

**STAFFORD BASEBALL LEAGUE SOFTBALL TOURNAMENT RULES**

**Rules:** Any rules not listed in this document will default to the 2024 Babe Ruth League, Inc. Softball Rules & Regulations & Official Playing Rules. (Note: Rule books are available with the tournament director if you need one to reference.)

**Home Team:** During pool play the home team will be determined by a coin flip at the plate. During bracket play the higher seed is the home team.

**PROTESTS:** A manager must immediately claim a violation of a rule, at which time play will be suspended until the Protest Committee has made its decision based upon information received from the managers and umpires and the Committee’s observations. The Protest Committee’s decision will be final. No protest, except on player eligibility, will be honored after a game has been completed. Note: Protest committee is a representative from each team and the tournament director. The violation should be stated by the team protesting and the umpire should provide details as to what occurred.

**PLAYERS:** 9 players in the field, 10 players for 8U. Teams can bat all players, non-defensive players will be identified as EP.

An **EXTRA PLAYER (EP)** can be used to increase the batting order. If a team elects this option, it must start with the EP and end with the EP. If no bench players are available to replace a batter in the lineup the team will take an out every time the player misses their at-bat. (Both teams in a game are not required to use this option.) There is no limit to the number of EP’s in the lineup.

**RE-ENTRY RULE:** Stafford Baseball League will allow re-entry of already-used players if all substitutes have been used and an injury occurs, or a player is ejected. Selection of this substitute must be made by the opposing manager. The injured or ejected player, once removed from the game, cannot re-enter. Pitchers may not re-enter the game at Pitcher once they have been removed from the mound during the same game. If all team members are in the lineup, the player that is unable to bat will count as an out for that at-bat.

**SOFTBALL (10U Division):** An 11” official fastpitch softball shall be used for all tournament competitions.

**SOFTBALL (12U, 14U, and 16U Divisions):** A 12” official fastpitch softball shall be used for all tournament competitions.

**GAME LENGTH (10U and 12U Divisions):** 6 complete innings unless the home team leads after 5 ½ innings of play. No new inning may start after 1 hour and 30 minutes of play. EXCEPTION: Championship games.

**GAME LENGTH (14U and 16U Divisions):** 7 complete innings unless the home team leads after 6 ½ innings of play. No new inning may start after 1 hour and 30 minutes of play. EXCEPTION: Championship games.

**INNING RUN RULE (8U and 10U Divisions):** Teams will be allowed a maximum of 5 runs an inning in the first two innings of the game. Once a team scores 5 runs, scoring stops that inning, and the half ending is ended. Starting in the 3rd inning teams will need to complete 3 outs to end the half innings.

**15-RUN RULE:** Any tournament game must be terminated immediately if one team is ahead by fifteen (15) or more runs after two and one half (2 ½) or three (3) innings and has had equal times at bat.

**10-RUN RULE:** Any tournament game must be terminated immediately once becoming regulation (3 ½ or 4 innings) if one team is ahead by 10 or more runs and the teams have had equal times at bat or the home team is leading by

**8-RUN RULE:** Any tournament game must be terminated immediately if one team is ahead by 8 or more runs and the teams have had equal times at bat, or the home team is leading by 8 or more runs after 4 and half or 5 innings.

**FIELD DIMENSIONS:** Standard Babe Ruth Softball Divisions base length of 60 feet. The mound distance for 10u is 35 feet. The mound distance for 12u is 40 feet. The mound distance for 14u and older is 43 feet.

**UMPIRES:** Two umpires will be on the field at all times (one on the field and one at home plate behind the batter). (Except for 8U).

**COURTESY RUNNER:** The pitcher and (or) catcher may have a courtesy runner for them every time that they are up to bat. Each courtesy runner used must be a player who is not in the game at the time. Each courtesy runner may be a courtesy runner only once per inning. After a team has used its eligible players for this rule, the team shall be allowed to use its player with the last completed plate appearance to run for the pitcher or catcher.

**BASE STEALING:** Base stealing is permitted in tournament play. Runners may not leave their bases(s) until the ball is released by the pitcher. (No stealing in 8U).

**FACE MASKS**: 8u and 10u– Fielding masks are required at all positions. (Catchers must have proper catching gear on.) 12u, 14u, and 16u – all infield positions are required to have a fielding mask. Outfield is optional.

**JEWELRY:** Jewelry is permitted in all Divisions. Umpires have the authority to remove anything believed to distract or increase risk to player safety. (Medical alert or religious bracelets or necklaces are not considered jewelry and continue to be permitted.)

**SOFTBALL BATS:** Bats must be stamped as Official Softball or Fastpitch bats by the manufacturer.

**DIAMOND KINETICS:** The Diamond Kinetics “Swing Tracker” sensor that is attached to the bottom of a softball bat can be used during live, in-game at bats.

**PITCHING RULES (10U and 12U DIVISIONS):** No pitcher shall be allowed to pitch in more than nine (9) innings in any two (2) successive tournament games within the same tournament level. All players have full pitching eligibility beginning at each level of tournament competition.

**PITCHING RULES (14U and 16U DIVISIONS):** There are no pitching limitations for these age groups.

**PITCHER’S FOOT PLACEMENT**: The new addition will eliminate the requirement that a pitcher must have part of her pivot foot on top of the pitcher’s plate. Now, the pivot foot must only start in contact with the plate. This addition will also allow the pitcher to start with the non-pivot “stride” foot in contact with or behind the plate, and allows the pitcher to step back with the stride foot off of the plate; provided the step-back begins prior to the official start of the pitch, the separating of the hands.

**With the new rule addition, pitchers will have the choice to either continue with the current rule or to comply with the new addition. Both will be accepted as legal play and will not result in an illegal pitch scenario.**

**PITCHER’S GLOVE:** No pitcher shall attach to her glove any foreign material of a color different from the glove. The pitcher may wear her batting glove on her non-pitching hand under her pitcher’s glove, provided the batting glove is not optic yellow.

**DROPPED THIRD STRIKE:** Rule does not apply to 8U and 10U divisions.

**Pitching Machine (8u only):** The use of a pitching machine is required in the 8u division. The tournament director or league representative will set the pitching machine to the settings required for tournament play. Micro adjustments are allowed prior to the start of the game, but NO ADJUSTMENTS once the game has started.

**Baserunning:** Runners stop once the ball is in the pitcher’s circle. If a runner is still running, the umpire will determine whether they need to go back to the previous base or continue to the next base. Play is not stopped until the umpire calls time.

**8U specific rules:**

* A spring-loaded portable pitching machine will be used with 11-inch softballs.
	+ The machine will be placed 35 feet from the plate. A league representative will set the machine up for play. Once play starts no adjustments can be made to the machine. If adjustments are needed, umpires will make the decision to adjust.
* 10 players may play defensively. 4 in the outfield, they must start play in the grass area of the field.
* The player assuming the pitcher position must remain within the pitcher’s circle behind the machine until the ball is hit.
* 3 swinging strikes = out
* Each player will get 4 pitches from the machine. If the batter has not put the ball in play the batter is out.
* The umpire can call no pitch if the ball is wild. If this is called the pitch does not count against the batter’s total of 4.
* If the batter fouls the final pitch they can receive another pitch.
* Dead ball will be called if a hit ball strikes the pitching machine or an umpire in the field of play. The batter will be awarded first base, and all runners will move back to the base they occupied prior to the ball being hit unless they are forced to move forward due to the batter taking first. If a defender touches the ball prior to the ball hitting the machine, the ball is live.
* No Stealing bases allowed.