36.	Interference by batter when attempted putout is by the catcher.	5-1-1p	Ball dead immediately. Batter is out. Runners return to last base touched at time of interference.	7-4-4
37.	Batter-runner fails to advance to first base and enters team area.	8-2-4	Batter-runner is out. Runners return to bases occupied at time of infraction.	6-2-4

DELAYED DEAD BALL

Activity		References	Awards or Penalties	References
1.	Illegal pitch released (F.P.).	5-1-2a	The pitch is ruled a ball if the ball is not hit or batter becomes base runner. Otherwise, if ball is hit and all runners do not advance one base safely, the team at bat has the choice of accepting the play or penalty.	6-1-1, 6-1-2, 6-1-3 PEN.
2.	Illegal pitch released (S.P.).	5-1-2a, 6-4-12	The pitch is ruled a ball. However, if the batter swings, there is no penalty for the illegal pitch.	6-1-4 (S.P.)
3.	Obstruction of batter by catcher or fielder.	5-1-2b	If batter and all runners do not advance at least one base, award batter first base and advance all other runners only if forced or result of play.	8-1-1d
4.	Intentionally touching batted ball with detached player equipment over fair territory.	5-1-2b	Award batter-runner and runners three bases if not made.	8-4-3d
5.	Intentionally touching thrown ball with detached player equipment.	5-1-2b	Award runners two bases if not made.	8-4-3d
6.	Interference by umpire with catcher throwing a non-batted ball (F.P.).	5-1-2c	If runner is not put out, runners return.	8-5-6
7.	Obstruction.	2-36, 5-1-3	If obstructed runner and all other runners hindered by the obstruction do not reach bases they otherwise would have reached, award runner or runners such bases.	8-4-3b
8.	Contact of any ball with illegal glove or mitt.	8-8-15	The offensive team will have the choice of the result of the play or having the penalty imposed.	8-8-15
9.	Deliberately removing batting helmet in live-ball territory while the ball is live.	5-1-2e	Team warning. Subsequent players and head coach on that team to violate rule are restricted to dugout/bench for the duration of the game.	3-6-1 PEN.

- g. a pitch or any other thrown ball;
 - 1. is touched by a spectator;
 - 2. is touched by nonparticipating team personnel;
 - 3. goes into a stand or players' bench (even if it rebounds to the field);
 - 4. goes over or through or wedges in the field fence (8-4-3c, g); or
 - 5. lodges in an umpire's equipment, or touches loose equipment. (1-8-3, 8-4-3k, 8-6-15, 2-2-3)
- h. the umpire handles a live ball, calls "Time" for inspecting the ball, or for any other reason, including items in Rule 5-2.
- i. a fielder, after catching a fair or foul batted ball (fly or line drive), leaves the field of play by stepping with one foot or by falling into a designated dead-ball area (i.e., bench, dugout, stand/bleacher, etc.).

NOTES: If a chalk line or imaginary line is used to determine dead-ball (out-of-play) territory, the line is considered in play.

 - 1. If the fielder's feet are touching the line or are in live-ball territory, the fielder is considered in the field of play and legally may field, catch or throw the ball without penalty.
 - 2. If the player's entire foot (no part of the foot is touching in live-ball territory) is beyond the line and touches dead-ball territory at the time the player catches, fields or throws the ball, the player has entered dead-ball territory, the ball is dead, no play is allowed.
 - 3. If a fielder has one foot in play and the other foot in the air, the fielder legally may catch, field or throw the ball unless the fielder's entire foot contacts the ground in dead-ball territory, at which time the ball becomes dead, no play is allowed, and the penalty is applied.
 - 4. If a fielder contacts dead-ball territory with any part of the body except the foot, the fielder is considered out of play. No play is allowed, and the penalty is applied. When the fielder completely leaves and then re-establishes position within live-ball territory (both feet in live-ball territory), a catch would be allowed.
- j. any personnel connected with the offensive team requests "Time" or uses any other command or commits an act for the purpose of trying to cause the opposing pitcher to commit an illegal pitch.
- k. after each strike or ball, as soon as a pitch touches the ground (S.P. only), or when an intentional base on balls is awarded. (S.P. and F.P.)
- l. an infielder intentionally drops a fair fly, fair line drive or fair bunt in flight with at least first base occupied and with less than two outs.

EXCEPTION: Infield fly rule. (8-2-9)
- m. a runner interferes with a fielder attempting to catch a foul fly.
- n. the batter-runner steps backward toward home plate to avoid or delay being tagged out.
- o. an illegal pitch occurs, but no pitch is delivered to the batter.
- p. there is interference by a batter. (7-4-4 PENALTY)

ART. 2 . . . It is a delayed dead ball when (see Table 5-1):

- an illegal pitch is delivered.
- a catcher or any fielder obstructs a batter or obstructs the ball through use of detached player equipment. (8-1-1d, 8-4-3b, 8-4-3d)
- the umpire interferes (F.P.) with a catcher who is attempting to throw a non-batted ball.
- a ball touches an illegal glove/mitt.
- anyone who is required to wear a batting helmet deliberately removes the helmet while the ball is live.

ART. 3 . . . The ball becomes dead when time is taken to make an award when a catcher or any fielder illegally obstructs a runner. (8-4-3b PENALTY)

ART. 4 . . . After a dead-ball situation, the ball becomes live when the umpire calls and/or signals "Play Ball."

SECTION 2 SUSPENSION OF PLAY

ART. 1 . . . "Time" shall be called by the umpire and play suspended:

- as in (5-1-1, 5-1-2, 5-1-3).
- when the umpire considers the weather or ground conditions unfit for play.
NOTE: After 30 minutes, the umpire may declare the game ended or, by state association adoption, suspended.
- when a player, bench personnel or spectator is ordered from the field of play, or player is ordered to secure protective equipment.
- when an umpire or player is incapacitated, unless injury occurs during a live ball, then time shall not be called until no further advance or putout is possible.

NOTE: If necessary, the umpire may suspend play immediately if, in the umpire's judgment, further play may cause injury or jeopardize a participant's safety. (10-2-3g)

- when a player or coach is granted time for a substitution, conference with the pitcher, or for similar cause.
- when play is suspended for any other cause, including an award of a base after an infraction, inspection of the ball, or the ending of a half-inning.

ART. 2 . . . When the ball becomes dead:

- no action by the defense during that time can cause a player to be put out, except a proper dead-ball appeal. (2-1-3b)
- a runner may not advance, nor return to a base that was not touched or that the runner was not in contact with on a caught fly ball during a live ball if the runner had advanced to or beyond a succeeding base.
- any runner may advance when awarded a base or bases for an act which occurred before the ball became dead. All awarded bases must be touched. (8-1-2, 8-3-11)

Rule **6** Pitching

SECTION 1 PITCHING REGULATIONS (F.P.)

ART. 1 . . . Prior to starting the delivery (pitch), the pitcher shall take a position with the pivot foot in contact with the pitcher's plate and the non-pivot foot in contact with or behind the pitcher's plate. Both feet must be on the ground within or partially within the 24-inch length of the pitcher's plate.

- a. Prior to pitching, the pitcher must take a position with shoulders in line with first and third base with the ball in the glove or pitching hand, and with the hands separated.
- b. While in this position, the pitcher shall take (or simulate taking) a signal from the catcher.
- c. After completing "b" above, the pitcher shall bring the hands together in front of the body for not less than one second and not more than 10 seconds before releasing the ball. The hands may be motionless or moving.
- d. The pitcher shall not be considered to be in pitching position unless the catcher is within the lines of the catcher's box and in position to receive the pitch.
- e. The pitcher may not take the pitching position on or near the pitcher's plate without having possession of the ball.
- f. The pitcher may remove themselves from the pitching position as follows:
 1. before the hands come together, the pitcher may legally step back from the pitcher's plate with both feet;
 2. when the hands are together and no part of the windup motion has been made, the pitcher may legally step back from the pitcher's plate with both feet;
 3. either foot may be removed first.

PENALTY: (Art. 1) An illegal pitch shall be declared immediately by the umpire (delayed dead-ball signal). The batter is awarded a ball.

EXCEPTIONS:

1. If the batter reaches first base safely and each other runner advances at least one base, the illegal pitch is nullified. All action stands and the illegal pitch is canceled.
2. If the batter does not reach first base safely or if any base runner fails to advance at least one base, the coach of the team at bat shall have the option of the result of the play or the penalty of the illegal pitch.
3. If the batter is hit by an illegal pitch out of the strike zone, the batter is awarded first base and the base runners are advanced only if forced.
4. If ball four is an illegal pitch, the batter is awarded first base and the base runners are advanced only if forced.

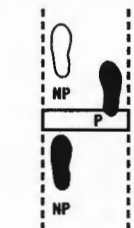
ART. 2 . . . About the Pitch:

- a. The pitch starts when the pitcher's hands separate after the hands have come together while the pivot foot is in contact with the pitcher's plate.

Figure 6-1
Reference Chart
For (F.P.) 6-1-1, 6-1-2

P = Pivot
Starting Position = Black

NP = Non-Pivot
Finishing Position = White



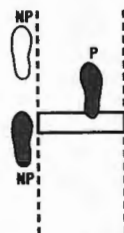
No. 1 LEGAL
P = In Contact
NP = Behind/Within



No. 2 LEGAL
P = In Contact
NP = Contact/Within



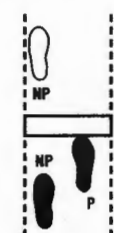
No. 3 LEGAL
P = In Contact
NP = Contact/Within



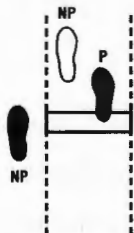
No. 4 ILLEGAL
P = In Contact (Legal)
NP = Forward Step Totally Outside (Illegal)



No. 5 ILLEGAL
P = Not In Contact With (Illegal)
NP = Behind/Within (Legal)



No. 6 LEGAL
P = In Contact With (Legal)
NP = Behind/Within (Legal)



No. 7 ILLEGAL
P = In Contact (Legal)
NP = Begins Totally Outside (Illegal)



No. 8 ILLEGAL
P = In Contact (Legal)
NP = Backward Step Totally Outside (Illegal)

- b. Any step back with the non-pivot foot must begin before the start of the pitch (6-1-2a). Once the pitch has started (the hands separate), the pitcher shall not take more than one step which must be forward, toward the batter and simultaneous with the delivery.

EXCEPTION: When removing self from the pitcher's position. [6-1-1f(2)]

NOTE: "Toward" is interpreted as within or partially within the 24-inch length of the pitcher's plate. (Figure 6-1)

- c. The pivot foot may remain in contact with or may push off and drag away from the pitching plate prior to the front foot touching the ground, as long as the pivot foot remains in contact with the ground and within the 24-inch length. If a hole has been created in front of the pitcher's plate, the pivot foot may be no higher than the level plane of the ground. Pushing off with the pivot foot from a place other than the pitcher's plate is illegal.

NOTES:

1. It is not a step if the pitcher slides a foot in any direction on the pitcher's plate, provided contact is maintained.
2. Techniques such as the "crow hop" and "the leap" are illegal. (2-16, 2-33)

ART. 3 . . . A legal delivery shall be a pitched ball that is delivered to the batter with an underhand motion.

- a. The release of the ball and the follow-through of the hand and wrist must be forward past the vertical line of the body.
- b. The hand shall be below the hip and the wrist not farther from the body than the elbow.
- c. The pitch shall be delivered on the throwing arm side of the body and not behind the back or between the legs.
- d. The pitch is completed with a step toward the batter.

ART. 4 . . . The pitcher may use any windup desired provided:

- a. no motion to pitch is made without immediately delivering the ball to the batter.
- b. the pitcher does not use a rocker action in which, after having the ball in both hands in pitching position, the pitcher removes one hand from the ball, takes a backward and forward swing and returns the ball to both hands in front of the body.
- c. the pitcher does not use a windup in which there is a stop or reversal of the forward motion.
- d. the pitcher does not make more than 1½ clockwise revolutions of the arm in the windmill pitch. The ball does not have to be released the first time past the hip.
- e. the pitcher does not continue to wind up after taking the forward step or after the ball is released.

NOTE: Continuation of the windup is considered any action that, after the ball is released, causes the arm to continue to rotate past the shoulder.

PENALTY: (Arts. 2, 3, 4) Illegal pitch. The ball is dead at the end of playing action, if the ball is pitched. A ball is called on the batter. (6-1-1 EXCEPTIONS)

SECTION 2 INFRACTIONS BY PITCHER (F.P.)

ART. 1 . . . The pitcher shall not deliberately drop, roll, bounce, etc., the ball while in pitching position in order to prevent the batter from striking it.

PENALTY: (Art. 1) Any infraction is an illegal pitch. The ball is dead at the end of playing action. The batter is awarded a ball.

ART. 2 . . . The pitcher shall not at any time during the game be allowed to use tape or other substance on the ball or contact points of the pitching hand or fingers; nor shall any other player apply a foreign substance to the ball. A pitcher who licks the fingers shall wipe them off before bringing them in contact with the ball. Under the supervision and control of the umpire, powdered rosin or any comparable drying agent may be used to dry the hand. It is not necessary to wipe off the drying agent before making contact with the ball.

PENALTY: (Art. 2) An illegal pitch shall be called immediately. (6-1-1 PENALTY)

NOTE: A pitcher shall not wear any item on the pitching hand, wrist, arm or thighs which the umpire judges to be distracting to the batter. (3-2-9)

ART. 3 . . . Once the ball has been returned to the pitcher to prepare for the next pitch, the pitcher has 20 seconds to release the pitch.

PENALTY: (Art. 3) The batter is awarded a ball.

EXCEPTION: Intentionally violating the rule in order to walk the batter without pitching shall not result in a ball being awarded to the batter. (3-6-13 PENALTIES)

ART. 4 . . . No pitch shall be declared when:

- the pitcher pitches during a suspension of play.
- the pitcher attempts a quick return of the ball before the batter has taken position or is off balance as a result of a previous pitch.
- the runner is called out for leaving the base too soon.
- the pitcher pitches before a base runner has retouched the base occupied after a foul ball has been declared and the ball is dead.
- a player, manager or coach calls "Time" or employs any other word or phrase or commits any act, while the ball is live and in play, for the obvious purpose of trying to make the pitcher commit an illegal pitch.

PENALTY: (Art. 4a through d) The ball is dead immediately and all subsequent action on that pitch is canceled. (Art. 4e) If the batter tries to cause the pitcher to commit an illegal pitch after the pitcher has started the delivery, the ball remains live if the pitcher legally delivers the pitch. (3-6-9, 7-3-1 EFFECT 2)

ART. 5 . . . At the beginning of each half-inning or when a pitcher relieves another, no more than one minute may be used to deliver no more than five pitches to the catcher or other teammate. The one-minute time limit begins from the third out of the previous half-inning. Play shall be suspended during this time.

NOTES:

- A pitcher returning in the same half inning will not be granted any warm-up pitches.
- Umpire is authorized to allow more pitches when weather is inclement or if pitcher was removed by rule or due to an injury.

PENALTY: (Art. 5) For excessive warm-up pitches, a pitcher shall be penalized by awarding a ball to the batter for each pitch in excess of five. This does not apply if the umpire delays the start of play due to substitution, conference, injuries, etc.

ART. 6 . . . When the ball slips from the pitcher's hand during the backswing or forward motion, it is a pitch.

EFFECT: A ball is awarded to the batter, and the ball remains in play and runners may advance with liability to be put out. A defensive player may immediately retrieve the ball as long as the batter has no opportunity to contact the pitch.

EXCEPTION: If the batter has a legitimate opportunity to hit the ball and swings at the pitch, a strike is called if the batter does not make contact and the ball is in play if it is batted.

ART. 7 . . . The pitcher shall not throw to a base while a foot is in contact with the pitcher's plate after having taken the pitching position.

PENALTY: (Art. 7) Illegal pitch, the ball is dead immediately. A ball is called on the batter.

NOTE: The pitcher may move from the pitching position by stepping backwards off the pitcher's plate with both feet before separating the hands or making any motion that is part of the windup after the hands have come together. The pitcher may step with either foot first. Stepping forward or sideways constitutes an illegal pitch.

ART. 8 . . . A fielder shall not take a position in the batter's line of vision or, with deliberate unsporting intent, act in a manner to distract the batter; a pitch does not have to be released.

ART. 9 . . . The pitcher shall not deliver a pitch until all defensive players are positioned in fair territory, except the catcher, who must be in the catcher's box.

PENALTY: (Arts. 8, 9) Illegal pitch. (6-1-1 PENALTY)

SECTION 3 INFRACTIONS BY CATCHER (F.P.)

ART. 1 . . . The catcher shall be inside the lines of the catcher's box when the pitcher takes a position to pitch and when the pitch is released.

PENALTY: (Art. 1) Illegal pitch. (6-1-1 PENALTY)

ART. 2 . . . The catcher shall return the ball directly to the pitcher after each pitch, except after a strikeout or putout made by the catcher, or to play on a base runner.

PENALTY: (Art. 2) The batter is awarded a ball.

EXCEPTION: Intentionally violating the rule in order to walk the batter without pitching shall not result in a ball being awarded the batter. (3-6-13 PENALTIES)

SECTION 4 PITCHING REGULATIONS (S.P.)

ART. 1 . . . Prior to delivery, the pitcher shall take a position with both feet firmly on the ground and with at least one foot on the pitcher's plate within the 24-inch length of the pitcher's plate. The pitching arm must come to a rest, holding the ball in front of the body, with a foot on the pitcher's plate. The pitcher must come to a full and complete stop facing the batter with the shoulders in line with first and third base. This position must be maintained for at least one second and

not more than 10 seconds before starting delivery. The pitcher is not required to take a signal. The pitch starts when the pitcher makes any motion that is part of the windup after the required pause.

ART. 2 . . . At the moment of delivery, only the pivot foot is required to be within the 24-inch length of the pitcher's plate. The pivot foot must remain in contact with the pitcher's plate until the ball leaves the pitcher's hand. There is no restriction on position or movement of the non-pivot foot except if a step is taken, the step must be forward and simultaneous with the release of the ball. After the pitcher releases the ball, there are no restrictions on the pitcher's movements except the pitcher may not continue to wind up after the release of the ball.

ART. 3 . . . The pitcher may select any windup provided no motion is made without immediate delivery of the ball to the batter. The pitcher's windup shall be a continuous motion without interruption, stop or reversal of the forward motion. The pitcher must deliver the ball toward home plate on the first swing of the arm past the hip. The windup shall end as soon as the ball is released.

ART. 4 . . . The pitch shall be delivered at a moderate speed underhand, below the hip, with a perceptible arch of at least 6 feet and not more than 12 feet at its highest point from the ground. The speed of the pitch is left entirely to the judgment of the umpire. The pitcher shall not pitch the ball between the legs or behind the back.

PENALTY: (Art. 4) The umpire shall warn a pitcher who delivers a pitch with excessive speed. If the pitcher repeats such an act after being warned, that pitcher shall be removed from the pitcher's position for the remainder of the game.

ART. 5 . . . At no time during the progress of the game shall the pitcher be allowed to use tape or other substances on the pitching hand or fingers. No foreign substance shall be applied to the ball, except, under the supervision and control of the umpire. Powdered rosin or any comparable drying agent may be used to dry the hands. The pitcher shall not wear any item on the pitching hand, wrist, arm or thighs which the umpire judges to be distracting to the batter.

ART. 6 . . . The catcher must be in and remain within the boundaries of the catcher's box until each pitch reaches home plate or is batted. The pitcher is not considered in legal pitching position unless the catcher is in legal position to receive the pitch.

PENALTY: (Art. 6) An illegal pitch shall be declared a ball by the umpire. The ball is dead until put in play again. Base runners do not advance. However, if the batter strikes at any illegal pitch it shall be a strike, and there shall be no penalty for such an illegal pitch. The ball shall remain in play if hit by the batter.

NOTE: An illegal pitch shall be called immediately when it becomes illegal. If called by the plate umpire, it shall be called in a voice so that the catcher and the batter will hear it. The base umpire also will give the delayed dead-ball signal. If called by a base umpire, it shall be called so that the nearest fielder shall hear it. The plate umpire also shall give the delayed dead-ball signal. Failure to hear the call shall not void the call.

ART. 7 . . . The pitcher shall not deliberately drop, roll or bounce the ball while in the pitching position in order to keep the batter from striking it.

ART. 8 . . . The catcher shall return the ball directly to the pitcher after each pitch except after a strikeout or putout made by the catcher. The pitcher has 20 seconds to release the next pitch.

PENALTY: (Art. 8) An additional "ball" is awarded to the batter.

ART. 9 . . . No pitch shall be declared when:

- the pitcher pitches during the suspension of play.
- the runner is called out for leaving the base too soon.
- the pitcher attempts a quick return of the ball before the batter is in position or is off balance as a result of the previous pitch.
- the ball slips from the pitcher's hand during the windup or during the backswing.
- the pitcher pitches before the base runner has retouched the base after a foul ball has been declared and ball is dead.

PENALTY: (Art. 9) The ball is dead and all subsequent action on that pitch is canceled.

ART. 10 . . . At the beginning of each half-inning or when a pitcher relieves another, not more than one minute may be used to deliver not more than five pitches to the catcher or other teammate. Play shall be suspended during this time. For excessive warm-up pitches, a pitcher shall be penalized by awarding a ball to the batter for each pitch in excess of five.

NOTE: A pitcher returning in the same half inning will not be granted any warm-up pitches.

ART. 11 . . . Legal pitch. A legal pitch is when the pitcher delivers the ball in accordance with this pitching rule.

ART. 12 . . . An illegal pitch is:

- when a pitcher throws to a base while a foot is in contact with the pitcher's plate.
- delivery of the ball not in accordance with the pitching rule.

NOTE: The pitcher can move from the pitching position by stepping backwards off the pitcher's plate. Stepping forward or sideways constitutes an illegal pitch.

ART. 13 . . . No player, manager or coach shall call time or employ any other word or phrase or commit any act while the ball is live and in play for the obvious purpose of trying to make the pitcher commit an illegal pitch.

PENALTY: (Art. 13) No pitch shall be declared and a warning issued to the offending team. A repeat of this type of act by the team warned shall result in the offender being restricted to the dugout/bench for the duration of the game. (3-6-9)

SECTION 5 BALL ROTATION

ART. 1 . . . The pitcher has a choice of balls at the start of each half inning unless both balls do not get put into play. In that case, the pitcher in the bottom of the first inning must throw the unused ball. Thereafter, the ball in play should be returned to the 16-foot circle after every half inning.

ART. 2 . . . The pitcher may request the other ball before throwing a warm-up pitch by returning the current ball to the plate umpire. The pitcher has now made a choice and must pitch that ball until such time as the ball goes out of play or becomes blocked.

Rule **7** Batting

SECTION 1 POSITION AND BATTING ORDER

ART. 1 . . . Each player of the team at bat shall become the batter and shall take a position within the batter's box (on either side of home plate), in the order their name appears on the lineup card as delivered to the umpire and the opposing team prior to the game (4-1-2). This order shall be followed during the entire game except that an entering substitute shall take the replaced player's place in the batting order. A batter is in proper order if the batter follows the preceding player in the lineup, even though such preceding batter may have batted out of order. An improper batter is considered to be at bat as soon as the batter enters the batter's box and one pitch has been thrown. When an improper batter's infraction is first discovered, time may be requested and the improper batter replaced by the proper batter who will assume the improper batter's ball and strike count, provided the infraction is detected before the improper batter is put out or becomes a base runner.

ART. 2 . . . After the first inning, the first batter in each inning shall be the player whose name follows that of the last batter who completed a time at bat in the preceding inning.

PENALTIES: (Art. 1, 2):

- 1. A batter shall be called out on appeal when the batter fails to bat in the proper order and another batter completes a time at bat in the batter's place.**

NOTE: Only the defensive team may appeal batting out of order after the batter has completed the time at bat.

- 2. When an improper batter becomes a runner or is put out and the defensive team appeals to the umpire before the next pitch (legal or illegal), or prior to an intentional base on balls, or before all infielders leave fair territory and the catcher vacates the normal fielding position if a half-inning is ending. The umpire shall declare the batter who should have batted out (not the improper batter). The improper batter's time at bat is negated and the batter is returned to the dugout/bench area. All outs stand and runners who were not declared out must return to the base occupied at the time of the pitch. If a runner advances because of a stolen base, wild pitch or passed ball (F.P.) while the improper batter is at bat, such advance is legal.**

NOTE: If any situation arises which could lead to an appeal by the defense on the last play of the game, umpires should not leave the field until all infielders have left fair territory and the normal fielding position has been vacated by the catcher. ~~Once~~ teams line up to shake hands, there is little chance for an appeal even if the defensive infielders have not crossed the foul line and umpires can leave the game at this point. No appeal can be made once the umpires have left the field.

3. **When an improper batter has completed a turn at bat and no appeal has been made before a pitch, legal or illegal, has been delivered to the next batter, an intentional base on balls has occurred or all infielders have left the diamond if a half-inning has ended. In these cases, the improper batter becomes the proper batter and the results of the batter's time at bat become legal.**
4. **When the proper batter is called out because the batter has failed to bat in turn. The next batter shall be the batter whose name follows that of the proper batter who was called out.**
5. **When an improper batter becomes a proper batter because no appeal is properly made as above. The next batter shall be the batter whose name follows that of such legalized improper batter. The instant an improper batter's actions are legalized, the batting order picks up with the name following that of the legalized improper batter.**
6. **When several players bat out of order before discovery so that a player's time at bat occurs while the batter is a runner. Such player remains on base, but is NOT out as a batter, and misses the player's time at bat with no penalty.**

SECTION 2 STRIKES, BALLS AND HITS

ART. 1 . . . A strike is charged to the batter when:

- a. a pitched ball enters any part of the strike zone in flight and the batter does not swing.
- b. a pitched ball is swung at and missed.
- c. a pitched ball becomes a foul when the batter has less than two strikes.
- d. a pitched ball becomes a foul tip (even on a third strike) or a foul from an attempted bunt (F.P.).
- e. a penalty strike is called because a batter delays. (7-3-1)
- f. a batted ball contacts the batter in the batter's box (foul ball).
- g. a pitched ball contacts the batter while swinging at the ball or the batter is hit by the pitch that is in the strike zone (dead-ball strike).
- h. a pitched ball, in the umpire's judgment, is prevented from entering the strike zone by any actions of the batter (dead-ball strike).
- i. when a member of the offensive team intentionally removes a line.

ART. 2 . . . A ball is credited to the batter when a pitch is not touched by the bat and is not a strike, when there is an illegal pitch (6-1-1, 6-1-2), or for catcher's or pitcher's delay. (6-2-3, 6-3-2)

EFFECT: Any pitch that touches the plate shall be called a ball if the batter does not strike at it.

ART. 3 . . . A foul hit or fair hit, which may be a bunt in (F.P.), occurs when a pitch is touched by the bat of the batter who is in the box. (2-8, 2-20, 2-25)

EXCEPTION: Foul Tip.

SECTION 3 BATTING INFRACTIONS

ART. 1 . . . A batter shall not delay the game by failing to promptly take position with both feet completely inside the batter's box within 10 seconds after the ball is returned to the pitcher to prepare for the next pitch, or by stepping out of the box when the pitcher is in contact with the pitcher's plate.

PENALTY: (Art. 1) If a pitcher has brought the hands together, the batter leaves the box at the risk of having a strike called while being out of position. For failure of the batter to be ready within 10 seconds after the ball has been returned to the pitcher, the umpire shall call a strike. If it is the third strike, the umpire shall call time and declare the batter out.

EFFECTS:

1. After entering the batter's box, the batter leaves it at the risk of being charged with delay. The batter may request time-out if the batter desires to step out for a valid reason and, if granted, the 10-second count will begin anew. The umpire is authorized to refuse to grant time-out if the batter repeatedly causes delay or if leaving the batter's box appears to be an attempt to distract the pitcher or to gain some other advantage.
2. If the pitcher stops or hesitates in the delivery as a result of the batter stepping out of the box or holding up a hand to request time, it shall not be an illegal pitch. If a pitch is not delivered, a rule has been violated by both the batter and the pitcher. The umpire shall call time, declare "no-pitch" and begin play anew. If the umpire judges the batter's action to be a deliberate attempt to create an illegal pitch, the umpire will penalize according to Rule 3-6-9. However, if the batter steps out of the box or holds up a hand to request time and the pitcher legally delivers the ball, it shall be called a strike and the ball remains live.

ART. 2 . . . A pitched ball that is not entirely within the batter's box, not swung at nor called a strike, touches the batter or clothing. If no attempt to avoid being hit by the pitch is made, the batter will not be awarded first base unless it is ball four. (8-1-2c)

PENALTY: (Art. 2) If the batter made no attempt to avoid the pitch which is not entirely in the batter's box or the batter obviously tried to get hit by the pitch, the ball is dead. The pitch is a ball or strike depending on its location and the batter remains at bat unless it is strike three or ball four. Base runners advance only if forced.

SECTION 4 BATTER IS OUT

ART. 1 . . . A team is playing with one less than the starting number in the batting order and the missing batter's turn to bat is reached.

ART. 2 . . . The batter enters the batter's box with an illegal bat or is discovered having used an illegal bat and the infraction is detected before the next legal or illegal pitch (only the umpire or defense may detect an illegal bat).

PENALTY: The ball is dead immediately. All runners not put out on the play must return to the base occupied at the time of the pitch. When the illegal bat is an altered or non-approved bat, the batter and head coach are also ejected.

NOTE: Damaged bats are not illegal and, when initially detected, are removed from the game without penalty. (7-4-15)

ART. 3 . . . The batter disconcerts the pitcher by stepping out of the box on one side of home plate to the box on the other side while the pitcher is in position ready to pitch.

PENALTY: The ball is dead immediately.

ART. 4 . . . The batter interferes with the catcher's fielding or throwing by leaning over home plate, by stepping out of the batter's box, by making any movement which hinders action at home after the pitch reaches the catcher or the catcher's attempt to play on a runner, or by failing to make a reasonable effort to vacate a congested area when there is a throw to home and there is time for the batter to move away.

PENALTY: The ball is dead immediately. Runners must return to the last base touched at the time of the interference. (8-6-10)

ART. 5 . . . A third strike is caught. (7-2)

ART. 6 . . . (S.P.) A third strike is not caught in flight, or a foul ball on the third strike is not caught.

PENALTY: The ball is dead immediately.

ART. 7 . . . (F.P.) A third strike is not caught in flight, a runner occupies first base at the time of the pitch and there are less than two outs. (8-2-1)

NOTE: (F.P.) If there are two outs or if no runner occupies first base, the batter is not out unless the third strike is caught. The batter is entitled to try to reach first base before being tagged out or thrown out.

ART. 8 . . . The batter hits the ball fair or foul while either foot is touching the ground completely outside the lines of the batter's box or while touching the plate.

ART. 9 . . . (F.P.) A bunt on a third strike is foul.

ART. 10 . . . (S.P.) The batter bunts or chops the ball downward.

ART. 11 . . . When a spectator reaches into live ball territory and interferes with a fielder's opportunity to catch a fly ball.

PENALTY: (Art. 8, 9, 10, 11) The ball is dead immediately. All runners must return to the base occupied at the time of the pitch.

ART. 12 . . . Offensive team members (excluding a runner or retired runner) shall not interfere with a fair batted ball or foul fly ball.

PENALTY: The ball is dead immediately. If, in the judgment of the umpire, the interference prevented a possible double play, the batter and runner closest to home shall be declared out. Other runners shall be returned to the last base touched at the time of interference. (3-5-6, 7-5-4, 8-6-16)

ART. 13 . . . After hitting or bunting a ball, the bat hits the ball a second time while the ball is on or over fair territory, or is on or over foul territory and, in the umpire's judgment, had a chance to become a fair ball.

EXCEPTION: If the batter is in the batter's box and the bat is in the batter's hands when the second contact occurs, it is a foul ball regardless of whether the ball was on or over fair or foul territory unless, in the umpire's judgment, the batter intentionally hit the ball a second time.

ART. 14 . . . The batter throws the bat and interferes with a defensive player attempting a play.

NOTE: If the bat breaks and a portion is hit by the ball or hits a runner or fielder, no infraction has occurred.

PENALTY: The ball is dead immediately. Runners must return to the last base touched at the time of the interference. (8-6-10)

ART. 15 . . . The batter enters the batter's box with a damaged bat that was previously removed from the game or is discovered having used a damaged bat that was previously removed from the game and the infraction is detected before the next legal or illegal pitch (only the umpire or defense may detect a damaged bat that was previously removed from the game).

PENALTY: The ball is dead immediately. All runners not put out on the play must return to the base occupied at the time of the pitch. The batter and head coach are also restricted to the dugout for the remainder of the game.

NOTE: Damaged bats are not illegal and, when initially detected, are removed from the game without penalty. This article assesses a penalty for a player who attempts to or uses a damaged bat that was previously removed from the game by an umpire.

SECTION 5 ON-DECK BATTER

ART. 1 . . . The on-deck batter shall take a position within the lines of the on-deck circle closest to the batter's dugout.

ART. 2 . . . The on-deck batter may warm up with no more than two official softball bats, an approved warm-up bat or a combination not to exceed two bats.

ART. 3 . . . The on-deck batter may leave the on-deck circle:

- when the on-deck batter becomes a batter.
- when directing a runner advancing from third base to home plate.

ART. 4 . . . The on-deck batter shall not commit interference with the defensive team.

PENALTIES: (Art. 4)

1. When the interference is with a thrown or pitched ball, the ball is dead and the runner closest to home is declared out. If no play is obvious, no player is out, but runners shall return to the last base touched at the time the ball is declared dead.
2. When the interference is with a fair batted or foul fly ball, the batter is out. When, in the judgment of the umpire, the interference prevented a possible double play, the runner closest to home shall also be declared out. Other runners return to the last base touched at the time of the interference.

Rule 8 Batter-Runner and Runner

SECTION 1 THE BATTER BECOMES A BATTER-RUNNER

ART. 1 . . . A batter becomes a batter-runner with the right to attempt to score by advancing to first, second and third and then home plate in the listed order when:

- a. the batter legally hits a fair ball.
- b. (F.P.) the catcher fails to catch the third strike before the ball touches the ground when there are less than two outs and first base is unoccupied at the time of the pitch, or anytime there are two outs.
- c. an intentional base on balls is awarded, or a fourth ball is called by the umpire.

EFFECTS:

1. (F.P.) The ball is in play unless it has been blocked.
2. On an intentional walk, the ball is dead and runners may not advance unless forced. If the defensive coach, pitcher or catcher desires to walk a batter intentionally, this may be done by notifying the plate umpire who shall award the batter first base.
- d. the catcher or another defensive player obstructs, hinders or prevents the batter from striking or hitting a pitched ball.

EFFECTS:

1. The umpire shall give a delayed dead-ball signal.
2. If the batter hits the ball and reaches first base safely and if all other runners have advanced at least one base on the batted ball, catcher obstruction is canceled. All action as a result of the batted ball stands. No option is given. Once a runner has passed a base, the runner is considered to have reached that base (whether missing the base or not) and no options are given.
3. Otherwise, the coach or captain of the team at bat, after being informed by the plate umpire of the obstruction, has the option to take the result

of the play, or have the obstruction enforced by awarding the batter first base and advancing all other runners only if forced.

- e. The catcher or any other fielder shall not:
1. Step on, or in the batter-runner or runner's base path without the ball; or
 2. On a swing or attempted bunt, touch the batter or the bat with a runner on third base trying to score by means of a squeeze play or a steal.

PENALTY: (Art. 1) The runner would be awarded the base on the attempted steal or squeeze. The batter shall also be awarded first base on the obstruction and the ball is dead.

ART. 2 . . . A batter is awarded first base when:

- a. a fair batted ball strikes the person, attached equipment, or clothing of an umpire or a runner.

EFFECTS: ~

1. **If, after touching a fielder (including the pitcher), the ball is in play.**
 2. **If, after passing a fielder other than the pitcher, and no other fielder had a chance to make an out, the ball is in play.**
 3. **If before passing a fielder without being touched, the ball is dead. If the runner is hit by the ball while off base and before it has passed an infielder, excluding the pitcher, or if it passes an infielder and another fielder has an opportunity to make an out, the runner is out and the batter-runner is entitled to first base without liability to be put out. When a fair batted ball touches a runner who is in contact with a base, the ball is dead or live depending on whether the closest fielder is in front of the base (live) or behind the base (dead). The runner is not out unless the runner intentionally interferes.**
 4. **If the fair batted ball hits an umpire before passing a fielder other than the pitcher, the ball is dead and the batter-runner is entitled to first base without liability to be put out. Any runner not forced by the batter-runner must return to the base reached prior to the interference.**
- b. (F.P.) a pitched ball not swung at nor called a strike, that is entirely within the batter's box and it strikes the batter or clothing. No attempt to avoid being hit by the pitch is required. However, the batter may not make an obvious attempt to get hit by the pitch.
- c. (F.P.) a pitched ball (not entirely in the batter's box) not swung at nor called a strike touches any part of the batter's person or clothing. It does not matter if the ball strikes the ground before hitting the batter. The batter's hands are not to be considered part of the bat. If no attempt is made to avoid being hit, the batter will not be awarded first base unless it is ball four.

PENALTIES: (Art. 2).

1. **The ball is dead. The batter is entitled to one base without liability to be put out.**

2. If the batter is hit anywhere on the body, including the hands, while swinging at a pitch and hits the ball fair or foul the ball is dead and a strike called. If it is strike three, the batter is out.

SECTION 2 BATTER-RUNNER IS OUT

The batter-runner shall be called out when:

ART. 1 . . . (F.P.) The catcher drops the third strike and is legally put out prior to reaching first base with two outs or less than two outs and first base is not occupied at the time of the pitch.

ART. 2 . . . After hitting a fair ball the batter-runner is legally put out prior to reaching first base.

ART. 3 . . . After a fly ball is hit, the ball is caught by a fielder before it touches the ground, any object or person other than a defensive player.

EFFECT: (Arts. 1, 2, 3) The ball is in play.

ART. 4 . . . The batter-runner fails to advance to first base and enters the dug-out/bench area after a batted fair ball, a base on balls, a hit batter (F.P.), a dropped third strike (F.P.), or catcher obstruction.

EXCEPTION: The ball is dead on a base on balls (S.P.), or on a hit batter who is injured (F.P.) the ball is dead, the batter-runner is not out and runners cannot advance unless forced.

ART. 5 . . . The batter-runner steps back toward home plate to avoid or delay a tag by a fielder.

ART. 6 . . . The batter-runner runs outside the three-foot (0.91m) lane and, in the judgment of the umpire, interferes with the fielder taking the throw at first base (there must be a throw); however, the batter-runner may run outside the three-foot (0.91m) lane to avoid a fielder attempting to field a batted ball. A runner is considered outside the running lane if either foot last contacted the ground completely outside the lane.

ART. 7 . . . The batter-runner interferes:

- with a fielder attempting to make an initial play on a fair batted ball.
- with a fielder attempting to field a fly ball over foul territory.
- with a fielder attempting to throw the ball.
- intentionally with a thrown ball while out of the batter's box.
- by making contact with a fair batted ball before reaching first base.
- (F.P.) with a dropped third strike.

If this interference, in the umpire's judgment, is an obvious attempt to prevent a double play, the runner closest to home plate shall be called out. A batter-runner being hit with a thrown ball does not necessarily constitute interference.

ART. 8 . . . The batter-runner interferes with a play at home plate in an attempt to prevent an obvious out at home plate.

PENALTY: (Arts. 4 through 8) The ball is dead and runner(s) must return to the last base touched at the time of the interference. (Art. 8) The runner is also out.

ART. 9 . . . The batter-runner hits an infield fly. (2-30)

NOTE: When an infield fly is not initially called, the batter-runner is declared out if brought to the umpire's attention before the next pitch.

ART. 10 . . . An infielder intentionally drops a fair fly ball, including a line drive or a bunt, which can be caught with ordinary effort with first; first and second; first and third bases; or first, second and third bases occupied with less than two outs. A trapped ball shall not be considered as having been intentionally dropped.

PENALTY: (Art. 10) The ball is dead, and each runner must return to the last base touched at the time of the pitch. If an infield fly is ruled, it has precedence over an intentionally dropped ball.

ART. 11 . . . The immediate preceding runner who is not yet out intentionally interferes, in the umpire's judgment, with a fielder who is attempting to catch a thrown ball or throw a ball in an attempt to complete the play on the batter-runner.

PENALTY: (Art. 11) Interference is ruled, the ball is dead, the batter-runner and the interfering runner are out, and all other runners are returned to the base last occupied at the time of interference.

ART. 12 . . . If a spectator reaches into the field of play and interferes with a fielder's opportunity to catch a fly ball.

PENALTY: (Art. 12) The ball is dead, the batter-runner is out and the umpire should award the runners the bases in the umpire's judgment they would have reached had the interference not occurred.

SECTION 3 TOUCHING BASES IN LEGAL ORDER

ART. 1 . . . An advancing runner shall touch first base, second base, third base and then home plate in order.

ART. 2 . . . When a runner must return to a base while the ball is in play or dead, the runner must touch the base(s) in reverse order.

EXCEPTION: On a foul ball.

EFFECT: (Arts. 1, 2) Offensive players could be ruled out on a proper appeal by the defensive team. (2-1)

ART. 3 . . . When a runner or batter-runner acquires the right to a base by touching it before being put out, the runner or batter-runner is entitled to hold the base until touching the next base in order or is forced to vacate it for a succeeding runner.

ART. 4 . . . When a runner passes a base, the runner is considered to have touched that base. This also applies to awarded bases.

ART. 5 . . . When a runner dislodges a base from its proper position, neither the runner nor the succeeding runner(s) in the same series of plays are compelled to follow a base out of position.

EFFECT: (Arts. 3, 4, 5) The ball is in play and runners may advance or return with liability to be put out.

ART. 6 . . . A runner shall not run bases in reverse order either to confuse the fielders or to make a travesty of the game.

PENALTY: (Art. 6) The ball is dead and the runner is out.

ART. 7 . . . Two runners may not legally occupy the same base simultaneously.

EFFECT: The runner who first legally occupied the base shall be entitled to it, unless forced to advance. The other runner may be put out by being touched with the ball.

ART. 8 . . . Failure of a preceding runner to touch a base or to legally tag up on a caught fly ball, and who is declared out, does not affect the status of a succeeding runner who touches bases in proper order. If the failure to touch a base in regular order or to legally tag up on a caught fly ball is the third out of the inning, no succeeding runner may score a run.

ART. 9 . . . No runner may return to touch a missed base or one left too soon after a following runner has scored or once the runner leaves the field of play.

ART. 10 . . . Bases left too soon on a caught fly ball must be retouched prior to advancing to awarded bases.

ART. 11 . . . Awarded bases must be run legally.

SECTION 4 RUNNERS ENTITLED TO ADVANCE

ART. 1 . . . Runners may advance with liability to be put out when:

- (F.P.) the ball leaves the pitcher's hand on the delivery.
- (S.P.) a pitched ball is batted.
- a thrown ball or a fair batted ball is not blocked.
- a thrown ball hits an umpire.
- a legally caught fly ball is first touched by any defensive player.
- a fair ball strikes an umpire or a runner after having passed a fielder other than the pitcher, and provided no other fielder had a chance to make an out, or when a fair batted ball has been touched by a fielder, including the pitcher.
- the ball gets lodged in a defensive player's uniform or equipment.

EFFECT: (Art. 1) The ball is in play.

ART. 2 . . . A runner forfeits exemption from liability and may be put out when:

- the ball is in play or on awarded bases, the runner fails to touch a base before attempting to make the next base.
- after overrunning first base, the runner attempts to continue to second base.
- after dislodging a base, a runner attempts to continue to the next base.

ART. 3 . . . A runner is entitled to advance without liability to be put out when:

- forced to vacate a base because the batter was awarded first base.

EFFECT: (F.P.) The ball remains in play unless it is blocked. All runners affected are entitled to one base and may advance farther at their own risk if the ball is in play. On an intentional walk, the ball is dead.

- a fielder not in possession of the ball or not making an initial play on a batted ball, impedes the progress of a runner or batter-runner who is legally running bases. Obstructed runners are still required to touch all bases in

proper order, or they could be called out on a proper appeal by the defensive team. Should an act of interference occur following any obstruction, enforcement of the interference penalty would have precedence.

PENALTIES: (Art. 3b) When any obstruction occurs (including a rundown), the umpire will signal a delayed dead ball. The ball will remain live.

1. **If the obstructed runner is put out prior to reaching the base that would have been reached had there not been obstruction, a dead ball is called and the obstructed runner and each other runner affected by the obstruction will be awarded the base or bases which would have been reached, in the umpire's judgment, had there not been obstruction. An obstructed runner may not be called out between the two bases where the runner was obstructed.**

EXCEPTIONS:

- a. When an obstructed runner, after the obstruction, safely obtains or returns to the base that would have been awarded, in the umpire's judgment, had there been no obstruction and there is a subsequent play on a different runner, the obstructed runner is no longer protected between the bases where the runner was obstructed and may be put out.
 - b. When properly appealed for missing a base or leaving a base before a fly ball was first touched while advancing. If obstruction occurred while a runner was returning to touch the base, the runner is protected.
 - c. When committing an act of interference.
 - d. When passing another runner.
 - e. When the batter flies out for the third out.
 - f. When the batter-runner is obstructed between two bases and the batter-runner flies out.
2. **If the obstructed runner is put out after passing the base that would have been reached had there been no obstruction, the obstructed runner will be called out. The ball remains live.**
 3. **When a runner, while advancing or returning to a base, is obstructed by a fielder who neither has the ball nor is attempting to make an initial play on a batted ball, or a fielder who fakes a tag without the ball, the obstructed runner and each other runner affected by the obstruction, will be awarded the base or bases which would have been reached, in the umpire's judgment, had there been no obstruction.**
- c. (F.P.) a wild pitch or passed ball lodges in or goes under, over or through the backstop.

PENALTY: (Art. 3c) The ball is dead and all runners are awarded one base only. The batter is awarded first base only on the fourth ball.

- d. a fielder intentionally contacts or catches a fair batted, a thrown, or a pitched ball with a cap, helmet, mask, protector, pocket, detached glove or any part of the uniform which is detached from its proper place on ~~the fielder~~.

PENALTY: (Art. 3d) All runners including the batter-runner would be entitled to three bases from the time of the pitch if a batted ball, two bases from the time of the throw if a thrown ball, or one base from the time of the pitch if a pitched ball and in (F.P.) may advance farther at their own risk. If the illegal catch or touch is made on a fair hit ball that, in the judgment of the umpire, would have cleared the outfield fence in flight, the batter-runner shall be awarded four bases.

- e. the ball is in play and is overthrown (beyond the boundary lines) or is blocked by the defense.

PENALTY: (Art. 3e) All runners will be awarded two bases, and the award will be governed by the positions of the runners when the ball left the fielder's hand. Runners may return to touch a missed base or base left too soon. If two runners are between the same bases, the award is based on the position of the lead runner.

EXCEPTIONS:

1. When a fielder loses possession of the ball, such as on an attempted tag, and the ball enters the dead-ball area or becomes blocked, each runner is awarded one base from the last base touched at the time the ball entered the dead-ball area or becomes blocked.
 2. When the ball becomes dead, no runner may return to touch a missed base or a base left too soon if the runner has advanced, touched and remains a base beyond the missed base or the base left too soon. A runner shall not be declared out if a fielder deliberately carries or throws the ball into dead-ball territory to prevent that runner from returning to a missed base or a base left too soon. In this case, the runner(s) may return to a missed base or base left too soon.
 3. If the ball becomes blocked due to offensive equipment not involved in the game, the ball is ruled dead and runners are returned to the last base touched at the time of the blocked ball. If the blocked ball prevented the defense from making an out, the runner being played on is called out.
 4. If an awarded base is in error, after one pitch is thrown (legal or illegal), the error cannot be corrected.
- f. a fair batted fly ball strikes the foul pole above the fence level or leaves the playing field in fair territory without touching the ground or going through the fence. It shall entitle the batter-runner to a home run.
 - g. a fair ball bounces over or rolls under or through a fence or any designated boundary of the playing field. Also, when it deflects off of a defensive player and goes out of play in foul territory, deflects off a runner or umpire and goes out of play after having passed an infielder excluding the pitcher and provided no other fielder had a chance to make an out.

PENALTY: (Art. 3g) The ball is dead and all runners are awarded two bases from the time of the pitch.

- h. a live ball is unintentionally carried by a fielder from playable territory into dead-ball territory. A fielder carrying a live ball into the dugout or team area to tag a player is considered to have unintentionally carried it there.

PENALTY: (Art. 3h) The ball is dead. Each runner is awarded one base from the last base touched at the time the fielder entered dead-ball territory.

- i. in the judgment of the umpire, a fielder intentionally carries, kicks, pushes or throws a live ball from playable territory into dead-ball territory.

PENALTY: (Art. 3i) The ball is dead. Each runner is awarded two bases from the last base touched at the time the fielder entered or the ball was kicked, pushed or thrown into dead-ball territory.

- j. there is spectator interference with any thrown or fair batted ball, the ball is dead at the moment of interference.
- k. a ball gets lodged in (a) umpire's gear or clothing or (b) in an offensive player's clothing.

PENALTY: (Arts. 3j, 3k) The ball is dead and the umpire should award the runners the bases in the umpire's judgment they would have reached.

SECTION 5 RUNNER MUST RETURN TO LAST BASE

A runner must return to the last base legally occupied when:

ART. 1 . . . A batted ball is foul.

ART. 2 . . . An illegally batted ball is declared by the umpire.

ART. 3 . . . A batter, batter-runner or runner is called out for interference. Each other runner shall return to the last base which, in the umpire's judgment, was touched by the runner at the time of the interference.

ART. 4 . . . (F.P.) Any part of the batter's person or clothing is touched by a pitched ball that is swung at and missed.

ART. 5 . . . (F.P.) A batter is hit by a pitched ball, unless forced to advance because of the batter being awarded first base.

PENALTY: (Arts. 1 through 5) The ball is dead. Runners must return to their base without liability to be put out, except when forced to go to the next base because the batter became a batter-runner. Runners need not touch the intervening bases in returning to their base.

ART. 6 . . . (F.P.) The plate umpire or any part of the plate umpire's clothing interferes with the catcher's attempt to throw out a runner stealing, or an attempted pick off play.

PENALTY: (Art. 6) This is a delayed dead ball at the time of the interference. If the runner is ruled out, the ball remains live. If the runner is not out, the runner must return to the base occupied at the time of the pitch. It is not umpire interference if, on a passed ball or wild pitch, the umpire gets hit by a thrown ball from the catcher or if contact is made with the catcher trying to retrieve the ball. The ball would remain live.

ART. 7 . . . (S.P.) Base stealing is not allowed.

EFFECT: Each runner may leave a base when a pitched ball is batted, touches the ground or reaches home, but must return to that base immediately after each pitch not hit by the batter.

ART. 8 . . . An intentionally dropped ball is ruled.

SECTION 6 THE RUNNER IS OUT

A runner is out when:

ART. 1 . . . Running to any base in regular or reverse order and the runner runs more than three feet (0.91 m) from the base path to avoid being touched by the ball in the hand(s) of a fielder.

ART. 2 . . . The ball is in play and while the runner is not in contact with a base, the runner is legally touched with the ball in the hand(s) of a fielder.

ART. 3 . . . On a force play, a fielder contacts the base while holding the ball, touches the ball to the base or tags the runner before the runner reaches the base.

ART. 4 . . . The runner physically passes a preceding runner before that runner has been put out. If this was the third out of the inning, any runs scoring prior to the out for passing a preceding runner would count. A runner(s) passing a preceding obstructed runner is not out. (8-4-3b PENALTY)

ART. 5 . . . Any offensive team member, other than another runner, physically assists the runner.

PENALTY: (Arts. 1 through 5) The ball is in play and the runner is out.

ART. 6 . . . The runner leaves a base to advance to another base before a caught fly ball has touched a fielder, provided the ball is returned to the infield and properly appealed.

ART. 7 . . . The runner fails to touch the intervening base or bases in regular or reverse order and the ball is returned to the infield and properly appealed. If the runner put out is the batter-runner at first base, or any other runner forced to advance because the batter became a batter-runner, this is a force out.

ART. 8 . . . The batter-runner legally overruns first base, attempts to run to second base and is legally touched while off the base.

ART. 9 . . . Running or sliding for home plate and the runner fails to touch it, and a fielder properly appeals to the umpire for the decision.

PENALTY: (Arts. 6 through 9) These are appeal plays. (2-1)

ART. 10 . . . The runner interferes:

- with a fielder attempting to make the initial play on a fair batted ball. (2-47)
- with a fielder attempting to field a fly ball over foul territory.
- with a fielder attempting to throw the ball.
- intentionally with a fielder or thrown ball.

NOTE: Jumping, hurdling and leaping are all legal attempts to avoid a fielder only if the fielder is lying on the ground.

ART. 11 . . . The runner is struck with a fair untouched batted ball while not in contact with a base and before it passes an infielder, excluding the pitcher, or if it passes an infielder and any fielder has an opportunity to make an out.

ART. 12 . . . The runner intentionally contacts a fair ball that an infielder has missed.

ART. 13 . . . The runner does not legally slide and causes illegal contact and/or illegally alters the actions of the fielder in the immediate act of making a play on the runner. Runners are never required to slide but, if the runner elects to slide, the slide shall be legal.

ART. 14 . . . The runner remains on the runner's feet and maliciously crashes into a defensive player. Malicious contact supersedes obstruction.

PENALTY: (Arts. 10 through 14) The ball is dead and the runner is out. Each other runner must return to the last base touched at the time of the interference. When a runner is called out for interference, the batter-runner is awarded first base and credited with a fielder's choice. If this interference, in the judgment of the umpire, is an obvious attempt to prevent a double play and occurs before the runner is put out, the immediate succeeding runner shall also be called out. If interference occurs by the runner on a foul fly ball, the runner is out and the ball is dead. A foul ball is called in this situation and the batter remains at bat unless it was a bunt attempt with two strikes on the batter (F.P) or it was the third strike (S.P); the batter is also out in these cases. (Art. 14) The runner is also ejected.

ART. 15 . . . Offensive team equipment causes a blocked ball (and interference).

PENALTY: (Art. 15) The runner being played on is out. If no play is obvious, no player is out, but runners shall return to the last base touched at the time the ball is declared dead.

ART. 16 . . . Any coach or member of the offensive team, other than a runner, interferes with a defensive player's opportunity to make a play. This includes, but is not limited to:

- The coach near third base runs in the direction of home plate on or near the baseline while a fielder is attempting to make a play on a batted or thrown ball and thereby draws a throw to home plate.
- A coach intentionally interferes with a thrown ball while in the coach's box, or interferes with the defensive team's opportunity to make a play on another runner.
- After being declared out or after scoring, a runner interferes with a defensive player's opportunity to make a play on another runner. A runner continuing to run and drawing a throw may be considered a form of interference. This does not apply to the batter-runner running on the dropped third strike rule.
- Member(s) of the offensive team stand or collect around a base to which a runner is advancing, thereby confusing the fielders and adding to the difficulty of making the play. Members of a team include bat/ball shaggers or any other person authorized to sit on the team's bench.

PENALTY: (Art. 16) The ball is dead and the runner closest to home plate at the time of the interference shall be declared out. Each other runner must return to the last base touched at the time of the interference.

ART. 17 . . . (S.P.) The runner fails to keep contact with the base which is entitled until a pitched ball is batted, touches the ground, or reaches home plate.

ART. 18 . . . (F.P.) The runner fails to keep contact with the base to which the runner is entitled until the ball leaves the pitcher's hand.

PENALTY: (Arts. 17, 18) The ball is dead, "no pitch" is declared when applicable, and the runner is out.

ART. 19 . . . The runner abandons a base by entering dead-ball territory.

ART. 20 . . . The runner takes a position behind and not in contact with a base to get a running start on any fly ball. The ball remains live.

ART. 21 . . . Prior to a pitch (legal or illegal) to the next batter, if the runner was discovered having used an illegal bat, the runner shall be declared out and any runners put out prior to the discovery shall remain out.

SECTION 7 (F.P.) LOOK-BACK RULE

ART. 1 . . . The look-back rule will be in effect when the ball is live, the batter-runner has touched first base or has been declared out, and the pitcher has possession of the ball within the pitcher's circle. (2-45)

ART. 2 . . . The runner(s) may stop once, but then must immediately return to the base or attempt to advance to the next base.

ART. 3 . . . Once the runner stops at a base for any reason, the runner will be declared out if the runner leaves the base.

ART. 4 . . . Responsibilities of the batter-runner after completing a turn at bat, and while the pitcher has the ball within the 16-foot pitching circle, including a base on balls or a dropped third strike are as follows:

- A batter-runner who rounds first base toward second base may stop, but then must immediately, without stopping, return to first base or attempt to advance to second base.
- A batter-runner who overruns first base toward right field, turns left and immediately stops, must then return non-stop to first base or attempt to advance to second base.
- A batter-runner who overruns first base toward right field, turns left and moves directly toward second base and stops is committed to second base and must attempt to advance non-stop to second base.
- A batter-runner who overruns first base toward right field, turns left and moves back toward the infield in any direction except directly toward second base is committed to first base and must return to first base.
- A batter-runner who overruns first base toward right field, and turns right, is committed to first base and must return to first base.

PENALTY: (Arts. 2, 3, 4) The ball is dead. "No pitch" is declared when applicable, and the runner is out. If two runners or more are off their bases, when one is called out, the ball is dead and other runners are returned to the last base touched. Only one runner may be called out.

EXCEPTION: The runner will not be declared out if a play is made on another runner (a fake throw is considered a play), the pitcher no longer has possession of the ball within the 16-foot circle, or the pitcher releases the ball on a pitch to the batter.

SECTION 8 RUNNER IS NOT OUT

ART. 1 . . . A runner runs behind or in front of the fielder and outside the base path in order to avoid interfering with a fielder attempting to make the initial play on the ball.

ART. 2 . . . A runner does not run in a direct line to a base, provided the fielder in the direct line does not possess the ball.

ART. 3 . . . More than one fielder attempts to field a batted ball and the runner comes into contact with the one who, in the judgment of the umpire, could not have made an out.

ART. 4 . . . A runner is hit with a fair, untouched batted ball that has passed an infielder, excluding the pitcher, and, in the judgment of the umpire, no other fielder had a chance to make an out.

ART. 5 . . . A runner is hit with a fair untouched batted ball over foul territory that, in the judgment of the umpire, no fielder had a chance to make an out.

ART. 6 . . . A runner is hit with a fair batted ball after it touches, or is touched by, any fielder, including the pitcher, and the runner could not avoid contact with the ball.

ART. 7 . . . A runner is touched while off a base:

a. with a ball not securely held by a fielder.

b. with a hand or glove of a defensive player and the ball is in the other hand.

ART. 8 . . . The defensive team does not request the umpire's decision on an appeal play. (2-1-4)

ART. 9 . . . A batter-runner overruns first base after touching it and returns directly to the base.

ART. 10 . . . The runner is not given sufficient time to return to a base. The runner will not be called out for being off base before the pitcher releases the ball.

EFFECT: "No pitch" will be called by the umpire and the runner(s) will be permitted to return to the proper base(s) without penalty.

ART. 11 . . . The runner has legally started to advance when the pitcher receives the ball while in the 16-foot circle, or when the pitcher steps into the 16-foot circle and possesses the ball.

ART. 12 . . . The runner stays on the base until a fly ball touches a fielder and then attempts to advance.

ART. 13 . . . Hit by a fair batted ball when touching the base, unless the runner intentionally interferes with the ball or a fielder making a play.

ART. 14 . . . The runner slides into a base and dislodges it from its proper position. The base is considered to have followed the runner.

EFFECT: A runner reaching a base safely will not be out for being off the base if it becomes dislodged. The runner may return without liability to be put out when the base has been replaced. A runner forfeits this exemption if the runner attempts to advance beyond the dislodged base before it is again in proper position.

ART. 15 . . . A fielder makes a play (a pitch by the pitcher is not considered making a play) on a batter, batter-runner or runner while using an illegal glove, and it is discovered before:

- the next pitch (legal or illegal).
- the pitcher and all infielders have left fair territory and the catcher has left the normal fielding position on the way to the dugout.
- The umpires have left the field.

PENALTY: (Art. 15) The offended coach may have the entire play nullified with each runner returning to the runner's original base and the batter batting over again, assuming the ball and strike count prior to the steal attempt or pitch that was hit; or the offended coach may take the result of the play and disregard the illegal act.

ART. 16 . . . A runner legally returns to a base left too soon or missed prior to an appeal being made, or is returning to a base during a dead ball.

ART. 17 . . . A runner physically passes an obstructed preceding runner.

SECTION 9 COURTESY RUNNERS

ART. 1 . . . The team at bat may use a courtesy runner for the pitcher and/or the catcher at any time. Neither the pitcher nor the catcher will be required to leave the game under such circumstances. The same courtesy runner may not run for both the pitcher and the catcher any time during the game.

ART. 2 . . . In the top of the first inning only, the pitcher and catcher are identified as those players listed on the lineup as the pitcher and catcher; both must face at least the first batter on defense (one pitch). Thereafter, the pitcher and catcher are identified as the last players who physically played that position on defense. The pitcher or catcher must bat and reach base legally (or earn the base) in order to be eligible for a courtesy runner.

EXCEPTION: When an injury or disqualification occurs in the top of the first inning to the pitcher/catcher identified on the lineup card and the pitcher/catcher is unable to face the first batter in the bottom of the first inning, the player who ran for the pitcher/catcher is retroactively a substitute for the pitcher/catcher, no longer a courtesy runner. All substitution rules apply and the pitcher/catcher has left the game.

ART. 3 . . . Players who are currently in the game or have participated in the game in any other playing capacity are ineligible to serve as courtesy runners.

ART. 4 . . . A player may not be a substitute for any player in the half inning that the player ran as a courtesy runner.

EXCEPTION: When an injury or disqualification occurs and no substitutes are available, the courtesy runner must be used as a substitute, and take the place of the injured player. Should the courtesy runner be on base, and is entered as a substitute, the pitcher or catcher for whom the courtesy runner is running, must run in the pitcher's/catcher's place.

ART. 5 . . . The courtesy runner is not permitted to run as a courtesy runner for the Designated Player (DP), if the DP is only batting, and not playing defense, for the pitcher or the catcher.

ART. 6 . . . Once the courtesy runner is designated for that half-inning, the pitcher or catcher for whom the courtesy runner is running may not return to run while that courtesy runner is on base. A courtesy runner shall not run for a courtesy runner. When a legal substitute replaces a courtesy runner, the player for whom the courtesy runner was running has left the game.

EXCEPTIONS:

1. Should an injury or disqualification occur to any other offensive player, and no substitutes are available, the courtesy runner must take the place of the player. In this case, the courtesy runner enters as a substitute and the pitcher or catcher for whom the courtesy runner is running, must run in the pitcher's/catcher's place.
2. When the courtesy runner is injured or disqualified, the player for whom the courtesy runner is running (pitcher or catcher) may return to run the bases or a legal substitute may be entered.

PENALTY: (Arts. 1 through 6) Illegal substitute. (3-4)

ART. 7 . . . A courtesy runner must be reported to the plate umpire.

PENALTY: (Art. 7) Unreported substitute as in 3-3-4 and 3-6-7 PENALTY.

SECTION 10 DOUBLE FIRST BASE (STATE ASSOCIATION ADOPTION)

ART. 1 . . . The defense must use the white portion and the batter-runner the colored portion when a play is being made on the batter-runner.

PENALTIES (Art. 1):

1. **The batter-runner is out when there is a play being made at first base and the batter-runner touches only the white portion provided the defense appeals prior to the batter-runner returning to touch the white or colored base.**
2. **The batter-runner is out for interference when there is a force play and the batter-runner touches only the white portion and collides with the fielder about to catch a thrown ball while on the white. (8-2-6 PENALTY)**
3. **Obstruction is called on the defense when there is a force play on the batter-runner, who touches only the colored portion and collides with the fielder about to catch a thrown ball, while also on the colored portion. (8-4-3b PENALTY)**

ART. 2 . . . The offense or defense may use either the white or colored portion:

- a. On any force out attempt from the foul side of first base.
- b. On an errant throw pulling the defense off the base into foul ground.
- c. When the defensive player uses the colored portion of the double base, the batter-runner can run in fair territory when the throw is coming from the foul side of first base, and if hit by the thrown ball, it is not interference. If intentional interference is ruled, the runner is out.

ART. 3 . . . The offense or defense may touch the white or colored base:

- a. On a fair ball hit to the outfield with no play being attempted or when the runner is returning to first base.
- b. On a fly ball tag-up play.
- c. (F.P.) On an attempted pick-off play.
- d. On a base on balls.

Rule **9** Scoring and Record Keeping

SECTION 1 HOW A TEAM SCORES

ART. 1 . . . A runner scores one run each time the runner legally advances to and touches first base, second base and third base and then home plate before there are three outs to end the inning. (2-49)

EXCEPTION: A run is not scored if the runner advances to home plate during action in which the third out is made as follows:

- by the batter-runner before touching first base;
- by another runner being forced out;
- by the preceding runner who is declared out on an appeal play;
- when a third out is declared on an appeal play resulting in a force out (this play takes precedence if enforcing of it would negate a score);
- when there is more than one out declared by the umpire which terminates the half-inning (the defensive team may select the out which is to its advantage);
- when a runner crosses home plate after a preceding runner is declared the third out.

ART. 2 . . . The number of runs scored by each team is entered on the scorebook for each inning. The team whose runners score the greatest total number of runs for the entire regulation game wins.

SECTION 2 RECORDING GAME ACTIVITY

ART. 1 . . . Uniformity in records of game activity is promoted by use of a standard tabulation sheet.

ART. 2 . . . The scorebook of the home team shall be the official scorebook, unless the plate umpire rules otherwise. The official scorekeeper, as designated by the umpire, shall keep records as outlined in the following rules and has the final authority when judgment is involved in determining whether a batter-runner's advance to first base is the result of an error or of a base hit, and in similar situations.

SECTION 3 PLAYER'S BATTING RECORD

ART. 1 . . . Each player's batting record shall include:

- the number of times batted (2-60), the runs scored (9-1-1), and the base hits made. (9-3-2)
- in the summary, the number of total base hits and the type (single, double, triple or home run), sacrifice hits, and number of runs batted in.
- slugging percentage, which is total bases (i.e., double = two bases, triple = three bases, etc.) divided by official at bats.
- on-base percentage, which is the number of hits, walks and hit by pitch, divided by the number of plate appearances (official at bats, sacrifices, walks and hit by pitch).

ART. 2 . . . A base hit is credited to a batter when the batter-runner advances to first base safely:

- a. because of a fair hit, rather than because of a fielder's error. It is not a base hit if any runner is out on a force play caused by the batter advancing toward first base.

NOTE: Base hits include any fair hit which cannot be fielded in time to throw out or tag out a batter-runner or any other runner when being forced to advance. Illustrations are as follows: (1) Ball is stopped or checked by a fielder in motion who cannot recover in time; (2) Ball moves too slowly; (3) Ball is hit with such force to a fielder that neither the fielder nor an assisting fielder can handle it.

- b. without liability of being put out because a runner is declared out for being hit by the batted ball (8-1-2a), or the umpire is hit by a batted ball. (5-1-1f)
- c. because of a fielder's choice when a fielder attempts to put out another runner but is unsuccessful and the scorekeeper believes the batter-runner would have reached first base even with perfect fielding.

NOTE: Scorekeepers use the term in the following ways: (1) to indicate the advance of the batter-runner who takes one or more bases when the fielder who handles the batted ball plays on a preceding runner; (2) to indicate the advance of a runner, other than by stolen base (F.P.) or error, while a fielder is trying to putout another runner; and (3) to indicate the advance of a runner due to the defensive team's refusal to play on the runner (F.P., an undefended steal).

ART. 3 . . . A base hit for extra bases is credited to the batter when it is the sole reason for safe arrival at second base (double), third base (triple) or home plate (home run).

ART. 4 . . . A sacrifice hit is credited to the batter when, with not more than one out, a bunt (F.P.) enables any runner to advance or a fly ball enables a runner to score; but, in either case, batter-runner is put out before reaching first base or would have been put out if the hit had been fielded without error.

ART. 5 . . . A run batted in is credited to the batter when a runner scores because of:

- a. a base hit, including the batter-runner's score on a home run.
- b. a sacrifice hit.
- c. any putout.
- d. a forced advance, such as for a base on balls or batter being hit.
- e. an error, provided two are not yet out and the error is such that the runner on third base would have scored even if there had been no error.

EXCEPTION: It is not a run batted in if there is a double play from a force out, or one in which the batter is put out or should have been put out on a batted ball.

ART. 6 . . . When a strikeout involves more than one batter, it is charged to the one who received at least two strikes. If no batter received more than one strike, it is charged to the batter who received the third strike.

SECTION 4 PLAYER'S BASERUNNING RECORD

A stolen base (F.P.) shall be credited in the summary to a runner each time the runner advances a base without the aid of a base hit, a putout or a fielding (including battery) error.

EXCEPTIONS:

1. No runner is credited with a stolen base if after reaching the base, the runner overslides and is put out;
2. No runner is credited with a stolen base if in an attempted double or triple steal, any runner is put out; or
3. No runner is credited with a stolen base if opponents are in collusion, such as a deliberate attempt to help establish a record.

SECTION 5 PLAYER'S FIELDING RECORD

ART. 1 . . . Each player's fielding record shall include: the times the fielder put out a batter or runner; the times the fielder assisted a teammate in putting out a runner, and the number of errors the fielder committed.

ART. 2 . . . A putout is credited to a fielder who catches a batted ball in flight, who tags out a runner, or who puts out a runner by holding the ball while touching a base to which a runner is forced to advance or return. (2-38-2)

EXCEPTIONS:

1. Catcher is credited with the putout when the batter is out for illegally batting the ball, for bunting a third strike foul (F.P.), for hitting the ball foul on strike three (S.P.), for the batter being hit by the batter's own fair batted ball or for batting out of turn.
2. For an infield fly, the putout is credited to the fielder who would ordinarily have made the catch.
3. For a runner being out because of being hit by a fair batted ball, the putout is credited to the fielder who is nearest the ball at the time.

ART. 3 . . . An assist is credited to a fielder each time the fielder handles or deflects the ball during action which is connected with the putout, or the fielder handles the ball prior to an error which prevents what would have been a putout. If several fielders handle the ball or one fielder handles it more than once during a play (such as when a runner is caught between bases), only one assist is credited to each fielder.

NOTE: If the catcher tags out or throws out a runner after the pitch, the pitcher is not credited with an assist.

ART. 4 . . . A double play or triple play is credited to one or more fielders when two or three players are put out between the time a pitch is delivered and the time the ball next becomes dead or is next in possession of the pitcher in pitching position.

ART. 5 . . . An error is charged against a fielder for each misplay that prolongs the time at bat of the batter; or prolongs the time a player continues to be a runner; or permits the runner to advance one or more bases. If it is impossible to assign an error to an individual player, then the team will be assessed with an error.

EXCEPTIONS:

1. A pitcher is not charged with an error for a base on balls, a batter being hit, an illegal pitch, a passed ball, or a wild pitch.
2. A catcher is not charged with an error for a wild throw in an attempt to prevent a stolen base, unless the base stealer advances another base because of the wild throw.
3. Neither catcher nor infielder is charged with an error for a wild throw in an attempt to complete a double play, unless the throw is so wild that it permits a runner to advance

an additional base. However, if a player drops a thrown ball when a double (or triple) play would have been completed by holding onto it, it is an error.

4. It is a passed ball when the catcher fails to stop or control a pitch when the catcher should have been able to do so with ordinary effort and on which a runner (other than the batter) is able to advance. When a passed ball occurs on a third strike, permitting a batter to reach first base, score a strikeout and a passed ball.
5. A fielder is not charged with an error for accurately throwing to a base when the baseman fails to stop or tries to stop the ball, provided there was good reason for such throw. If the runner advances because of the throw, the error is charged to the baseman, or fielder who should have covered that base.
6. If a fielder drops a fair fly ball but recovers in time to force out a runner, the fielder is not charged with an error. It is recorded as a force out.

SECTION 6 PITCHER'S RECORD

ART. 1 . . . A wild pitch (F.P.) shall be charged to the pitcher when a ball legally delivered to the batter is so high, or so low (including any pitch which touches the ground in front of home plate), or so far away from home plate that the catcher does not stop or control it with ordinary effort and the batter-runner advances to first base or any runner advances a base.

NOTE: (F.P.): When the catcher enables a runner (other than the batter-runner) to advance by failing to control a pitch which should have been controlled, it is not a wild pitch but a "passed ball." For dropping third strike see 9-5-5 EXCEPTION 4.

ART. 2 . . . The number of bases on balls, batters being hit by a pitch (F.P.), strikeouts, and base hits allowed by each pitcher shall be recorded in the summary. If a batter is hit by what would have been the fourth ball (F.P.), it is recorded as a hit batter. An intentional walk is recorded as a base on balls.

ART. 3 . . . An earned run shall be charged against the pitcher when a runner advances to home plate because of a safe hit, a sacrifice, a stolen base, a putout, a base on balls, a hit batter (F.P.), or a wild pitch (even when the wild pitch is a third strike F.P.), provided that in each case it is before the team in the field has had an opportunity to make a third putout.

When there is doubt as to whether an act is an error or as to which base a runner would have been held if there had been perfect fielding, the pitcher shall be given the benefit. If a pitcher commits a fielding error, it is treated the same as any other fielder's error.

NOTE: For the tie-breaker procedure, the run scored by the player starting as a runner at second base shall be charged to the defensive team, not to the pitcher.

ART. 4 . . . A strikeout is credited to the pitcher when a third strike is delivered to a batter, even though the batter might reach first base because the third strike is a wild pitch (F.P.) or is not caught (F.P.) (2-56-2). It is also a strikeout if an attempted third strike bunt (F.P.) is an uncaught foul.

ART. 5 . . . A relief pitcher shall not be charged with any earned run scored by a runner who was on base when such pitcher entered nor with any hit or advance by a batter who had more balls than strikes when such pitcher entered. (3-3-2, 3-3-3)

ART. 6 . . . Winning and losing pitchers are determined as follows:

- a. The starting pitcher is credited with a win in the following circumstances:
 1. When the starting pitcher pitches at least half of the innings in the game and the starting pitcher's team stays ahead for the remainder of the game.
 2. When the starting pitcher pitches the required number of innings, the starting pitcher's team is ahead or tied when the starting pitcher is replaced, the starting pitcher re-enters the game with the starting pitcher's team behind, and the team subsequently recaptures the lead.

NOTE: A pitcher cannot receive credit for a save if the pitcher receives the win.

- b. The relief pitcher is credited with a win in the following circumstances:
 1. The starting pitcher did not pitch the required number of innings, or the starting pitcher's team fell behind.
 2. The relief pitcher who pitches most effectively after the starting pitcher did not pitch the required number of innings, more than one relief pitcher was used and the lead was never lost.
 3. The relief pitcher was the pitcher of record when the relief pitcher's team gained the lead and stayed in the lead.
 4. A relief pitcher left the pitching position while the score was tied or the relief pitcher's team was behind, and the relief pitcher re-entered as the pitcher and regained the lead.
- c. If a pitcher is replaced by a pinch hitter or a pinch runner, the runs scored by the team during the inning of removal are to be credited to that pitcher's benefit for deciding the pitcher of record when the team takes the lead.
- d. A pitcher shall be charged with the loss when the team is behind or falls behind because of runs assessed to that pitcher and the team does not subsequently tie the score nor take the lead.
- e. A pitcher cannot be given credit for pitching a shutout if the pitcher does not pitch the complete game, unless the player enters the game with no one out before the opponents have scored in the first inning and the player does not permit the opposition to score during the game.

ART. 7 . . . In order for a pitcher to be credited with a save, the pitcher shall meet all three of the following criteria:

- a. the pitcher is the last pitcher in a game won by that pitcher's team; and
- b. the pitcher is not the winning pitcher; and
- c. the pitcher meets at least one of the following:
 1. the pitcher enters the game with a lead of not more than three runs and pitches at least one inning; or
 2. the pitcher enters the game, regardless of the count on the batter, with the potential tying run either on base, at bat or on deck; or
 3. the pitcher pitches effectively for at least three innings.

NOTE: A starting pitcher who is replaced and then re-enters as pitcher can be credited with a win but not a save.

SECTION 7 GENERAL SUMMARY

ART. 1 . . . The game summary includes the following:

- a. total score and runs scored in each inning.
- b. stolen base(s) for each runner (F.P.).
- c. sacrifice(s) by each batter.
- d. base hit(s) by each batter and total against each pitcher.
- e. wild pitch(es) (F.P.) by each pitcher.
- f. time(s) each pitcher hits batter with pitch, as well as the names of those hit (F.P.).
- g. two- or three-base hit(s) and home runs.
- h. time(s) at bat for each player and total against each pitcher.
- i. strikeout(s) by each pitcher.
- j. base(s) on balls by each pitcher.
- k. passed balls by catcher (F.P.).
- l. name of each umpire.

ART. 2 . . . Percentage records are computed as follows:

- a. percentage of games won and lost—divide the number of games won by the total games won and lost.
- b. batting average—divide the total number of base hits, not the total bases on hits, by the total times at bat.
- c. fielding average—divide the total putouts and assists by the total of putouts, assists and errors.
- d. earned-run average—divide the total runs earned while pitching by the total number of innings pitched (average runs per inning) and multiply by seven (average runs per game).
- e. slugging percentage is total bases (i.e., double = two bases, triple = three bases, etc.) divided by official at bats.
- f. on-base percentage is total times on base divided by official at bats, walks, errors, interference, etc.

NOTE: If there is a fraction of $\frac{1}{2}$ or more, a full point is added.

Rule 10 Umpiring

SECTION 1 GENERAL

ART. 1 . . . Game officials include the plate umpire and may include one or two field umpires. Any umpire has the authority to order a player, coach or bench personnel to do or refrain from doing anything which affects the administering of these rules, and to enforce prescribed penalties. The rules committee strongly recommends there be at least two umpires.

ART. 2 . . . Umpire jurisdiction begins upon the arrival of one umpire within the confines of the field and ends when the umpires leave the field of play at the conclusion of the game.

NOTE: The umpires maintain administrative responsibilities for the contest through the completion of any required reports or correspondence in response to any action occurring while the umpires have jurisdiction. State associations may intercede in the event of unusual incidents after the umpires' jurisdiction has ended or in the event that a game is terminated prior to the conclusion of regulation play.

ART. 3 . . . If there is only one umpire, that umpire has complete jurisdiction in administering the rules and shall take a position behind the catcher.

ART. 4 . . . Any umpire's decision which involves judgment, such as whether a hit is fair or foul, whether a pitch is a strike or ball, or whether a runner is safe or out, is final. If there is a reasonable doubt about some decision being in conflict with the rules, the coach or captain may ask that the correct ruling be made. The umpire making the decision may ask another umpire for information before making a final decision. The use of videotape by game officials for the purpose of making calls or rendering decisions is prohibited. No umpire shall criticize or interfere with another umpire's decision unless asked by the one making it.

NOTE: The plate umpire sometimes asks for aid from the base umpire when there is a question as to whether a batter's half-swing is to be called a strike. (2-11)

ART. 5 . . . The umpire's right to disqualify players or to remove nonplayers for objecting to decisions or for unsporting conduct is absolute.

ART. 6 . . . No game official shall use alcohol or any form of tobacco product (e-cigarette or similar items) beginning with arrival at the competition site until departure following the completion of the contest.

SECTION 2 PLATE UMPIRE

ART. 1 . . . If there are two (or more) umpires, the plate umpire shall stand behind the catcher, call and count balls and strikes, signal each fair hit and call out "foul ball" while signaling each foul hit and make all decisions on the batter. The plate umpire shall make all decisions except those commonly reserved for the field umpire.

ART. 2 . . . The plate umpire has final authority to forfeit a game, and has jurisdiction over any rules matters not mentioned in 10-2-1 and not assigned to the field umpire in 10-3.

ART. 3 . . . The duties include those listed in 10-2-1 and also the following:

- conduct the pregame conference as in 4-1-2. Inspect the condition of the field, define the dugout/bench areas and, if necessary, designate the official scorekeeper (9-2-2).
- call and/or signal "Play Ball" to start the game or to resume play, and call and/or signal "Time" or "Dead Ball" whenever the ball becomes dead.
- eject or restrict to the dugout/bench a player, coach or bench personnel.
- announce each substitute.
- call the game if conditions become unfit for play.
- penalize for rules infractions, such as illegal pitch, interference, delay, unwarranted disputing of decision, unsporting conduct or defacement of the ball.
- make final decision on points not covered by the rules.

- h. forfeit the game for prescribed infractions by spectators, players or bench personnel.
- i. when a game is played under the auspices of an organization which permits protests to be filed, the plate umpire shall report the protest to the organization along with all related conditions at the time of the protested play, provided the protest is brought to the attention of an umpire by the offended team at the time of the play and before the next pitch after such play.
EXCEPTION: Protests resulting from the last play of the game shall be brought to the attention of an umpire by the offended team prior to the umpires leaving the field. The plate umpire shall then inform the coach of the opposing team and the official scorekeeper.
NOTE: If there is a question about a rule that was possibly misapplied, the team's coach or captain shall inform the umpire at the time of the play and before a pitch to the next batter of the team currently at bat or before the first batter for the team that was on defense, if the teams have changed positions; or before the umpires leave the field, if the play in question was the last play of the game.
- j. keep a record of defensive and offensive team charged conferences and team warnings for each team.
- k. immediately remove a player from the game who exhibits signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion as in 3-3-9. (NFHS Suggested Guidelines for Management of Concussion, Appendix B)
- l. penalize for equipment violations. (3-6-1 PENALTY)
- m. rectify any situation in which an umpire's decision that was reversed has placed either team in jeopardy.
- n. correct a scorekeeping error if brought to an umpire's attention before the umpires leave the field when the game is over.

SECTION 3 FIELD UMPIRE

ART. 1 . . . A field umpire shall aid the plate umpire in administering the rules. The field umpire shall make all decisions on the bases except those reserved for the plate umpire. The field umpire shall have concurrent jurisdiction with the plate umpire in calling time, illegal pitches, defacement or discoloration of ball by the pitcher, when a fly ball is caught, or in disqualifying any player for blatant, unsporting conduct or infraction as prescribed by the rules. In some instances, the field umpire will rule on the ball being fair or foul.

ART. 2 . . . When there is only one field umpire, that umpire shall make all decisions at first and second base, unless a play takes the field umpire beyond the infield, in which case the plate umpire shall make the call at those bases. The field umpire also shall make such decisions at third base that cannot be made by the plate umpire.

ART. 3 . . . Additional field umpires (base umpires), if used, have concurrent jurisdiction with the first field umpire.

SECTION 4 EQUIPMENT AND APPAREL

ART. 1 . . . Umpires working the plate in fast pitch shall wear a throat protector that is part of or attached to the mask and extends far enough to adequately protect the throat. An attached throat protector must be commercially manufactured, properly attached, unaltered and worn properly. A mask is recommended for slow pitch. A chest protector is recommended in fast pitch.

ART. 2 . . . The proper uniform for an umpire consists of a powder blue shirt (pullover or button style), heather gray or navy blue slacks, navy blue jacket, pullover knit sweater, cap, and ball bag (plate umpire only). Shoes, socks and belt shall be black. If an undershirt is worn under the powder blue shirt, it shall be white and short sleeved.

ART. 3 . . . Casts, splints and braces may be worn, if padded.

SOFTBALL RULES BY STATE ASSOCIATION ADOPTION

- 1-1-2 NOTE** By state association adoption (S.P.), the pitching distance shall be 50 feet when using a 12-inch ball.
- 1-2-1 NOTE** A double first base is permitted. (8-10-1)
- 1-3-3 NOTE** By state association adoption, an 11-inch softball shall be used in girls slow pitch. (1-1-2a)
- 3-2-1** State associations may, on an individual basis, permit a player to participate while wearing a different style uniform for religious reasons, inclement weather, etc.
- 3-2-4** By state association adoption, for special occasions, a commemorative or memorial patch, not to exceed 4 square inches, may be worn on the jersey.
- 3-3-7 (S.P.)** By state association adoption, a team may use an 11th player called an Extra Player, EP.
- 4-2-3** By state association adoption, game-ending procedures may be determined.
- 4-2-3 NOTE 2** By state association adoption, the number of innings for one or both games in a doubleheader may be scheduled for less than seven innings. Current state association game-ending procedures still apply.
- 4-2-6** By state association adoption, the tie-breaker procedure may be instituted at a point in the game specified by the state association.
- 4-3-1a** State associations are authorized to specify the timeframe and/or circumstances before a forfeit will be declared for a late arrival by one of the teams.
- 4-4** It is optional on the part of a state association as to whether protests are permitted.
- 5-2-1b NOTE** After 30 minutes, the umpire may declare the game ended or by state association adoption, suspended.

2023 POINTS OF EMPHASIS

Sportsmanship

Good sporting behavior is one of the fundamental ingredients to the continued success and enjoyment of education-based high school sports and activities. In fact, in the 103-year history of organized high school sports in the United States, good sportsmanship has been one of the most important outcomes of high school activity programs.

NFHS playing rules are written to encourage sportsmanship. Participation in these programs should promote respect, integrity and sportsmanship. However, for these ideals to occur, everyone involved in these programs must be doing their part.

The NFHS is concerned that unsporting behavior in education-based athletics has increased across all sports. As a result, the NFHS has made sportsmanship the No. 1 Point of Emphasis for the 2022-23 school year.

Sportsmanship, or good sporting behavior, is about treating one another with respect and exhibiting appropriate behavior. It is about being fair, honest and caring. When these types of appropriate behavior occur, competitive play is more enjoyable for everyone.

Coaches set the tone at athletic contests with their display of sportsmanship. If these individuals act in a sportsmanlike manner, their behavior sets the tone for players, spectators and others. If coaches, however, are complaining constantly about the decision of contest officials, spectators are more likely to do the same.

There must be a collaborative, working relationship between contest officials and game administration to promote good sportsmanship and safely conduct the contest. Everyone has their roles to play in creating a positive, sportsmanlike atmosphere at contests.

Officials should focus on the actions of players, coaches and other bench/sideline personnel. A positive, open line of communication between officials and coaches ultimately results in a better contest for everyone involved.

Contest officials, however, should never engage with spectators who are exhibiting unsporting behavior. Once the contest begins, school administration is responsible for dealing with unruly spectators. A proactive approach by school administration includes monitoring the behavior of spectators and intervening as needed.

If spectators are using demeaning or profane language at officials – or at others in the stands – those individuals should be removed from the contest by school administration.

In recent years, a heightened level of unsportsmanlike behavior has been occurring by spectators at high school sporting events, and it must be stopped. The use of demeaning language, or hate speech, by students, parents and other fans must cease.

High school sports and other activities exist to lift people up, not demean or tear people down. The goal is to treat everyone fairly and treat each other with respect. Any speech or harassment that is insulting, demeaning or hurtful will not be tolerated.

High schools must establish a culture that values the worth of every single person – both players on the school's team and players on the opposing team. There must be a no-tolerance policy regarding behavior that shows disrespect for another individual.

Good sports win with humility, lose with grace and do both with dignity. It takes the efforts of everyone every day to ensure that sportsmanship remains one of the top priorities in education-based activity programs.

Time Between Innings

As a point of emphasis, umpires and coaches should pay strict attention to the 60-second time limit between half-innings. In accordance with Rule 6-2-5, at the beginning of each half-inning no more than one minute may be used to deliver no more than five pitches to the catcher or other teammate. The one-minute time limit begins from the third out of the previous half-inning. A pitcher returning to the pitching position in the same half-inning will not be granted any warm-up pitches. Umpires may authorize more pitches during inclement weather or if a pitcher was removed due to injury or by rule.

Jewelry and Electronic Communication

The rule prohibiting jewelry has been removed allowing team personnel to now wear jewelry; however, the rule regarding the use of electronics is still in place. The use of electronic devices by team personnel to transmit or record information pertaining to their players or team's performance is only permitted within the dugout. Items such as smartwatches are permitted to be utilized as a watch but cannot be used to transmit or receive data outside of the dugout.

Comparable Drying Agents

Pitchers are not permitted to use any substance on the ball or on contact points of the pitching hand or fingers; also, no foreign substances may be applied to the ball. If a pitcher licks the fingers, the player must wipe the fingers prior to touching the ball. Comparable drying agents listed on the USA Softball website (USAsoftball.org) are permitted, and powdered rosin is also permitted. It is not necessary to wipe off the drying agent before making contact with the ball.

COMMENTS ON THE 2023 RULES CHANGES

1-4-1 — Removes the number of color restrictions on a glove, including laces and seams, and does not allow any part of the glove to match the color of the ball. Manufacturers are producing more multi-colored gloves, and as long as one of those colors is not the color of the ball, they should be permitted for use. This change allows for the NFHS rule to be less restrictive, providing more options. The glove still cannot have an optic-colored marking which gives the appearance of the ball or is judged to be distracting to the umpire.

2-20-1g (NEW) — This allows the definition of a fair ball to reflect what umpires have always enforced as part of the definition of a fair ball. It is intended to mirror the definition of a foul ball. (2-25-1e)

3-2-12, 3-6-11 — Removes the language prohibiting jewelry, which places the softball rules in line with other NFHS sports that do not have the restriction. These sports have no documented data of an increased risk for injury while wearing jewelry. With this change, medical alert and religious medals are no longer a concern. Umpires still have the authority to rule on anything that is considered a distraction or increases risk to any player.

4-2-1 — Allows for all runs to be counted when a fair batted ball clears the home run fence to end the game. All runs scored by virtue of the home run will be included in individual and team statistics.

8-2-7 — This clarifies batter-runner interference on a fly ball over foul territory. This has always been the enforcement but was not listed in the section covering batter-runner. The language is consistent with the rule covering interference on an initial play on a fair-batted ball and aligns with Rule 8-6-10.

COMMENTS ON THE 2023 MAJOR EDITORIAL CHANGES

1-4-1 — Clearly defines that any offensive player can commit interference on a batted ball while over foul territory. This has always been the enforcement, but by changing the word from batter to offensive player it makes the rule more inclusive and easily interpreted.

7-4-11 — This better defines spectator interference on a fair or foul fly ball. The previous rule language was confusing on a fly ball when there was spectator interference preventing the defense from catching the ball.

IMPROPER CONDUCT PENALTY SUMMARY CHART

Penalty	Infraction	Additional Info
<p>First Offense – Team warning Second Offense – Offender restricted to dugout/bench</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Lineup changes after submitted and verified. Faking a tag (3-6-2). Carelessly throwing a bat (3-6-3). Hitting balls to teammates on defense (3-6-4). Entering behind the catcher while the opposing pitcher and catcher are in their positions (3-6-5). Being outside the dugout/bench (3-6-6). Use of amplifiers or bullhorns for coaching purposes (3-6-8). Calling time or using any command or commit any act for the purpose of causing an illegal pitch (3-6-9). Objects other than score-keeping materials/devices in the coach's box (3-6-10). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Head coach is the offender (3-1-3). Faking a tag is also obstruction (3-6-2). If offender is a coach, depending on severity, on first offense the umpire may issue a warning or immediately restrict to bench/dugout or eject (3-6-8).
<p>First Offense – Team warning Second Offense – Offender and Head Coach restricted to dugout/bench</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Illegal equipment (3-6-1). Unreported substitute (3-6-7). Intentionally removing lines (3-6-17). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Additional penalty of a called strike or ball (3-6-17).
<p>Ejection Unless judged to be of a minor offense. If minor, offender is warned and ejected if repeated.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Electronic communication devices (3-6-11). Use of tobacco products (3-6-12). Unsporting acts (3-6-13). Charging an umpire (3-6-14). Arguing balls and strikes or judgment calls (3-6-15). Deliberately throwing equipment (3-6-16). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> and 3. Coaches who violate may be restricted or ejected (3-6-11, 3-6-13).
<p>Ejection</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Initiating malicious contact (3-6-18). Fighting (3-6-19). Use of altered or non-approved bat (7-4-2). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Offender and head coach ejected.



NFHS OFFICIAL SOFTBALL SIGNALS

<p>A. Do not pitch</p>	<p>B. Play ball</p>	<p>C. Time out/Foul ball/ Dead ball</p>	<p>D. Delayed dead ball</p>
<p>Signal toward pitcher</p>	<p>Verbally calls "Play ball"</p>	<p>Verbally calls "Time," "Foul ball" or "Dead ball"</p>	<p>Extend left arm out, fist with palm down (or out)</p>
<p>E. Strike/Out</p>	<p>F. Infield Fly</p>	<p>G. Safe</p>	<p>H. Fair Ball</p>
<p>Fist to hammer at 90 degrees</p>	<p>Verbally calls "Infield fly"</p>	<p>Verbally calls "Safe"</p>	<p>Point to fair territory with hand closest to infield. No verbal call.</p>
<p>I. Foul Tip</p>	<p>J. Count</p>	<p>K. Home run</p>	<p>L. Double</p>
<p>Fingers touch together, chest high, followed by strike call</p>	<p>Left hand indicates balls, followed by strikes on the right hand. Verbally give count.</p>	<p>Right hand in the air, rotate counterclockwise</p>	<p>First two fingers in the air</p>



National Federation of State High School Associations

MISSION STATEMENT

The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) serves its members by providing leadership for the administration of education-based high school athletics and activities through the writing of playing rules that emphasize health and safety, educational programs that develop leaders, and administrative support to increase participation opportunities and promote sportsmanship.

CORE BELIEFS AND VALUES

WE BELIEVE

Student participation in education-based high school athletics and activities:

- Is a privilege.
- Enriches the educational experience.
- Encourages academic achievement.
- Promotes respect, integrity and sportsmanship.
- Prepares for the future in a global community.
- Develops leadership and life skills.
- Fosters the inclusion of diverse populations.
- Promotes healthy lifestyles and safe competition.
- Encourages positive school/community culture.
- Should be fun.

THE NFHS:

- Serves as the national authority that promotes and protects the defining values of education-based high school athletics and activities in collaboration with its member state associations.
- Serves as the national authority on competition rules while promoting fair play and seeking to minimize risk of injury for student participants in education-based high school athletics and activities.
- Promotes lifelong health and safety values through participation.
- Develops and delivers impactful, innovative and engaging educational programs to serve the changing needs of state associations, administrators, coaches, directors, officials, students and parents.
- Provides professional development opportunities for member state association staffs.
- Promotes cooperation, collaboration and communication with and among state associations.
- Collects and provides data analysis in order to allow its membership to make informed decisions.



National Federation of State High School Associations

SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR MANAGEMENT OF CONCUSSION IN SPORTS

COMMON SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF CONCUSSION INCLUDE:

- Dazed or stunned appearance;
- Confusion about assignment or position;
- Forgetfulness;
- Uncertainty of game, score, or opponent;
- Clumsy movements;
- Slow response to questions;
- Mood, behavior or personality changes;
- Can't recall events prior to or after hit or fall;
- Headache or "pressure" in head;
- Nausea;
- Balance problems or dizziness;
- Double or blurry vision;
- Sensitivity to light or noise;
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy or groggy;
- Concentration or memory problems;
- Emotions of "not feeling right" or "feeling down."

Activate the Emergency Medical System or Call 9-1-1 if, after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body, an athlete has one or more of these danger signs:

- One pupil larger than the other;
- Drowsiness or inability to wake up;
- A headache that gets worse and does not go away;
- Slurred speech, weakness, numbness, or decreased coordination;
- Repeated vomiting or nausea;
- Convulsions or seizures (shaking or twitching);
- Unusual behavior, increased confusion, restlessness, or agitation;
- Loss of consciousness (passed out/knocked out). Even a brief loss of consciousness should be taken seriously.

SUGGESTED CONCUSSION MANAGEMENT:

1. No athlete should return to play (RTP) or practice on the same day of a concussion.
2. Any athlete suspected of having a concussion should be evaluated by an appropriate health-care professional as soon as possible.
3. Any athlete with a concussion should be medically cleared by an appropriate health-care professional prior to resuming participation in any practice or competition.
4. After medical clearance, RTP should follow a step-wise protocol with provisions for delayed RTP based upon return of any signs or symptoms at rest, while doing school work or with physical activity.

For further details, please see the "NFHS Suggested Guidelines for Management of Concussion in Sports" at www.nfhs.org.



National Federation of State High School Associations

EQUIPMENT GUIDELINES

1. Each NFHS sports rules committee is responsible for recommending the official playing rules to the NFHS Board of Directors for adoption. The committee is NOT responsible for testing or approving playing equipment for use in interscholastic sports. Equipment manufacturers are responsible for the development of playing equipment that meets the specifications established by the committee, and that is otherwise of good design and quality. The NFHS urges manufacturers to work with the various independent testing agencies to ensure the production of safe products. Neither the NFHS nor the applicable NFHS sport rules committee certifies the safety of any sport equipment. Non-compliant equipment is inappropriate for use in competition under NFHS sports rules. While the committee does not regulate the development of new equipment and does not set technical or scientific standards for testing equipment, the committee may, from time to time, provide manufacturers with guidance as to the equipment-performance levels it considers consistent with the integrity of the game. The committee reserves the right to intercede to protect and maintain that integrity.
2. Each NFHS sport rules committee suggests that manufacturers planning innovative changes in sports equipment submit the equipment to the applicable NFHS sport rules editor and/or rules committee for review before production.
3. Protective headgear is required by NFHS rules in some sports and is permissive in others. Hard helmets can decrease the incidence of certain head trauma, such as skull fractures and subdural hematomas. Soft headgear may protect against cuts and bruises to the scalp and forehead. Coaches, athletes and parents/guardians should review the manufacturers' warnings about proper usage and performance limits of such products. **No helmet or headgear can eliminate the risk of concussion and all sports should be played, coached and officiated in recognition of that fact.**



National Federation of State High School Associations

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR SPORTS HYGIENE, SKIN INFECTIONS AND COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

Proper precautions are needed to minimize the potential risk of the spread of communicable disease and skin infections during athletic competition. These conditions include skin infections that occur due to skin contact with competitors and equipment. The transmission of infections such as Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) and Herpes Gladiatorum, blood-borne pathogens such as HIV and Hepatitis B, and other infectious diseases such as Influenza and COVID-19 can often be greatly reduced through proper hygiene. The NFHS SMAC has outlined and listed below some general guidelines for the prevention of the spread of these diseases.

UNIVERSAL HYGIENE PROTOCOL FOR ALL SPORTS:

- Shower immediately after every competition and practice, using liquid soap and not a shared bar soap;
- Wash all workout clothing after each practice, washing in hot water and drying on a high heat setting;
- Clean and/or wash all personal gear (knee pads, head gear, braces, etc.) and gym bags at least weekly;
- Do not share towels or personal hygiene products (razors) with others;
- Refrain from full body and/or cosmetic shaving of head, chest, arms, legs, abdomen, and groin;
- Students should clean hands with an alcohol-based gel or soap and water before and after every practice and contest to decrease bacterial load on the hands;
- Covering up coughs and sneezes in the bend of the elbow instead of the hand;
- Stay home from school and athletic participation if frequent cough, diarrhea, vomiting or fever.

INFECTIOUS SKIN DISEASES

Strategies for reducing the potential exposure to these infectious agents include:

- Students must notify a parent/guardian and coach of any skin lesion prior to any competition or practice. An appropriate health-care professional must evaluate all concerning skin lesions before returning to practices or competition;
- If an outbreak occurs on a team, especially in a contact sport, all team members should be evaluated to help prevent the potential spread of the infection. All shared equipment shall be properly cleaned/disinfected prior to use;
- Coaches, officials, and appropriate health-care professionals must follow NFHS or state/local guidelines on "time until return to competition." Participation with a covered lesion may be considered if in accordance with NFHS, state or local guidelines and the lesion is no longer contagious.

BLOOD-BORNE INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Strategies for reducing the potential exposure to these agents include following Universal Precautions such as:

- A student who is bleeding, has an open wound, has any amount of blood on a uniform, or has blood on their body, shall be directed to leave the activity (game or practice) until the bleeding is stopped, the wound is covered, the uniform and/or body is appropriately cleaned, and/or the uniform is changed before returning to activity;
- Athletic trainers or other caregivers must wear gloves and use Universal Precautions to prevent blood or body fluid-splash from contaminating themselves or others;
- In the event of a blood or body fluid-splash, immediately wash contaminated skin or mucous membranes with soap and water. Skin antiseptics (e.g., isopropyl alcohol) or moist towelettes may be used if soap and water not available;
- Clean all contaminated surfaces and equipment with disinfectant before returning to competition. Be sure to use gloves when cleaning;
- Blood on an opponent's uniform during competition or teammate's uniform during practice should be cleaned at that time by wiping with a disinfectant such as isopropyl alcohol;
- Any blood exposure or bites to the skin that break the surface must be reported and immediately evaluated by an appropriate health-care professional.

OTHER COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

Means of reducing the potential exposure to these agents include:

- Make certain that students, coaching staff, and medical staff are current on all required vaccinations (MMR, Hepatitis B, Chickenpox, Meningitis, Hepatitis A). COVID-19 vaccine and yearly influenza vaccine are strongly encouraged;
- During times of outbreaks, follow the guidelines set forth by the CDC as well as State and local Health Department.

For more detailed information, refer to the "Blood-Borne Pathogens," "Infectious Mononucleosis" and "Skin Conditions and Infections" sections contained in the NFHS Sports Medicine Handbook.



National Federation of State High School Associations

GUIDELINES ON HANDLING PRACTICES AND CONTESTS DURING LIGHTNING OR THUNDER DISTURBANCES

These guidelines provide a default policy to those responsible or sharing duties for making decisions concerning the suspension and restarting of practices and contests based on the presence of lightning or thunder. The preferred sources from which to request such a policy for your facility would include your state high school activities association and the nearest office of the National Weather Service.

PROACTIVE PLANNING

1. Assign staff to monitor local weather conditions before and during practices and contests.
2. Develop an evacuation plan, including identification of appropriate nearby safer areas and determine the amount of time needed to get everyone to a designated safer area:
 - a. A designated safer place is a substantial building with plumbing and wiring where people live or work, such as a school, gymnasium or library. An alternate safer place from the threat of lightning is a fully enclosed (not convertible or soft top) metal car or school bus.
3. Develop criteria for suspension and resumption of play:
 - a. When thunder is heard or lightning is seen*, the leading edge of the thunderstorm is close enough to strike your location with lightning. Suspend play for at least 30 minutes and vacate the outdoor activity to the previously designated safer location immediately.
 - b. 30-minute rule. Once play has been suspended, wait at least 30 minutes after the last thunder is heard or lightning is witnessed* prior to resuming play.
 - c. Any subsequent thunder or lightning* after the beginning of the 30-minute count will reset the clock and another 30-minute count should begin.
 - d. When independently validated lightning-detection devices or mobile phone apps are available, this technology could be used to assist in making a decision to suspend play if a lightning strike is noted to be within 10 miles of the event location. However, you should never depend on the reliability of these devices and, thus, hearing thunder or seeing lightning* should always take precedence over information from a mobile app or lightning-detection device.

* – At night, under certain atmospheric conditions, lightning flashes may be seen from distant storms. In these cases, it may be safe to continue an event. If no thunder can be heard and the flashes are low on the horizon, the storm may not pose a threat. Independently verified lightning detection information would help eliminate any uncertainty.

4. Review the lightning safety policy annually with all administrators, coaches and game personnel and train all personnel.
5. Inform student-athletes and their parents of the lightning policy at start of the season.



National Federation of State High School Associations

COACHES CODE OF ETHICS

The function of a coach is to educate students through participation in interscholastic competition. An interscholastic program should be designed to enhance academic achievement and should never interfere with opportunities for academic success. Each student should be treated with the utmost respect and the student's welfare should be considered in decisions by the coach at all times. Accordingly, the following guidelines for coaches have been adopted by the NFHS Board of Directors:

- **Coaches** shall be aware that they have a tremendous influence, for either good or ill, on the education of the student and, thus, shall never place the value of winning above the value of instilling the highest ideals of character.
- **Coaches** shall uphold the honor and dignity of the profession. In all personal contact with students, officials, athletic directors, school administrators, the state high school athletic association, the media, and the public, coaches shall strive to set an example of the highest ethical and moral conduct.
- **Coaches** shall take an active role in the prevention of drug, alcohol and tobacco abuse.
- **Coaches** shall avoid the use of alcohol and tobacco products when in contact with players.
- **Coaches** shall promote the entire interscholastic program of the school and direct the program in harmony with the total school program.
- **Coaches** shall master the contest rules and shall teach the rules to their team members. Coaches shall not seek an advantage by circumvention of the spirit or letter of the rules.
- **Coaches** shall exert their influence to enhance sportsmanship by spectators, both directly and by working closely with cheerleaders, pep club sponsors, booster clubs and administrators.
- **Coaches** shall respect and support contest officials. Coaches shall not indulge in conduct which would incite players or spectators against the officials. Public criticism of officials or players is unethical.
- **Coaches** should meet and exchange cordial greetings with the opposing coach to set the correct tone for the event before and after the contest.
- **Coaches** shall not exert pressure on faculty members to give students special consideration.
- **Coaches** shall not scout opponents by any means other than those adopted by the league and/or state high school association.



National Federation of State High School Associations

OFFICIALS CODE OF ETHICS

Officials at an interscholastic athletic event are participants in the educational development of high school students. As such, they must exercise a high level of self-discipline, independence and responsibility. The purpose of this Code is to establish guidelines for ethical standards of conduct for all interscholastic officials.

- **Officials** shall master both the rules of the game and the mechanics necessary to enforce the rules, and shall exercise authority in an impartial, firm and controlled manner.
- **Officials** shall work with each other and their state associations in a constructive and cooperative manner.
- **Officials** shall uphold the honor and dignity of the profession in all interaction with student-athletes, coaches, athletic directors, school administrators, colleagues, and the public.
- **Officials** shall avoid the use of alcohol and tobacco products beginning with the arrival at the competition site until departure following the completion of the contest.
- **Officials** shall prepare themselves both physically and mentally, shall dress neatly and appropriately, and shall comport themselves in a manner consistent with the high standards of the profession.
- **Officials** shall be punctual and professional in the fulfillment of all contractual obligations.
- **Officials** shall remain mindful that their conduct influences the respect that student-athletes, coaches and the public hold for the profession.
- **Officials** shall, while enforcing the rules of play, remain aware of the inherent risk of injury that competition poses to student-athletes. Where appropriate, officials shall inform event management of conditions or situations that appear unreasonably hazardous.
- **Officials** shall take reasonable steps to educate themselves in the recognition of emergency conditions that might arise during the course of competition.
- **Officials** shall maintain an ethical approach while participating in forums, chat rooms and all forms of social media.



National Federation of State High School Associations

SOFTBALL DP/FLEX SIMPLIFIED REMINDERS

1. The DP can never be on DEFENSE ONLY.
2. The FLEX player can never be on OFFENSE ONLY.
3. The DP and FLEX player can never be on offense at the same time.
4. The STARTER and the SUBSTITUTE cannot be in the game at the same time.
5. The starting DP and FLEX player have one re-entry just as any other player.
6. Once the game is started with the DP/FLEX positions in the lineup, those positions are available for the entire game.
7. The penalty for illegal re-entry of the DP or FLEX player is always restricted to the bench/dugout.
8. If the player is on offense, the player is called out. If the player is on defense, the team on offense may have the choice of taking the result of the play or accepting the penalty.
9. The DP player is charged with a substitution only when the DP is withdrawn from the batting order and the FLEX player is charged with a substitution only when the FLEX is no longer listed as playing defense.

INDEX

REFERENCES ARE TO RULE, SECTION AND ARTICLE

Appeals.....	2-1, 8-3-2 EFF., 8-8-16, 10-1-4	Awarded First Base.....	8-1-2
Awards.....	2-65-1, 2; 6-1-3 PEN.; 8-1-1d EFF. (3); 8-1-1e PEN.; 8-1-2 PEN.; 8-3-11; 8-4-3	Becomes Runner.....	8-1-1
Ball.....		Defined.....	2-5-1
Batted.....	2-2-2	Delays.....	7-2-1e, 7-3-1
Bounces Out of Play.....	8-4-3g	Disconcerts Pitcher.....	7-4-3
Called.....	10-2-1	On-Deck.....	2-5-3, 7-5
Dead.....	2-2-4, 5-1-1, 5-2-2	Batter-Runner.....	2-5-2
Dead-Ball Table.....	5-1	Batter's Box.....	DIA. 1, 1-1-4, 2-6
Defined.....	2-2-1	Battery.....	2-23-2
Delayed Dead Ball.....	2-2-5, 5-1-2, 8-1-1d, 8-4-3d	Batting Helmet.....	1-6
Fair.....	2-20-1, 2-20-2, 5-1-1f	Batting Order.....	2-7-1, 3-3-2, 4-1-2b, 7-1-1, 2
Fly.....	2-2-6	Batting Out of Order.....	2-7-2, 7-1-2 PEN. 1
Foul.....	2-25-1, 7-2-1c, 7-2-1d, 7-2-3	Bench Conduct.....	3-6-1:20
Ground.....	2-2-7	Bleeding.....	3-3-10
Hits Batter.....	2-62 EXC., 2-62, 5-1-1a, 7-3-2 PEN., 8-1-2b	Blocked Ball.....	2-2-3, 5-1-1g
Hits Umpire.....	2-20-1d, 5-1-1d, 5-1-1f, 8-1-2a, 8-4-1d, 8-4-1f	Bunt.....	2-8, 7-4-9, 8-2-10, 9-3-4
Illegally Batted.....	5-1-1b, 7-4-8, 7-4-13	Casts.....	3-2-13
In Flight.....	2-20-1e, 2-28	Catch.....	2-9
Live.....	5-1-4	Catcher.....	
Passed.....	2-2-8, 9-5-5 EXC. 4, 9-6-1 NOTE	Defined.....	2-10-1
Rotation.....	6-5	Equipment.....	1-7
Specifications.....	1-3-3	Infractions (F.P.).....	6-3
Thrown into Stands.....	8-4-3e	Interference With.....	5-1-2c, 7-4-4, 8-2-6
Touches Runner.....	5-1-1d, 5-1-1f, 8-1-2a	Obstruction.....	2-36, 5-1-2b, 8-1-1d, 8-4-3b
Base.....		Position.....	3-1-5
Dislodged.....	8-3-5, 8-8-14	Catcher's Box.....	1-1-4, 2-10-2, 1-1-4 DIA. 1-1
Double.....	1-2-1 NOTE, 8-10	Checked Swing.....	2-11, 10-1-4 NOTE
Home Plate.....	1-2-2	Coach.....	
Missed.....	8-3-8, 8-3-9, 8-8-16, 9-1-1 EXC. c	Box.....	2-13
Retouch.....	6-2-4d, 8-3-9	Conduct.....	3-6
Specifications.....	1-2-1	Interference By.....	3-5-4, 3-5-5, 8-6-16
Touch Requirements.....	8-3-1, 8-3-2, 8-3-3, 8-3-8, 8-3-9, 8-3-10	Reporting Substitutions.....	3-3-2
Base Hits.....	9-3-1a, NOTE, 9-3-2a	Uniform.....	3-5-3
Base Line/Path.....		Conduct, Bench and Field.....	3-6
Abandoning.....	8-2-4, 8-6-19	Conferences.....	
Defined.....	2-3	Charged.....	2-14-1, 10-2-3j
Runner Leaves.....	8-2-5, 8-8-1	Defensive.....	3-7-1
Base on Balls.....	2-65, 8-1-1c	Offensive.....	3-7-2
Bat.....		Pragame.....	2-14-2, 3-5-1, 4-1-2
Altered.....	2-4-2a	Confines of the Field.....	2-15
Damaged.....	2-4-3, 7-4-14 NOTE	Courtesy Runners.....	8-9
Illegal.....	2-4-2	Crow Hop.....	2-16
On-Deck Devices.....	1-5-3	Dead Ball.....	2-2-4, Dead-Ball Table
Specifications.....	1-5-1, 1-5-2	Delayed.....	2-2-5
Touched by Batted Ball.....	5-1-1b, 8-2-7	Line.....	5-1-1i, Dead-Ball Table
Batter.....		Territory.....	2-22-4
		Delay of Game.....	
		By Batter.....	7-2-1e, 7-3-1
		By Pitcher.....	6-2-3 (F.P.), 6-4-7 (S.P.)
		Forfeit.....	4-3-1a-d

Designated Media Area	1-1-7	Ground Ball	2-2-7
Designated Player	3-1-1, 3-3-6	Ground Rules	4-1-3, 10-2-3
Detached Equipment	1-4-4, 5-1-2b, 5-1-2e, 8-4-3d	Illegal Pitch	2-43-2, 6-2-1, 6-2-2, 6-2-3, 6-2-7, 6-3-1 PEN., 6-4-6, 6-4-9, 6-4-12a (S.P.), 6-4-12b (S.P.), 6-4-13
Doubleheaders	4-2-3 NOTE 2	Improper Batter	7-1-1, 7-1-2 PEN.
Dugout/Bench Area	2-17	In Flight	2-28
Effect	2-18	Infield	2-29
Ejection	2-19, 3-6, 10-2-3f	Infield Fly Rule	2-30, 8-2-9
Equipment		Infielder	2-23-2
Loose	1-8-3, 5-1-1g, 8-4-3d, Dead-Ball Table	Initial Play	2-47-3
Nontraditional	1-8-1	Inning/Half Inning	2-31
Verification	3-5-1, 10-2-3a	Intentional Walk	2-65-2
Fair Ball		Interference	
Caught	2-9, 6-2-3	Double Play	8-6-10 PEN.
Defined	2-20-1	Offensive	2-32, 7-4-12, 8-6-10, 8-6-13
Hits Runner	5-1-1f, 8-1-2a, 8-4-1f, 8-6-11	Ball Hits Runner	5-1-1f, 8-1-2a, 8-4-1g, 8-6-11
Fair Territory	2-22-2	Ball Hit Twice	5-1-1b, 7-4-13
Fake Tag	2-21, 3-6-2, 8-4-3b	Bat Hits Fielder	7-4-14
Fielder		Batter Impedes Fielder	5-1-1p, 7-4-4, 7-4-14
Defined	2-23-1	Coach	7-4-12, 8-6-16
Falls Into Dugout	5-1-1i, 8-4-3h	Offensive Team Hinders	8-6-15, 8-6-16
Intentionally Dropped Ball	5-1-1i, 8-2-10	Runner Impedes Fielder	5-1-1e, 8-6-10, 8-6-14
Interfered With	8-6-10, 8-6-11, 8-6-12	Runner Impedes Thrown Ball	8-6-10d
Obstruction	2-36, 5-1-2c, 5-1-3, 8-4-3b	Spectator	5-1-1g1, 8-2-12, 8-4-3j
Position	3-1-4	Umpire	5-1-1f1
Field of Play		Jewelry	3-2-12
Defined	2-22-1	Leap	2-33
Layout	1-1, DIAS. 2 & 3	Line Drive	2-34
New	1-1-10, 1-1-11	Lineup Cards	3-1-3, 4-1-2b
Fighting	3-6-19	Malicious Contact	2-35, 8-6-14
Fly Ball	2-2-6	Missed Base	8-3-8, 8-3-9, 8-8-16
Force Out	2-1-11, 9-1-1 EXC. b, 9-1-1 EXC. d	Obstruction	2-36, 8-4-3b
Force Play	2-24	Official Scorer	9-2-2
Forfeited	2-26-4, 4-3, 10-2-2	On-Deck Circle	2-37, DIA. 1
Foul		Out	2-38
Line	1-1	Outfield	2-39
Territory	2-22-3	Outfielder	2-23-3
Foul Ball		Overrunning/sliding Base	2-40, 8-4-2b, 8-6-8, 8-7-4, 8-8-9
Bat Hit Second Time	7-4-13	Passed Ball	2-2-8, 8-4-3c
Bunt	7-2-1d	Penalties	2-41
Caught	5-1-1i, 7-4-11, 8-2-3	Pinch	
Defined	2-25-1	Hitter	2-42-1
Interference With	7-4-12	Runner	2-42-2
Not Caught	8-3-2 EXC.	Pitch	2-43-1
Tip	2-25-2, 7-2-1d	Pitcher	
Game		Changes Field Position	3-3-2 NOTE
Beginning	4-1-1, 4-1-5	Conferences	2-14-1, 3-7-1
Called	2-26-2, 4-2-3, 4-3-1	Defaces Ball	6-2-2, 10-2-3f
Ending	4-2	Defined	2-44
Gloves/Mitts		Disconcerted	3-6-15, 7-4-3
Illegal	1-4-4, 5-1-2d, 8-8-15	Fake Throw	8-7-4 EXC.
Loose	1-8-3	Foreign Substance	6-2-2 (F.P.), 6-4-5 (S.P.)
Specifications	1-4		
Thrown	8-4-3d		

Illegal Equipment	3-2-9	Stolen Base (F.P.)	2-55, 9-4
Infractions	6-2	Strike	
Legal Pitch	6-1-2, 6-1-3, 6-1-4	Called	7-2-1a, 8-1-2b
Legal Position	6-1-1	Defined	2-56-1
Pivot Foot	2-46, 6-1-1, 6-1-2c	Penalty	7-2-1, 7-3-1
Preparatory Pitcher (Warmups)	6-2-5	Swinging	7-2-1b
Pitching Circle	1-1-2, 2-45, 8-7	Zone	2-56-3, 2-56-4
Pitching Regulations	6-1 (F.P.),	Strikeout	2-56-2, 9-6-4
.....	6-2 (F.P.), 6-4 (S.P.)	Substitutes	
Player(s)		Defined	2-57
Captain	2-14-2, 3-1-2, 10-1-4	Illegal	3-4
Conduct	3-6	Pitcher	3-3-2 NOTE
Positions	3-1-6, DIA. 1	Procedure	3-3-3
Reduced Number	4-3-1f, 4-3-1g, 7-4-1	Suspended Games	2-26-1, 4-2-3
Play Ball	2-47	Suspension of Play	5-2
Pregame Procedures	3-5-1, 4-1-2,	Tag Out/Play	2-38-4, 8-6-3
.....	4-1-3, 10-2-3a	Team Members	2-58
Protested Games	1-1-9, 4-4, 10-2-3i	Team Personnel	2-59
Records	9-2 thru 9-7	Third Strike	
Re-entry	2-57-2, 3, 3-3-5	Bunted	7-4-9 (F.P.)
Regulation Game	2-26-3, 4-2	Caught	7-4-5
Relief Pitcher	6-2-5 (F.P.)	Not Caught	7-4-7 (F.P.), 8-1-1b (F.P.)
Restricted to the Dugout	2-48	8-2-1, 8-2-4
Runner		Three-Foot Lane	1-1-4, 2-60, 8-2-6
Advance	8-1-1, 8-2-4, 8-4,	Tie Game	4-2-5
.....	8-6-6, 8-6-7, 8-7, 8-6-11, 8-8-12	Time at Bat	2-62, 9-3-1a
Awarded Base	8-1-1d EFF. 3,	Time of Pitch	6-1-2 (F.P.)
.....	8-1-1e PEN., 8-1-2,	Time-out	2-61, 5-1-1h, 5-2-1
.....	8-2-12 PEN., 8-3-11, 8-4-3	Timing Play	2-63
Baseline	8-8-1	Tobacco Products	3-6-12, 10-1-6
Batter-Runner	8-1-1, 8-1-2, 8-2-6	Touching	2-64
Defined	2-50-1	Umpire	
Hit by Batted Ball	2-44,	Duties & Responsibilities	10-2, 10-3
.....	5-1-1f, 8-1-2a,	Equipment and Apparel	10-4
.....	8-4-1f, 8-6-11	Field Umpire	10-3
Hit by Pitch	2-62 EXC., 5-1-1a	Handles Live Ball	5-1-1h
Interference by	5-1-1e, 8-6-10	Interference	5-1-1f(1), 5-1-1g(5)
Missed Base	8-3-8, 8-8-16	5-1-1h, 5-1-2c (F.P.)
Obstructed	2-36, 5-1-3, 8-4-3b	Jurisdiction	10-1-3
Out	2-38-1	Plate Umpire	10-2
Passes Preceding Runner	8-6-4	Touched by Thrown Ball	3-5-5 EXC.,
Retired	2-50-2, 5-1-1e	5-1-1g, 8-4-1d
Retouch	6-2-4d, 8-3-10	Unconscious Player	3-3-9, 10-2-3k
Stolen Base	2-55	Uniforms	3-2
Run(s)		Unsporting Conduct	3-6-13,
Defined	2-49	10-2-3f, 10-3-1
Scoring	9-1-1, 9-1-2	Video Equipment	3-6-11
Scorebook	3-1-4, 9-2-2, 10-2-3a	Visiting Team	4-1-2, 4-1-3, 4-1-4
Score of Game	4-2, 4-3-2, 10-2-3n	Walk	2-65
Scoring	Rule 9	Warmup Pitches	6-2-5 (F.P.), 6-4-10 (S.P.)
Shoes	3-2-11	Weather	4-1-1, 4-2-2, 4-2-3
Slap Hit	2-51	Wild Pitch	8-4-3c (F.P.), 9-6-1
Sliding	2-52, 8-6-13, 14	Wild Throws	8-4-3e
Squeeze Play	2-53 (F.P.)		
Starting Players	2-54		