

2026 SPYBAS Rookies Softball League Rules

I. General

A. Ground Rules

- 1) If lightning is observed, all games must be delayed for 30 minutes after the last visible lighting. All players, coaches, and spectators shall take cover in their vehicles. After 30 minutes, umpires and League Directors will determine if games can resume.
- 2) Scores will NOT be kept for league games. This league is designed to introduce kids to the basics of softball. Practices and game should be primarily focused on learning and basic skill development. Have Fun!
- 3) A ball that hits the protective fencing or netting in foul territory is considered a dead ball, even if subsequently caught by a defensive player.
- 4) The orange "safety" base at first base is considered foul territory.
- 5) Bases are set at 60' distances.
- 6) A ball that hits the pitching machine is considered a "live" ball

B. Equipment/Safety

- 1) Bats must be softball bats 2 1/4" in diameter.
- 2) Players are encouraged to wear their own batting helmet; All helmets must have a facemask.
- 3) Players must wear rubber cleats or tennis shoes – no metal cleats.
- 4) Any minor, including players, serving as a base coach, batboy or batgirl must wear a helmet while they are on the field.
- 5) Players are not allowed to wear jewelry, including "soft" bands and/or necklaces. Studded earrings are acceptable if covered by a band-aid or similar.
- 6) Shirts of all players should be tucked in.

C. Coaches/Team Responsibilities

- 1) No player, coach or fan shall speak disrespectfully or with foul language toward another player, coach, fan or umpire. Doing so may result in disciplinary action by the umpire, and/or SPYBAS.

- 2) Teams are allowed a 1st and 3rd base coach while batting. The batting team must also supply a coach to feed the pitching machine. All other coaches/parent helpers must remain in the dugout or at the mouth of the dugout unless required to pitch per league rules.
- 3) The defensive team is required to post a coach/parent helper at the backstop behind the catcher and umpire to assist with wild pitches and passed balls, maximize playing time for the kids, and expedite the flow of the game. The defensive team may also position two coaches in the outfield to assist in positioning defensive players and directing game action. The coaches must stand beside or behind the outfielders.
- 4) Game Setup/Clean Up responsibilities
 - a. Visiting team of 1st game: Remove base plugs and install bases.
 - b. Visiting team of last game: Replace base plugs and put away bases. Lock the storage shed when all bases and the pitching machine are put away.
 - c. Home team of 1st game: Set up the pitching machine.
 - d. Home team of last game: Put away pitching machine.
 - e. Each team is responsible for cleaning out its own dugout.

D. Umpires

- 1) Umpires are to be treated with respect at all times. Failure to comply with this rule can result in ejection from the game and possible dismissal from coaching at the discretion of SPYBAS.
- 2) Any umpire's call which involves judgement, such as, but not limited to:
 - fair or foul,
 - balls and strikes
 - safe or outis FINAL. No coach, player, or spectator shall object to any such judgement decisions. Coaches are required to stay in their dugouts or at their base on judgement calls.
- 3) If there is reasonable doubt that the umpire's decision may conflict with the rules, the coach may appeal the decision and ask that the ruling be reviewed. Such an appeal shall be made only to the umpire who made the protested decision. To make an appeal:
 - a. The coach shall ask for "time out". Coaches from both teams shall then approach the umpire calmly. Discussion of appeal shall only start when both coaches are present with the umpire.

- b. Coaches must not intimidate the umpire in any manner (e.g., shouting, finger pointing, invading personal space, intimidating language)
- c. If the umpire chooses, they can consult with the other umpire or league director (if present) prior to making a final ruling.
- d. When the umpire makes the final decision, coaches must accept that decision and make no further protests about the call.

E. Rosters/Lineups

- 1) Fewer than 7 players present at the beginning of a game will result in a forfeit.
- 2) If a team is below the league allowed number of players in the field, that team may have a player(s) from other league team(s) fill in and play to reach a full complement of fielders per league rules.
 - a. Any replacement players needed are only allowed to play in the outfield and must bat at the end of the rolling batting order for that game. They must wear their own league jersey, so everyone knows the players are from another team and subject to these restrictions.
 - b. If a team utilizes a replacement player to start a game, and later has sufficient team members such that the replacement player chooses to leave, they may do so with no penalty to the team utilizing the replacement player. Players who show up late will be added to the end of the lineup for that particular game if their regular spot in the order has already batted.
- 3) Playing Time
 - a. All rostered players present must bat.
 - b. All rostered players present at the start of the game may only sit one defensive inning for games 3 innings or less, or a maximum of 2 defensive innings for games 4 innings or more.
 - c. No player may play the same defensive position in a game for more than 2 innings. Each outfield position is considered unique. Free defensive substitution is allowed to accommodate this rule.
 - d. Please consider player safety when positioning players in the field, some positions may not be appropriate for all players at this age. Use judgement to keep players engaged, learning, and safe.
- 4) In an effort to get all kids the same number of at bats throughout the season, teams must use a rolling batting order. For example, if the 5th batter in the lineup makes the last out in the first game, the 6th batter will be the first batter of the next game. The batting order cannot change from game to game, it simply picks up where it left off the previous game.

F. Game Length

- 1) Game time limit is 80 minutes for the regular season, with a "hard stop." Umpires and coaches must note the official start time of the game. Umpire is

the official timekeeper. It is very important that all games start on time. The same rules apply to all games, meaning the last game of the day cannot extend play simply because there is no game following their game.

- 2) A new inning starts immediately after the 3rd out of the previous inning.
- 3) A team's at-bat is over once three outs are made or the team has batted through the order, whichever occurs first. If one team has more players than the other, the team with fewer players may bat the same number of players as the larger team when at bat.
- 4) A game is complete if 6 innings have been played. If the game is called by the umpire, it will be considered "regulation" if 4 innings have been completed.

II. Batting

A. General

- 1) On deck batters are allowed. On deck batters must position themselves behind the batter at the plate (1st base foul territory for left-handed batters, 3rd base foul territory for right-handed batters) regardless of which dugout their team occupies.
- 2) A batter is allowed to step into and over home plate to avoid a wild pitch or a pitch thrown behind them.
- 3) If the batter unintentionally makes contact with any part of the catcher during their swing (catcher's interference), the batter will be awarded 1st base. Catchers must maintain ample separation from the batter, both in the interest of safety and to avoid interfering with the batter's swing.
- 4) Similarly, batters must get out of the way of a catcher attempting to field a foul ball, a batted ball, a wild pitch or passed ball as they attempt to make a play. If the umpire determines deliberate interference by the batter, it will be considered a dead ball. Runners attempting to advance will be returned to the base they occupied prior to the last pitch. If the batter interfered with a batted ball in play, they will be called out.
- 5) Batters will receive a maximum of 5 pitches per batter unless the batter reaches 3 swinging strikes first. Batters must swing on the 5th pitch or be called out on strikes. A batter will be allowed unlimited foul ball swings on the 5th machine pitch.

B. Strikeouts

- 1) There is no attempting to reach first on a dropped 3rd strike. Runners already on base may advance if league rules permit stealing/advancing on passed balls/wild pitches.

C. Hit By Pitch (HBP)

- 1) Due to machine pitching, there is no HBP at this level. Any pitch that strikes a batter will be considered a ball.

D. Bunting

- 1) Bunting is NOT allowed.

III. Base Running

A. General

- 1) Batters must use the orange “safety” base when there is a play or potential play at 1st base. If the batter fails to use the orange “safety” base and interferes with a defensive player attempting to make a play at 1st base, they will be called “out”. If the ball is hit beyond the infield, the runner may round first base using either base.
- 2) Base runners are to avoid contact and should slide when a play is being made on the runner or the potential exists for such a play. If a player doesn’t slide, the umpire will call the runner out without warning. Excessive contact with no slide may result in the runner being called out and ejection from the game.
- 3) Headfirst sliding is not allowed, and the runner will be called out except when the base runner is diving back to return to a base they already occupied.
- 4) Coaches may substitute a courtesy runner for the projected catcher at any time during the inning. A courtesy runner is required for the catcher once you reach 2 outs. The courtesy runner must be the player that recorded the last out. The projected catcher must use this time to get their gear on and ready for the next inning.
- 5) The “Circle Rule” is in effect. If the pitcher has the ball and is standing within a 4’ radius of the rubber, any base runner that has rounded a base and then stops must make a definitive and immediate move toward one base or the other. A base runner is not allowed to “bait” the pitcher into throwing to one base. Any base runner that violates the circle rule will be called out.

B. Leading Off

- 1) There is no leading off. The pitch must cross home plate before the base runner is allowed to leave. Base runners that leave early will be warned for the first offense and required to return to the base. If the runner does not advance on the pitch, they must return to the base before the next pitch is thrown.
 - a. A second lead-off violation by the same team will result in the runner being called out.

- b. If the runner leaves early and the ball is put in play, the play will be allowed to finish and at the conclusion of the play, the runner will either be warned or called out if second infraction.

C. Base Stealing, Wild Pitches, & Passed Balls

- 1) Base stealing is NOT allowed.
- 2) Runners may NOT advance on wild pitches or pass balls.

D. Overthrows/Advancing

- 1) Batters and base runners are not allowed to advance on an overthrow.
- 2) Runs can only be scored on balls that are hit in play.

IV. Defense

A. General

- 1) There are 10 players in the field: 6 in the infield (including the pitcher and catcher) and 4 in the outfield. Outfielders shall line up in a LF, LC, RC, RF orientation. No “rover” position is allowed
- 2) Teams must field a catcher at all times
- 3) Outfielders must play on the grass until the ball is hit.
- 4) An infield and outfield warm up ball will be allowed during the first inning only.
- 5) The youth “pitcher” will stand next to the coach pitcher on the first base side for right-handed batters, and on the third base side for left-handed batters.

B. Defensive Gameplay

- 1) Defensive players may not obstruct the base paths unless they have the ball in their possession or are in the process of fielding a hit ball. Base runners may go around a fielder attempting to play a batted ball in the base path.
- 2) There is no infield fly rule.

V. Pitching

A. General

- 1) Machine pitch will be used for the entire season. The speed of the pitching machine will be determined by the League Director. Please communicate any issues with the pitching machine to the League Director.

B. Walks

- 1) There are no walks. A player must either put the ball in play or be called out on strikes.

C. Pitches Hitting the Ground

- 1) Pitches hitting the ground will be considered a dead ball.

VI. End of Season Tournament

The following exceptions to regular season rules exist for the End of Season Tournament

A. Ground Rules

- 1) League Director will communicate with coaches to determine seeding.
- 2) Scores will be kept.
- 3) Head coach of the winning team is responsible for reporting the score to the league immediately following their game. Games not reported within 48 hours will be recorded as a tie. Communicate scores as directed by the League Director.

B. Roster/Lineups

- 1) Coaches will be allowed to reset their batting order for each game in the tournament.
- 2) Replacement players are not allowed in the end of season tournament. Any team with less than the minimum number of team players will be required to forfeit.

C. Game Length

- 1) Game Length rules are adjusted/supplemented as follows
- 2) No new inning may begin after 75 minutes. Once the 75-minute time limit has been reached, gameplay will proceed as follows:
 - a. If at the time limit, the home team is batting
 - i. with the lead, the game is over.
 - ii. and tied or behind, the home team will bat until they take the lead, bat through the order, or 3 outs are made.
 - b. If at the time limit the away team is batting
 - i. and does not tie the game or take the lead at the end of their at-bat, the game is immediately over.
 - ii. and ties the game or takes the lead, the home team will also be permitted to bat until situation (a.ii) above is met.
- 3) For games tied after 6 innings or for all new innings after the 75-minute limit:

- a. All new innings begin with the batting team placing a runner on 2nd base. This runner will be the player that immediately precedes the batter in the batting order.
- b. The team at bat will begin with one out.
- c. Limits for runs or offensive batters per inning remain in effect (as appropriate).
- d. The game ends when the home team takes the lead, or the visiting team has the lead and records 3 outs in the bottom of the inning.