



ELV Softball

Eastern Lehigh Valley Softball League

2022 MAJOR'S PLAYING RULES

→ General Rules

- 1) **Game Times** - Weekday game time is 6:00 PM. Saturday game times begin at 11:00 AM or 1:00PM. Exceptions are permitted and will be indicated on the schedules. Sunday games will begin at 1:00pm, exceptions are permitted.
- 2) **Length of game and minimum playing time of players.**
 - A. Game is six innings long. The five (5) run rule shall not apply starting with the fifth (5th) inning, or any inning thereafter, where three (3) outs are required to end the inning. The games have a two (2) hour time limit. Of course if darkness comes into play umpires should use their own discretion for safety reasons.
 - B. A running batting order consisting of all the players is mandatory
 - C. Each player must play at least three (3) Innings in the field in each game of six (6) innings or a minimum of two (2) innings in any game of five (5) innings or less that is shortened due to darkness, weather or mercy rule. **A player can sit two innings in a row in the first four innings of the game. After the fourth inning no player can sit in consecutive innings. DON'T** not start the same players every game.
 - D. A league warning will result upon the first offense of not playing all players.
 - E. No inning shall start after two hours (2:00) have been played.

3) Complete Games

- A. Four (4) innings, or three and a half (3½) innings if the home team is leading.
- B. Mercy Rule:
 - I. In the event that the home team is ahead by fifteen (15) runs after three and a half innings (3½) innings, or the visiting team is ahead by fifteen (15) runs after the fourth (4th) inning, or at the completion of any inning thereafter.
- C. In the event of bad weather or darkness, a game will be considered complete after three and one half (3 1/2) innings if the home team is winning or four (4) innings if the visiting team is winning. In the event that a game is defined as a continuation game suspended due to weather a new two hour time limit is observed and you pick up where you left off.

4) Dimensions - Length of bases shall be sixty (60) feet. Pitching rubber shall be located forty (40) feet from the back point of home plate.

5) Equipment

- A. The home team shall supply one new ball and one backup ball for each game.
 - I. A twelve (12) inch ASA .47 approved optic yellow softball shall be used for play. Red-stitching is mandatory.
- B. Bats
 - I. The PIAA follows the NFHS Bat process that is outlined in NFHS Rule 1-5. It also states that bats must have one of the 3 ASA or USA Certification marks and not be on the USA Softball Non-Approved Bat List with Certification Marks. Please note this list only includes bats that at one time were approved with the USA/AS

Bat Certification mark on the bat, but are no longer approved.

Here is the link: <https://usa.asasoftball.com/e/BB1P2000.asp>
- C. Helmets
 - I. Batters and base runners must wear protective helmets with attached facemasks and chin straps.
- D. Pitching Facemasks shall be **required** for all pitchers. All organizations are responsible for providing at least one pitching facemask per team.
- E. All coaches are required to have first aid kits at all practices and games. A pair of rubber gloves must be available. Individual first aid kits are not required if your organization has a general first aid kit on location. During games the home organization is required to have a first aid kit on location at the playing fields
- F. Use of the double first base is required
- G. Hit sticks may not be used during games.
- H. **Metal cleats may not be worn.**

6) Rosters

- A. Minimum of twelve (12), unless exception is approved by the league board.
- B. Minimum players needed for the game is eight (8), no automatic out will be charged provided there are eight (8) players in the line-up. If there are less than eight (8) players, the offending team will **FORFEIT** the game to the opposing team. The opposing team has the option of supplying a player (s). The Forfeiting team is responsible for paying the umpire.
- C. Bringing up of players
 - I. A player must be brought up from the one age level below if a team knows they will have only eight (8) players or less for a regular scheduled game.
 - I. A player may be brought up as the ninth (9) or tenth (10) player. If brought up as the tenth (10) player, all ten (10) must play. Players who have been brought up cannot play more innings in the field than any regular rostered player.
 - II. Any player who is brought up is **NOT** eligible to pitch.
 - III. No player is eligible to be brought up if her regular team has a game scheduled at the same time.

7) Game Procedures

- A. Game rainouts, cancellations and make ups
 - I. **All rainouts and cancellations must be replayed by the second Sunday following the date of the cancellation.** In the event of two rainouts/cancellations in the same week, the second game must be made up by the second Sunday following the date of the second cancellation.
 - II. Failure to follow this rule will result in the offending team being charged with a forfeit or being fined \$25.00 at the league's discretion, or both for repeat offenders. The league will have the option to reschedule the game.
 - III. Lineups must be exchanged prior to the game. Lineups must include the last name and first initial and uniform number.
 - IV. If a coach moves a game after the umpire has been scheduled, a \$5.00 fine will be assessed to the requesting (offending) organization rather than having the league assume this cost. Any show up fees due the umpire shall be paid by the offending organization as well.
- B. Scorekeeping
 - I. Scores will be kept by both teams
 - II. Each team will hand in line-up to the opposing team that will consist of last name, first initial, number and position. All players playing up shall be identified with an asterisk (*). Failure to identify players playing up will be considered illegal players and a forfeit will be declared. Failure to submit a line up may result in the game being forfeited and the offending coach being suspended.
 - III. The winning team is responsible for submitting the scores to the statistician. Players playing up shall be submitted for each game as well. Failure to identify the players playing up will be considered illegal players and a forfeit will be declared.
 - IV. Failure to send the information to the statistician within twenty-four (24) hours will result in a five dollar (\$5.00) fine, payable at the next league meeting.

→ **Game Protest**

- A. A fee of \$25.00 must accompany a written protest within 24 hours of the completion of the game being protested. The protest must be filed with the umpire in compliance with the 'PIAA protest rules". The protest is for rules only, not judgement calls and the protest must take place before the next pitch. Both coaches must initial the book and the umpire must sign it. The fee will be returned if the protest is upheld. The league administrator must be notified of any protest within twenty-four (24) hours.

→ **Batting**

- A. A running batting order that includes all players shall be used.
- B. A player arriving late shall be added to the end of the batting order. If players arriving after the line-ups have been exchanged, and the other team is not made aware of the changes prior to the first pitch being thrown, the team will take an out when that batting position comes up the first time.
- C. An inning shall end when three (3) outs have been made or a maximum of five (5) runs have scored.
- D. The five (5) run rule shall not apply starting with the fifth (5th) inning, or any inning thereafter, where three (3) outs are required. All games have a 2:00 time limit. Of course if darkness comes into play umpires should use their own discretion for safety reasons.
- E. In the event a team has eight (8) players at the start of a game, they will not be charged with an automatic out at the end of the batting order. A player arriving late shall be placed at the bottom of the batting order.
- F. Should a player leave a game due to injury or illness, she may return at any time and will be put back into her original position in the batting order.
- G. The strike zone shall be from the top of letters to the knees and shall include the white and black portions of the plate.
- H. Unlimited bunting will be permitted. Fake bunt and swing will be prohibited and the batter shall be declared out and the runners are to be returned to their original bases.
- I. Slap Hitting is permitted as long as the player doesn't fake a bunt.
- J. One (1) warning per game shall be given to each team for throwing the bat. The batter shall be declared out on the second offense.
- K. Advancement may **NOT** take place on a dropped third strike.
- L. **There will be no Infield Fly Rule.**

→ **Pitching**

- A. A pitcher may pitch a maximum of four (4) innings per game. A pitcher cannot pitch more than three (3) innings in a row other than extra innings. There are no per week pitching limitations.
- B. In the event of a tie game and extra innings are played, a pitcher may pitch more than the maximum of four (4) innings per game and these extra innings are "free" innings. A

- pitcher may **NOT enter a game for the third (3rd) time in extra innings.**
- C. A pitcher may re-enter the game one time provided her maximum of four (4) innings have not been met.
 - D. One pitch in an inning shall be counted as a complete inning pitched.
 - E. A pitcher shall be removed from the mound when she hits three (3) batters in a given game. Pitched balls hitting the ground prior to hitting a batter will not be considered a hit batter for the purpose of removing the pitcher. This rule applies to all innings pitched in a game, including any extra innings.
 - F. If a batter is struck by a pitch, **directly or indirectly (hit ground first), the batter shall be awarded first base.** The batter must make every effort to get out of the way of the pitch. If this is not done, the pitch will be considered a ball and a base will not be awarded. This is at the discretion of the umpire.
 - G. PIAA pitching rules will be used and enforced.
 - I. Pitchers must be removed after two trips to the mound per inning from either a coach or player(s).
 - II. A maximum of three trips, from either a coach or player(s), are allowed per game.
 - H. The pitcher will be allowed a maximum of **five (5)** warm-up pitches prior to the start of their first appearance and **three (3)** each inning after the first appearance.
 - I. The strike zone shall be the top of letters to the knees including the white and black portions of the plate.

→ **Base Running**

- A. A base runner may leave the base when the ball is released by the pitcher. The runner must immediately return to the base when the pitcher is in possession of the ball while standing in the circle. If the base runner leaves the base early the umpire shall issue a warning. The second (2nd) occurrence will result in the runner being called out.
- B. Delayed steals will not be permitted. If the offensive team tries a delayed steal, the runner will be called out. **Delayed steal is defined as when the ball is being returned from the catcher or infield to the pitcher**
 - I. Example: If the catcher makes a poor throw to the pitcher, the runners may advance. This rule applies to an overthrow from any position on the field. A ball that is caught, bobbled, or dropped by the pitcher or any fielder is NOT considered an overthrow. **A ball that does not leave the circle is NOT considered an overthrow.**
 - II. Pitchers must receive the ball back from the catcher within the circle, or else the ball is considered live. **The batter-runner cannot be frozen at first base on a base-on-balls by merely returning the ball to the pitcher in the circle.** The batter-runner after reaching first base may continue on, without stopping, in an attempt to reach second base. Said runner may stop in the baseline after rounding first base. At this point, the umpire should begin a three-second count on the runner. If the runner again begins movement to advance or retreat before the count reaches "three" and does not stop again, this is a legal action and should not be penalized. **However, if the runner stops a second time, without an attempt by the defense, that runner is out immediately.**
- C. [Look Back Rule Clarification](#)
- D. A play is not considered "dead" when the ball is in secure possession of an infielder. She has to either make a play at a base or return the ball to the pitcher in the circle. Once the pitcher has the ball in the circle, the runner must return to her original base.

- I. Example: If a runner is one (1) step from second (2nd) base when the pitcher gains possession of the ball in the circle, the runner is entitled to 2nd base. If the runner is one step past second (2nd) base, she has the option to proceed to third (3rd) base, and the defense has the option to make a play on her. If the runner stops or hesitates after touching 2nd base, she must return to 2nd base.
- E. A collision rule shall be in effect. A deliberate collision shall result in that player being ejected from the game. A fielder may not block the base unless she is in the possession of the ball. A runner must slide or give herself up if the fielder is blocking the base while in the possession of the ball.
 - I. If a fielder is blocking the base while not in possession of the ball and any contact, incidental or otherwise occurs, an obstruction shall be declared and the runner shall be awarded the base.
- F. Sliding is strongly encouraged.
- G. Courtesy runner **MUST** be used when the catcher is on base and may be used for the pitcher and there are two outs. The courtesy runner will be the last person to make an out.
- H. Stealing
 - I. Each team will be allowed unlimited steals.
 01. **A steal is defined as any advancement on a non-batted ball.**
 02. No delayed steals will be allowed. A runner may not advance when the catcher throws the ball back to the pitcher for the purpose of resuming play. If the offensive team tries a delayed steal, the runner will be declared out.
 03. All runners may advance additional bases when the catcher is attempting to throw a runner out who is attempting to steal. The ball is considered live where the baserunner may advance additional bases at their own risk if the throw is misplayed. Play remains live until the ball is back to the pitcher with secure control in the circle or an out is made at a base.
 - I. Pick-off plays will be permitted at all bases. The ball is live on a pickoff throw and the ball must be returned to the pitcher in the circle to stop play. There is no limit on the number of bases a runner can advance. Runner continues to advance at her own risk. **If a pick off is attempted on the baserunner by the pitcher or catcher, the runner must go back and touch the base before moving to the next base. If not we will consider this a delayed steal and call the runner out.**
 - J. The ball will become live if the return throw to the pitcher from the catcher leaves the circle.

→ **Defense/Fielding**

- A. There will be ten (10) defensive players
- B. The outfielders must be positioned a minimum of fifteen (15) feet behind the baseline prior to the start of the play.
- C. Catcher's interference will be enforced. The offensive team will have the option to choose between the result of the play or award of first (1st) base. An umpire may move the catcher at his/her discretion for safety reasons.
- D. Catchers must make an effort to accurately throw the ball back to the pitcher. Rolling

- the ball will not be allowed.
- E. The pitcher will be allowed a maximum of **five (5)** warm-up pitches prior to the start of their first appearance and **three (3)** each inning after the first appearance.
 - F. Fielders are not permitted to stand in the baseline at the start of each pitch. This rule applies only when runners are on base, or going to the affected bases.
 - G. Infielders are not restricted to starting position within the diamond, and may play up to deter the bunt. It is recommended that infielders wear masks if routinely playing up in bunting/non-bunting situations.
 - H. Infield fly rule **DOES NOT** apply

→ **Game Conduct**

- A. Cheering
 - I. Players from the offensive team will be allowed to cheer for the batter and the batter only, until the pitcher steps on the mound and addresses the plate. At this point the offensive team must cease cheering. This rule shall apply to the offensive team's coaches and fans. After one warning has been given, the offending team's head coach will be ejected.
- B. Coach and Player Conduct
 - I. Any coach or player ejected from a game is automatically suspended from their next game. The ejected person will not be allowed to participate, coach or attend the game.
 - II. Assistant coaches will be permitted to coach the other team's players if it is done in a positive manner. They may not address or engage the opposing team's coaches or the umpire(s). Arguing or discussing any rule or call with the umpire will result in a warning. A second offense shall result in a suspension of no less than two (2) games. The warning will be carried forward for the balance of the season. **ONLY THE HEAD COACH MAY APPROACH THE UMPIRE(S).**
- C. Parents on the Field
 - I. Any parent who steps on the field of play for reasons other than an injury will be ejected from the game.
- D. Persons behind the Backstop
 - I. No one will be permitted behind the backstop. One warning will be issued by the umpire. On the second offense, the offending team will be assessed an out.

→ **Post Season**

- A. All playoff games must be played in their entirety. Any game that isn't completed will be completed the following night. In the event there is a game scheduled the following night, the incomplete game will take precedence and shall be completed prior to the start of the regularly scheduled playoff game.
- B. Team eligibility
 - I. The designated number of teams from each division or conference will be eligible for the playoffs (see below)
 - II. In the event a balanced schedule has been played and a fifth (5th) place team in one division has a better record than the fourth (4th) team in the other division, a play-in game between them will be held with the winner qualifying for the

- playoffs as the fourth (4th) seed. This would apply to fourth (4th) and third (3rd) place in the event three teams qualify from each division.
- III. In the event of an unbalanced schedule, a one-half (1/2) game differential in the final standings caused by one team having an additional regularly scheduled game, shall be considered a tie for the standings position in question.
 01. Example: One team finishes the season with an 8-8 record and a second team has an 8-7 record.
 - IV. After the first round of playoffs have been completed, the seeding of the remaining teams will be established as follows:
 01. Season record
 02. Head-to-Head competition
 03. Divisional Playoff winning percentage
 04. Runs allowed
 05. Coin Toss
- C. Player Eligibility
- I. A player must play in at least one half (1/2) of the regular season games. In the event of injury the player will be given credit for a game played provided she attends her team's game and signs the scorebook.

→ **THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND**

- Make the game important to the girls. They will respond in kind.
- Have the girls arrive a minimum of 30 minutes before the game. Have them take warm-ups to prepare themselves for the game. If you make the preparation important the game will be even more important.
- Concentrate on teaching the fundamentals, particularly throwing and catching the ball. It's imperative that these two skills be learned. A girl can't progress in learning the other skills until they can throw properly and catch the ball. Hitting will come later when the coach pitches at mid-season.
- Keep up the level of enthusiasm. Cheer your opponent as well as your own team. Get the adrenalin flowing. Girls who leave with enthusiasm will return with enthusiasm.
- Positive reinforcement is the key. Have a lot of patience. Remember, they know absolutely nothing about the game. If they learn that it's fun from you, it'll be fun. Remember, the girls must have fun.
- Every girl needs to think that she's important and that she belongs (so do we). Every girl needs a "win", good throw, good catch, good hit, etc.. Cheer her accomplishments and have her teammates do so as well.
- Be cognizant of the tone and volume of your voice. You don't want to scare some of the girls. Be aware of their reactions when you speak to them.
- Play little games with them. Challenge them to see if they can make 3 outs before the other team has batted all of their batters. When accomplished, challenge them to do it a second time.

- Remove the batter from first base if she is made out. Some girls will be upset and cry because they think they've failed or done wrong. Use some psychology here and explain that they had a good hit, it's just that the fielder made a very good play.
- Make it fun. If it's not fun they won't be back. Don't take things too seriously and remember they will feed off of your attitude. Be well organized, keep things moving.
- Make up your lineup and batting order before the game. You can always adjust if someone doesn't show up. Have the girls sit in batting order so they are ready to go.
- Have numerous coaches to assist. This will keep the girls motivated and ready to go. One Hour practices are plenty enough time, as long as you have help. You can break down into numerous stations. If you are having a great practice you can go longer.
- Make sure your girl's hustle on and off the field between innings and at practice going out to their positions.

→ **INSTRUCTIONS**

- **Play all the games**. It's a very short schedule
- **Check with your coordinator** to make sure the **field is available** on your scheduled home dates. The other age levels have started and it's possible games have been moved on the field you are using.
- In the event of rain, call the opposing coach a minimum of 1 ½ hours prior to scheduled game time in order to cancel the game. Reschedule the game as soon as possible.
- The schedule and directory will be posted on the league's website. The website is elvsoftball.org
- If you have any rule questions please email or call the 5th/6th Grade Statistician.
- All contacts with opposing coaches are to be DIRECT VERBAL contacts. DO NOT make any game changes by email or voicemail. Doing so is a recipe for disaster. If you want to email in advance, make sure you get confirmation, if not call the coach and make sure you speak.
- **The Winning team is to notify your statistician when the game has been played with the scores from both teams and pitching information. Also, any issues and problems with games or other coaches.**

IF THE MAJORITY OF PLAYERS RETURN NEXT SEASON, YOU'VE DONE YOUR JOB VERY, VERY WELL. WE DON'T WANT TO LOSE PLAYER, BEFORE THEY'VE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN AND ENJOY THIS GREAT GAME OF SOFTBALL!