



ELV Softball

Eastern Lehigh Valley Softball League

2021 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.
- 2) **Length of game and minimum playing time of players.**
 - A. Prior to May 14th, no inning may start after 7:45, unless fields have lights, then the game can continue until set forth below. The five (5) run rule shall not apply starting with the fourth (4th) inning, or any inning thereafter, where three (3) outs are required prior to May 14th. Starting with your May 15th games the **5th inning will now be considered the last inning.** The five (5) run rule shall not apply to this inning or any inning after. Also, the games move to a 2:00 time limit. If darkness comes into play umpires should use their own discretion for safety reasons.
 - I. Six (6) innings or a new inning may not begin after two hours (2:00) for regular season games.
 - B. **WEEKEND GAMES** - No new inning may start after two (2) hours. **If a game is tied after the two hour time limit the game will be declared a tie.** We don't want to see these young ladies on the fields for too long of a period, especially when it starts warming up. After a couple hours, normally the level of play goes down and the

interest definitely goes down.

- C. Games can end in a tie. Games can only be called for weather or darkness.
- D. In the event of bad weather or darkness, a game will be considered complete after two and one half (2 1/2) innings if the home team is winning or three (3) 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.
- E. A running batting order consisting of all the players is mandatory
- F. Each player must play at three (3) Innings in the field in each game of five (5) or six (6) innings or a minimum of two (2) innings in any game of four (4) innings or less that is shortened due to darkness, weather or mercy rule. No player shall sit consecutive innings defensively. It is highly recommended that half a player's defensive innings are in the infield. The coaches can use their own discretion for safety issues or if a player only wants to play the outfield.
- G. A league warning will result upon the first offense of not playing all players.

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 twelve (12) runs after three and a half innings (3½) innings, or the visiting team is ahead by twelve (12) runs after the fourth (4th) inning, or at the completion of any inning thereafter. The Home team gets it last at bat.
- C. In the event of bad weather or darkness, a game will be considered complete after two and one half (2 1/2) innings if the home team is winning or three (3) 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 fifty-five (55) feet. Pitching rubber shall be located thirty-five (35) 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. An eleven (11) inch ASA .47 approved optic yellow softball shall be used for play. Red-stitching is mandatory.
- B. Bats
 - I. All bats must be 2004 ASA or BESR certified softball bats.
- 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 should 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.
 - II. 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.
 - III. Any player who is brought up is **NOT** eligible to pitch.
 - IV. 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 first 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 and be approved by the umpire. Lineups must include the last name and first initial and uniform number as well as position of the starting players.
 - 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. 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. The last names of the pitchers from both teams and innings pitched also need to be submitted to the statistician. Give the total numbers of innings when you post, don't put the specific innings that were pitched. 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 fourth (4th) inning, or any inning thereafter, where three (3) outs are required prior to May 14th. Starting with your May 15th games the **5th inning will now be considered the last inning**. The five (5) run rule shall not apply to this inning or any inning after. The game also moves to a two (2) hour time limit.
- 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. If a team has more than eight (8) players to start a game, a player may 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.
- F. The strike zone shall be from the shoulders to the knees and shall include the white and black portions of the plate.
- G. 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.
- H. 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.
- I. No advancement may take place on a dropped third strike.

→ **Pitching**

- A. A pitcher may pitch a maximum of four (4) innings per game, no more than two (2) consecutive innings shall be pitched. 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. A pitched ball that is thrown out of play from the mound while in the act of pitching to the batter shall be considered a “ball”.
 - H. PIAA pitching rules will be used and enforced.
 - I. Pitcher 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.
 - I. 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.
 - J. The strike zone shall be the shoulder to the top of the knees including the white and black portions of the plate.

→ **Base Running**

- A. Play concludes when the ball is in possession of the pitcher. **If the ball is in firm possession of an infielder and play has stopped, the play is dead.**
- B. Overthrows
 - 1) Infielder/Outfielder throws to a bag but overthrows the bag
 - a) Players can advance **one** base on all overthrows made to **any** base at the runners own risk unless the ball goes out of play. If the ball goes out of play the runner is awarded the next base as per PIAA rules.
 - b) No advancement may take place on a return throw from the catcher or infielder to the pitcher once they have firm possession and control of the ball.
 - c) No advancement may take place on an overthrow on a stolen base.
 - 2) A base runner **MAY NOT** leave the base until a pitched ball passes the plate. Runners must return to the base immediately when the ball is returned to the pitcher. If the base runner leaves the base early the umpire shall issue a warning. There will be three (3) warnings issued per team per game. After the third (3rd) warning, the umpire shall declare the runner out.
 - 3) A collision rule shall be in effect. A deliberate collision shall result in that player being ejected from the game. A collision is defined as a violent coming together of two bodies. **Running into the catcher’s arm while she is attempting to make a tag or the brushing of the catcher by a runner is incidental contact. NOT A COLLISION.**
 - 4) An Obstruction Rule shall be in effect.
 - a) 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. If 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. ***The fielder has the right on a batted ball, the runner on a thrown ball.*** Possession is defined as the fielder actually holding the ball in her hands or glove A thrown ball on the way to the plate that has not yet been fielded IS NOT possession.
 - c) 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. **Plays at second or third base** – 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. The proper positioning on a tag play is for the fielder to straddle the base, catch the ball and put her glove down in front of the base.
 - d) PIAA RULE for Double First Base
 - The defensive team may only retire the batter/runner using the white base when the throw is on or inside the baseline. In the event that the throw is outside of fair territory the fielder may use the orange base.
 - 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.
- 5) Courtesy runners **MUST** be used when the catcher is on base and there are one or more outs. A courtesy runner may be used for the pitcher when there are two outs. The courtesy runner will be the last person to make out.
 - 6) Each team will be allowed ten (10) attempts stealing, including home plate, per game from any base. Double steals will be counted as two (2) steals. In the event of extra innings each team will be given two steal attempts per each extra inning. **NOTE:** If you only used under 10 steal attempts previously those are lost. Extra innings start fresh with each team getting two steal attempts per every inning played after the 6th inning.
 - The scorekeeper/coach shall declare when a given team is out of steals. One warning will be given for an attempted steal after the limit has been obtained by returning the offender to her prior base. Additional attempts will be considered an out
 - 7) A **steal is defined** as any advancement on a pitched ball. This advancement must take place when the ball crosses the plate and must be a direct and expedient (running) attempt to achieve the next base. Walking, moving slowly or shuffling toward the next base is not defined as expedient. If the runner does not proceed expediently (running) toward the next base she must return to her previous base.
 - 8) 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.
 - 9) Double steals are permitted and will count as two (2) steals.
 - In the case a team has nine (9) steals with runners on bases other than third base where the team attempts to steal home and the trailing runner(s) follows, the play stands with the runner attempting to steal

home, however the runners will need to be returned to their original base without penalty. No advancement may take place by any runner when the catcher is attempting to throw a runner out who is attempting to steal. No advancement on the overthrow.

- 10) If a runner is thrown out at home plate and the trailing runner has not proceeded directly to third (3rd) base, she must return to second (2nd) base.

CLARIFICATIONS: Runner on 1st and 2nd where both runners attempt to steal the next base on a pitched ball. This counts as a double steal (2).

There is no advancement on overthrows.

01. If a runner is thrown out at third (3rd) base and the trailing runner has not proceeded directly to second (2nd) base, she must return to the first (1st) base

02. The scorekeeper/coach shall declare when a given team is out of steals. **ONE** warning will be given for an attempted steal after the limit has been obtained. After this the play will be called dead and the runner called out.

If a game is tied at six (6) innings, each team will receive two (2) additional steals for each inning starting with the seventh (7th) inning. All steals left from the first six (6) innings will be lost.

- 11)** Pickoff plays – can be made, but with consequences. The runner has to go back to the base when a pick off throw is attempted. If the ball is caught or touched the runner cannot proceed to the next base. If the ball sails untouched the runner can advance one base at her own risk.

→ **Defense/Fielding**

- A. There will be ten (10) defensive players. They are the pitcher, catcher, four infielders and four outfielders.
- B. The outfielders must be positioned a minimum of fifteen (15) feet behind the baseline prior to the start of the play.
- C. Outfielders cannot cover or run to a base for the purpose of making a putout.
- D. At the start of each pitch and until the pitcher releases the ball, each infielder shall be in their assigned playing position, which cannot be more than 5 feet in front of the base bag. Failure to comply will result in a warning, and then the results of the play or the pitch begin declaring a ball.
 - 1) Exception: Infielders may leave their assigned position when a batter has committed to bunt.
- E. 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.
- F. Catchers must make an effort to accurately throw the ball back to the pitcher. Rolling the ball will not be allowed.
- G. 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.
- H. 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.
- I. 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 girl's 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!