



Harris Softball League Rules - 8U Machine Pitch

LEAGUE PHILOSOPHY

The purpose of 8U Softball is to teach physical and mental fundamentals to all softball players on the team. Teaching techniques should include emphasis on proper throwing, pitching, catching, and batting fundamentals. Additionally, good sportsmanship and enjoyment of the game is to be emphasized over the score of the game. While a score is kept, the goal of each parent and coach should be teaching a love of the game of softball in a semi-competitive environment.

GENERAL PLAYING RULES:

Game play at all divisions shall utilize Babe Ruth Softball League Playing Rules, except as specifically addressed in the Harris Softball League Rules presented here.

Players and Substitutions

Players

All players in attendance and dressed in uniform must be listed in the line-up and bat in that order for the duration of the game, even if not playing in the field. If a player shows up after the first pitch, she must be added to the line-up in the last spot. This player must play the minimum number of innings unless she arrives after the third inning. Players batting out of order are not automatically out. If the out of order situation is discovered while the player is up to bat, the correct batter finishes the at bat using the current count. If the runner reaches base and the out of order situation is discovered before the next pitch is thrown, the player who batted out of order is recorded as out. If a pitch is thrown, the correct player replaces the runner at the base achieved and play resumes without penalty (see USSSA rule book). Once a player misses her place in the batting order due to illness or an injury, she is gone for the duration of the game. An automatic out will not be charged to the team for a player who leaves the line-up due to illness or injury.

Required Playing Time

All girls must play a minimum of three full innings at a defensive position, including at least one full inning at an infield position and at least one full inning at an outfield position by the end of the third inning. There may be a maximum of ten (10) players on defense. Four of the players must be positioned in the outfield and remain there until the ball is in play. Catchers at minimum will wear a helmet with mask and stand behind the batter at the backstop. At the discretion of the coach(es), catchers may take the normal position behind the plate in full gear and catch balls pitched from the machine. Coaches are encouraged to practice this position outside of a game setting if possible. Violation of these rules will be a ball called on the batter and all base-runners may advance one base.

Each defensive player may play a maximum of 3 combined innings at pitcher, 1st base, 2nd base, 3rd base or shortstop. A player cannot play a position they have already played in the current game. Coaches must teach players on defense to throw the ball to proper bases when the ball is in play. Example: a more skilled outfielder should not suddenly run in and cover a base from a less skilled player. Nor should we be teaching a player to run the ball in from the outfield to infield. This is a developmental division and these rules will be enforced.

The Game

Game Times/Schedule

Weeknight games may start as early as 5:30pm. Warm-ups may be done in the outfield or between the infield foul line and dugouts before the game.

Time Limits

Division	Time or Innings Allowed
8U Machine Pitch	ONE HOUR or not later than 8:30 pm while school is in session; or a maximum of FIVE full innings * Exception - time limit is 90 minutes in tournament play

Any inning which has been started prior to the time limit expiring will be completed. No new inning will begin once the time limit has expired.

The time begins when the home team takes the field. A new inning begins as soon as a) the third out is recorded in the previous inning; or b) a runner scoring the maximum allowed run in the inning has crossed home plate (see run limits in the next section).

Run Rule

The "run rule" limits the amount of runs scored by one team in one inning to a maximum of FOUR runs.

Official Game

The game is official after the team behind in score has completed its turn at bat in the fourth inning, or the time limit has expired. If the score is tied after the completion of the maximum time or innings allowed as stated in the section above, the official game ends in a tie and is recorded as such. No tiebreaker rules apply, except as specified in tournament play.

Umpires

Umpires will not be used except in tournament play. Coaches are responsible for loading the pitching machine.

Offensive Playing Rules

Batting

Bunting is allowed. Fake/slap bunting/hitting is not allowed.

Base Running

Base runners may advance at their own risk on any fair batted ball.

Infield Control (Dead Ball): Play is considered stopped when a defensive player has possession of the ball in the infield. At that point:

- Runners may not advance further.
- Any runner who has not reached the halfway point to the next (non-forced) base must return to the previous base.
- Any runner who has reached or passed the halfway point shall be awarded the next (non-forced) base.

Ball Entering the Infield from the Outfield: When a batted ball reaches the outfield, each runner is limited to advancing one (1) base beyond the last base touched at the moment the ball crosses into the infield, whether or not the ball is possessed.

Overthrows: Runners may not advance on any overthrow by a defensive player, whether from the infield or outfield. The intent of this rule is to encourage defensive players to attempt proper throws without risk of additional advancement due to overthrows.

Example: With runners on first and second, the batter hits a ball to the outfield. When the throw from the outfield crosses into the infield:

- The runner from second may advance to home if she has already rounded third.
- The runner from first may advance only to third.
- The batter-runner may advance only to second.

No additional advancement is permitted on any subsequent overthrow.

Base stealing is not allowed. The runner may not leave the base until after the ball crosses the plate. If the runner leaves early, they shall be automatically out, one warning allowed.

Advancing on fly balls caught in the infield or outfield is not permitted.

Runners can only score on a hit ball in fair territory.

Defensive Playing Rules

Infield Fly Rule

Does NOT apply in any situation.

Dropped Third Strike

Does NOT apply in any situation.

Defensive Coaches

Defensive coaches are allowed to stand along the foul line during the game. They may not interfere with the ball in play.

Pitching Rules

Before game starts, the manager for home team and visitors team will meet at pitching circle to determine pitching height and speed for pitching machine. To help determine proper height, the tallest and shortest player from either team will be used to find middle of the hitting zone. At the beginning of the season, the pitching machine will be set at a speed of 32 mph from a distance of 35 feet. The pitch speed will progress to 35 mph approximately five weeks into the season (about the first week in June). If a pitch is not hittable due to feed/machine error a “no pitch” will be declared which will not be included in the pitch count.

*The only exception to changing pitching machine would be, if the pitches are consistently out of strike zone to at least three batters in the same inning. Both managers would meet at the pitching circle to adjust machine together. This can only be done at the top of an inning. Once an inning has started, the machine may not be adjusted unless at the discretion and sound determination of coaches from both teams..

The defense shall have a player in the pitching circle. This player is a full participant in the defensive game. A coach of the team who is batting shall operate the pitching machine. This coach needs to be careful to stay out of a play. They should never take a throw from any player on the field. All throws should be to the pitcher and the pitcher shall hand the ball to the coach or umpire operating the pitching machine.

The batter will receive up to five pitches or three swinging strikes, whichever occurs first. If the fifth pitch results in a foul ball, additional pitches may be thrown until either the batter swings and misses (i.e., a strikeout) or the batter hits the ball into fair territory.

If a pitch is not in the strike zone due to feed/machine error a “no pitch” will be declared which will not be included in the pitch count.

A ball that is batted and hits the pitching machine shall be considered a dead ball. The batter gets to take 1st base and all other runners may advance one base. A thrown ball that hits the pitching machine is live unless lodged near the base of the machine (play is dead and runners awarded one extra base).

End of Season Tournament

A single elimination tournament will be scheduled at the completion of Regular Season games. Team standings from the Regular Season will be used for seeding purpose (tie-breakers will be used if teams have same record). Higher seed will be home team during all games except championship game. (1 is higher than 8). For tournament play, the pitching machine speed will be set at 35 mph.