

NOTABLE RULES DIFFERENCES: USA, etc. v. NFHS

Updated 2-28-2025

- ▶ The following rules are either notable differences or points of emphasis based on variations of rules over multiple rule sets. The purpose of this document is merely to highlight specific rules.
- ▶ The rules (aside from waivers) are contained in the rulebook and casebook. The absence of a rule here does not mean that there is not a difference between NFHS and previous and other rule sets.
 - ▶ Put another way, it doesn't make a difference what any other rulebook says, except in the adoption of "language consistent with" another rule set in terms of a waiver. Aside from that, consult the NFHS rulebook and casebook for the rules and interpretations to be played by and enforced.

MEDIA: 1-1-7

- ▶ Media must be in dead ball territory, not merely in foul territory
 - ▶ Standing beyond 1st or 3rd base in foul territory is not permitted
 - ▶ Umpires may use discretion in allowing authorized media into this area momentarily “between” innings, but it should not be habitual

BAT GRIP: 1-5-2

- ▶ The bat grip: 10 – 15 inches
- ▶ A safety grip shall be made of cork, tape (no smooth, plastic tape) or composition material

BATTING HELMET: 1-6-7, etc.

- ▶ Any eye shield must permit 100% light transmission
 - ▶ This is true of defensive eye shields as well
 - ▶ Tinted shields are not permitted
- ▶ Face masks with NOCSAE warning are required
 - ▶ Chin straps remain optional

OTHER EQUIPMENT: 1-8

- ▶ Defective equipment shall be repaired or replaced immediately
- ▶ All equipment shall be worn properly and as designed by the manufacturer
- ▶ The use of electronic devices by team personnel to transmit or record information pertaining to their players or team's performance shall be permitted for coaching purposes with the team's dugout/bench area only, provided the point of origin of the electronic communication is outside of the field of play
- ▶ A coach may use an electronic device for one-way communication from the dugout to the catcher while the team is on defense

ON-DECK BATTER: 2-5-3

- ▶ The on-deck batter is a player of the offensive team entitled to occupy the on-deck circle closest to the player's team dugout
- ▶ A single on-deck batter shall remain in the on-deck circle while the opposing pitcher is warming up (see Rule 7-5)

ATTEMPTED BUNT: 2-5-8

- ▶ Holding the bat in the strike zone is considered a bunt attempt

CATCH/COLLAPSIBLE FENCE: 2-10-4

- ▶ A fielder who catches the ball while contacting or stepping on a collapsible fence, which is not completely horizontal, is credited with a catch
 - ▶ If the collapsible fence is completely on the ground (as opposed to collapsing simultaneously with the act of catching the ball), and the defender “secures” the ball while standing on it, this is not considered a “catch”

INTERFERENCE / OBSTRUCTION: 2-35; 2-46-3

- ▶ The act may be:
 - ▶ Intentional or unintentional
 - ▶ Physical or verbal
- ▶ "Initial Play" on a **batted ball** includes a misplayed ball that is still within a "step and a reach" (in any direction) of that defender
 - ▶ If within a step and a reach, the offense may be liable for interference
 - ▶ Once the ball is beyond a step and a reach from the defender, the defender may be liable for obstruction

PINCH HITTER / PINCH RUNNER: 2-41

- ▶ Although used, these terms were not recognized by USA Softball
- ▶ NFHS uses these terms to describe the specific player
- ▶ However, that player remains in the game as a substitute until replaced
 - ▶ Projected substitutions are not permitted
 - ▶ A team may make multiple substitutions at once, but...
 - ▶ ... may not announce a future sub (e.g., 12-Smith is going in for 13-Jones, then 13-Jones is going to re-enter)

SLIDE: 2-52-2

- ▶ Legal slide requires the runner to be within reach of the base with either hand or foot
- ▶ A slide is illegal if:
 - ▶ The runner uses a rolling or cross-body slide into the fielder;
 - ▶ The runner's raised leg is higher than the fielder's knee when the fielder is in a standing position
 - ▶ The runner goes beyond the base and makes contact with or alters the play of the fielder
 - ▶ The runner slashes or kicks the fielder with either leg; or
 - ▶ The runner tries to injure the fielder

WRISTBAND / PLAYCARD: 3-2-7-c

- ▶ It shall only be worn on the player's wrist/arm
- ▶ Pitcher must wear it on her non-pitching arm
- ▶ It may not be optic yellow
- ▶ If placed inside the batter's back pocket, it may not hang out and is not considered to be a hit-by-pitch if struck
 - ▶ Likewise, batting gloves or sliding mitts that stick out of the pocket or waistband are not part of the batter's uniform or equipment and would not result in a hit-by-pitch if struck

SUBSTITUTIONS: 3-3-2; 3-3-3

- ▶ The plate umpire shall record all substitutions on the lineup card and then announce immediately any change(s) to the opposing team's head coach
- ▶ A pitcher removed from the pitching position may only return to pitch one time per inning

COACHING / PREGAME CONFERENCE: 3-5-1; 4-1-2

- ▶ Prior to the start of the game at the pregame conference, the head coach shall be responsible for verifying to the plate umpire that the lineup card is correct, all players are legally equipped, and that players and equipment are in compliance with all NFHS rules
- ▶ During the pregame conference, there shall be no balls hit or thrown in live-ball territory
 - ▶ The players belong in the dugout/team area at this point

COACHES' UNIFORM: 3-5-3

- ▶ The coach shall be attired in a school's uniform or jersey/coaching shirt with slacks, shorts or other leg coverings in school colors or colors of khaki, black, white or gray. Cut-offs of any type of jeans are prohibited.

UNREPORTED SUBSTITUTE: 3-7

- ▶ Players and substitutes shall not enter the contest unreported.
- ▶ The umpire shall issue a team warning to the coach of the team involved.
- ▶ The next offender on that team shall be restricted to the dugout/bench for the remainder of the game.
- ▶ The head coach is also restricted to the dugout/bench for the remainder of the game for a second violation.
- ▶ NYS: Because there is a waiver requiring the reporting of pitcher and catcher substitutions, this rule will apply to the non-reporting of changes involving the pitcher and catcher

PITCHING: 6-1-1; 6-1-2; 6-1-4

- ▶ Both feet must be on the ground within or partially within the 24-inch length of the pitcher's plate (*i.e.*, touching the imaginary line)
- ▶ Any step back with the non-pivot foot must begin before the start of the pitch (*i.e.*, separation of the hands after they've come together)
 - ▶ Once separated, all movement must be forward
- ▶ The pitcher may not use a windmill motion that has more than 1 ½ revolutions of the arm

BATTING INFRACTIONS: 7-3-1

- ▶ A batter shall not delay the game by failing to promptly take her position with both feet completely inside the batter's box within 10 seconds after the ball is returned to the pitcher to prepare for the next pitch, or by stepping out of the box when the pitcher is on the pitcher's plate.
 - ▶ “If the batter steps out of the box or holds up a hand to request time and the pitcher legally delivers the ball, it shall be called a strike and the ball remains live.” 7-3-1-Effects #2; Case Play 7-3-1-b

RUNNER IS OUT: 8-6-14

- ▶ The runner is out when the runner remains on the runner's feet and maliciously crashes into a defensive player. Malicious contact supersedes obstruction.
- ▶ If interference occurs on a foul fly ball, the ball is dead and only the runner who interfered it out.

HIT-BY-PITCH: 8-1-2-b

- ▶ A pitched ball that is entirely within the batter's box strikes the batter or her clothing.
- ▶ No attempt to avoid the pitch is required.
- ▶ However, the batter may not obviously try to get hit by the pitch.
- ▶ A pitched ball (not entirely in the batter's box) not swung at nor called a strike touches any part of the batter's person or clothing.
- ▶ It does not matter if the ball strikes the ground before hitting the batter. The batter's hands are not to be considered part of the bat. If no attempt is made to avoid being hit, the batter will not be awarded first base unless it is ball four.

3-FOOT LANE INTERFERENCE: 8-3-6

- ▶ The batter-runner is considered outside the running lane if either foot last contacted the ground completely outside the lane.

LOOK-BACK RULE: 8-7-1

- ▶ Possession of the ball includes “wedging” the ball (either alone or within the mitt) between two body parts (e.g., chin and chest, forearm and ribcage)
 - ▶ Umpires shall not call simply because the pitcher “wedges” the ball. The ball remains live.

COURTESY RUNNER: 8-9-2

- ▶ In the top of the first inning only, the pitcher and catcher are identified as those players listed on the lineup as the pitcher and catcher
 - ▶ Both must face at least the first batter on defense (one pitch) in the bottom of the first inning.
 - ▶ Thereafter, the pitcher and catcher are identified as the last players who physically played that position on defense
 - ▶ The pitcher or catcher must bat and reach base legally in order to be eligible for a courtesy runner (exception – tie-breaker).