**IFTG Playing Rules 2016**

**Equipment:**

A. Metal cleats are prohibited; rubber cleats or sneakers are allowed.

B. No jewelry is allowed except in the case of newly pierced ears and they must be fully covered by tape. Hair clips must be made of rubber or fabric, no metal or plastic is allowed.

C. Each player must wear her team jersey. The number must be visible while at bat. At the discretion of the umpire, a cover-up without a number may be worn while at bat. Cover-ups are allowed during defensive play.

D. Catchers must wear an approved masked helmet and chest protector.
Fast-pitch catchers must also wear shin guards (ages 10U and up). Catchers who are warming up a fast-pitch pitcher, either on or off the field of play, must wear full protective gear.

E. Bats must be official softball bats. No bats on the ASA disapproved list may be used. Multi-walled and composite bats are permitted in the 12U and older age groups only. During play, violation of these rules is subject to the Umpire’s interpretation of the ASA Rulebook, rule 7, section 6C. Any team in violation of this rule a second time may receive a forfeit.

F. Protective masks and mouth guards for pitchers are not required but highly recommended, as well as for all infielders.

G. The batter, on deck batter, and base runners must wear an approved batting helmet with facemask secured with a chinstrap and it must remain on until they exit the field of play, for ages 10U and older. Facemasks are required for 8U, and chin straps are recommended but not required.

H. Double bases will be used at first base when available. Runners should be directed to run to the outside bag when possible.

I. One new ball and one, umpire approved, used ball will be provided by the home team for each game.

Field Dimensions:

Pitching Rubber Bases

8U, 10U 35 ft. 60 ft.

12U, 14U 40 ft. 60 ft.

15+ 43 ft. 60 ft.

**General Park Rules:**

A. ASA fast-pitch rules will be followed unless otherwise stated by IFTG. In the event that rules differ, IFTG rules supersede all others where applicable. If there isn’t a specified rule stated by IFTG, the default is ASA.

B. Player Participation:

1. All players present will be in the lineup and bat.

2. A player(s) arriving after the game begins will be added upon arrival to the bottom of the lineup and bat in that spot. If a player(s) is not able to take her turn at bat for any reason other than injury, the Umpire and opposing Coach shall be notified and the turn will be skipped with a recorded out. A player(s) missing a turn at bat for any reason may bat later in the game in the same spot. The Umpire and opposing Coach shall be advised of her return.

3. If a runner is unable to continue due to injury (injury sustained while running the bases), the Umpire and opposing Coach shall be notified. The previous batter not on base is allowed to replace that runner as a temporary runner until she is put out, scores or the inning ends.

4. A player will have only one offensive return per game. The second time a player leaves the game for any reason it will be an out if they are unable to bat or if they leave the bases.

5. No player may sit out more than one inning per game until all other active players, excluding the starting pitcher and catcher if they are still in those positions, have sat out.

C. Bat slinging is not allowed and the player may be ruled out. No warning is necessary and the Umpire’s judgment prevails.

D. Only one Coach may approach an Umpire to question a rules interpretation. Before the next pitch, the Manager or Coach must request time out then approach the Umpire.

E. An adult Coach is required at 1st and 3rd base, or a helmet is required for players who are coaching (12U and older).

F. No infield practice will be allowed after the scheduled game start time. Pitchers will be allowed a maximum of five warm-up pitches before the start of the game.

G. Forfeit time will be fifteen (15) minutes after the scheduled start time of the first game of the day. Subsequent games are allowed a ten (10) minute grace period.

H. Any registered team may borrow players from another registered team, within the same park, to avoid a forfeit.

1. The borrowed player must be from the same age division or lower.

2. The borrowed player can pitch for the borrowing team as long as the borrowing team’s pitcher is unavailable.

3. The borrowed player cannot take the borrowing team above 9 players. The substituted players cannot play catcher or pitcher.

I. Scorekeeping: The Home team should keep the scorebook (it’s recommended that both teams keep scorebooks) and the Visiting team should provide an individual to operate the scoreboard. Lineups may be changed any time prior to the first pitch. List all players by name and number including those not present at game time so they can be added upon arrival and become eligible for play. In the event of a scoring dispute, that the umpire does not have a clear ruling, the books will be compared. If only one team is keeping a book, that team’s score will be the official score regardless of whether they are the home team or the away team, as long as the umpire is in agreement with the score provided by the bookkeeper.

J. Umpires are responsible for the official game time and rule interpretation.

**6U Universal Rules:**

Time limit is 60 minutes. Teams will finish the inning.

Two (2) base coaches may be on the field to assist base runners and three (3) coaches may be on the field to assist the defense. Coaches must remain behind the defensive players and cannot interfere in any play.

All players present will be on the field defensively and will bat regardless of the number of players present. No substitution is required and there are no forfeits due to the number of players. If there are more than 10 defensive players, infield positions will be fielded and the rest of the players may play outfield, starting on the grass before each play.

Each team will bat through their entire batting order once each inning. If the number of batters is not the same between the two teams, the team with less players may bat up to the number of batters on the team with the highest number of players.

Batters will have six (6) opportunities to put the ball in play.They can receive any combination of pitches from the coach or swings off the T. The Coach may pitch from any appropriate distance in order to give the batter an opportunity to hit the ball. All efforts should be made to let the batter put the ball in play, but time should be considered. A 10" softie ball will be used for all games, with the home team providing the game ball(s).

If possible, defensive players should be rotated to different positions except in situations where injury or embarrassment may occur.

All play stops when a player is in the circle and ball breaks the plane of the circle. If the player is at the half way point she may continue on towards the next base, if not, she must return to the previous base.

The purpose of this age group is to have fun, work on basic skills and build enthusiasm for the game.No score will be kept, all players are WINNERS.

**8U Universal Rules:**

Game time limit is 75 minutes or five (5) innings, whichever comes first. No new inning after 75 minutes with a drop dead at 90 minutes. An inning started within the time limit will be completed unless a team is mathematically eliminated.

A. ASA approved, 11” balls will be used. No composite or double-walled bats are permitted in 8U play.

B. A team may start the game with seven (7) players but not fall below seven once the game has started. If a team falls below seven players, the game will be forfeited. Exception; if a team has only seven players and one is injured during game play, that team may continue to play with six (6) players.

C. All eligible players must be included in the batting line-up and they must bat in the order listed in the official scorebook. If an injured player taken out of the game cannot bat, the batting position is passed over and no out is recorded. The injured player may return to the game in their original batting position. Any players arriving late will be added at the bottom of the batting order.

D. An injured runner (a player who is injured while running the bases) can be substituted for with the player who made the last out, without penalty.

**Offensive Play:**

A. Five (5) pitches or three swinging misses shall be an out (no called strikes). On the fifth pitch or with two strikes, a foul ball keeps the batter alive if not caught for an out.

B. On any attempt to get an out at first base should the ball be overthrown, the runner reaching 1st base may at their own risk advance to 2nd base and stop there. Runners already on base may advance up to two bases at their own risk. For example, a runner that began play at 2nd may advance to home. A runner that began at 1st base may advance to 3rd base. There will be no more than two (2) overthrows to any base allowed per batter. The batter will only be able to advance up to 3rd base on the second over throw. Base runners already on base can advance at their own risk.

C. Three outs or a maximum of five (5) runs per half inning is allowed.

D. Open inning will be after 60 minutes or after 4 innings. Open inning has an eight (8) run limit.

E. A batter cannot bunt.

F. A batter cannot reach first base by a walk.

G. A batter will not be awarded first base if hit by a pitch.

H. Stealing is not permitted. Base runners may leave the base after the ball has been struck.

I. There is no advancement on a dropped third strike.

**Pitching Regulations:**

A. There will be an 8’ radius circle around the front of the 35’ pitching mound. The Coach-Pitcher will start their pitching motion with at least one foot within or on the circle. The momentum of the pitch may carry the pitcher outside the circle.

B. When the ball is hit, the Coach-Pitcher must exit the playing field opposite the direction of play. It is proper and advised for the Coach-Pitcher to remove the bat from play if possible.

C. If a batted ball hits the Coach-Pitcher, the ball is dead, considered a no-pitch and is replayed.

D. The Coach-Pitcher should make an attempt to deliver a flat pitch to each batter. The umpire should determine if the pitchers are delivered with an arch and address accordingly.

E. There should be no more than 20 seconds between pitches to maintain an adequate pace of the game.

F. Base coaches at first and third may not come into contact with the base runner during the play. The play is considered live until the umpire indicates that time has been called. If a coach makes contact with a base runner, the runner will be ruled out.

G. All on deck batters must remain in the on deck circle until the previous play has concluded.

**Defensive Play:**

A. A maximum of two (2) coaches may be positioned in the outfield beyond the outfielder’s area of play.They may not enter the playing area or interfere with play in any manner.

B. The Player-Pitcher may be positioned anywhere in or around the 8’ radius circle as long as one foot is positioned inside or touching the circle. There is no restriction once the ball is hit.

C. Players will be positioned as pitcher, catcher, four infielders and four outfielders. Infielders shall not be closer than 45’ from home plate until the ball is hit. Outfielders shall be placed in the grass until the ball is hit.

D. Players may not play a position more than 2 innings in a game. If it is determined that a player takes the field in the same position for the third inning, a warning will be given to that team. If a second offense of this manner takes place, the batter of the opposing team gets first base automatically. If a third offense is recorded, the coach will be ejected from the game.

E. There is no infield fly rule in 8U play.

F. A ball hit foul and caught by the catcher must travel in an upward arch to be considered an out. A tipped ball that goes directly to the catcher’s glove is a strike unless it is the third strike, in which case the batter will receive an additional pitch.

**Defensive play that can stop runner advancement:** The defensive team throws the ball to the base in front of the lead runner and the fielder at the base has control of the ball or the umpire waits to see if the lead runner is tagged out. Once the lead runner is tagged out, reaches the base safely or goes back to the previous base, play is called dead. Throwing the ball to the pitcher in the circle does not stop play. If the defensive team throws the ball to a base other than the base in front of the lead runner, play will not stop until all runners ahead of the defensive play stop their advancement.For example, with a runner on 2nd base, the ball is hit to left field. The left fielder throws the ball to 2nd base and stops the advancement of the batter. The runner, who started at 2nd base, going to 3rd, does not have to stop running because the play was made at 2nd base.However, if the runner hesitates or stops momentarily at 3rd for any reason, the Umpire may call time and the runner cannot advance. The overthrow rule should not be confused with a throw made to a base other than the base in front of the lead runner. An overthrow by definition is a throw that is intended for a base and by passes that base without being fielded by the defensive player.

**10U and 12U:**

**Defensive Play:**

In the 10U and 12U age groups, a team will be comprised of ten (10) players if available, if not the game may be played with eight (8) players minimum to be considered a regulation game. In the 14U and 15+ age groups, teams will be comprised of nine (9) players if available. If not, the game may be played with eight (8) players and will be considered a regulation game. If a player(s) leaves the game for any reason other than injury after coming to bat, an automatic out will be taken at her place in the batting order.

ASA approved 11” balls will be used in the 10U age group and 12” ball will be used in the 12U and older age groups.

At any bat when four (4) runs are scored, the half inning is complete regardless of the number of outs. When 60 minutes or four innings of play are complete, whichever comes first, the next inning(s) will be an open inning(s). The open inning(s) will not have a run limit, and will be a true open inning.

Game time limit is 80 minutes or six (6) innings (10U), 80 minutes or seven (7) innings (12U-15+), whichever comes first. No new inning will start after the limit has expired. Drop dead time will be 105 minutes (1 hour 45 mins) for age 10U and older. Mercy rule will be 12 after 3 innings, 10 after 4 innings, 8 after 5 innings.

In the event of a tie, the batters making the last two outs of the previous inning will be put on 2nd base and 3rd base respectively. Each inning will start with one (1) out. The game will be extended a maximum of two (2) innings. If the score is still tied after two additional innings the game will be recorded as a tie.

When a play at home plate occurs, the base runner should make every attempt to avoid a collision with the Catcher.

In all age groups, outfielders must be positioned in the grass prior to the ball being hit.

The Look Back rule is in effect. The rule states that when the pitcher has possession of the ball within the 8' radius circle and is not making a play on a runner, a runner must immediately return to her base or proceed to the next base without hesitation or be liable to be called out by the Umpire. No runner may leave a base when the pitcher has possession of the ball in the circle and is not making a play on a runner. If the circle is not marked, the Umpire will approximate the circle radius when making this judgment call. Exception: when a batter receives a walk, runners on 2nd or 3rd can remain off their bases until the batter-runner reaches 1st base. As soon as the batter-runner reaches 1st base and the pitcher has the ball in the circle, the other runners must return to their base or commit to the next base.

**10U Specific Rules:**

The infield fly rule is not in effect for the 10U age group.

The dropped third strike rule is not in effect for the 10U age group.

**Pitching Regulations:**

A. The Player-Pitcher should make every effort to finish the batter. If four balls are thrown, a Coach-Pitcher will enter the game and complete the at-bat. There is no “5 pitch rule” if the first 4 pitches are balls.

B. The Player-Pitcher will then assume a “pitcher’s helper” position. The Coach-Pitcher must pitch from within the pitching circle. The Coach-Pitcher must make every attempt to deliver flat pitches, with minimal arch.

C. The Coach-Pitcher will be allowed a maximum number of pitches equal to the number of strikes remaining for the batter. The final coach pitch must be put in play or hit foul. If neither occurs the batter is declared out.

D. A 3rd strike foul against the Coach-Pitcher entitles the batter to another pitch until the ball is put in play or a non-strike is pitched. If neither occurs the batter is declared out.

E. A batter who is hit by a pitch from a Player-Pitcher is entitled to 1st base. A batter who is hit by a pitch from a Coach-Pitcher is not entitled to 1st base, and this pitch counts against the overall number of pitches awarded to the coach-pitcher.

If the Coach-Pitcher is struck with a batted ball or makes incidental contact with a player attempting to field a batted ball, play will stop and the ball shall be declared a dead ball. All runners will return to the base they occupied when the pitch was made.The pitch does not count in the pitch total or the pitch count and the batter is awarded another pitch.
If in an Umpire’s judgment, interference by the Coach-Pitcher is intentional, the batter is out and all runners will return to the base they occupied when the pitch was made.

Once the pitched ball leaves the Player-Pitcher’s hand, the runners may attempt to advance. There will be no stealing during Coach-Pitch. A base runner leaving early may be called out. If the Catcher attempts to throw out an advancing base runner and the ball is overthrown, the runner may not advance beyond that base (Example 1). A runner already on 3rd base may not attempt to advance in this situation (Example 2).A runner on 3rd may only advance home on a force play or a batted ball.

Example 1 - With a base runner on 1stbase, the pitcher delivers the pitch and the ball passes the catcher. The runner attempts to advance to 2nd base, the catcher retrieves the ball and throws to 2nd but the ball gets past the infielder.The base runner must stay on 2nd base.

Example 2 - With runners on 1st and 3rd base, the pitcher delivers the pitch and the catcher catches the ball. The runner on 1st attempts to advance to 2nd base, the catcher throws to 2nd base. The runner on 3rd base may not attempt to advance home.

Exception to 3rd base runner advancing: If a runner is on third, takes a lead, and the catcher attempts to throw them out (pick them off) at third base, the runner may advance at their own risk to home.

Bunting is not permitted during Coach-Pitch.

Each ball pitched to a batter must have a flat trajectory and appropriate velocity. Any pitch with a significant arc is not allowed. If, in the judgment of the Umpire, the actions of the Coach-Pitcher are deemed to give unfair advantage to the offense, the play shall be nullified and all runners will return to the base they occupied when the pitch was made. The pitch will accrue in the pitch count. Multiple offenses shall cause the Coach-Pitcher to be removed from pitching for the remainder of the game.

A defensive coach may assist with pass balls during non-steal situations. Should a Coach interfere with a pass ball during a steal situation, runners are entitled to move one base from the base they occupied before the pitch but a runner on 3rd may not advance home.

A ball leaving the field of play results in the advancement of 2 bases for runners on base (a ball is overthrown outside the fence or into a dug out).

**12U and Older Leagues:**

Once the pitched ball leaves the Pitcher’s hand, the runners may attempt to advance. A base runner leaving early may be called out. If the Catcher attempts to throw out an advancing base runner and the ball is overthrown, the runner(s) may continue to advance at their own risk.

Intentional walks are permitted (one per game in 12U). If a pitcher intends to intentionally walk a batter, all pitches must be legally delivered to the batter. If there are no runners on base, a pitcher wishing to intentionally walk a batter will be granted such by signaling the Umpire of her intention. No pitches need be thrown for an intentional walk to be granted in this situation.

The infield fly rule is in effect for 12U and older play.

The dropped 3rd strike rule is in effect for 12U and older play.

The look back rule is in full effect.

If there is a safety bag present on the field at first base, the runner shall make every attempt to hit the safety bag. If a runner collides with a first basement, who is not on the safety bag, the runner will be ruled out and no other base runners may advance beyond the base they were on prior to contact with the ball. If a 1st baseman is on the safety bag, interference will be signaled by the umpire, and defensive interference rules will apply.

**General Sportsmanship for all ages: If a coach or player harms a coach or player on the opposing team at any time during non-softball plays (meetings, between plays, handshakes, etc.), that player or coach will be ejected from the game and will not be eligible to participate in the next game. Either both coaches, or the umpire, should rule that the offense meets the spirit of this standard.**