ELV Softball

Eastern Lehigh Valley Softball League

Juniors Playing Rules (2026)

General Rules

1. Game Times - weekday game time 6:00 PM, weekend game time will be no earlier than 9:00 AM unless otherwise agreed upon by both coaches
2. Length of game
    a. 7 innings or 2 hours – no new inning shall start after the 2 hours, but once the inning has started it will be played to completion.
    b. Games will be considered official after 5 innings (4 ½ if the home team is leading) in the event that the game needs to be suspended for weathers, darkness, etc.
3. Scoring
    a. Scores and standings will be kept
        i. Both teams are responsible for keeping score during the game
        ii. The winning team is responsible for submitting the game played to the statistician within 24 hours of completing the game

b. There will be a five (5) run limit per inning for the first 4 innings. The final play of the inning shall be completed (ball returned to the pitcher in the circle) despite additional runs scoring. The additional runs will count.
c. Starting in the 5th inning three outs will be required to end the inning and there will be no inning run limit from that point forward.
d. Mercy Rule - 15 after 3 innings, 12 after 4 innings (3 ½ if the home team is leading), 10 after 5 innings (4 ½ if the home team is leading)
e. Line ups consisting of players last name and number shall be provided to the opposing team
    i. Any player playing up shall be clearly identified on the line up card

4. Field Dimension
    a. Base length 60'
    b. Pitching rubber 43' from the back of home plate
5. Equipment
    a. Game Balls - the home team shall supply 2 new game balls for each game. The ball for this level is a 12" ASA or USSSA approved .47 optic yellow softball with red stitching
    b. 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: https://usa.asasoftball.com/e/BB1P2000.asp
    c. Helmets – all batters and base runners must wear a protective helmet with an attached facemask. Chin strap is encouraged but not required
    d. Pitching facemask is required for all pitchers. Each team shall be supplied with a team face mask by their organization
    e. Jewelry - post earrings are permitted, but no hoop earrings or dangling earrings will be allowed. A simple chain necklace is permitted, but no other jewelry will be allowed. No watches. Cell phones will not be permitted on the field.
    f. First Aid Kit – each team must have a first aid kit at all practices and games
    g. Use of a double first base is required
    h. Metal cleats may not be worn
6. Rosters
    a. Recommended 11-16 players
    b. Minimum of 8 players required for a game
        i. No automatic out will be charged at the bottom of the batting order
        ii. If a team does not have 8 players, they will forfeit the game. The forfeiting team is responsible for paying the umpire.
    c. **No player will sit more than 2 consecutive innings defensively, and all players must play in the field at least half of the game.**
    d. Bringing up players
        i. A player may be brought up from a team within the organization from the age level below if a team knows they will have 9 or less players for a game. For fall only, teams may call up from any majors team in the league.

i. Any player brought up must play in the game and cannot play more than any regularly rostered players
ii. Any player brought up **CANNOT** pitch without prior discussion and approval
iii. No player is eligible to be brought up if her regular team has a game scheduled at the same time

7. Game Changes
    a. Cancellation due to weather will be made by the coach of the home team no later than 1 hr 30 mins prior to the start of the game and must be communicated to the opposing coach via phone
    b. Canceled games need to be rescheduled within 3 days. Rescheduling means a new game date must be given to the statistician, the game can be played any time prior to the end of the season.
    c. If late changes are made to the schedule that results in umpire change and/or show up fees, the offending team/organization will be responsible for paying those fees

Batting

1. A running batting order including all players shall be used
2. Any player arriving late will be added to the end of the batting order
3. If a team has 8 players at the start of the game, they will not be charged an automatic out at the end of the batting order.
4. If a player leaves the game due to injury or illness the team will not be charged an automatic out when her turn to bat comes up. The player may reenter at any time in her original position in the batting order.
5. The inning will end when 3 outs have been recorded or 5 runs have been scored. The final play will be played until the ball is returned to possession of the pitcher even if additional runs score on the play.
6. The strike zone will be from the letters to the knees and shall include the white and black portions of the plate.
7. Bunting is permitted. Fake bunt and swing is prohibited and the batter will be declared out and runners will be returned to their original positions.
8. If the batter is struck by a pitch, directly or indirectly (hits ground first), the batter will be awarded first base.
    a. The batter must make every effort to get out of the way of the pitch. At the discretion of the umpire, if the batter does not make an effort to get out of the way, the pitch will be considered a ball and a base will not be awarded.
9. One (1) warning per game will be given to each team for throwing the bat. Additional offenses will result in the batter being declared out and runners will be returned to their original positions.

Pitching

1. There are no inning limits per game on pitchers and there are no weekly pitching limits
2. A pitcher may re-enter to pitch once per game
3. One pitch in an inning shall be counted as an inning pitched
4. A pitcher shall be removed from the game when she hits 3 batters in a game. Any pitched ball that hits the ground prior to striking the batter shall not be considered a hit batter for the purpose of removing the pitcher
5. A pitched ball that is thrown out of play from the circle while in the act of pitching to the batter will be considered a ball
6. USSSA pitching rules will be enforced
    a. The pitcher will be removed after two visits by a coach to the circle in an inning – injury checks will not count toward this total
7. Dropped 3rd strike rule **WILL** be enforced

Base Running

1. Play concludes when the ball is in possession of the pitcher in the circle
2. Overthrows
    a. Runners can advance on overthrows at their own risk
    b. If the ball goes out of play, the runners will be awarded the next base per USSSA rules
    c. Advancements are permitted on throws from the catcher to the pitcher or from an infielder to the pitcher at the runner's own risk
    d. Advanced past first on a walk is permitted - the batter-runner cannot be frozen at first base on a walk by merely returning the ball to the pitcher in the circle. After reaching first base, the batter-runner may continue on, without stopping, in an attempt to reach 2nd base. The runner may stop in the baseline, at which time the umpire will start a 3 second count. If the runner begins movement again, either to advance or retreat, within that 3 second count and does not stop again, this is a legal action. If the runner stops a second time, without an attempt by the defense to make a play, she will be declared out.
3. There will be unlimited steals of all bases
    a. Delayed steals are permitted
4. Base runners may take a lead at all bases. Base runners may leave the base when the ball leaves the pitcher's hand.
5. If the base runner leaves early, the baserunner will be called out.
6. Pick off attempts are allowed at all bases
7. Collision Rule
    a. A collision is defined as a violent coming together of two bodies
        i. Running into the catcher's arm while she is attempting to make a tag or brushing of the catcher by a runner is incidental contact, not a collision
    b. A deliberate collision shall result in that player being ejected from the game
8. Obstruction Rule

    a. A fielder may not block the base unless she is in possession of the ball. A runner must slide or give herself up if the fielder is blocking the base while in possession of the ball. If the 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
    b. Plays at the plate – in the event of a play at the plate, the catcher must be positioned in front of the plate when not in possession of the ball and must allow the runner complete access to the plate. If the throw takes the catcher into the path of the base runner and a collision or incidental contact occurs, the runner will be awarded the plate.
        i. This does not apply to a force play at the plate. In this instance the catcher may place one foot on the plate, but must allow the runner access to the plate
    c. Plays at 2nd and 3rd – the fielder may not stand with her foot on the base while awaiting a throw or making a tag. She must allow direct access to the base.
    d. The fielder has the right on a batted ball, the runner on a thrown ball.
    e. Sliding is strongly encouraged when the runner is in the act of attempting to achieve a base or when the fielder is in possession of the ball before she gets to the base
9. Double First Base
    a. The defensive team may only retire the batter/runner using the white base when the throw is on or inside the baseline. If the throw is outside fair territory, the fielder may use the orange base
10. Courtesy Runners
    a. Can be used for the catcher and pitcher at any point.
    b. The courtesy runner will be the last batted-out player

Defense/Fielding

1. There will be 9 defensive players – pitcher, catcher, 1B, 2B, SS, 3B and 3 outfielders. The outfielders must be positioned at least 15' behind the baseline at the start of the play
2. Outfielders may cover a base on a put out, but only on bunts, run downs and overthrows - Realistic softball plays
3. Infielders must be in their assigned playing position no more than 8' in front of the baseline until the start of the pitch
4. Catcher's interference will be enforced
    a. The umpire may move the catcher back for safety reasons
5. Fielders are not permitted to stand in the baseline at the start of the pitch when there are runners on base advancing to the affected base
6. Infield fly rule applies

Game Conduct

1. Cheering
    a. Players from the offensive team will be allowed to cheer for the batter and the batter only
    b. Cheering should be positive toward your team, not negative toward the opposing team
    c. Cheering should cease when the pitcher is pitching and should not be used to distract the opposing pitcher
2. Coach and Player Conduct
    a. Any coach or player ejected from a game is automatically suspended for their next game. The ejected person will not be allowed to participate, coach or attend the game
    b. Only head coaches may approach the umpire(s)
    c. Assistant Coaches may not address or engage the opposing team's coach(s) or umpire(s). Arguing or discussing rules or calls with an umpire will result in a warning. A second offense shall result in a suspension of no less than 2 games. The warning will be carried forward for the balance of the season.
3. Parents/Spectators
    a. Any parent or spectator who steps on the field of play for reasons other than injury will be ejected from the game
    b. 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 charged an out.

Post Season

1. All post season games will be played exactly as played during the regular season, unless changed by the board. All teams and umpires will be notified.
1. Team Eligibility
    a. Prior to the start of each season, the number of teams that make the playoffs will be determined and announced
    b. Rankings/Seeding will be determined by the following criteria
        i. Win/loss record
        ii. Head to head competition
        iii. Run allowed
        iv. Coin toss
2. Player Eligibility
    a. A player must play in at least half of a team's regular season games to be eligible for the playoffs. In the event of an injury, the player will be given credit for a game played provided she attended the team's game.
    b. If necessary, players can be brought up from the younger level

USSSA PLAYING RULES