

# Guidelines Stow Youth Softball (2009)

This document is intended for all Umpires, Managers, and Coaches that are affiliated with the SYBS Softball ([www.stowyouthbb.org](http://www.stowyouthbb.org)) program. This is intended to help all participants of the league. It is to establish a common ground to understand some of the issues that have occurred over the years relating to NSA (National Softball Association [www.playnsa.com](http://www.playnsa.com)) rules and their meaning as it relates to Stow Youth Softball. We welcome any comments that will make this a more useful document and insure more consistent seasons.

Thank you for your participation and here's hoping for a successful Softball season.

**If you have any concerns that the umpire is aware of any specific league rules, please make sure you go over during the ground rules.**

## **The Stow Youth Baseball and Softball Board**

### **Safety**

For the safety of all participants all protective items must be worn:

When players on the team are warming up pitchers they must wear the catchers mask. All the players in all the softball leagues must wear the required safety equipment specified (catchers – full catchers gear; batter/runner – helmet w/face guard and chinstrap).

**Umpires** must wear the protective equipment. The mask, chest protector and shin guards give protection and allow the umpire to focus on calling balls and strikes as well as knowing the game situation, without having to worry about getting out of the way of foul tips. **Please, all umpires wear your safety equipment!**

### **Time factors**

As the umpire (and coaches can really help here) it is your responsibility to start the game on time and keep it moving. **Coaches**, have your lineup for defense ready and hustle the girls on and off the field (have someone help the catchers get ready early). **Umpires**, limit the number of warm-up pitches between innings. A pitcher coming back should only get 5 warm-up pitches, a new pitcher should be warmed up before entering the game, but you can allow 10 pitches from the mound. Usually this would be allowed only for a mid-inning replacement. **Umpires** hold your ground rules discussion 5 minutes before the start of game, even if one of the teams is still doing infield practice.

### **Stalling**

If a manager, coach, players, or parents attempt to stall a game in any way, the umpire can allow the game to continue without regard to a time limit or if darkness is an issue, the game can be rescheduled by the Umpire-in-Chief and League VP to be completed.

### **Pitching Rules**

We will be following the **NSA** rules for pitching for all Leagues in the Stow Youth Softball Organization. These rules can be summarized with the following as the important rules to maintain (*always problems every year*):

1. Both feet must start on the pitching rubber.

2. Pitchers must pause to look for a sign from the catcher (one does not have to be given); this assures that there will not be 'quick pitches'.
3. Pitcher must present the ball and touch it to the glove once before delivery.
4. No "rocking" is permitted (both feet must be in contact with the rubber until the step forward)
5. No "Crow Hopping" (A foot must be in contact with the rubber until release or the back foot can be dragged until the release)
6. No double windups.

Given the ages of the specific leagues more of the rules must be enforced as the girls get older, but it is very important to teach the girls in the younger leagues the proper ways to pitch.

### **Illegal Pitch**

In softball, an illegal pitch results in a ball awarded to the batter with no runners being awarded any extra bases.

### **Stealing Rules**

In all leagues it is desired to teach the proper lead off techniques. No runner may leave the base before the pitch leaves the pitchers hand.

In ten and under "A" league, no base runner is allowed to steal home for any reason.

### **Sliding Rules**

Sliding of the base runner is mandatory when a play is being made at the base, except first. The purpose of sliding during close plays (when a fielder has an opportunity to record an out against a baserunner) is to avoid crashing into a fielder. Please consult League Rules for specific league applications.

A fielder is allowed a portion of the base/bag when making a play or attempting to make a play. A fielder is prohibited from using a fake tag to induce the runner into sliding. If the fielder uses a fake tag and does not have an opportunity to make a play on the runner, all players will receive one warning at the time of the incident. If a second incident occurs, the (any) fielder will be ejected from the game.

### **Taunting Rules**

Cheering for your own team is highly encouraged. Teamwork and building an enjoyable experience for all the girls in the league is our desired goal. However, there comes a time when the line can be crossed over, and it is up to the umpire to be aware of the incidents and to try to maintain a level playing field for both teams. This issue is not only between girls from both teams, it involves coaches and parents. Negative cheers about the other team should not be tolerated. Sudden noises (shouts, horns, foot stomping, "swing", or other noise making devices) shall not be tolerated. Yelling things like "good pitch", "ball", "strike", etc. should not be allowed until after the pitch is over. These are manipulative techniques to influence the batter and the umpire. The **Umpire** should stop the game to give a warning the first time and expel the person the next time it happens.

## **Infield Fly Rule**

With runners at first and second base and with less than two outs (includes a bases loaded situation), any fly ball that can be “easily” caught by an infielder (guideline: usually this means the infielder does not turn their back to home plate), the batter is out and the runners may advance at their own risk. The **Umpire** should clearly call out the “Infield fly rule is in effect and the batter is out” as soon as possible in the ongoing play.

There is no infield fly rule in the 10 and under “A” league, but all the other leagues have this rule.

## **Passed Ball out of play**

When a passed ball goes out of play, all runners are awarded one base. This occurs mostly when a ball bounces off a part of the catcher’s equipment and does not get stopped by the backstop. It is a deadball situation and all runners are awarded a base.

EXCEPTIONS: **No runner** will be awarded home in the 10 and under “A” league, since home cannot be stolen at all.

## **Sportsmanship**

**Coaches** and **Parents** are responsible for teaching good sportsmanship. Whenever there are concerns over rules, the parents should ask their coaches to get a ruling from the umpire. Remember that some umpires are of high school age and therefore may be less experienced so it is necessary at all times to have the coach approach the umpire politely so that a civil review of the rules can proceed and a better decision may be made if necessary. Not all rules are understood the same way by everyone. Especially for parents that know baseball rules, softball rules are not always the same. Calmer heads should prevail and the two head coaches with the umpire should work out the issues. Remember that the umpire does have the final word. **Coaches** and **Managers**, please ask all of your parents to talk to you and not to scream at the umpires. Remember if the umpires do not come back you will have to find someone to umpire your game, and they may not know as many of the rules the current umpire knows.

**Umpires** are responsible for knowing the rules of the game they are umpiring.

**Umpires** are responsible for controlling the game. The control of the game requires decisive decisions to be made as quickly as possible. Strive to always make the right call, but remember everyone makes mistakes. It is OK to change a decision when it comes to understanding a rule. But changing judgement calls will cause trouble and you will soon find that you will lose control of the game. Listen to what a coach or manager tells you (do not let them be abusive) and learn from their advice for the next call or next game. Remember everyone gets excited and caught up in the game, and you as umpire have to maintain that neutral perspective.

## **Dropped third strike**

On a dropped third strike and with no one on first base (or with two outs even if there is someone on first base) the batter is allowed to try to advance to first while the defense can make a play to get the batter or any base runner out. Any

contact with the ground is considered a drop, even if the catcher catches it on the first bounce.

In “B” league, with the bases loaded and two outs, the runner from third is forced at home. All the catcher has to do is step on the plate for the force out. Running home in this situation is not considered stealing home, but it is a live ball situation and the runners are entitled to the same rules as a batted ball.

In “A” league, there is no dropped third strike rule; the batter is always out.

## **Interference**

**Catcher** Interference: When the catcher hits the bat while the batter is swinging at a pitched ball, the play is a ‘delayed dead ball’ and the batter is awarded first base. If the ball is hit and all runners are safe and the batter makes it to first the play stands, otherwise, offense get their option to take the hit or obstruction.

**Fielder** Interference: When the fielder gets in the way of a base runner it is considered a delayed dead ball and the runner cannot be put out going to the base. The play continues and the runner can continue to advance to additional bases with liability of being put out.

**Runner** Interference: When a runner interferes with the fielder's ability to make a play on a live ball, the runner is out and the ball is dead. If the interference is intentional to avoid a double play, the umpire can call the lead runner out.

## **Hit by Pitch**

When a pitched ball hits a batter, the ball is dead and the batter is awarded first base. Even if the ball bounces before it hits the batter, she is still awarded first base. However, when in the judgement of the umpire, the batter did not make a good attempt to get out of the way of the pitch it is the umpire’s decision whether to award the base. Remember the skill levels of the players when making this judgement call and the intent of the batter. A fourteen-year-old sticking out her leg to get hit should not be awarded first, while a seven-year-old just trying to hold the bat up probably is not thinking of moving out of the way should be awarded first base.

## **Hit by Batted Ball**

The base runner is out, when the runner is struck with a fair untouched batted ball while not in contact with a base and before it passes an infielder, excluding the pitcher, or if it passes an infielder and any fielder has an opportunity to make an out.

## **Overthrows on plays**

If the ball is thrown out of play the base runners get the base they are running to plus one base from where they were at the time of the throw.

## **The playing field**

Home plate is in fair territory.

A batted ball striking a player in the batter’s box is a foul ball.

A player making contact with a pitch while out of the batter’s box is a dead ball and the batter is ruled out.

## **Batting Helmets**

The rules state that removal of a batting helmet is an infraction and the base runner is out. This rule is here for safety. If the base runner loses her helmet while running the bases, she should not be considered out. If removal occurs during a dead ball situation so hair can be fixed or helmet readjusted the base runner is not out. Only when it is determined that the act was purposely done and a safety issue is at hand the base runner should be called out.

## **Out of Baseline**

When the base runner goes more than three feet out of the baseline to 'avoid a tag', the runner is out. The baseline is not necessarily the straight line between the two bases (or home plate). The baseline is established by where the base runner is currently running; any attempt to avoid a tag by moving laterally more than three feet, the runner should be called out. The fielder must be attempting to make a tag for the runner to avoid.

Running to first base: If the base runner is on the inside of the first baseline and is struck by a throw, the runner is out. (This occurs on bunts and possibly dropped third strikes, if it happens at all)

## **Look Back Rule**

NSA Rule 8, Section 8 Article X

When a runner is legitimately off a base after a pitch, or as a result of a batter completing a turn at bat, with the batter/runner being out or reaching first base, and while the pitcher has the ball within the circle, the runner may stop once, but then must immediately attempt to advance to the next base or return to the last base touched.

NSA Rule 8, Section 9, Article I

When a runner, who has legally started to advance, cannot be stopped by the pitcher receiving the ball while on the pitching plate not by stepping on the pitching plate with the ball in his/her possession.

## **SPEED UP RULE:**

**Catcher:** When the catcher is on base or reaches a base with two outs, it is mandatory the catcher be replaced by the player who made the last out. The catcher speed up rule will not be in effect during the last inning. The catcher speed up rule will be enforced if the game requires extra innings.

**Pitcher:** A pitcher will be allowed a maximum of five warm up pitches from the mound. If a pitcher requires more than 5 warm-up pitches, it will be the manager's responsibility to have his pitcher warm-up in between innings in a safe and out of play area. A pitcher replacing a pitcher that has been removed from the mound during an inning shall be given (at umpires discretion) adequate time to warm up. When the pitcher is on base or reaches base with 2 outs, a manager has the option of replacing the pitcher with the person who made the last out.

IT WILL BE THE MANAGER'S RESPONSIBILITY TO HAVE THE REPLACEMENT RUNNER READY

**WARMING UP PITCHERS:**

NSA rules state that a pitcher is allowed 3 minutes for warm-up between innings. This rule should be enforced in all leagues. If the umpire has allowed the 3 minutes and the teams are not ready to start the inning, the umpire may begin calling strikes if the batter is not ready or calling balls if the defense team is not ready. Please refer to your NSA rule book for further clarification.