

# YOUTH BASEBALL/SOFTBALL/T-BALL RULES & REGULATIONS

The Athletics Division of the Onslow County Parks & Recreation Department provides a platform for physical activity focused on ethical behavior, social responsibility, community engagement, and competitive effort that encourages leadership and individual growth.

**ACCEPTANCE:** Participation and play, including district Athletic Boosters, coaches, volunteers, spectators, and players, in any Onslow County Parks and Recreation Department athletic program implies full acceptance of all rules governing play, including the playing rules, by-laws, policies and procedures, and “Code of Conduct.”

**PHYSICAL HEALTH VERIFICATION:** It is the parent’s responsibility to see that their child is in sound physical condition. It is recommended that a player have a thorough physical examination prior to participating in the program.

**CONDUCT:** All players, spectators, parents, and coaches will be expected to adhere to the OCPR Athletics Code of Conduct that is provided in the OCPR Athletics Handbook. Any conduct that does not align with the expectations of our recreational league will be addressed by OCPR directly with consequences assigned.

## TEAM UNIT

- Each team shall have a minimum of 10 players and a maximum of 15 players per roster. Total registration numbers for Fall Ball specifically may require a number less than or more than the indicated number of players per roster.
- Registration for all districts must be completed before the start of the first scheduled practice. A player cannot begin practice with a team until he/she has registered, participated in the draft process, and has been placed on a team by the specified district.
- No coach shall allow any player to practice with his or her team who is not listed on the team roster.
- All practices must be held at the sites and times assigned by OCPR and district board. No other sites or times may be used.
- The minimum number of players required to begin a game is eight. A ten-minute grace period from the start time of the scheduled game is provided before forfeiture is determined. If a team does not have 8 players present once the grace period has concluded, the game will be a forfeit. If both teams agree to move forward in a scrimmage format, the game will turn into a scrimmage with no official score recorded.

## COACHES

- All coaches must be approved by OCPR and receive a badge prior to coaching the first practice session.
- A coaching staff cannot exceed three coaches (one head coach and two assistant coaches). *Exception: 8U and T-Ball may have one head coach and three assistant coaches.*
- Coaches must wear the OCPR badge during all practices and games.

## GAME PROCEDURES

- There will be no infield practice before or between games.
- Warm Up Period: There will be a minimum 15-minute warm up period before each game begins.
- Rostered players and coaches will be the only participants allowed in a team dugout.
- Scorekeepers should sit directly outside of the dugout on the side nearest home plate.
- No music during warm up or walk-up music will be permitted during regular season or tournament play.

## PRACTICE PROCEDURES

- Pre-Season: No more than 3 days per week. No practices will be scheduled on Sundays.
- During Season: No more than 2 days per week. No practices will be scheduled on Sundays.
- No practices will last longer than 90 minutes.

- No practices can be held unless an OCPH Athletic Coordinator and OCPH approved coach is present.

**PLAYING TIME:** During the regular season games, all players must play at least 6 consecutive outs on defense. All substitutions must enter the game by the top of the third inning. Substitutions must be reported to the official and opposing scorekeepers.

- Credit shall be given to players for a complete inning if the last half of the last inning does not need to be played.
- If a player is not present by the top of the third inning, they are not required to play. If that player enters the game, they must be able to meet the mandatory participation rule.
- A player who arrives more than 30 minutes after the start of the game will not be permitted to play.
- Failure to comply with the playing time regulation will result in a team forfeiture of the game.

**PROTESTS:** Protests on judgment calls will not be considered during regular season play.

**PLAYING RULES & REGULATIONS:** The current “National Federation of State High School Associations” (NFHS) rules will govern play in all districts, except as modified by county league rules described in this rules manual. These rules and regulations will apply to all age divisions, unless otherwise noted.

## **ALL AGE GROUPS**

### **Equipment:**

- Batting helmets must be worn by all batters, runners, youth base coaches, and bat persons.
- Catchers must wear a chest protector, shin guards, protective cup (baseball), and mask with a throat protector (as necessary or if standard mask does not cover) during the game and when warming up the pitcher.
- No metal or ceramic cleats or spikes are allowed for T-Ball, 8U, 10U, or 12U.
- Baseball: All bats must adhere to the current rules and standards set by USA Baseball. *\*14U Baseball will follow the BBCore guidelines as listed in the NFHS Handbook.*
- Softball: All bats must adhere to the current rules and standards set by USA Softball (formally ASA).
- Softball: Infield face masks are highly suggested for all players playing in the infield.

**Batting:** Continuous batting will be enforced. Every player that is present at game time must be listed in the batting lineup and players must bat in the order listed.

- A player who unintentionally throws his/her bat will be warned by the umpire. In addition, a team warning will be issued and thereafter any player who throws his bat will be declared out. This is a dead ball situation.

**Baserunning:** Baserunners cannot run out of the baseline to avoid being tagged out and cannot run into a fielder with possession of the ball with the intent of dislodging the ball. If this occurs, the runner will be considered out.

- If a player has passed the halfway line between bases when the umpire grants timeout, they will be awarded the base they are advancing to.
- Offensive teams may substitute a runner for their catcher at any point the catcher is a baserunner. It is required when there are two outs.
  - The offensive player who recorded the last out will replace the catcher.
- Offensive teams may have one coach in the first base and third base coaches' boxes.
  - Coaches may not make physical contact with baserunners to begin or stop the baserunner. Any contact between an offensive coach and the baserunner will result in the runner being out.

**Calling Time:** Time-out will be granted by the umpire when the defensive team has possession of the ball in the infield and requests time-out. The coach or the catcher are the only two participants who may call time-out.

**Suspended/Delayed Games:** If a game is suspended due to weather conditions after one hour or three complete innings, the game is called complete with the final score recorded.

## **T-BALL**

**Batting:** Every player listed on the team roster bats every inning.

**Pitching: 3-4:** A tee will be provided and utilized for each batter. **5-6:** A coach will pitch up to 3 pitches for each batter to hit the ball. If the player is unsuccessful in hitting, a tee will be provided for the batter to utilize.

**Baserunning:** Every will player will have the opportunity to cross home plate in each inning.

**Defense:** Every player plays in the infield/outfield for defense. All players must stand behind the designated arc for defense.

## **8U BASEBALL / SOFTBALL**

**Innings:** 6

**Pitching Distance:** Baseball: 40 feet (coach pitch) / Softball: 35 feet (coach pitch/machine pitch)

**Base Distance:** 60 feet

**Time Limit:** 1 hour 30 minutes (*new inning will not begin after 1 hour 15 minutes of play*)

**Run Rules:** There will be a five-run limit in the first inning. In the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, or 5<sup>th</sup> inning the trailing team will always have the chance to tie the score and score an additional five runs in last at-bat situations. The team leading may only score five runs before the inning rolls over. In the 6<sup>th</sup> inning, there is no run limit for either team. The mercy rule will be enforced when a team is winning by ten runs after four complete innings or eight runs after five complete innings

**Batting:** Every player that is present at game time must be listed in the batting lineup and players must bat in the order listed throughout the entirety of the game.

- Players will have the opportunity to receive up to five pitches or three swings from a coach to hit a ball into fair territory. If the 5<sup>th</sup> or any additional pitch is hit into foul territory, the batter will receive an additional pitch.
- The first fair ball will be considered a live ball and the batter must run to first base.
- If a batted ball hits any part of the coach, it will be declared dead, and the batter will be awarded first base, and any other runners will advance one base only if forced.
- Bunting is allowed, but for the safety of all players if the batter shows bunt, they can only bunt or pull back. The batter will not be allowed to show bunt and then pull back to slash or hit away. All defensive players (including the pitcher) must stay behind the coach pitcher until the ball is released.
- No intentional walks will be given during a player's time at bat.
- Players are not allowed to advance to first base on a dropped third strike.

**Pitching:** Any rostered coach may pitch for the duration of the game.

- Coaches may pitch from the designated pitching mark and may pitch from a standing position only.
- Once the ball is hit, the coach must remove themselves from active play.

**Baserunning:** There will be no stealing. Runners may leave the base when the ball reaches the plate. Runner(s) may advance only when the ball has been put into play.

- In the judgment of the umpire, if a runner leaves the base before the ball reaches the plate, the runner will be sent back to the base and "no pitch" will be called. A team warning will be issued to the whole team and any runners leaving the base early during the remainder of the game will be called out with the umpire declaring "no pitch."
- A substitute runner for the catcher on base with two outs is mandatory. The courtesy runner must be the last participant to be recorded as an out in the offensive team's lineup. With less than two outs, it is the coach's option to use a courtesy runner. The courtesy runner will be the last recorded out.
- If a ball is overthrown into a dead ball area, the baserunner will be awarded the base they are going to plus one at the time of the throw.
- When the lead runner has been stopped and the umpire has called time, if the trailing runners have not passed the half-way line between bases, they must return to the prior base touched.

- When a runner retreats to a base with the ball on the infield, time will be called unless a play is being made on a runner.
- Headfirst sliding will not be permitted. If a runner slides headfirst, the runner will be called out. Players may dive when returning to a base.
- **SOFTBALL ONLY:** In the event of an overthrow at 1<sup>st</sup> base, runner(s) may advance only one base with the risk of being thrown out. If the defensive team makes an attempt to throw the runner(s) out, the play opens up and runners may advance until stopped or the runner(s) score. The throw to first may come from an outfielder. If the overthrow to first is the second part of a double play, then the overthrow to first is treated as such, thus allowing the runner(s) to continue at their own risk. This rule applies to overthrows only at first base. All other overthrows at any base are the same as the older divisions.

**Defense:** Teams will play with 10 defensive players in the field.

- Teams will have a maximum of six players in the infield including a catcher and pitcher's helper.
- A pitcher's helper will be positioned to the right or left of the coach who is pitching.
- Defensive players may not take a position in front of the mid-point of the pitcher's circle.
- The infield fly rule is NOT in effect.
- Time will be called only by the umpire when the lead runner is stopped or abandons their effort to advance. Bringing the ball to the pitcher's mound, home plate, or a player calling time does not constitute time. If the defense makes a play on any other runner, then the lead runner is free to run. This will be up to the judgment of the umpire.
- If a thrown ball hits the pitching machine or coach, the ball will remain a live ball unless the umpire has called time.
- **SOFTBALL ONLY:** The umpire will also call time or dead ball when it is a safety concern such as the ball coming to rest under or near the pitching machine where it is dangerous to retrieve.

## **10U/12U BASEBALL**

**Innings:** 6

**Pitching Distance:** 46 feet

**Base Distance:** 60 feet

**Time Limit:** 1 hour 30 minutes (*new inning will not begin after 1 hour 15 minutes of play*)

**Run Rules:** There will be a seven-run limit per inning until the last inning. The mercy rule will be enforced when a team is winning by ten runs after four complete innings. If the home team is ahead after three- and one-half innings, they will not bat.

**Batting:** Every player that is present at game time must be listed in the batting lineup and players must bat in the order listed.

- Bunting is allowed; but if batter shows bunt, they may only bunt or pull back.

**Run Rule:** There will be a seven-run limit per inning until the last inning.

**Pitching:** Pitchers performing the number of pitches below require the designated time for rest:

# of Pitches	Days of Rest
1-30	No set rest time
31-45	1 day of rest
46-65	2 days of rest
66 and above	3 days of rest

- Player pitchers who are removed from the mound or the game may not return to the mound in the same game.
- Coaches may have one conference per inning. The defensive team is not charged a conference when a pitcher is removed.

- Players may have no more than five pitches to warm-up at the beginning of an inning or when replacing a removed pitcher.
- Balks will not be called.

**Baserunning:** Players may steal bases but may not leave their base until the pitch crosses home plate.

- If a player leads off before the ball crosses home plate, the ball will be dead, and the runner will be called out.
- Headfirst sliding will not be permitted. If a runner slides headfirst, the runner will be called out. Players may dive when returning to a base.
- Players are not allowed to advance to first base on a dropped third strike.

**Defense:** Teams will play with 9 defensive players in the field.

- Teams will have a maximum of six players in the infield including a catcher and pitcher.
- The infield fly rule is in effect.

## **10U/12U SOFTBALL**

**Innings:** 6

**Pitching Distance:** 10U: 35 feet / 12U: 40 feet

**Base Distance:** 60 feet

**Time Limit:** 1 hour 30 minutes (*new inning will not begin after 1 hour 15 minutes of play*)

**Run Rules:** There will be a seven-run limit per inning until the last inning. The mercy rule will be enforced when a team is winning by ten runs after four complete innings. If the home team is ahead after three- and one-half innings, they will not bat. It will also be enforced if a team is winning by 15 runs after three complete innings. If the home team is ahead after two- and one-half innings, they will not bat.

**Batting:** Every player that is present at game time must be listed in the batting lineup and players must bat in the order listed.

- Bunting is allowed; but if batter shows bunt, they may only bunt or pull back.

**Pitching:** A player may only pitch 8 innings in one calendar week (Monday-Sunday). Once a pitch has been delivered, that inning will now count towards their total innings.

- **10U:** After four batters have walked in an inning, the offensive team's coach comes in to pitch for the rest of the inning.
- Player pitchers may re-enter the game as long as they have not exceeded their innings limit. They may not re-enter the game in the inning they were removed.
- Coaches may have one conference per inning. The defensive team is not charged a conference when a pitcher is removed.
- Players may have no more than five pitches to warm-up at the beginning of an inning or when replacing a removed pitcher.

**Baserunning:**

- **10U:** Players are not allowed to lead off or steal any base. They may not leave their occupied base until the ball reaches the plate.

**12U:** Players may steal bases but may not leave their base until the pitch leaves the pitcher's hand on delivery to the batter.

- **10U:** Players are not allowed to advance to first base on a dropped third strike.
- **12U:** Players are allowed to advance to first base on a dropped third strike. The exception to this rule would be when there are less than two outs, and first base is occupied at the time of the pitch. With two outs and first base occupied at the time of the pitch, the batter *will* be allowed to advance to first base on a dropped third strike.

**Defense: 10U:** Teams will play with 10 defensive players in the field.

**12U:** Teams will play with 9 defensive players in the field.

- Teams will have a maximum of six players in the infield including a catcher and pitcher.
- The infield fly rule is in effect.

## **14U BASEBALL**

**Innings:** 7

**Pitching Distance:** 54 feet

**Base Distance:** 80 feet

**Time Limit:** 2 hours (*new inning will not begin after 1 hour 45 minutes of play*)

**Run Rules:** There will be a seven-run limit per inning until the last inning. The mercy rule will be enforced when a team is winning by ten runs after five complete innings. If the home team is ahead after four- and one-half innings, they will not bat.

**Batting:** Every player that is present at game time must be listed in the batting lineup and players must bat in the order listed.

- Bunting is allowed.
- With less than two outs and first base occupied at the time of the pitch, the batter *will not* be allowed to advance to first base on a dropped third strike. With two outs and first base occupied at the time of the pitch, the batter *will* be allowed to advance to first base on a dropped third strike.

**Pitching:** Pitchers performing the number of pitches below require the designated time for rest:

# of Pitches	Days of Rest
1-30	No set rest time
31-60	1.5 days of rest
61-95	2 days
96 and above	3 days of rest

- Player pitchers who are removed from the mound or the game may not return to the mound in the same game.
- Coaches may have one conference per inning. The defensive team is not charged a conference when a pitcher is removed.
- Players may have no more than five pitches to warm-up at the beginning of an inning or when replacing a removed pitcher.
- Pitchers must come set or balk will be called- at the discretion of the umpire.

**Baserunning:** Players may steal any base and are allowed to lead off.

**Defense:** Teams will play with 9 defensive players in the field.

- Teams will have a maximum of six players in the infield including a catcher and pitcher.
- The infield fly rule is in effect.

## **14U SOFTBALL**

**Innings:** 6

**Pitching Distance:** 43 feet

**Base Distance:** 60 feet

**Time Limit:** 1 hour 30 minutes

**Run Rules:** There will be a seven-run limit per inning until the last inning. The mercy rule will be enforced when a team is winning by ten runs after four complete innings. If the home team is ahead after three- and one-half innings, they will not bat. It will also be enforced if a team is winning by 15 runs after three complete innings. If the home team is ahead after two- and one-half innings, they will not bat.

**Batting:** Every player that is present at game time must be listed in the batting lineup and players must bat in the order listed.

- Bunting is allowed.
- With less than two outs and first base occupied at the time of the pitch, the batter *will not* be allowed to advance to first base on a dropped third strike. With two outs and first base occupied at the time of the pitch, the batter *will* be allowed to advance to first base on a dropped third strike.

**Pitching:**

- Player pitchers may re-enter the game.
- Coaches may have one conference per inning. The defensive team is not charged a conference when a pitcher is removed.
- Players may have no more than five pitches to warm-up at the beginning of an inning or when replacing a removed pitcher.

**Baserunning:** Players may steal bases but may not leave their base until the pitch leaves the pitcher's hand.

- If a player leads off before the ball leaves the pitcher's hand, the ball will be dead, and the runner will be out.

**Defense:** Teams will play with 9 defensive players in the field.

- Teams will have a maximum of six players in the infield including a catcher and pitcher.
- The infield fly rule is in effect.