

Intercounty Softball Association

ISA League Rules – Spring 2026

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Introduction

This document covers the guidelines and rules for the Intercounty Softball Association (ISA). If there are any questions or concerns about the content of this document, please contact Anthony (Stitch) Picariello (215) 588-7838 or Lsaagirlssoftball@gmail.com

If any of these rules differ by age group, it will be noted in the applicable section.

Questions about rule interpretation, as well as suggestions for additions or revisions, should be submitted to the Board. The Board may modify these rules during the season with approval by a majority vote. Coaches and umpires will be provided with copies of any rule changes and notified of their effective dates.

General Rules

- All umpires and coaches will receive a copy of these rules prior to the start of the season.
- All teams must submit a team roster prior to the start of the season.
- Any player on a travel/tournament team roster or playing for a travel/tournament team must be identified.
- All Rosters are due by **March 15, 2026** with a lockdown date of **April 24, 2026** for the Spring season.
- Smoking is not permitted on or around the field by anyone on or associated with the team including coaches and score keepers.

Equipment

Batting Helmet

All offensive players must wear a helmet when they are at bat. The helmet must be NOCSAE approved with the extended ear flaps covering both ears and temples.

Each batting helmet must be equipped with a NOCSAE approved face protector. The text “Meets NOCSAE Standard at the time of manufacture” must be permanently affixed to the face protector.

If the helmet does not have a face protector, an eye shield may be worn and attached to the batting helmet. The shield must be constructed of a molded rigid material that is clear and permits 100% (no tint) allowable light transmission.

During a game/practice, all batters and base runners must always wear a batting helmet while on the field. For example, if a player is asked to be a base coach, that player must be wearing a helmet to be on the field.

Fielding Masks

The following applies to all players from 8u through 14u:

- When taking the field all players **must** wear a mask in the infield.
- Wearing a mask when playing in the outfield is optional in 12u-18u.

NOTE: At the 18u level fielding masks are encouraged, but they are optional for players anywhere in the field.

Footwear

No player may participate in a game/practice if they are wearing **anything** other than sneakers or rubber (plastic molded) spikes. Turf shoes are an acceptable option to softball spikes.

Metal spikes are **not** permitted for the 8u through 14u age groups. If a player shows up to a game or practices wearing metal spikes, the player will be removed from the game/practice unless the footwear described above is worn.

NOTE: Metal spikes may be worn in 18u events.

Bats

All bats must have at least one of the following stamps:

- ASA
- USSA
- USA

Bat material/construction may vary, however composite bats are **not** permitted in 8u and 10u game play. This is for the players' safety as the ball will come off those bats at faster speeds than a metal bat.

Banned Bats

All bats must **not** be on the banned bats list and meet the standards provided by the USA/ASA Softball organization. <https://www.usasoftball.com/certified-equipment/>

Jewelry

Players may not wear jewelry during game play. This includes bracelets, earrings, necklaces, etc. Any earrings left in place **must be taped over**.

Player Eligibility

If a player has an injury where they must wear some sort of cast or device to immobilize a part of their body, the player is not to participate in any game. There is too great of a risk of re-injury or doing further damage.

Age Eligibility

We will continue to use the birth year for eligibility. Whatever age the girl enters the New Year as, she stays eligible for that all year. Girls can play up in age but never play down.

Pitchers

Travel/Tournament players are **ineligible** to pitch in the ISA League unless it is 18u. Any player on one of the Suburban Select teams who is **not** on a travel/tournament team may pitch in ISA sanctioned games. If a Select team is entering tournaments outside of isa and Suburban select ,then they are no longer just a select team.School teams are not considered travel/tournament teams.

Travel Players

For the purposes of our league, a travel player is defined as: ***Any athlete who is playing on a travel / tournament team or entering into travel tournaments or round robins.***

This includes:

- ***Any player listed on the USSSA website for the current year.***
- ***Anyone that is playing on a travel / tournament team or playing in a travel tournament or round robin. Guest playing will make you ineligible.***
- ***This includes players who were listed on the USSA website for the current year and subsequently removed.***

If a player is listed on the USSSA website but does not have a year associated with them on the site, you must have the player explain when they played and for what team so it can be verified on the USSSA site. If it cannot be verified or if the player does not supply the

information, they **will not be eligible** to pitch. The player/organization is responsible for why the player is on the USSSA website if they are not on a travel/tournament team.

If players are on any other travel/tournament team, not just USSSA, they are not permitted to pitch in the ISA League up to an including the 14u age level. If a player/organization/team is unsure if they are eligible, we encourage them to ask and not hide the information. If confirmed and verified during a game, the player will be prohibited from pitching by the umpire.

A player does not have to be listed on the USSSA or utrip website to be flagged as a travel player. If a team or player plays in any tournament/round robin with other travel teams that is not sanctioned by ISA or Suburban Select League(Spring season is when Suburban League games take place) they will be considered as travel player and ineligible to pitch in ISA League event. Players who participate in the Suburban Select League can pitch in ISA **unless** the player/team participates in travel tournaments and/or round robin tournaments.

The above does **not** apply to players in the 18u ISA League.

Umpires

1. Each game will have one (1) umpire assigned per game.
2. **The umpire's judgement is final.**
 - a. Protests are not permitted at any time. If there is a question or concern only the head coach and one of the assistant coaches designated by the head coach prior to the start of the game are permitted to **discuss** any play in question with the umpire. Any discussions with the umpire are to take place away from the players and spectators so the conversation is not overheard and no one else can interfere with it.
3. No game shall be permitted to begin without a home plate umpire.
 - a. If an umpire does not show for the game the coaches may agree upon a coach or spectator to act impartially as the umpire for the game.

Umpire Assignment

The assignment of the umpire for each game is the responsibility of the umpire assigner, John Bradbury.

Umpire Fees

The fee per game for the umpire is \$68 per game. Each team is to provide half (1/2) of the payment which is \$34 each.

Fees are to be paid **prior** to game play starting. You may not withhold payment till the end of the game based on the umpire's performance.

All payments are to be made in cash directly to the umpire.

Behavior Policy

There is a **zero**-tolerance policy when it comes to treatment and behaviors directed toward umpires. Anyone who behaves inappropriately may be ejected and/or banished from the game and/or field for unsportsmanlike conduct by the umpire. This applies to players, coaches, and spectators alike.

Examples of unsportsmanlike conduct include but are not limited to:

- Unnecessary arguing
- Use of profanity
- Fighting
- Needling / heckling the umpire.

The team coaches are responsible for the conduct of their players, parents and spectators who are supporting their team. If someone is acting inappropriately it can lead to the suspension of the game and a forfeit for the team whose players/spectators are causing the issues.

The behavior rules hold true for the teams' coaches as well.

Game Play

General Rules

A full game is seven (7) innings for all age groups except at 10u it is six (6) innings. Games can end in a tie in regular season, but if a game finishes the full seven (7) innings prior to time expiring, extra innings should be played.

NOTE: This applies to regular seasons only. No borrowing of players for the mid and end of season tournaments.

All players must participate in every game and are not permitted to remain on the bench for more than two consecutive innings or more than half of the game, except in cases involving injuries or medical conditions. This guideline applies to both regular season and tournament games.

14 & Under

The inning ends when the team at bat has three (3) outs or because of the ten (10) batter rule.

12 & Under

1. The infield fly rule is **not** in effect.
2. The dropped third strike rule is **not** in effect.
3. Stealing is permitted only after the pitched ball crosses home plate.
 - a. The runner is not permitted to advance on an overthrow by the catcher on an **attempted steal**.
4. A runner may advance on an overthrow of an attempted pick off.
 - a. The intent of this rule is to encourage catchers to make throws when players are stealing so the catchers learn to make the throws and fielders learn to make the tags at the base.
 - b. It is not meant to allow the catcher unlimited pick off attempts.
 - c. A runner may advance on a pickoff attempt whether the fielder fields the ball clearly or the catcher overthrows the fielder.

The Ten Batter Rule

This rule only applies to 10u, 12u and 14u levels.

1. If a team bats ten (10) batters in an inning, the tenth batter will be played as if there are two (2) outs.
2. If the tenth batter in an inning hits a fair ball, play will continue until the third out is made at any base or home plate.
3. If the tenth batter walks or is hit by a pitch, the batter will be awarded two bases (12u +14u).
 - a. Base runners who are forced will advance.
 - b. When the batter reaches second base, the inning is over.
 - c. If there are base runners forced to score, the runs will count, and the inning is over.

Game Time Rosters

A full team consists of eight (8) players; however, the ninth spot in the batting order must be recorded as an out. If a team is shorthanded, it is permissible to use girls from a lesser age bracket, provided they are ISA rostered players.

As a last resort, you may borrow a player from another ISA team at the same age bracket, but these “borrowed” players are ineligible to pitch unless you obtain your opponent’s permission.

Game Duration & Timing Rules

A. Start and End Times

- **No New Inning After 1:45.** No inning may begin after 1 hour and 45 minutes from the scheduled start time.
- There is no run rule or mercy rule in the regular season. If the game is out of hand, try to stop stealing and taking extra bases. The whole goal of isa is for the girls to play and get at bats and reps in. Don` t cut games short in regular season since they don` t count anyway.

B. Timekeeping

- **Official Time** The umpire is responsible for keeping the official game time.

C. Inning Completion

- **Finish What You Start** Once an inning has begun, it must be completed unless interrupted by weather or loss of daylight. Coaches can agree to end the game after the 1hour 45 min mark.

D. Game Outcomes

- **Regular Season Ties** Games may end in a tie during the regular season if time expires before seven (7) innings are completed.
- **Extra Innings** If a game reaches the full seven (7) innings before the time limit expires, extra innings should be played to determine a winner.

Field & Weather Conditions

The umpire may suspend play, including not starting a game, if the field conditions are not safe for the players. This includes both physical conditions such as mud and broken safety barriers as well as the weather conditions.

At the first sight of lightning, or if thunder is heard, the game must be stopped and the players removed from the field, **no exception**. This is mandatory for the protection of the players, coaches, umpires, and spectators. Again, no arguing with the umpire on their decision to suspend play.

Scheduling

If a game needs to be rescheduled, a minimum of **24-hours' notice** must be given for rescheduling a game for any reason other than a rainout.

If the event of rain, the field is unplayable or is a team needs to reschedule, it is the head coach's responsibility to collaborate with John Bradbury to notify the assigned umpire and assign an umpire for the rescheduled game.

Pre-Game

- The home team is responsible for field preparation prior to the game.
- The home team coach is responsible for determining if the game is to be played.
- The decision to postpone a game due to rain or other inclement weather must be made no later than two (2) hours before the game time.
- The home team coach must call the opposing team's head coach, and the umpire assigner.
 - All required phone numbers would be provided to each coach.
- The home team collaborates with their opponent to reschedule the game.

In-Game

Pitching

Pitching shall be as defined by the USSSA rules for female fastpitch (Rule 6. Pitching Rule). This includes the updated Rule Change: Rule 6A, Section 1A. stating:

- Prior to the pitch, the pitcher must take a position with their pivot foot in contact with the pitcher's plate and their 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, and the hands must be apart.
- The pitcher may not take the pitching position on the pitcher's plate without possession of the ball, nor may the pitcher simulate pitching with or without the ball when near the pitcher's plate.

The rule change listed above allows female pitchers to start with one or two feet on the pitcher's plate.

Note: ISA is not implementing the 2022 'leaping' rule for pitchers. Leaping and crow hopping will remain illegal in ISA.

At Bat

A player is not allowed to show bunt, pull back, and then swing at the pitch. If this occurs, it will result in a dead ball, and the batter will be called out.

Every player will bat for her team. For example, the team has fourteen players at the game, all fourteen (14) players must bat. The lineup remains consistent throughout the game. If a player is injured and cannot bat when it is her turn, she is bypassed and the next batter in the lineup bats.

There is no out if an injured player is bypassed in the lineup. The injured player may be placed back in her original place in the lineup if she returns to the game. Players that arrive late are inserted at the end of the lineup.

Base Running

A courtesy runner can and should be used for the catcher and pitcher when she is on base at any time. The courtesy runner should be the last girl at bat to make an out.

Fielding

When fielding with ten players, four players must be in the outfield and the players in the outfield must be on the outfield grass and off the infield.

Frequently Asked Questions

Slide or Surrender

Question: If the base runner does not slide and there is a play, is it automatically an out?

Answer: In our league there is NO "Slide or Surrender" rule. The correct wording to be used is "AVOID CONTACT OR BE CALLED OUT" a base runner is to avoid contact with a baseman making a play however she does NOT need to slide into a base. If she collides due to not sliding, then she will be called out. A fielder who is putting a tag on a runner is not considered a collision when the glove touches the runner. Also, Catchers or fielders cannot block bases if they do not have the ball.

Question: Does the "slide or surrender" rule mean the runner is automatically out if there is a play and the runner does not slide?

Answer: (Directly from the Head of the Umpires, John B.) There is no "Slide or surrender" rule in the ASA rule book. The runner cannot deliberately crash into a fielder or interfere with a fielder attempting to make a play. The slide or surrender rule is an over-riding rule that is put in by leagues to protect both the runner and fielder. It becomes a problem when both coaches and umpires take the words "Slide or Surrender" literally. Some coaches want a runner called out in any circumstances when she does not slide and some umpires will take an out anyway they can get it. Both are wrong. The other problem is when there is an errant throw that may take a catcher or fielder up the line and into the path of a runner and there's contact. Should the runner be penalized for not sliding when she may not have had the chance to slide? That is part of the game. The problem is that the wording is too vague. Each situation should be officiated differently as it unfolds. If there is a close play with no slide or no contact, I do not believe a runner should be automatically called out. Each situation is different. Bottom line, coaches, or umpires should not be looking for an automatic out.

10th Batter Rules

Question: With the 10th batter up and playing "as if 2 outs" as soon as the ball is put into play, can the defensive team get an out by simply throwing the ball home and touching out plate, regardless if it's not a force out?

Answer: If there is a legitimate play at home that is one thing. If a catcher must stand on home plate and wait for a runner to trot from first to home that is another. In the case of the former, the commonsense thing to do would be to call them out and avoid any future collision. However, because of the latter, the rule cannot be WORDED or INTERPRETED

that simply touching home plate results in an out. That would open an assortment of problems whereas you have the 10th batter up with a runner at second representing the tie or winning run, the batter hits a single to the outfield and there is a legitimate play at the plate. The umpire needs to make the call based on the same rules that apply at every other point in the game which is to say –

- Did she beat the tag?
- Did the catcher hold onto the ball?

Question: Does the “slide or surrender rule mean the runner is automatically out if there is a play and the runner does not slide?

Answer: (Directly from the Head of the Umpires, John B.) There is no "Slide or surrender" rule in the ASA rule book. The runner cannot deliberately crash into a fielder or interfere with a fielder attempting to make a play. The slide or surrender rule is an over-riding rule that is put in by leagues to protect both the runner and fielder. It becomes a problem when both coaches and umpires take the words “Slide or Surrender" literally. Some coaches want a runner called out in any circumstances when she does not slide and some umpires will take an out anyway, they can get it. Both are wrong. The other problem is when there is an errant throw that may take a catcher or fielder up the line and into the path of a runner and there's contact. Should the runner be penalized for not sliding when she may not have had the chance to slide? That is part of the game. The problem is that the wording is too vague. Each situation should be officiated differently as it unfolds. If there is a close play with no slide or no contact, I do not believe a runner should be automatically called out. Each situation is different. Bottom line is that coaches and/or umpires should not be looking for an automatic out.

Question: While the 10th batter is up, a runner is out stealing either at a base on home plate. Does this mean the inning is immediately over since we are playing it as if there are two outs?

Answer: No, unless of course there were already two official outs made. The playing “as if” two (2) outs rule does not go into effect UNTIL the batter either puts the ball in play, walks, strikes out, or reaches base safely or is called out in any other way. In the case mentioned above, the batter reserves the right to complete the at bat.

Overthrows / Under Throws

The following applies to the 12u level only.

Question: If a catcher attempts to throw out a base runner during a steal and the ball does not reach the base, but falls short, can the runner continue to advance as if it is a live ball.

Answer: An under thrown ball is treated the same as an overthrown ball in the 12u division.

Question: The catcher overthrows the pitcher while a runner is stealing home, and the ball rolls around the infield, can the rest of the base runners continue to advance?

Answer: No, this is still considered to be an overthrow, home plate is considered a base just like all the others.

Question: If the ball is overthrown to the pitcher while she is in the circle, is the ball considered LIVE?

Answer: Yes, if the ball stays within fair territory, the ball is considered live. Runners may advance to any base at their own risk. An exception to this rule is in the 10u division, this rule does not apply.

Out of Play Rule

Question: A fielder attempts to throw out a runner at first or [third base], however, the fielder throws a high-arching ball, and by the time the ball hits the ground and rolls out of play, the runner has already touched the first base she is heading to, and on her way to second. The ball finally rolls out of play just as the runner reaches second base. Does the runner automatically get one more base? As if the batter going to First Base would get Third Base automatically, or a runner on First Base going to Third Base would automatically get Home Plate.

Answer: Once a ball is deemed “out of play” by the umpire, the runner will get the base she is going to “PLUS ONE” This happens at the time of release from the fielder’s hand towards the base in which she is throwing to. So basically, no matter how fast the runner is and no matter how slow the throw is, or how long it takes to roll out of play, the runner will only be awarded one additional base from where she was at the time of the throw. Balls not going out of play are considered “Live.”

Contacts

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