

2026 USA Softball Rules

- Middle Essex Girls Softball
 - Essex County Girls Softball
- Effective April 10, 2026**

BYLAWS & POLICIES PURPOSE:

All towns and teams must be registered under the new USA Softball website - ma.registerplay.com. Coaches, Assistant Coaches, Score Keepers, Additional Staff and Volunteers **must** be registered, complete background checks and SafeSport training completed before the first game. Any team who has not registered all their players, coaches, and volunteers will forfeit their games. No excuses.

USA Softball abides by a ZERO-TOLLERANCE Policy.

- Coaches who argue or comment in a negative fashion towards umpires, players or fans will be immediately ejected from the game and given a \$100 fine. The ejection carries a two-game suspension. 2nd ejection will result in being suspended for all USA softball events for the remainder of the season.
- Parents / Fans who argue or engage in negative behavior (yelling, teasing, taunting, etc.) shall be removed from the playing area. Time will continue in the game as this happens. If the parent or fan refuses to leave within one minute, the game will end with a forfeit charge against the offending team. Any argument or disagreement that becomes physical, in any way, will result in an immediate, indefinite suspension for any adult involved. A team may exercise its right to play the game under protest based on an incorrect rulebook interpretation.

ROSTERS:

- All players **MUST** be registered and insured through USA Softball via the new site listed above. Anyone who uses a player who is not registered and insured will result in a forfeit for the game(s) played.
- Players can be added at any time. Players may only be listed on one (1) roster.
- If on a given night a team is going to be short on players, a girl may be called to play up one division. She may not play down even if age eligible. Likewise, she may not go from an "A" team to a "B" team.
- A player can only be called up if the team has less than 10 players.
- If there are two teams in the same division, she may not play for the "other" team.
- Each team is allowed to list three (3) non-residents. **Please note, these players cannot become pitchers.** Also, your non-residents may not be from a town that has a team in the same division as your team.
- Club Pitchers **ARE** allowed; however, they **CAN ONLY** pitch in A Divisions.
- Roster violations will result in a loss by forfeit and a two-game suspension of the coach.
- Each player must play a minimum of 5 games to be eligible for playoffs. Each player should also play a minimum of 2 innings.

UMPIRES:

- Umpires will be hired from the appropriate USA Softball umpire districts.
- The home team is responsible for canceling a game for rain or other factors. They must contact the proper assignor and other team coach. Any cancellation, because of rain or poor field conditions, needs to be made **2 hours before start time**. For any other reason than weather related, communication must be made before **12 pm on the day of the game**; otherwise, the home team will be responsible for the umpire's fee. The more notice you can provide, the better. Once the umpire shows up to a field and it's determined to be unplayable (raining or too much standing water, unsafe to play) will still be required to be paid.

GAMES:

- Scheduled game times are **6:15 PM for Middle Essex Girls and 6:00 PM for Essex County Girls**.
- Games must start on time. If a team has only 8 players, the USA shorthanded rule is in effect. If the Umpire is late, the game should start as scheduled, and the Umpire will take over once they arrive.
- No new inning may begin, after 1 hour and 30 minutes from the scheduled start time.
- Any game that plays to the time limit will be considered an official game regardless of the number of innings.
- Umpires are responsible for ending games regarding darkness, weather or other factors, once a game has begun.
- If the home team is losing and doesn't get to complete they're at bats or complete the half inning, the final score reverts to the last completed inning.
- Teams must play their games according to the league schedule.
- Teams are not allowed to reschedule games because a team is not able to play or field enough players on an assigned date, you must take a forfeit.
- If an event comes up, where you can't field a team, approval to reschedule must first be agreed on by both coaches and then be approved by the League Commissioner. Each case will be reviewed to decide if the game can be rescheduled.
- When posting a forfeit, the proper score per USA Softball is 7-0.
- If a game must be postponed because of rain or other weather-related events, it can be played on a new date. Both teams must agree and the Home Team must notify the appropriate assigner. **RULES:** The current rules of the USA are in effect unless noted.

Rules: The current rules of USA Softball are in effect, unless noted below.

- Pitching Distances:
 - Divisions 18A, 18B, 14A and 14B pitch from 43 feet.
 - 12A and 12B pitch from 40 feet
 - 10A and 10B pitch from 35 feet. **Please Note**, if having difficulty at this distance and with the consent of both coaches, she may move in another step or two.
- Batting Order:
 - A team may use either a rule-book line up or a continuous batting order.
 - Free defensive substitutions are allowed only when using continuous batter order. The batting order will remain the same.
 - If a player gets injured and cannot continue to play, it is not an out in the lineup. Any other reason is an out. The only restriction here regards the pitcher, if removed she may not return to pitch in the same inning but is free to pitch in any other inning.
- Defense:
 - 10U and 12U B Divisions are allowed (but not required) to play with ten (10) fielders
 - All other Divisions will play with 9 fielders.
- Run and Mercy Rule:
 - A 10-run mercy rule is in effect. It is invoked after 5 innings (4 ½ if home team) and at the point in which it occurs.
 - 5 (five) RUN RULE: This rule applies to all Divisions except 18A and 10U (**See 10U rule below**). An inning will end early if a team scores 5 runs before they are put out three times. The play on which the 5th run scores will end at its normal conclusion. **Please note**, if more than 5 runs score in the inning, they do not count. (DO NOT ABUSE THE RULE) The 5 run rule is lifted in the 5th, 6th and 7th inning.

- SPECIAL RULES FOR THE 10U DIVISION:
 - **There are NO WALKS in 10U.** A coach from the offense must come in and pitch to the batter until the batter either strikes out or puts the ball in play. The count remains the same once the coach comes in. This provision is made to make the game flow along more smoothly.
 - Base runners may steal from second to third and third to home, but only two steals per inning are allowed. This is also applicable when the “coach” is pitching in a “walk” situation.
 - Runners must wait until the pitched ball reaches home plate.
 - A runner may only advance from 1st to 2nd on action generated by an at bat. They cannot steal from 1st to 2nd at all.
 - If the catcher throws **back to the pitcher or to 3rd base**, the runners **cannot advance**. We are trying to teach the catcher to throw down.
 - The “walk and run Look back rule” play is not allowed.
 - A player may not advance to second on a walk.
 - The dropped third strike rule **is not** in effect.
 - There **is no** infield fly rule.
 - A five-run rule per inning until the completion of the 3rd inning. Starting the 4th inning, there are unlimited runs.
 - 10 run mercy rule is in effect after 5 innings as detailed in previous section.
 - Games will be played with 11- inch softball.
 - 10U games in this league are 6 innings if time permits.

Club pitching rule:

- No pitcher from a club team can pitch in the B division team. If they are playing up a division or on an older team it may be allowed in certain cases. USA will determine if this is allowed. If they are good pitchers do not waste your time and ask. If you bring a pitcher up to fill in because you have under 10 players, they cannot pitch.

Misc. Items:

- There is no “**Must Slide**” rule. Baserunners must try to avoid contact if the defensive player has possession of the ball. There is also not rule against sliding “**headfirst**”, it is allowed.
- ALL STAR GAME: Each league will have an All-Star Game for most divisions. Dates will be announced during the season. Tee shirts will be provided by USA Softball and handed out to the players and coaches. Coaches will be determined in advance of the games.
- SCHOLARSHIP AWARD: The Middle – Essex Softball League will award one scholarship to a graduating senior. The recipient must have played on Middle – Essex teams for at least five seasons and be nominated by a coach. Other factors will be taken into consideration such as giving back to the softball community by helping with teams, umpiring or in some other way promoting the game. Also, citizenship and financial need may be considered.
- FORFEIT and CANCELTION POLICY: Any forfeit needs to be communicated to the assigner **before noon time** the day of the game to avoid paying the Umpire fee. Any communication after that grace period, the forfeiting team must pay a fee of \$70 within 48 hours. Second forfeit is \$100 and subject to be removed from the league. You will be advised where to send payment to if this happens. In the event of bad weather, the assigner needs to be notified **2 hours before start time** to avoid paying an umpire fee. If the game is called or canceled once the umpire arrives, or after the first pitch, the \$70 fee is still payable to the umpire.

USA Softball MA has the right to change or add rules as needed.