



Frederick County Girls Softball League

General Rules

Revised March 2025

A. LEAGUE OPERATIONS & GOVERNING RULES

1. Rules for specific age groups have precedence over all other rules. Rules outlined in the Frederick County Girls Softball League (FCGSL) General Rules have precedence over rules defined in the USSSA rulebooks. If a rule has not been set-forth or modified by the specific Age Group or FCGSL General Rules, play is governed by the USSSA rules for fastpitch. https://usssa.com/docs/Fastpitch/Fastpitch_Rules.pdf

NOTE: It is the responsibility of each coach to be familiar with the rules, and to carry a copy of the rulebook with him/her to each game.

Mandatory Coaches Clinic and Demonstration: 1 coach from each team must attend the Coaches Clinic and Demonstration for Explanation of the age group rules. Completion of the clinics will certify your team to play in the league for the year. Without certification, your team will forfeit all games until your team is certified.

2. Protests must be lodged within 48 hours of the protested incident and signed and dated by the umpire of the game (or both coaches in the absence of an umpire) that the incident happened and using the procedure set-forth in the League By-Laws. The protest fee is \$25.00; refundable if the protest is upheld.
 - a. If the protest committee makes a decision, an appeal can be made with a request in writing to the FCGSL board, if the appeal is not founded and the organization does not adhere to the protest committee's decision, a fine of \$500 will be issued for that organization. If the fine is not paid within 2 weeks, then the team/teams that are impacted will be suspended and games will not be made up until the fine is paid. If the fine is not paid on or before the final game of that age group for the season, that organization will be banned from FCGSL until further notice.
 3. Starting time for games scheduled Monday through Friday is 6:00 p.m. Starting time for Saturday games (8 and Under) is 10:00 a.m. Sunday games for 15 and Under will start at
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4pm. Any team, home or visitor, not arriving at the playing field within 15 minutes past the scheduled game time, with at least seven (7) eligible players, will forfeit the game to the opposing team. There is a maximum 15-minute warm-up time for the team arriving late. Visiting teams are to be provided with 15 minutes of warm-up on the game infield, unless arriving late (for a 6:00 p.m. game, the visiting team must arrive by 5:45 p.m. to receive 15 minutes of warm-up time.) If a team arrives after 5:45 p.m., they will be considered “late” and only be allowed to warm-up on the field until game time at 6:00 p.m. Every new pitcher gets 5 warm-up pitches.

4. Teams must start and finish with at least seven (7) active eligible players or the game is forfeited to the opposing team. In games where a team begins play with at least seven (7) players but less than the maximum number of fielders allowed (due to a shortage of players), those players arriving late for the game are added to the bottom of the batting order and entered into vacant field positions upon their arrival at the game field. No automatic outs are assessed to a team playing shorthanded due to lack of players.
5. A regulation game for 8U and 10U is 6 innings. A regulation game for 12U and 15U is 7 innings. All games have a two (2) hour time limit. Once the top of the inning starts, you must complete that inning unless it is called for darkness. If called for darkness, the winner of the game is determined by reverting back to the previously completed inning. No new inning will start after the time limit has expired. A new inning is considered started at the time of the last out of the previous inning. An inning started prior to the time limit will be completed. The time limit constitutes a complete game regardless of the number of innings played. 8U: If there is a tie but there is still time left in the 2 hour time limit—they may play out the tie.
6. **International TieBreaker Rule:** For 10U, 12U and 15U— When the International Tie Breaker Rule comes into effect—it is used when a game ends in a tie and there is time left after (6 innings for 10U and 7 innings for 12U and 15U). At the beginning of each team’s at-bat the last batter from the previous inning is placed on 2nd base. It is not sudden death. Each team has an opportunity to bat each inning. The game can end in two ways—(1) when one team is ahead at the end of the inning or time runs out (If at this point the game is still tied it will count as a tie).
7. In the event of a lightning strike and/or the sound of thunder, it must be heard at the field the teams are playing on, 30 minutes will be allowed to pass before play is allowed to resume. Each new lightning strike and/or sound of thunder at the field the teams are playing on starts a new 30 minute delay. The game’s total time limit is suspended during the lightning/thunder delays. Suspended games shall resume at the point at which it was suspended.
8. Both teams--should phone/email game results to the appropriate scorekeeper within 24 hours after completion of the game, so that wins, losses, and forfeitures are properly recorded (except as otherwise noted in Rule D-15f). Results should include age group, team name, game date, and score.
9. FCGSL standings will use a point system for determining placement of teams in each age group. For each game played, three (3) points will be awarded for a Win (played or by official forfeit), two (2) points for a Tie, and one (1) point for a Loss.

- a. If there is a tie between two or more teams with points, we look at head to head (games between the teams tied for points) next, then go to runs against, then runs for, and then flip a coin.

B. PLAYER ELIGIBILITY

1. Age must be verified by a valid birth certificate or other proof of age identification. These documents will be kept by each League Representative for their applicable association/organization. Team levels and qualifications are as follows:
 - a. Age must be attained before January 1 of any given year of play
 - b. Proof of age of each player must be on record prior to participation. Failure to comply, or to produce age certification when requested, may result in forfeiture of the game(s) in question. *(Further explanation is stated in By-Laws XI-B).
 - c. Guest players are allowed, but the player must be registered with FCGSL for the current season. ***Guest players: coaches must notify the opposing coach and their age group coordinator via email a minimum of 2 hours prior to the start of the game of any intent to utilize a player who is not rostered on their team.***
2. Players may be listed on more than one FCGSL team roster, as long as the teams are in different age groups. Players can “play up” on a team in a different age group (example - an 8U team) with the exception of the new 15U rule (a 16 year old can play if not on High School or Travel Team). *Use of any ineligible player will result in forfeiture of any game in which the ineligible player participated.
3. **Travel softball players** - a travel softball player is defined as any player registered with USSSA and that plays C level or above. ***Travel players are defined from January 1- December 31st of that calendar year.*** No FCGSL team shall have more than 6 travel and/or high school players on their team. Travel and high school players shall not pitch more than 2 innings per FCGSL game, and a maximum of 4 innings pitched by all travel and high school players on any one team in any one game.

C. SPECIFICATIONS (Equipment & Field)

1. Only softballs approved by the league will be accepted. Official game balls are: C.O.R. .47 and Max Compression is 525lbs with raised-seam, etc. (refer to Softball Nation Rules/Guidelines). Each team will provide one game ball for all games.
2. Only official softball bats with stamps will be used, exception being use of T-Ball bats for 8U games. Let players know that if they plan on playing on the FCGSL All-Star Team they need to have the USSSA stamp printed on the bat or they won't be able to use it.
3. Facemasks must be used on all batting helmets. Must be NOSCAE approved with stamp on helmet.

4. Uniforms will consist of shirts (numbered on the back) of the same color, style and trim. Regular uniform pants are optional. Team uniforms for managers and coaches are optional.
5. Bases will be at a distance of 60 feet for all age group league games. Safety bases (i.e., double-sized 1st base) are allowed but not mandatory.
6. Pitching will be from within a clearly marked 8-foot radius circle. The pitching distance is to be measured from the rear part of home plate to the center of the circle. For 8 and 10 & Under league games this distance is 35 feet. For 12U league games the distance is 40 feet. For 15U games the distance will be 43 feet the same distance as dictated by Maryland High School rules.
7. Metal cleats are not allowed, plastic or rubber only.
8. If an on-deck circle is used, it must be 40 feet away from home plate.
9. All Infield positions are required to wear a fielding mask for all ages.

D. THE GAME

1. The minimum number of fielders (per team) in the game at all times for all age groups is seven (7).
2. The maximum number of fielders (per team) in the game at all times:

 8U and 10U: Ten (10) - (P, C, 1st, 2nd, SS, 3rd, and 4 outfielders)

 12U, 15U: Nine (9) - (P, C, 1st, 2nd, SS, 3rd, and 3 outfielders)
3. There is no restriction on the number of innings any pitcher can pitch in league games. However, there is a two (2) inning limit for any player that plays on a travel team or a high school player. With a maximum of 4 total innings pitched by all travel team and high school players from any one team in any one game.
4. Use of a Designated Player (DP) is not allowed in league games.
5. There is no arc limit.
6. When running to a base you may not head first slide. You are allowed to head first dive back into a base you have passed. But after a runner starts to run to the next base and decides they want to go back to the previous base to avoid being put out they can slide head first into their previous base.
7. When a catcher is on base with one or more outs, an optional courtesy runner may be used, that runner being the last player to make an out.
8. When a runner is legitimately off a base after a pitch, or as a result of a batter completing a turn at bat, and while the pitcher has the ball within the circle (an 8 foot radius of the pitchers plate), the runner may stop ONCE, but then must immediately return to the base or attempt to advance to the next base. Failure to immediately return non-stop to the base or

proceed non-stop to the next base will result in the runner being declared out. Once the runner stops at a base for any reason, she will be declared out if she leaves the base, with the exception being if a play is made on her or another runner, the pitcher no longer has possession of the ball in the circle, or the pitcher releases the ball on a pitch to the batter.

***NOTE:** This rule is not applicable to the 8U Division since play is automatically stopped by the umpire once the coach pitcher has control of the ball within the circle.

9. ALL players must play a minimum of 3 innings in the field (8U and 10U), or 2 innings in the field (12U and 15U). This rule is suspended in the event of injury, illness, or disciplinary action taken by the coach before or during the game or in case of an official game shortened for weather or for run rule.
10. A pitcher can change from pitcher to another position back to pitcher in an inning if the coach only visits her once on the mound. If the coach visits the pitcher twice in the inning the pitcher must be removed from the pitching position for the remaining part of that inning.
11. Running batting order and free substitution for all age groups (8U, 10U, 12U, 15U).
Re-entry of a substitute player will be allowed in all the above age groups.
12. There are no limitations as to the number of times a players' defensive field position can be changed.
13. Scorebooks and/or lineup cards should include the player's name (first and last) and must include uniform number. The official start time should be agreed upon by the umpire and both coaches at the pre-game meeting and written in both score books.
14. Exposed jewelry which is judged by the umpire to be dangerous, must be removed and may not be worn during the game. Medical alert bracelets/necklaces/etc are approved.
15. **Home team responsibilities:**
 - a. Communicate with the visiting team, verifying time and place of game, at least 72 hours in advance to designate field location if more than one site is listed in the FCGSL handout, or if field directions are different than those posted in the FCGSL handout.
 - b. Softballs will be provided by both teams for games. (General Rule C1).
 - c. Teams need to be aware that if a rainout occurs, teams should expect to play the makeup game as soon as the next day.
 - d. Clearly mark 8-ft. radius (16-ft. diameter) pitcher's circle, foul lines, and batter's box. 10U will have a hash mark on the field 10ft. from the leading edge of the base clearly marked.
 - e. All bases, home plate, and the pitcher's rubber must be attached to the ground by means of spikes or posts.
 - f. Notify visiting team and umpire of game postponed, only due to inclement weather, or in other special circumstances. If a game is postponed, it must be rescheduled

within seven (7) days of the original game date, and must be played **within fourteen (14) days**. If within five (5) days the home and visiting team cannot agree on a mutual date, both teams call their respective Age Group Coordinator to set the date, time, and place for the makeup game. If a team does not show, then it is considered a forfeit for the "no show" team. **If the game is not played within 14 days and an exception is not obtained, the home team forfeits the game.** The FCGSL President will act on behalf of the Age Group Coordinator in situations where a conflict of interest exists.

***NOTE:** Any game postponed or not played during the last two weeks of the season needs to be made up no later than five (5) days from the last regular scheduled game of the season. The Final Championship can be played on any day of the week.

- g. Notify and schedule visiting team, Umpire, group coordinator and appropriate scorekeeper, of any postponements and/or rescheduled game date.

16. Visiting team responsibilities:

- a. If a game is postponed, it must be rescheduled within seven (7) days of the original game date, and must be played **within fourteen (14) days**. If within five (5) days the home and visiting team cannot agree on a mutual date, both teams call their respective Age Group Coordinator to set the date, time, and place for the makeup game. If a team does not show, then it is considered a forfeit for the "no show" team. **If the game is not played within 14 days and an exception is not obtained, the home team forfeits the game.** The FCGSL President will act on behalf of the Age Group Coordinator in situations where a conflict of interest exists.
 - i. Teams need to be aware that if a rainout occurs, teams should expect to play the makeup game as soon as the next day.
 - ii. Any game postponed or not played during the last two weeks of the season needs to be made up no later than five (5) days from the last regular scheduled game of the season.
 - iii. Final Championship games may be played on any day of the week.

17. Rescheduled and canceled games--7 days advance notice is required to postpone and reschedule any game--Only valid reason to reschedule a game is when a team does not have a minimum of 7 or more players due to school activities or injury/illness.

18. Each team will pay the Umpire \$40.00 before the start of their games. If the Umpire shows up and the game is called for rain or the other team forfeits—the umpire is still paid the fee from each team.

19. To be eligible to play in the end of season Play-Offs and All-Star Games all players must have played in 7 games within that age group, on that team during the regular season. In cases of illness or injury, the board can make an exception.

12u Specific Rules

1. A regulation game for 12U is seven (7) innings. A complete game consists of five (5) full innings or four and one-half (4 1/2) innings, if the home team is ahead, or when the 2-hour time limit rule has been reached. Games will have a two (2) hour time limit but once an inning starts, you must complete that inning in full, unless the home team is ahead. (see General Rules A-5). If an inning starts and the home team does not get to finish, and visitors are ahead, they don't necessarily win. Game reverts back to the previously completed inning. No new inning will start if the time limit expires at the time of the last out of the previous inning. An inning started prior to the time limit will be completed. The time limit or darkness (without a weather delay) constitutes a complete game regardless of the number of innings played. International Tie Breaker Rule for 12U will be used if after seven (7) innings a game is tied and two (2) hour time limit isn't reached (see General Rules A-5).
2. 15 run mercy rule is in effect after five (5) full innings or 4 and 1/2 if the home team is ahead.
3. If pitchers hit any three (3) batters in one inning where 1st base is awarded, they must be removed for that inning as the pitcher. If a pitcher hits a total of five (5) batters where first base is awarded, they will be removed from the pitching position for the remainder of the game.
4. Pitchers are allowed to use "slingshot" or "windmill" delivery styles.
5. Players have to play six (6) defensive outs. The batting order will consist of all players at the game, and will run in a continuous order, (General Rules 9-D ALL players must play a minimum of 2 innings in the field (12U and 15U). This rule is suspended in the event of injury, sickness, or disciplinary action taken by the coach (before or during the game), or unless the game is shortened due to time rule or 15 run rule.
6. An inning will end in any one of the following ways:
 - a. When three (3) outs are made.
 - b. When five (5) runs are scored in that inning. (Innings 1 – 5 only, suspended in the 6th and 7th innings).
7. If a batter is hit by a pitch where the ball touches the ground two or more times (i.e. rolling or bouncing) prior to hitting the batter, that is called a ball, not a hit-by-pitch. If the batter makes an attempt to swing at the ball, that is called a strike, not a hit-by-pitch. In all other instances, the batter is awarded first base if hit by the pitch.
8. Outfielders need to be ten (10) feet behind the baseline when the pitch is being delivered.
9. When running to a base, players may not head first slide. Players may head first dive back into a base that has been passed. But after a runner starts to run to the next base and decides they want to go back to the previous base to avoid being put out they can slide head first into their previous base. This is to avoid injury (General Rules (D-7)).
10. If there is a play at a base (other than first base), the runner must slide to avoid contact with the fielder.