

Merrimack Valley Girls Softball League

Rules and Regulations

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Table of Contents

1 Key Reminders	3
2 Playing Rules and Regulations.....	3
3 10U Division-Specific Rules	8
4 12U Division-Specific Rules	9
5 14U Division-Specific Rules	10

6 Playoffs (If Applicable)..... 11

1 Key Reminders

1.1 Weather/Complete Games

In cases of inclement weather or darkness, a game shall be considered complete at that point. Should the inning not be completed, the score will revert to the last complete inning. The game will be official in the standings unless the minimum number of innings was not reached.

1.2 Pitching Philosophy

The Merrimack Valley Girls Softball League (MVGSL) expects all pitchers follow the ASA rules for pitching as closely as possible. Specifically, in NO case shall any player take the first forward step forward with the “pivot” foot. The foot on the same side of the ball (i.e. ball in right hand, the first step must be made with the left foot). The action of “crow hopping should be avoided – your pivot foot should always be in contact with the ground.

1.3 Playing Time

Playing time in the field is to be divided equally between all players present. This is not applicable for hitting because all players will bat continuously.

1.4 Zero Tolerance Policy

Coaches will remember that their behavior and attitude will be an example for the team. Be positive with your players and the umpires. Under no circumstances should a coach, parent or player argue with the umpire about a call. The only circumstance where a coach can talk to the umpire about action on the field is to question a RULE clarification. Coaches are also responsible for the behavior of their team’s parents. **ZERO TOLERANCE.**

2 Playing Rules and Regulations

MVGSL will follow the ASA playing rules unless otherwise noted in this section or the division specific sections.

2.1 Curfew

Games will last one (1) hour and forty (40) minutes maximum, meaning no new inning may start after time expires. Coaches should record the start time and verify the time with the umpire prior to the game. The clock starts on the first warmup pitch.

2.2 Mercy Rule

The game will end after the minimum number of innings have been played any time the trailing team has completed batting when trailing by 15 runs or more. An inning does not need to be completed if the leading team is batting. For the 10U league, the minimum is 4 innings for the purpose of this rule. For the 12U and 14U leagues, the minimum is 5 innings. This is different than the minimum number of innings needed for an official game.

2.3 Rain Policy

In the case of a rain-out, the home team is responsible for communicating the change to the umpire and the away team (via the coaches contact list). The cancellation should be made at least two hours prior to the game time. Less than two hours prior to the game, the decision rests with the umpire and coaches at the site.

2.4 Game Scores

After each game, scores will be entered into the MVGSL by the winning team. Do not make the league's Board chase after coaches to enter scores. Standings are important for setting future games. If the minimum number of innings are not played, the game result should not be entered on the website.

*for 2023 the website will not be used, as we migrate to a new provider. Please email results weekly to your town rep.

2.5 Inning Run Rule

10U – a maximum of **four (4) runs** can be scored in any one inning. Once the fourth (4th) run crosses the plate, the inning is over. After the completion of the **fourth (4th)** inning, innings 5 & beyond will have no run limit. A game can end in a tie.

12U – a maximum of **five (5) runs** can be scored in any one inning. Once the fifth (5th) run crosses the plate, the inning is over. After the completion of the **fourth (4th)** inning, innings 5 & beyond will have no run limit. A game can end in a tie.

14U – a maximum of **six (6) runs** can be scored in any one inning. Once the sixth (6th) run crosses the plate, the inning is over. After the completion of the **fourth (4th)** inning, innings 5 & beyond will have no run limit. A game can end in a tie.

2.6 Courtesy Runner

The use of a courtesy runner for pitchers and catchers may be used to help expedite the game. The courtesy runner will be the last person that made an out unless it is the pitcher or catcher.

2.7 Leading

Runners can take a lead after the ball leaves the pitcher's hand.

2.8 Continuous Batting Order

Continuous batting is in effect for all levels. All players in attendance at a game will be placed in the batting order for the entire game. If a player shows up late, she will be placed at the bottom of the batting order, no exceptions. If the player shows up *really* late, the inclusion is at the discretion of the opposing coach.

2.9 Playing Time

Playing time in the field is to be divided equally between all players present.

2.10 Field Conditions

Please do your best to help maintain the playing conditions of the infields. At the conclusion of each game, take a few minutes and fill in any holes at the pitcher's mound and home plate. Also, please ask the players to clean the dugouts of all trash and belongings after every game.

2.11 Dugouts

Home team will choose the first or third base dugout. The visiting team will get the other dugout.

2.12 Umpires

The intent is for the 10U division to use junior "kid" umpires. 12U and 14U will use full patched umpires. The home team is responsible for paying the umpire.

2.13 Game Balls

The home team will supply two (2) game balls. The only exception to this is if a COVID-19 rule is in effect where both teams supply their own game balls for pitching.

2.14 Rules Infractions

If a coach feels there has been an infraction of MVGSL rules during a game, he/she must report it to their town's Board representative within 24 hours of the end of that game. The Board representative will contact the President.

2.15 Ejections

If a player or coach is ejected in a game, they are automatically suspended for the team's next game. The suspended player or coach may face further disciplinary actions by the MGGSL Board of Directors.

2.16 Team Rosters

Players may "play up" at any time. Players may not be on multiple rosters in the same division. However, if a team risks forfeit, they may use players from another team within the same division, but that player or players will not be allowed to pitch.

2.17 Batting Helmets

All players must wear a helmet with a cage.

2.18 Playing Short

Any team in the 10U division can play with a minimum of 6 girls. Any team in the 12U or 14U divisions can play with a minimum of 7 girls. No outs will be recorded against the team playing short. If less than the minimum number of girls is present, the game will be recorded an official forfeit, but every effort should be made to play a game (play for fun).

2.19 Non-rain Cancellations

Every effort should be made to prevent cancellations. The coach of the cancelling team is required to suggest make-up date possibilities within two (2) days of requesting the cancellation. Scheduling is difficult so please try to play the games as scheduled. There is no rescheduling of games due to vacations of coaches or players. If a non-rain cancellation is necessary, it must be done at least two weeks (2) weeks in advance and agreed to by both teams unless it is an emergency situation such as a field closure.

2.20 Number of Players on the Field

Ten (10) defensive players allowed on the field in all divisions.

2.21 Bench Area

Only players and coaches are allowed in the bench area.

2.22 Slashing

"Slashing" is not allowed, that is a player cannot show bunt, pull back and then swing away. This is a safety measure to protect the fielders. Once she shows bunt, the player must attempt a bunt or take the pitch.

2.23 Batting Order

The batting order is continuous and includes all players at the game.

2.24 Out of Play

A ball is considered out of play when it passes the imaginary line made from the end of the backstop to the outfield if there is no fence.

2.25 Overthrows

On a batted ball: ball is LIVE until it is (1.) returned to the pitching circle, or (2.) it goes out of play (as defined by the ground rules defined in pre-game meeting with umpire and declared by the umpire).

On a non-batted ball: each division will follow the stealing rules for that division

- i. **10U:** Only one runner can advance one base on an overthrow
- ii. **12U:** All runners can advance one base on an overthrow
- iii. **14U:** Ball is live, same as batted ball. All runners can advance until the ball is returned to the pitching circle, or the ball is declared "out of play" by the umpire in accordance with ground rules.

2.26 Start Times

The start time for games is the time posted on the game schedule.

2.27 Hit Batters

If a pitcher hits three (3) batters in an INNING, she should be removed from pitching and should not re-enter the games as a pitcher (she will remain in the game as a player/batter). USE DISCRETION. If both coaches agree that the hit by pitches were not harmful then the girl will be allowed to continue to pitch until it is determined that it becomes harmful. The intent of this rule is to avoid injuries to batters and not penalize the pitcher/pitching team.

2.28 Lightning

Lightning will result in the immediate suspension of the game.

2.29 COVID-19

The COVID-19 rules in effect at each game will be dictated by the home team's local town rules. These will be discussed prior to the game by the coaches and the umpire. Coaches are responsible for ensuring parents follow the local town rules.

3 10U Division-Specific Rules

3.1 Base and Pitcher Plate Distances

60' between bases

35' between pitcher plate and the back of home plate

3.2 Stealing

Runners are allowed to steal any base but only one base per pitch per team, not per player.

A team may steal home 2 times successfully per inning (you can attempt more than two times but only can have two successful attempts). For example, a runner can be called out on a steal of home and then that team is still allowed to attempt to steal two more times (outs recorded at the plate are not considered steals).

With only one base per ball pitched, a player cannot take second on a base on balls (i.e., continuous play).

No double steals. Only 1 runner may steal 1 base per pitch. Since there is no double stealing, if two runners advance at the same time then the trailing runner is the one that shall advance, and the lead runner will have to return to her base. For example, runners on 1st and 3rd base and the runner on 1st base runs and then ball passes by the catcher and the runner on 3rd base runs home. The result would be the runner on 3rd base would have to return to her base as she is the lead runner (no matter if the runner was safe or out at home plate). If a girl starts to steal 2nd base and returns back to the base, that counts as an attempted steal and no other runners can advance. However, in such cases where there is a runner on first and second, and both steal, the runner that just advanced to third can stay, and the runner that just advanced to second will be put back on first.

Intent of the rule – the intent is for the catcher to throw the ball to 2nd base without having the runner from 3rd base advance. No “fake” steals of 2nd base will be allowed with the intent of having the girl on 3rd base score.

3.3 Infield Fly Rule

The infield fly rule is NOT in effect

3.4 Softball Size

11" softballs will be used

3.5 Game Length

The maximum number of innings will be **six (6) innings**. A game is considered official for standings purposes after 3 innings (2.5 if the home team is winning).

3.6 Metal Spikes

Metal spikes are not allowed in this division.

3.7 Pitching Restrictions

Each player may pitch a total of nine (9) outs per game. More than this will result in a forfeiture of the game.

3.8 Outfield Positioning

Outfielders must remain at least on the edge of the outfield grass or where the outfield grass would be (outfield territory). Prior to each pitch, all players must be in traditional softball positions.

3.9 Dropped 3rd Strike

There will be no dropped third strike (That is, if a girl strikes out, she may NOT advance to first, even if the catcher drops the ball).

3.10 Umpires

Junior or "kid" umpires are encouraged.

4 12U Division-Specific Rules

4.1 Base and Pitcher Plate Distances

60' between bases

40' between pitcher plate and the back of home plate

4.2 Stealing

A team may steal home 2 times successfully per inning (you can attempt more than two times but only can have two successful attempts). For example, a runner can be called out on a steal of home and then that team is still allowed to attempt to steal two more times (outs recorded at the plate are not considered steals).

With only one base per ball pitched, a player cannot take second on a base on balls (i.e., continuous play).

A runner cannot steal more than a single base per pitch.

However, multiple runners CAN steal on a single pitch, up to one base each. Double stealing IS allowed at 12U.

4.3 Infield Fly Rule

The infield fly rule is NOT in effect

4.4 Softball Size

12" softballs will be used

4.5 Game Length

The maximum number of innings will be **seven (7) innings**. A game is considered official for standings purposes after 3 innings (2.5 if the home team is winning).

4.6 Pitching Restrictions

Each player may pitch a total of twelve (12) outs per game. More than this will result in a forfeiture of the game. There will be no extra innings unless it is a playoff game.

4.7 Dropped 3rd Strike

There will be no dropped third strike (That is, if a girl strikes out, she may NOT advance to first, even if the catcher drops the ball).

5 14U Division-Specific Rules

5.1 Base and Pitcher Plate Distances

60' between bases

43' between pitcher plate and the back of home plate

5.2 Infield Fly Rule

The infield fly rule IS in effect.

5.3 Softball Size

12" softballs will be used

5.4 Metal Spikes

Metal spikes are allowed in this division.

5.5 Game Length

The maximum number of innings will be seven (7) innings. A game is considered official for standings purposes after 3 innings (2.5 if the home team is winning).

5.6 Pitching Restrictions

Each player may pitch a total of twelve (12) outs per game. More than this will result in a forfeiture of the game. There will be no extra innings unless it is a playoff game.

5.7 Dropped 3rd Strike

There IS dropped third strike.

6 Playoffs (If Applicable)

6.1 Length of Game

Playoff games will be played for the full number of innings (6 for 10U and 7 for 12U and 14U) unless agreed to prior to the game by both coaches and the umpire.

6.2 Pitching Restrictions

The number of outs limit still applies for the full length of the game. However, if the game goes to extra innings, the limit is waived.

6.3 Rosters

Teams may not “cherry pick” players to use for playoff games. Each girl must have been part of the roster for the full season. There is no minimum number of games played, but this is an honor system approach. If there is any debate, questions should be escalated to the league Board.