

2026 Major Rule Difference between USA Softball, NCAA and NFHS Rev 1/1/2026					
USA Softball		NCAA		NFHS	
RULE 1 - DEFINITIONS					
Bunt					
A pitched ball that is intentionally tapped with the bat, slowly, within the infield. It is not a bunt attempt if the bat is held in the strike zone.	1	A legally batted ball not swung at but intentionally tapped into the infield with the bat. Holding the bat in the strike zone is considered a bunt attempt. In order to take a pitch the bat must be withdrawn -- pulled backward and away from the ball.	11.7.2	A bunt is a legally batted ball not swung at but intentionally tapped with the bat. An attempted bunt is any non- swinging movement of the bat intended to tap the ball into play. Holding the bat in the strike zone is considered a bunt attempt. In order to take a pitch, the bat must be pulled back and away from the ball.	2-8-1 2-8-2

USA Softball		NCAA		NFHS	
<b>Official Line-Up</b>					
The official document listing the starting players and substitutes of a given team. The line-up card shall contain the first and last name, defensive position and uniform number of each player. If a wrong number is on the line-up, correct it and continue playing with no penalty. All available substitutes should be listed in the designated place by their last name, first name and uniform number.	1 4.1	Same except the following: In addition, it shall include the first and last name of the head coach. In the event the team has co-head coaches, one shall be designated as the head coach for that game.  If the name, number or position of a player is incorrect, it is handled as an appeal play.	5.7.1	Same except the following: first initial and last name, after the lineup card has been submitted to and verified by the umpire and a change is subsequently made to a player/substitute name or number, or if a player/substitute is added to the lineup card, the umpire shall issue a team warning to the head coach of the team involved. Any further changes made to a player/substitute name or number results in the head coach being restricted to the dugout/bench area for the remainder of the game.	3-1-3
<b>Runner</b>					
Runner: An offensive player who has reached first base and has not yet been put out or scored.	1	Runner: The offensive player who is in the process of running the bases whether as a batter-runner or base runner.	1.19	Runner: A runner is an offensive player who is advancing to, touching or returning to a base.	2-50-1
<b>Offensive Player</b>					
No definition		Offensive Player (OP): The player in the batting order who is not playing defense because the DP has entered to play defense.	8.1.2.7	No definition	

USA Softball		NCAA		NFHS	
<b>Stealing</b>					
The act of a runner attempting to advance during a pitch. In Fast Pitch runners can advance once the pitched ball leaves the pitcher's hand.	1	No definition		A stolen base is the advance of a runner to the next base without the aid of a base hit, putout, a passed ball or a wild pitch, a putout, a fielding error, a passed ball or a wild pitch. A double or triple steal involves two or three runners, respectively.	2-55
<b>Strike Zone</b>					
Fast Pitch: Between the batter's: arm pits and the top of the knees. Slow Pitch: Between the batter's back shoulder and the front knee.	1	The area over home plate between the bottom of the batter's sternum and the top of her knees. The top of the ball must be in the horizontal plane and either side of the ball in the vertical plain of the strike zone.	11.3.1	Same as USA Softball	2-56-3 2-56-4
<b>RULE 2: THE PLAYING FIELD</b>					
<b>Backstop (padding)</b>					
No mention of padding. On dimensions mentioned which 25' minimum and 30' maximum.	2 Dim. Table	When the backstop is wood, cement or brick, it shall be padded from dugout to dugout beginning no higher than one foot off the ground and extending to the top of the wood, cement or brick or six feet from the ground, whichever is shorter.	2.3	Same as USA Softball	1-1-3C
<b>Branding on Bases</b>					
No Rule		Only a sticker with NCAA, team or conference logo, name or abbreviation sticker or label may be used, only in the middle third of the rise of the base. At no time is the branding sticker allowed on top of the base.	2.7 NOTE	No Rule	

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<b>Double Base</b>					
Double Base (Distance Table). The base is 15X30 inches and both sides of the double base shall be equal thickness. (5" max) Required in all divisions of play.	2.1 2.3H	<b>Double first base is required for the 2026 season for Division I and the 2027 season for Divisions II and III.</b>	2.7	By state association adoption, a double first base is permitted. The base shall be a one or two-piece unit, 15 inches by 30 inches. The base in foul territory shall be a color other than white. Bases shall be equal in height (5" max).	1-2-1 NOTE
<b>Catcher's Box</b>					
Fast Pitch: 7' Long 8.5' Wide. Slow Pitch: 10' Long, 8.5' Wide.	2.3D	Same as USA Softball for Fast Pitch.	2.10	Fast and Slow Pitch: 10' Long 8.5' wide	2-10-2
<b>Media Area</b>					
No Rule		Media/photographers authorized by the host team may be in designated live or dead ball areas at the discretion of the host institution. Also has NOTE for additional references	5.12	Media areas shall be dead ball territory.	1-1-7
<b>Base Distance</b>					
Girl's and Boy's Fast Pitch: 60' Girl's Slow Pitch: 10U,12U 60', 14U, 16U, 18U 65' Boy's Slow Pitch: 10U, 12U 60', 14U, 16U, 18U 70'	2.1	60'		Female and Male Fast Pitch: 60'. Slow Pitch: 60' for Females and Males using the 12" ball. 65' for Females using the 11" ball.	1-1-2a
<b>Pitching Distance</b>					
Girl's Fast Pitch: 10U 35', 12U 40',14U, 16U, 18U – 43' Boy's Fast Pitch: 10U 35', 12U 40', 14U,16U, 18U 46' Girl's Slow Pitch: 10U 40', 12U 46' 14U, 16U, 18U 50' Boy's Slow Pitch: 10U 40' 12U 46' 14U, 16U, 18U 50'	2.1	43'	2.27	Female Fast Pitch: 43'. Male Fast Pitch 46' Slow Pitch: 46' for Females and Males using the 12" ball. 50' for Females using the 11" ball.	1-1-2b 1-1-2c
<b>Fences</b>					
No mention of padding. Minimum and maximum distance set in Adult and JO Divisions.	2.1 Official Distance Table	Institutional fields with a 6 feet or taller fence shall be a minimum of 190 feet (new construction required to be 200 feet) in left and right fields, and 220 in center field. Institutional field with 4 foot fence shall be a minimum of 210 feet in left and right field and 230 in center field. It is highly recommended that a municipal field meet the same requirements.	2.15.2	All Fast Pitch 185-235' Female Slow Pitch 250-275' Male Slow Pitch 275-300'	1-1-3a

USA Softball		NCAA		NFHS	
Recommended Foul Pole Height					
No rule		The pole shall extend a minimum of 10, or the recommended height of at least 40, feet from the ground and shall be immediately adjacent to or attached to the outside of the home run fence.	2.16.2	No Rule	
Attachments on Foul Poles					
No rule		No attachments are allowed to be added to the foul side of the pole.	2.16.3	Flags are allowed on foul poles, no mention of side of the pole.	4-1-3a

USA Softball		NCAA		NFHS	
Erasing Batter's Box Lines					
No rule		Strike on the batter if the offense intentionally removes the lines and ball if the defense does the same. In addition, a warning shall be issued to the offending team. Subsequent violation by the same team shall result in an eject of the offender.	2.20.3 EFFECT 11.3.2.6 EFFECT	Same as NCAA with the exception that after an occurrence a team warning is issued and the next violation is a ball / strike and the offender and coach is restricted to the dugout.	6-3-17
Running Lane					
The three-foot line is drawn in foul territory parallel to and three feet from the baseline, starting at a point halfway between home plate and first base.	2.3 A	The runner's lane is the area that is the last half of the distance between home plate and first base where a batter-runner must run to avoid interfering with a fielder's attempt to receive a thrown ball. It is bounded by a 30- foot line drawn in foul territory parallel to and 3 feet from the first- base line, starting at a point halfway between home plate and the back edge of first base. (See diagram at end of rule.) If the infield is skinned, it is recommended the runner's lane be skinned.	2.28	Same as USA Softball	1-1-4 Figure 1-1, 1-2, 1-3

USA Softball		NCAA		NFHS	
<b>RULE 3: EQUIPMENT</b>					
<b>Official Bat</b>					
The official bat for USA Softball Championship Play must meet all USA Softball specifications and requirements of Rule 3, Section 1 and: 1) The official bat, made up of the knob, handle, grip, taper, barrel, and end cap shall be free of burs, dents, cracks, sharp edges rattles and show no signs of excessive wear. The official bat may be marked OFFICIAL SOFTBALL by the manufacturer, be no more than 34 inches long nor exceed 38 ounces in weight. The official bat shall not be more than 2.250 inches in diameter at it's largest part, including any tolerance expansion. The official bat must bear either the ASA 2000 Certification Mark, ASA 2004 Certification Mark, or ASA 2013 Certification Mark (Slow Pitch Only) or USA Softball Certification Marks and must not be listed on the USA Softball Non Approved Bat List. And 2) must be included on the list of approved bat models published by the USA Softball or painting the name or number of the player will not make the bat an altered bat.	3.1A	The bats shall bear the permanent ASA 2004 certification seal and be on the current NCAA Approved Softball Bat List as maintained on the NCAA and SUP websites indicating compliance with the bat performance standard per the appropriate ASTM testing protocol. a) The barrel, taper and handle shall be one piece or multi-piece permanently assembled. b) If it is a multi-piece permanently model, the connection shall be sufficiently stiff to resemble its initial manufactured condition and have not excessive wobble. c) Shall be metal, plastic, graphite, carbon, magnesium, fiberglass, ceramic, titanium or any composite material. d) Shall not have exposed rivets, pins, rough or sharp edges or any form of exterior fastener that would present hazards. Bats shall be free of damage (rattles, dents, burrs, wobble and cracks) and not be altered from their certification specifications.	3.3.1	Required USA Certification Mark and not be listed on the Non-Approved Bat List With Certification Marks. Not required to be on Approved Bat List.	1-5-1
<b>Approved Bat List</b>					
On the USA Softball website, <a href="http://www.USAsoftball.com">www.USAsoftball.com</a>	3.1	Upon arrival for barrel compression testing, each coach shall provide a new, printed copy of the current NCAA Approved Softball Bat List to the BCT testing manager, with the team name and date completed.	5.2	No approved list used.	1-5-1d

USA Softball		NCAA		NFHS	
<b>Non-Approved Bat list with a Certification Marks</b>					
On the USA Softball Website, www.USAsoftball.com. A list of 47 Bats that were previously approved by USA Softball and are no longer an approved bat.	3.1	A nonapproved bat is a bat that does not bear the ASA 2004 or fastpitch USA Softball Certification Mark, is not on the current approved NCAA bat list or does not have the correct sticker confirming barrel compression testing.	3.3.1.4 3.4.1.3 5.2.2	Same as USA Softball	1-5-1d
<b>Damaged Bats</b>					
The official bat, shall be free of burs, dents, cracks, sharp edges rattles and show no signs of excessive wear.	3.1A1	Shall not have exposed rivets, pins, rough or sharp edges or any form of exterior fastener that would present a hazard. Bats shall be free of damage (rattles, dents, burrs, excessive wobble and cracks) and not have any attachment nor be altered from their certification specifications.	3.3.1.3	Be free of rattles, dents, burs cracks and sharp edges that might deface the ball. These bats are considered damaged and removed from the game without penalty. A batter that uses a damaged bat previously removed from the game by an umpire, will be called out and the player and head coach will be restricted to the dugout for the remainder of the game.	1-5-1c, 2-4-3, <b>3-5-21</b>
<b>Safety Knob</b>					
The knob shall have a diameter of at least 1/4 inches with no sharp edges. The knob will be permanently attached to the bat and may be covered with grip tape. <b>The use of an internal or external bat sensor is allowed provided that the sensor is properly attached.</b>	3.1B	Bats manufactured with a tapered/flare/cone handle are permitted. A bat with additional layers of tape adjacent to the traditional knob or a bat with a tapering cone as long as it is completely covered by grip. The knob may be solid or hollowed out to house an embedded metric sensor. If a sensor is used it shall (1) not affect performance; (2) be secured by a locking mechanism and a back-up mechanism to keep it in place; and (3) have a distinguishing "off line" mode to prevent data from being accessed during a game.	3.3.1.7. 2	The bat shall consist of the following components (see figure 1-7): Knob. The knob may be molded, lathed, welded or adjustable, but must be permanently fastened. Devices, attachments or wrappings that cause the knob to become flush with the handle are permitted. The knob may be covered with grip tape. A one-piece rubber knob and bat grip combination is illegal. Choke-up devices are not permitted.	1-5-2a



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<b>Handle</b>					
The region of the bat from the knob, not including the knob, to the start of the taper where the diameter increases. The handle will include the grip.	3.1C	The handle is the area between the knob and taper which is covered by the grip. It shall have a safety grip of cork, tape (not smooth, plastic tape) or composition material (commercially manufactured bat grip)	3.3.1.7.3	The bat handle is the area of the bat that begins at, but does not include the knob and ends where the taper begins to increase in diameter. The handle shall have a round or oval cross-section.	1-5-2b
<b>Grip</b>					
The handle grip region of the bat must have a grip made of cork, grip tape, or other synthetic material that is permanently attached to the bat. No bare metal, wood or composite material may be exposed in this area. The grip shall be not less than 6" and not more than 15" from the knob. Resin, pine tar or spray substances are permissible on the grip region only.	3.1D	The safety grip shall not be less than 10 inches (25.0cm) long and shall not extend more than 15 inches (40.0cm) from the knob. It may not exceed two layers. If taped, it must be a continuous spiral but not need not be a solid layer. Resin, pine tar or spray substances placed on the safety grip to enhance the grip are permissible on the grip only.	3.3.1.7.3	The bat shall have a safety grip of cork, tape or composition material. The grip shall extend a minimum of 10 inches, but not more than 15 inches from the handle end of the bat. Slippery tape or similar material shall be prohibited. Rosin, pine tar or spray substances to enhance the hold are permitted on the grip only.	1-5-2b
<b>Barrel</b>					
The region of the bat from the Taper to the End Cap. The barrel region shall be smooth and round within 0.050 inches in diameter.	3.1F	The color of the barrel of the bat shall be of color(s) contrasting to the ball...	3.3.1.7.5	The barrel is the area intended for contact with the pitch; it shall be round and smooth. The barrel shall be round cylindrically symmetric with a smooth contour.	1-5-2d
<b>End Cap</b>					
The cap placed at the barrel end of the bat. The End Cap shall be permanently affixed to the bat to prevent alterations to the interior of the bat. It shall be affixed so that it cannot be removed by anyone other than the manufacturer without damaging or destroying the End Cap or Barrel.	3.1G	The End Cap is a rubber, vinyl, plastic or other approved material insert firmly secured and permanently affixed so that it cannot be removed by anyone other than the manufacturer, without destroying it. A bat made of one piece construction may not have an End Cap.	3.3.1.8.6	The End Cap is made of rubber, vinyl, plastic or other approved material. It shall be firmly secured and permanently affixed to the end of the bat so that it cannot be removed by anyone other than the manufacturer without damaging or destroying it. A one-piece construction bat will not have an End Cap.	1-5-2e

USA Softball		NCAA		NFHS	
Construction					
<p>The official bat shall be of one piece construction, multi-piece permanently assembled or two-piece interchangeable construction. If the bat is designed with interchangeable components it must meet the following additional criteria:</p> <p>1 Mating components must have a unique locking key to prevent uncertified equipment combinations in the field.</p> <p>2 All component combinations must meet the one-piece bat rules.</p> <p>3 Manufacturer must demonstrate that the interchangeable bat fails in a safe manner (i.e. visible damage before locking feature(s) fail(s).</p> <p>4 Bat components must be designed in a way to prevent uncertified equipment alterations.</p>	3.1 I	The barrel, taper and handle shall be of one piece or multi-piece permanently assembled	3.3.1.1	Same as USA Softball	1-5-1a

USA Softball		NCAA		NFHS	
<b>Warm Up Bats</b>					
The warm-up bat shall meet the following requirements to be approved: A. Stamped with 1/4 inch letters WB on either end of the bat or marked in one inch letters the word WARM-UP BAT only on the barrel end of the bat. B. The warm- up bat shall comply with the safety grip and safety knob requirements of the official bat. C. Be of one-piece construction or a one-piece permanently assembled bat that clearly distinguishes itself as a warm- up bat and is approved by USA Softball. D. Shall have a safety knob of a minimum of 1/4 inch protruding at a 90 degree angle from the handle. It may be molded, lathed, welded or permanently fastened. E. Only approved attachments included in the list published by USA Softball can be used on warm-up bats.	3.2A-E	Non-altered, one-piece, wooden baseball or softball bats may be used in the pre-game warm-ups or in the on-deck circle in addition to legal softball bats. Attachments to a bat (such as sleeves, donuts and fans), are not allowed in the on-deck circle.	3.5	Warm-up bats used in the on-deck circle shall have all parts permanently and securely attached at the time of manufacture and at the time of use. No more than two bats shall be used when warming up in the on-deck circle. Devices added to a bat for warm-up purposes shall be commercially manufactured specifically for a softball bat and shall be securely attached, so as not to disengage during use. Such devices shall take, but not exceed, the general shape and size of a bat including the grip.	1-5-3
<b>Official Softball</b>					
Certified Approved: Only softballs which bear an ASA or USA Softball approved certification mark signifying compliance with the Ball COR and Ball Compression limitations then in effect and, and which satisfy all other applicable provisions in Rule 3, Section 3 will be allowed for use in USA Softball Championship Play. Check the Non-Approved Ball List on the USA Softball Web Site; <a href="http://www.usasoftball.com">www.usasoftball.com</a> , under the "Certified Equipment" tab.	3.3A	The home host team shall be responsible for providing a minimum of twelve game balls of the same specifications and manufacturer. Each game shall begin with two new game balls (one rubbed by each team, so the manufacturer's gloss is removed) and ten additional (new or game quality) balls.	3.2.1, 3.2.2, 5.4	Specifications same as USA Softball. The NFHS Authenticating Mark shall be on each ball as shown in Figure 1-4 of the NFHS rule book.	1-3-3 1-3-8

USA Softball		NCAA		NFHS	
<b>Glove/Mitt</b>					
A Glove/Mitt may be worn by any player. The dimensions of any glove/mitt used by any player shall not exceed the specifications set forth in Rule 3. The Pitcher's glove may be of one solid color or multicolored as long as the color(s) are not the color of the ball being used in the game.	3.4	All players except the catcher must use a leather fielder's glove/mitt that meets the specifications of Rule 3. The use of any treatment or device that fundamentally changes the specifications of gloves is prohibited and renders the equipment altered and unusable for play.	3.6.1	A glove/mitt may be worn by any player. Glove/mitt may be multi-colored as long as one of those colors is not the color of the ball. No markings inside or outside that give the appearance of the ball are allowed.	1-4-1
Glove/mitt - may be worn by any defensive player and must meet dimensional requirements.	3.4	Catcher may wear a glove / mitt of any dimension.	3.6.1.1	Catcher can wear a glove or mitt of any dimension. Defensive fielders can wear either a glove or mitt but meet the dimensional requirements.	1-4-2
Pitcher's Glove - may be one solid color or multicolor as long as one of the colors is not the color of the ball used in the game played.	3.4	Any player's glove May not be the color of the ball but may be any combination of other colors.	3.6.2	Glove/mitt may be multi-colored as long as one of those colors is not the color of the ball. No markings inside or outside that give the appearance of the ball are allowed.	1-4-1
<b>Helmet</b>					
<p>Helmet - Offense, must be NOCSAE approved with a NOCSAE approved face mask/guard with visible NOCSAE stamp. Chin strip OPTIONAL. No mention of color.</p> <p>Fast Pitch Only: The helmet shall have a non-glare (not mirror like) surface.</p>	3.5E NOTE	All team members must use the same color, with permanent NOCSAE mark and warning label legible. Highly reflective, mirror-like chrome-finish helmets of any color are prohibit. An offensive player may wear a helmet with a commercially manufactured protective mask attached. The face mask should meet the NOCSAE standard for the mask and helmet combination and must be permanently attached by the manufacturer. In addition any defensive player may wear a face mask, whether the mask is attached to a helmet or not.	3.7.1 3.8.2 3.8.3	A batting helmet with a permanently affixed NOCSAE Stamp and legible exterior warning label is mandatory for each batter, on-deck batter, players/students in the coach's boxes, runners and retired runners. The exterior warning label must be affixed outside of the helmet, which includes both sides of the bill, in either sticker form or embossed. The batting helmet shall have a non-glare (not mirror like) surface.	1-7-1

<b>USA Softball</b>		<b>NCAA</b>		<b>NFHS</b>	
Catcher must wear a mask with throat protector and approved helmet with ear flaps. EXCEPTION: Hockey Style Face Mask.	3.5C Defense, 3.5E	The catcher must wear a protective helmet while receiving pitches in a game. Highly reflective, mirror-like chrome-finish helmets of any color are prohibited. In addition, the catcher must wear a protective face mask. Traditional baseball/softball catcher's headgear or ice hockey goalie style headgear may be worn but, in either case, must bear a permanent mark indicating compliance with the National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment (NOCSAE) combined helmet and mask standard.	3.7.2	The catcher shall wear a catcher's helmet and mask combination that meets the NOCSAE standard at the time of manufacture. The helmet shall bear the permanent NOCSAE seal. A throat protector that is part of or attached to the mask shall be worn and extend far enough to adequately protect the throat.	1-8-1
Junior Olympic players acting as coaches in the coaches box, must properly wear double ear flap NOCSAE approved batting helmets.	3.5E Offense	Student-Athlete Base Coach. A student-athlete in the coaches' box is required to wear a NOCSAE- approved protective helmet whenever the ball is live from the first pitch of an inning to the last out of the inning.	3.7.1.1	Same as USA Softball	1-7-3
<b>Helmets Defense</b>					
Any defensive player may wear a helmet, with or without ear flaps, of similar color as the team caps. It must have a bill. Fast Pitch Only: The helmet shall have a non-glare (not mirror like) surface.	3.5E.2	A defensive player may wear a helmet. If more than one player wears a helmet, the helmets must be the same color. Highly reflective, mirror-like chrome- finish helmets of any color are prohibited.	3.8.3	Same as USA Softball, without restriction on the color of the helmet.	1-9

USA Softball		NCAA		NFHS	
Facemasks Defense					
No Rule	N/A	3.8.3.1 A defensive player may wear a helmet. If more than one player wears a helmet, the helmets must be the same color. Highly reflective, mirror-like chrome-finish helmets of any color are prohibited. 3.8.3.1 A defensive player may wear a face mask, whether attached to a helmet or not	3.8.3	Defensive players are permitted to wear face/head protection in the field, except as in 3-2-14, and as specifically required in 1-7. If an eye shield is worn attached to the face/head protection, it must be constructed of a molded, rigid material that is clear and permits 100 percent (no tint) allowable light transmission. Face/head protection worn by defenders shall have a non-glare (not mirror-like) outer surface.	1-9-4
Uniforms					
All players on a team shall properly wear uniforms that are like in color and style. Sleeves or straps of the uniform top may be adjusted with or without tie-ups, to the comfort of the players, provided uniform numbers remain visible. If because of the blood rule a change is required and the uniform part does not match, the player will not be penalized. All protective equipment should be worn properly. If a player is requested to remove jewelry, illegal shoes or illegal parts of the uniform and they refuse, the player will not be allowed to play. EFFECT: Players wearing metal cleats after being warned by the umpire shall be ejected.	3.6	All eligible players should be attired with uniforms (jersey, pants, shorts and socks) of identical style and color and trim differing only in size and players' numbers and names. Uniform accessories (namely foul weather apparel, headgear, knee/shin pads, undershirts and undershorts) are optional parts of the uniform. Uniforms, all accessories and protective equipment must be worn properly and as designed. A uniform part that must be changed because of saturation of blood shall not cause the player to be penalized.	3.10 Exception	Uniforms of all team members shall be of the same color and style. State associations may, on an individual basis, permit a player to participate while wearing a different style uniform for religious reasons, inclement weather, etc. Accommodations should not fundamentally alter the sport, heighten risk to the athletes/others or place opponents at a disadvantage.	1-6-1 1-6-12 NOTE

USA Softball		NCAA		NFHS	
<b>Sleeves</b>					
Players may wear a solid-colored undershirt. It is not mandatory that all players wear an undershirt, but if more than one player wears one, they must be like in color and style. No player may wear ragged, frayed or slit sleeves on exposed undershirts.	3.6.C	Require visible undergarments contrast with the color of the ball.	3.10.9	Exposed undergarments, if worn, are considered part of the official uniform. All exposed undergarments shall be a solid, single color: black, white, gray or a school color. c. Garments other than team uniforms – such as arm sleeves, leg sleeves, and tights – are permissible. Anything worn on the arm or leg is a sleeve, except a brace, and shall meet the color restrictions.	1-6-7c
<b>Headwear</b>					
Ball caps are mandatory, must be alike, and worn properly in Male F.P. In Female F.P. ball caps, visors head/sweat bands, both pullover and tied are optional for players. If worn they may be mixed, but must be worn properly. Colors to include, black, white, grey, beige, pink or team colors. The colors may be mixed and are not required to be the same for all team members. Handkerchiefs do not qualify as headwear and cannot be worn around the head or neck. Plastic visors are not allowed.	3.6A2	Headgear. Visors, headbands and caps are uniform accessories, may be mixed, and must be of the same predominant color and worn as intended by the manufacturer. Exception: The catcher's headgear may be of a different color than other defenders' headgear.	3.10.1	Caps and visors may be mixed. a. If worn, caps and visors must be white, black, beige or school colors (the colors are not required to be the same for team members). The logo may be any color. b. Plastic visors and bandannas are prohibited. c. Any head coverings worn for religious reasons must be made of non-abrasive, soft materials and must fit securely so that the head coverings are unlikely to come off during play. Head coverings worn for medical reasons require state association approval.	1-6-5
<b>Pants</b>					
All players' pants must be long, short, or mixed in style, as long as they are like in color.	3.6B	The uniform may consist of pants or shorts, but all players on the same team must be attired the same.	3.10.7	State Associations may, on an individual basis, permit a player to participate while wearing a different style uniform for religious reasons, inclement weather, etc.	1-6-1
<b>Numbers</b>					
Uniform numbers; Players may not wear the same number, whether in the game or not. Numbers 0 and 00 are not considered to be the same number. Numbers must be at least 3" high and clearly visible.	3.6D	Players on the same team shall not wear the same number. 0 and 00 are considered the same number	3.10.3	A number on the back of each player's jersey is required and shall be at least 6 inches high. The number must be of solid color contrasting with the color of shirt. No players on the same team may wear identical numbers, (0 and 00) are considered the same number.	1-6-2
<b>Jewelry</b>					

USA Softball		NCAA		NFHS	
Exposed Jewelry judged dangerous by umpire must be removed and may not be worn during the game. Religious or medical alert bracelets may be worn but must be taped to the body.	3.6.F	No such rule		No rule prohibiting jewelry. Umpires still have the authority to rule on items that are judged distracting or increase risk to any player.	
<b>Shoes</b>					
Junior Olympic Fast Pitch Boys and Girls 18U A/B Gold and 16U A/B Gold and 14U A/B classifications of play may wear metal cleats.	3.6G Excepti on	Pitching toes and metal cleats are permitted.	3.9	Metal toe plates and metal cleats are permitted.	<b>1-6-11 NOTE</b>
<b>Exposed Undergarments</b>					
Players may wear a solid-colored undershirt. It is not necessary that all players wear an undershirt, but if more than one player wears one, they must all be like in color and style. No player may wear ragged, frayed or slit sleeves or exposed undershirts.	3.6C	Not required, but if worn by more than one player, the apparel must be the same in color/pattern. Shirt style and sleeve length may vary . Visible undergarments must contrast with the color of the ball and be worn as intended by manufacturer.	3.10.9	Exposed undergarments, if worn, are considered part of the official uniform. All exposed undergarments shall be solid, single color, black, white, gray or school color.	<b>1-6-7</b>
<b>Wrist Bands</b>					
No Such Rule		Signal arm band. It is not required that players wear a signal arm band, but if worn, it shall be worn on the arm, <b>belt, in their pocket, etc. Note: Pitchers may not wear it on their pitching arm.</b>	3.10.8	Any wristband with a playbook/playcard attached shall be considered equipment and is permitted as long as it is a single solid color, and it is not optic yellow. It does not have to match the color of the upper undergarment. It shall only be worn on a player's wrist or arm, and pitchers must wear it on their non-pitching arm.	<b>1-6-7c Exception</b>
<b>Equipment Inspection</b>					
The National Championship UIC, Assistant UIC or Staff has the right to remove any and all equipment not meeting Rule 3 including bats and helmets, through pregame inspection, bat testing or during a game.	3.7B 3	If an umpire detects the inappropriate bat during the pregame inspection, the bat shall be removed from the team's possession.	3.4 EFFECT 5.2	No such rule	



USA Softball		NCAA		NFHS	
<b>All Equipment</b>					
(JO Fast Pitch Only) For pregame inspection, all equipment shall be inspected by the umpire, and is to be placed outside the dugout/team area prior to the start of the game.	3.7C	Coaches are responsible for ensuring that their players are legally equipped and properly attired to reflect a positive image of the game.	3.1.2	The head coaches verify that their players are legally and properly equipped. Umpires are permitted to inspect equipment, but It is no longer required that they check the equipment prior to the game as the responsibility rests with the coach and administration of the school. Rules 3-6-1 and 10-2-3I provide the authority to umpires to penalize for equipment violations.	4-1-2d
<b>RULE 4: PLAYERS, COACHES, SUBSTITUTES.</b>					
<b>Number of Players to start a game</b>					
A team must have the required number of players present in the dugout to start the game.	4.1A	Each team shall have a least nine eligible players in the game at all times.	8.1.1	Each of the two teams must start with nine players. In Fast Pitch only, a team may use the Designated Player/Flex Option (DP/Flex).	3-1-1

USA Softball		NCAA		NFHS	
<b>Line-up Changes</b>					
Line-up cards must be completed and submitted to the scorekeeper and umpire at the start of each game. Eligible roster members may be added to the available substitute list at any time during the game with no penalty.	4.1A 1-2	Each team must submit a complete line-up card to the official scorer 20 minutes before game time and to the plate umpire and opponent at the pre-game meeting. Coaches must let the umpire know of any defensive changes. A coach may make substitutes by notifying the plate umpire of the forthcoming changes. Substitutes are not required to enter the game at the time the substitution is reported to the plate umpire. Projected reentries are not allowed	5.7.2 8.5.1.3	The home team and then the visiting team shall deliver their respective lineup cards, in duplicate, to the plate umpire. The umpire shall then permit inspection by both captains/coaches. The substitution regulations as in Rule 3 are then in effect. A player who is not listed as an eligible substitute on the lineup card shall not be prohibited from playing. 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. After the lineup card has been submitted to and verified by the umpire and a change is subsequently made to a player/substitute name or number, or if a player/substitute is added to the lineup card, the umpire shall issue a team warning to the head coach of the team involved. Any further changes made to a player/substitute name or number results in the head coach being restricted to the dugout/bench area for the remainder of the game.	4-1-2b 3-1-3 PENALTY <b>3-2-1</b> <b>3-2-3</b>
<b>Team Members</b>					
The team shall consist of 9 players in Fast Pitch or 10 players in Fast Pitch with the DP/FLEX JO has the option to: Use one EP batting 10 Use DP/FLEX with one EP 11 players batting 10.	4.1C.1	Each team shall have at least nine eligible players in the game at all times.	8.1.1	Team members are players listed on the teams roster and lineup as submitted to the umpire at the pregame meeting.	2-58
<b>Shorthanded Rule</b>					
Teams can play shorthanded to start or continue a game. The game can start or finish with one less player than required to start (8). The game can continue with one less player than is currently in the batting order.	4.1D 1-2	No rule in NCAA		Must have 9 players to start the game, must have 8 to continue.	4-3-1f 4-3-1g

USA Softball		NCAA		NFHS	
<b>Re-Entry</b>					
Any player may be substituted for or replaced and re-entered once, provided the player occupies the same position in the batting order.	4.5.A	Substitutes may not re-enter	8.6	Same as USA Softball	<b>3-2-5</b>
<b>Substitute</b>					
The manager or team representative of the team making the substitution shall notify the plate umpire at the time the substitute enters.	4.6.A	Any player may be substituted for at any time when the ball is dead A coach may make substitutes by notifying the plate umpire of the forthcoming changes. Substitutes are not required to enter the game at the time the substitution is reported to the plate umpire. Projected re- entries are not allowed.	8.5.1.1 and 8.5.1.3	Same as USA Softball	<b>3-2-2</b>
<b>Unreported Substitute</b>					
There is no penalty of disqualification for the unreported substitute. If the unreported substitute is an illegal player eject the player.	4.6.C	There is no disqualification unless the unreported player is an illegal player, in which case the illegal player is ejected.	8.3.3 and 8.3.4	Players and substitutes shall not enter the contest unreported. The umpire shall issue a team warning to the coach of the team involved and 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.	<b>3-5-7</b> PENALTY
<b>Projected Substitute</b>					
No rule, controlled by umpires as part of good game management		Projected reentries are not allowed.	8.5.1.3	A projected substitute is the act of entering a substitute without first removing a player from that position in the line-up. They are not permitted.	<b>2-57-4</b> <b>3-2-3</b>

USA Softball		NCAA		NFHS	
<b>Illegal Player</b>					
The use of an illegal player is handled as a protest by the offended team while the illegal player is in the game. The illegal player is disqualified. An out can be recorded if protested at the proper time.	4.6.F (1-4)	Illegal players: players who compete in a game in a way in which they are not allowed to participate.	8.3.4	Illegal offensive or defensive players may be discovered by the umpire or either team any time after the ball becomes live and an illegal substitute has taken a position: Penalty: Restricted to the dugout/bench remainder of the game. When on offense will be called out.	<b>3-3</b>
<b>Coach/Team Personnel</b>					
A coach is responsible for the team's actions on the field and will represent the team in communications with the umpire and opposing team. A player may be designated as a coach in the event the coach is absent or that player is acting as a player/coach.	4.7A	The head coach is the person employed or appointed by an institution to be responsible for the softball team. The head coach is accountable for: 4.4.1.1 The team's conduct; 4.4.1.2 Observance of the official rules; 4.4.1.3 Ensuring that all players are legally and safely equipped and properly attired; 4.4.1.4 Presenting an approved bat list with highlighted and numbered models for all bats available for use in the game; and 4.4.1.5 All communication with the umpire whether initiated by assistants or other team personnel. If the head coach leaves the field, he/she should inform the umpire of his or her temporary replacement. 4.4.2 In the event the team has co-head coaches, one shall be designated as the head coach on the lineup card. 4.4.3 In the event the head coach is unavailable, an acting head coach shall be named. He/she must be an approved representative of the institution.	4.4	Prior to the start of the game at the pre-game conference, a head coach shall be responsible for verifying to the plate umpire that the lineup card is correct, all his/her players are legally equipped, and that players and equipment are in compliance with all NFHS rules.	<b>3-4-1</b>

USA Softball		NCAA		NFHS	
<b>Use of Electronic Equipment</b>					
<p>An exclusive one-way communication device is permitted to be used to communicate to the offense or defense from the dugout or field.</p> <p>Effect: If a two-way communication device is used disqualification or ejection will occur after a warning.</p>	4.7C.5	<p>Scouting information obtained from outside the dugout involving current opponents shall not be relayed or given to the playing field or to team personnel during the contest. A team may film or videotape only contests in which it is playing, but may record (from video truck, satellite feed or airwaves, not video camera) any game which is or will be televised.</p> <p>One-way communications devices are allowed to be used during play, <b>on offense</b> as well as on defense.</p>	5.9.6 5.9.8 5.9.9	<p>During the game, the use of electronic devices by team personnel to transmit or record information pertaining to his/her player or team's performance shall be permitted for coaching purposes within the team's dugout/bench area only, provided the point of origin of the electronic communication is outside of the field of play. Electronic devices are permitted in the dugout for one-way communication with the catcher only while the team is on defense. <b>No player shall transmit or record audio or video from the playing surface.</b></p>	1-9-6
<b>Post Game Use of Video</b>					
No Rule		<p>If available, television monitoring or institutional replay equipment may be used following a game in only the following situations: (1) By the umpires to verify personnel involved in a fight, (2) By the umpires to verify personnel who left the team area to join in a brawl, (3) By the SRE to confirm the accuracy of a softball incident report involving a protest or possible suspension.</p> <p>Allow post game review of ejections that include a suspension.</p>	5.9.10 13.2 13.3	No rule	
<b>Video Review</b>					

USA Softball		NCAA		NFHS	
No rule		To allow video review of designated plays as listed below. In games using video review, each head coach has two challenges to initiate a review of the plays designated in the rule for the entirety of the game. The challenge must be indicated before the next pitch, before the pitcher and all infielders have clearly vacated their normal fielding position and left fair territory, or before the umpires have left the field of play. Additionally, an umpire may initiate a review of these plays at his/her discretion at any point in the game. <b>Revised list of items to be video reviewed, as well as actions of teams during the reviews.</b>	5.9.9 & Appendix G	Not allowed.	
<b>Disqualified Player</b>					
A disqualified player is prohibited from playing but can remain in the team area or serve as a coach/manager.	4.8A	No rule		The restricted player is not allowed to leave the bench/dugout for the remainder of the game.	2-48 <b>3-4-2</b>

USA Softball		NCAA		NFHS	
<b>Ejected Participant</b>					
A participant may be ejected at any point from the time the umpire crew enters and until they leave the field of play. An ejected participant must leave the grounds and have no contact with the umpires or participants in the game and is suspended for one additional game. The ejected participant is restricted from having contact with the team and is not permitted to sit in the stands, dugout or general locality of the next game. The ejected participant may appeal the one game suspension to the Championship Protest Committee. EFFECT: The game is forfeited.	4.8B	Definition-The exercise of an umpire's authority to remove a player and/or other team personnel from further participation in a game. Ejections are classified as either administrative ejections or behavioral ejections.	13.2	Ejected players shall remain in the bench/dugout area. A coach who is ejected shall leave the vicinity (out of sight and out of sound) of the playing area immediately and is prohibited from any further contact (direct or indirect) with the team during the remainder of the game. Failure to comply with the rules of ejection shall result in the game being forfeited. Umpire Jurisdiction begins upon the arrival of one umpire within the confines of the field and ends when the umpires leave the field of play at the conclusion of the game.	3-5-20; 10-1-2
<b>Arguing Balls and Strikes</b>					
Any arguing of the judgment of balls and strikes will result in a team warning. Any repeat offenses will result in the ejection of the team member.	4.8.C	Same as USA Softball	13.3.4 EFFECT	The offender will be ejected, unless judged to be minor, then the offender will be warned and ejected if the offense is repeated.	3-5-15 PENALTY
<b>RULE 5: THE GAME</b>					
<b>Home Team</b>					
Prior to the start of all games, the choice of which team will bat first or last in the inning shall be decided by a coin flip. Exception: In the Championship game only, the undefeated team shall decide the home team. If there is more than one undefeated team or in the event of an "IF" game, the home team shall be decided by a coin toss.	5.1	The home team may be determined in a variety of ways (for example, coin flip, mutual agreement, conference or tournament assignment, custom.)	Rule 6	No rule	
<b>Fitness of the Grounds</b>					
The fitness of the grounds for a game shall be decided solely by the plate umpire.	5.2	When on site within one hour before game time the coaches of both teams and/or the site administrator shall decide whether a game shall not be started because of unsatisfactory conditions of weather or playing field, except for the second game of a doubleheader.	5.3.1	The home coach shall decide whether the grounds and other conditions are suitable for starting the game.	4-1-1

<b>USA Softball</b>		<b>NCAA</b>		<b>NFHS</b>	
<b>Regulation Tie Game</b>					
Games that are regulation tie games shall be resumed at the exact point where they were stopped.	5.3F	If the competing teams, league, conference or tournament committee wish not to be bound by the tie game rule and wish to complete a regulation tie game from the point at which the game was terminated, they may do so by formally opting to use the Halted Game Rule. Otherwise a game stopped after five or more innings with the score tied is considered a regulation tie game, not a Halted Game, and may not be resumed. Intent to use the Halted Game Rule must be declared before the game starts.	6.15.3	If a regulation game has a tie score as in 4-2-2 it is a tie game unless the State Association has any prescribed game ending procedures.	4-2-5
<b>Called Game</b>					
A called game is a game ended by the umpire	5.3C	A travel policy that allows a game to conclude before its actual completion may be established by conference or tournament policy or agreed upon by opposing coaches.	6.17.4	Same as USA Softball	2-26-2 4-2-2
<b>Forfeited Game / Field Enough Players</b>					
A Forfeit shall be declared by the umpire for several reasons including not having enough players to field a full team or shorthanded team. No rule for a declaration of no contest.	5.4	EFFECT: A forfeit shall be declared in favor to the team with sufficient players in the event on team is no longer able to field a team of at least nine players. In the event neither team can field a team, the game is declared "No Contest." unless the failure to field a team is as a result of misconduct suspensions (See Rule 13)	8.1.1.1 8.1.1.2 EFFECT	Same as USA Softball	4-3
<b>Conferences</b>					



USA Softball		NCAA		NFHS	
<p>Offense: There shall be no more than one charged conference between team representatives and the batter, another team representative, and/or runners in an inning. The umpire shall not permit any such conferences in excess of one in an inning.</p> <p>Defense: There shall be only three charged conference between manager or other team representative from the dugout with any defensive players in a seven inning game. For every inning beyond seven, there shall be one charged conference per inning between manager or other team representative from the dugout with any defensive players.</p>	5.7	<p>Each team is allowed 7 charged team representative-to-player conferences per regulation game max of 1 per half inning. Each team allowed 7 charged player-to-player conferences per regulation game with max of 2 per half inning. Each team is allowed 1 charged rep-to-player and 1 player-to-player conference per half inning for each extra inning. Any remaining conferences from regulation do not carry over into extra innings.</p>	6.12	Same as USA Softball	3-6-1 3-6-2

USA Softball		NCAA		NFHS	
<b>Run Ahead Rule</b>					
JO: 15 after three innings, 12 after four and 8 after five innings.	5.9.1A (1B)	A regulation eight-run rule game shall be declared by the plate umpire if one team is ahead after five or more complete innings.	6.14	A state association may adopt game-ending procedures that determine how games are ended, including suspended games. However, if a state association does not have established game-ending procedures, by mutual agreement of the opposing coaches and the plate umpire, any remaining play may be shortened at any time or the game terminated.	4-2-3
<b>Time Limit-One True Nationals</b>					
1 hour and 40 minutes finish the inning beginning with the first WARM-UP Pitch. <b>Exception: The Championship and "IF" games will have no time limit.</b>	5.10A	Not allowed	6.1.3	A state association may adopt game-ending procedures that determine how games are ended, including suspended games. However, if a state association does not have established game-ending procedures, by mutual agreement of the opposing coaches and the plate umpire, any remaining play may be shortened at any time or the game terminated.	4-2-3
<b>Time Limit-Territorial Championships</b>					
<b>1 hour and 30 minutes and/or 1 hour 40 minutes</b> finish the inning beginning with the first WARM-UP Pitch. <b>Exception: The Championship and "IF" games will have no time limit.</b> <b>Note: Game Times must be determined prior to the event.</b>	5.10B	Not allowed	6.1.3	A state association may adopt game-ending procedures that determine how games are ended, including suspended games. However, if a state association does not have established game-ending procedures, by mutual agreement of the opposing coaches and the plate umpire, any remaining play may be shortened at any time or the game terminated.	4-2-3
<b>Tie-Breaker Rule</b>					
Starts in the top of the eighth inning. Place the person who is scheduled to bat last in the inning on second base. If team is shorthanded and the last batter is the open spot go to the previous batter.	5.11 A/B	If, after the completion of at least seven innings of play, the score is tied, the tie-breaker rule MAY be played to determine a winning team. Whether the tiebreaker procedure will be used, and when it shall be invoked, must be determined not later than pregame meeting.	6.16 6.16.2	A regulation called game has a tie score when ended as in 4-2-2 it is a tie game unless the State Association has a tie-breaker procedure.	4-2-5 4-2-6

USA Softball		NCAA		NFHS	
<b>Dugout Conduct</b>					
Dugout Conduct: A. Coaches, players, substitutes and other bench personnel shall not be outside the designated bench, dugout/team area except when the rules allow or is justified by the umpire. B. Adult: Participants may not smoke or use alcohol beverages inside the dugout or on the playing field. C. (JO only) The use of alcoholic beverages or tobacco products is prohibited at all Junior Olympic Championships. EFFECT: The first offense is a team warning. Any repeat offense shall result in the ejection of that team member	5.12	Whether a warning is issued or not, Umpires have the authority to remove a player and/or other team personnel from further participation in a game for unsporting behavior or verbal misconduct. The on-site administrator will make him/herself available to assist the umpire crew as requested.  To prohibit teams from coming out of the dugout during stoppages of play, including during conferences, pitching changes, substitutions, and injuries, except for those players directly involved in the situation.	13.2.1, 6.5, 6.6	Any abusive conduct or unsporting behavior by team personnel in the dugout or on the field will result in the prescribed action by rule.	3-5-20
<b>RULE 6: PITCHING</b>					
<b>Preliminaries</b>					
Before starting the pitch the pitcher shall comply with the following. Both feet must be on the ground and in contact with or behind the pitcher's plate.	6A.1.A- E 6A.1.C	The pitcher is considered to be in the pitching position when she has her hands apart, her pivot foot in contact with the pitcher's plate, both feet on the ground the pivot foot within the 24-inch length of the pitcher's plate, the hips in line with first and third bases. The stride foot can be on pitcher's line/pitcher's plate (rather than within the 24-inch length of the pitcher's plate). The stride foot may be on or behind the pitcher's plate as far back as desired. Once the pitcher initially sets the toe of her stride foot, she may not move that foot in any direction prior to the step/stride and delivery.	10.1.1 10.2.1.2	Same as USA Softball	6-1-1 6-1-2a &b FP
<b>Taking a Signal</b>					
While on the pitcher's plate, the pitcher shall take a signal or appear to take a signal with the hands separated. The ball must remain in either the glove or pitching hand.	6A.1.D	While in this position, the pitcher must take or appear to take a signal while on the pitching plate. They are not allowed to take a signal from anywhere other than the pitching plate.	10.2.2	Same as USA Softball, with exception must simulate from catcher.	6-1-1b
<b>Timing for Hands being Together</b>					

USA Softball		NCAA		NFHS	
Pitcher shall bring hands together for not less than one and not more than 10 seconds.	6A.1.E	Pitcher has not more than five seconds to deliver the pitch after the hands are brought together	10.18	Same as USA Softball	6-1-1c
<b>Number of Revolutions</b>					
The pitcher must not make more than two revolutions of the arm on the windmill pitch. A pitcher may drop the arm to the side and to the rear before starting the windmill motion.	6A.3.D	Not more than one and a half revolutions.	10.6.1	Not more than one and a half clockwise revolutions of the arm in the windmill pitch.	6-1-4d
<b>Continuing the Revolution</b>					
The Pitch shall not make another revolution after releasing the ball	6A.3M	Same as USA Softball	10.6.5	The Pitcher does not continue to wind up after taking the forward step or after the ball is released. NOTE: Continuation of wind up is considered any action that, after the ball is released causes the arm to continue to rotate past the shoulder.	6-1-4e
<b>Legal Delivery</b>					
The Pitcher may not throw behind their back or through their legs and the ball must be delivered on the throwing side of the body.	6A.3F	No rule		Same as USA Softball	6-1-3c
JO: In the act of delivering the ball, the pitcher shall take one step with the non-pivot foot simultaneous with the release of the ball. The step must be forward and toward the batter within the 24-inch length of the pitcher's plate. It is not a step if the pitcher slides the pivot foot across the pitcher's plate toward the batter, or if the pivot foot turns or slides in order to push off the pitcher's plate, provided contact is maintained with the plate. Raising the foot off the pitcher's plate and returning it to the plate creates a rocking motion and is an illegal act. Any step back with the non-pivot foot must begin before the start of the pitch. Once the pitch has started (the hands separate), the pitcher shall not take more than one step which must be forward, toward the batter and simultaneous with the delivery.	6A.3I	The stride foot may be on or behind the pitcher's plate as far back as desired. Once the pitcher initially sets the toe of her stride foot, she may not move that foot in any direction prior to the step/stride and delivery.	10.2.1.2	Same as USA Softball	6-1-2b

USA Softball		NCAA		NFHS	
Pushing off and dragging the pivot foot in contact with the ground or having both feet in the air is allowed.	6A.3K	Same as USA Softball	10.1.2.1 10.5.4	Same as USA Softball	6-1-2c
The pitcher has 20 seconds to release the next pitch after receiving the ball or after the umpire indicates "play ball."	6A.3.O	The pitcher has 20 seconds to begin their windup. Teams have the option of using a visible action clock. Illegal Pitch-Offense has the choice of the penalty or the play if the pitch is thrown and the batter hits the ball.	2.34 10.18 11.2.1	Same as USA Softball	6-2-3

USA Softball		NCAA		NFHS	
<b>Illegal Pitch Effect</b>					
JO: 1) If the batter hits the ball and reaches first base safely, and if all other runners have advanced at least one base on the batted ball, the illegal pitch is nullified. All action as a result of the batted ball stands. No option is given. When a runner passes a base, the runner is considered to have touched that base. 2) Otherwise, the manager has the option to take the result of the play, or the illegal pitch is enforced by awarding a ball to the batter. 3) If an illegal pitch hits the batter out of the strike zone, the batter is awarded first base and all runners are awarded one base only if forced.	6A.11	...(1) If the batter does not reach first base safely or if any runner fails to advance at least one base, the coach of the offensive team may choose the result of the play or the standard effect for an illegal pitch, which is that a ball is awarded to the batter. (3) If the batter is hit by an illegal pitch not swung at, the batter is awarded first base, and other base runners advance one base, only if forced. (4) If ball four is an illegal pitch, the batter is awarded first base, and each other base runners advance one base, only if forced.	10.8 EFFECT	Same as USA Softball	6-1-1 Excepti on 1, 2, 3,4
<b>Covering the Pitcher's Plate</b>					
No such Rule		A team representative or player shall not intentionally cover the pitcher's plate nor erase the line of the pitcher's lane. EFFECT: For a first violation in a game, a ball shall be awarded to the batter. Subsequent violation by the same team shall result in the violator(s) being ejected.	2.20.3	No Rule in NFHS	
<b>Pitching Lane</b>					
The Pitcher's step must be forward and stay within the 24" length of the pitchers plate. A pitcher's lane is not drawn.	6A.3I	The Pitcher's Lane: The area to which the pitcher is restricted when pitching, the stride foot is allowed to be on the pitcher's lane/pitcher's plate. The lane are lines drawn on the field of play.	2.26, 10.1.1, 10.4.2	The Pitcher's step must be forward within or partially within the 24" length of the pitcher's plate. A pitcher's lane is not drawn.	6-1-2c
<b>Foreign Substance</b>					

USA Softball		NCAA		NFHS	
A defensive player shall not at any time during the game be allowed to use any foreign substance upon the ball, pitching hand or fingers. Under the supervision and control of the umpire, powder resin, and/or an approved drying agent that is included on the list published by USA Softball may be used by the pitcher. The resin must be left on the ground and the approved drying agent in the pitcher's pocket. A pitcher who licks their fingers must wipe the fingers off before bringing them in contact with the ball. EFFECT: Illegal pitch. A second violation will result in an ejection.	6A.6A	Under the supervision and within view of the umpire, a resin (i.e. a drying agent) may be used on the pitcher's hand/fingers. <u>Any</u> substance (including resin, dirt or saliva) applied to the pitcher's hands and fingers must be wiped off <u>if it would transfer to the ball</u> . 10.13.2 No player or other team personnel may apply moisture or <u>any</u> substance to the ball <u>or into a glove</u> <u>which will then contact the ball</u> or do anything else to deface the ball.	10.13.1 10.13.2	Same as USA Softball	6-2-2
<b>Warm-Up Pitches</b>					
At the beginning of each half inning or when the pitcher relieves another, not more than one minute may be used to deliver not more than five pitches. This does not apply if the umpire delays the start of play due to substitution, conference, injuries or other umpire responsibilities.	6.9 Effect	At the start of the game and the beginning of each half inning, the pitcher of record may throw any number of warmup pitches and one throw to any base during the time allowed. For all games (media or non-media), teams are allowed a maximum of 90 seconds between innings and at the start of the game for warmups. The time limit may be shortened by mutual agreement between the two teams or by conference or tournament policy. If a media agreement requires a longer time between innings and at the start of the game, that time will become the maximum allowable time. EFFECT – At the end of the time limit, if the defensive team is not ready to play, a ball will be awarded to the batter, and if the offensive team is not ready to play, a strike will be assessed to the batter. If media goes to break during a pitching change more pitches are allowed.	10.19 10.19.2 6.6, 6.7, 10.19.3.1	At the beginning of each half-inning or when a pitcher relieves another, not more than one minute may be used to deliver not more than five pitches to the catcher or other teammate. NOTE: If the incoming pitcher has already pitched in the game, she will receive 5 warm-up pitches. When a pitcher is removed by rule or due to injury and the incoming pitcher has not pitched in the game, the umpire is authorized to allow more warm-up pitches.	6-2-5 <b>3-6-1</b> NOTE
<b>Intentionally Pitching at a Batter</b>					

USA Softball		NCAA		NFHS	
No such Rule		The pitcher shall not intentionally attempt to hit a batter with a pitch.	10.14.1	No such Rule	
<b>RULE 7: BATTING</b>					
<b>On-Deck Circle</b>					
On-Deck Batter can use either On-Deck Circle as long as the on-deck batter is behind the batter and not on the batter's open side.	7.1A Excepti on	The on-deck batter is restricted to the on-deck circle nearest her dugout for warm-up swings.	11.1.1	The on-deck batter shall take a position within the lines of the on- deck circle closest to her dugout.	7-5-1



USA Softball		NCAA		NFHS	
<b>Batting Order JO Pool Play</b>					
Junior Olympic Fast Pitch Pool Play: Nine defensive players will bat or teams have the following options: 1. Bat nine players without the DP/Flex. 2. Bat nine Players and use the DP/Flex. 3. Bat up to and including all roster players without a DP/Flex. 4. Bat up to and including all roster players with the DP/Flex	7.2.F	No such Rule		No such Rule	
<b>Batting Order JO</b>					
Junior Olympic Fast Pitch Play: Nine defensive players will bat or teams have the following options: 1. Bat nine players without the DP/Flex. 2. Bat nine Players and use the DP/Flex. 3. Bat 10 with 1 EP without a DP/Flex. 4. Bat 10 with 1 EP with the DP/Flex	7.2.F	No such Rule		No such Rule	
<b>Batting Position</b>					
The batter must take a position in the batter's box within 10 seconds after being directed by the umpire.	7.3C	The batter must be in the batter's box, catcher in catcher's box within <b>12</b> seconds after the pitcher receives the ball in preparation to pitch or after the umpire calls, "Play ball." <b>(i.e. 8 seconds remaining)</b>	10.18, 11.2.1	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.	7-3-1
<b>Batter remains in the batter's box (between pitches)</b>					
JO: After entering the Batter's Box, the batter must remain in the box with at least one foot between pitches and while taking signals and practice swings. (There are eight exceptions). Violation can result in a warning or a strike being called. No pitch need be thrown.	7.3D Effect	No such Rule		No such Rule	

<b>USA Softball</b>		<b>NCAA</b>		<b>NFHS</b>	
<b>Batter using Altered or Non- Approved Bat</b>					
When caught using an Altered or Non-Approved bat after completing their time at bat and before the next pitch legal or illegal, the penalty is: The batter is out, ejected, if in a tournament, the player may be subject to future penalties, all outs stand. All runners not out return to the base occupied at the time of the pitch.	7.6C Effect	Bats deemed inappropriate (altered, illegal or non-approved) (pregame or during play) shall be removed from the team's possession and secured by the on-site administrator for the duration of the game. If the inappropriate bat is rediscovered while the batter is in the batter's box or after her turn at bat or before a pitch to the next batter, the batter (or now batter-runner if their term at bat is completed) shall be declared out and ejected, and any advance by base runners shall be nullified.	5.2.5 3.4.1 Effect	When the batter enters the batter's box with an altered bat and the infraction is detected before the next legal or illegal pitch they are called out. The batter and head coach are also ejected. All runners must return to the base occupied at the time of the pitch, unless they were put out on the play.	7-4-2 PENALTY
<b>Batter using an Illegal Bat</b>					
When a batter is caught using an illegal bat after completing their time at bat the penalty is: The batter is out, all outs count and all runners return to the base occupied at the time of the pitch.	7.6E Effect	Bats deemed inappropriate (altered, illegal or non-approved) (pregame or during play) shall be removed from the team's possession and secured by the on-site administrator for the duration of the game. If the inappropriate bat is rediscovered while the batter is in the batter's box or after her turn at bat or before a pitch to the next batter, the batter (or now batter-runner if their term at bat is completed) shall be declared out and ejected, and any advance by base runners shall be nullified.	3.4.1 Effect	Same as USA Softball	7-4-2 PENALTY
<b>The Batter is out when hitting the ball out of the box</b>					
When an entire foot is touching the ground completely outside the lines of the batter's box at the time the ball makes contact with the bat.	7.6.F	At the moment of bat-ball contact, the batter may not contact the pitch when any part of her body is touching the ground outside the lines of the batter's box. Delayed dead ball, defensive coach has option of result of play or strike on batter.	11.2.5 11.15.1	Same as USA Softball	7-4-8
<b>Batter interferes with the Catcher</b>					

USA Softball		NCAA		NFHS	
The batter is out: When hindering the catcher from catching or throwing the ball by stepping out of the batter's box, when actively hindering the catcher while in the batter's box.	7.6P-S Effect	Regarding the effect of batter's interference... Delayed dead ball is signaled. The defensive team shall choose the result of the play OR the batter is out and each base runner shall return to the last base legally touched at the time of the interference.	11.20.2 EFFECT	Same as USA Softball	7-4-4 PENALTY
<b>Batter hit foul ball</b>					
No such Rule		A legally batted ball that is declared foul cannot be changed to fair regardless of additional information that might be made available to the calling umpire. Exception: Dead ball awards (i.e., out-of-the-park home run, ground rule double, and hit-by-pitch).	11.5.2	No such Rule	
<b>RULE 8-BATTER-RUNNER AND RUNNER</b>					
<b>Base on Balls</b>					
When four balls have been called by the umpire. The batter-runner is awarded first base. If the pitcher desires to intentionally walk a batter, all pitches must be legally delivered.	8.1.C 6A.4	If the pitcher purposely throws four balls to a batter, it is scored as an intentional base on balls. All pitches including a pitchout must be legally pitched to the catcher. The ball is live and the batter is awarded first base.	10.15	A request made to the umpire by the defensive coach, pitcher or catcher, for the purpose of awarding the batter first base. The request may be made prior to or during the at-bat. On an intentional walk the ball is dead and runners may not advance unless forced. If the pitcher defensive coach or catcher desires to walk a batter intentionally, he/she may do so by notifying the plate umpire who shall award the batter first base.	2-65-2 <b>8-1-3</b> EFFECTS

USA Softball		NCAA		NFHS	
Batter hit by pitch not in the Strike Zone					
(Fast Pitch) When a pitched ball not swung at nor called a strike touches any part of the batter's person including the hands or clothing. If no attempt is made to avoid being hit, the batter will not be awarded first base unless it is ball four.	8.1F Excepti on	A batter is awarded first base when a pitch, neither swung at nor called a strike, is entirely within the batter's box and it strikes the batter or their clothing. No attempt to avoid being hit by the pitch is required; however, the batter may not obviously try to get hit by the pitch. A batter is awarded first base when a pitch neither swung at nor called a strike touches any part of the batter or their clothing while they are in the batter's box, with exceptions.	11.13.1 11.13.2	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.	8-1-7 8-1-8

USA Softball		NCAA		NFHS	
Batter Runner - Three-Foot Lane Interference					
When the batter-runner runs outside the three-foot lane and, in the umpire's judgment interferes with the fielder taking the throw at first base. Batter-runner may run outside to avoid a fielder fielding the ball. The batter-runner is considered outside the lane when the ball hits a body part which is outside the lane.	8.2.E/ Interp.	The runner's lane is the area that is the last half of the distance between home plate and first base where a batter-runner must run to avoid interfering with a fielder's attempt to receive a thrown ball. It is bounded by a 30- foot line drawn in foul territory parallel to and 3 feet from the first- base line, starting at a point halfway between home plate and the back edge of first base. (See diagram at end of rule.) If the infield is skinned, it is recommended the runner's lane be skinned. When either of her feet is completely outside the runner's lane, in contact with the ground, and, in the judgment of the umpire, she interferes with the fielder taking the throw at first base. Exception: She may run outside the runner's lane: (1) if she has not yet reached the start of the runner's lane; (2) to avoid a fielder attempting to field a batted ball; (3) or if she leaves the lane on her last stride in order to touch first base.	2.28 12.5.5	The batter-runner is considered outside the running lane if either foot last contacted the ground completely outside the lane.	8-2-6

USA Softball		NCAA		NFHS	
<b>Running Bases in Reverse Order</b>					
A runner shall not run bases in reverse order to confuse the fielders nor to make a travesty of the game. The ball is dead. The runner is out.	8.3.D	The batter-runner is out when she runs the bases in reverse order, runs intentionally into the outfield between bases or runs through first base unnecessarily into the outfield on a walk, dropped third strike or any batted ball either to confuse opponents or to make a travesty of the game. A runner shall not run bases in reverse order or intentionally run into the outfield between bases either to confuse the fielders or to make a travesty of the game.	12.5.9 12.10.3	Same as USA Softball	8-3-6
<b>Runner advancing on a base on balls</b>					
When forced to vacate a base because the batter was awarded a base on balls. Effect: (Fast Pitch) 1 The ball remains live unless it is blocked. 2 Any runner affected is entitled to one base and may advance farther with liability to be put out.	8.5.A	The ball is live. The batter is awarded first base. If forced other runners can advance one base without jeopardy of being put out but may advance further at the risk if being put out.	10.15	Same as USA Softball with the exception: on an intentional walk, the ball is dead.	<b>8-5-1</b>
<b>Dead Ball Appeal</b>					
Once the ball has been returned to the infield and time is called, any coach or infielder, with or without possession of the ball, may make a verbal appeal on a runner missing a base or leaving too soon on a caught fly ball. No runner may leave a base during this period as the ball remains dead until the next pitch	8.7.F-I Effect	After the ball is returned to the infield and time is called a request by a coach or any fielder with or without the ball may ask umpire to make a decision on the appeal play.	7.1.2.2	Same as USA Softball	2-1-3b

USA Softball		NCAA		NFHS	
<b>Obstruction</b>					
When a runner advancing or returning to a base is obstructed by a fielder who neither has the ball or is attempting to field the ball or when a fielder fakes a tag without the ball: The obstructed runner and all other runners shall always be awarded the base or bases which would have been reached, in the umpire's judgment, had there been no obstruction. In the umpire's judgment, a defensive player making a fake tag could be ejected from the game.	8.5.B (4) EFFEC T & NOTE	Obstruction occurs when a defensive player, neither in possession of the ball nor in the act of fielding a batted ball, impedes a batter's attempt to make contact with a pitch or impedes the progress of any runner who is legally running bases on a live ball. It can be intentional or unintentional. <b>Blocking the leading edge of the base constitutes obstruction unless the runner's ability to reach the base is not hindered. If the base runner would have been out, regardless of the defensive player's movement or positioning, which had no effect on the play, the runner would remain out and the obstruction would be ignored.</b>	9.5.1, 9.5.2	A fielder not in possession of the ball or not making an initial play on a batted ball, impedes the progress of a runner or batter-runner who is legally running the bases.	<b>8-5-2</b>
<b>Blocked Ball</b>					
When a fielder loses possession of the ball, and the ball leaves live ball territory or becomes blocked. Runners must be given the opportunity to complete their base running responsibilities.	8.5.G Note	When the ball goes out of play, all runners must be given an opportunity to complete their base running responsibilities as determined by the umpire. Once a runner has been given sufficient time to advance or return and shows no immediate intention of doing so, a dead-ball appeal can be made.	7.1.2.2. 3	Same as USA Softball	<b>8-5-7</b>

USA Softball		NCAA		NFHS	
<b>Physical Contact with an Umpire or Opponent</b>					
When a defensive player has the ball and the runner remains upright and crashes into the defensive player.	8.7.Q	Any threat of physical intimidation or harm, including pushing, shoving, spitting, kicking, throwing at or attempting to make aggressive physical contact, or use of equipment in a combative manner, shall not be tolerated and is considered fighting.	13.3	The runner is out if she remains on her feet and crashes into a defensive player. Malicious contact supersedes obstruction.	2-35 <b>8-7-14</b>
<b>Leaving the Base Too Soon on a Pitch</b>					
When the runner fails to keep contact with the base to which the runner is entitled until the ball leaves the pitcher's hand. Effect - Sections 7R-S: 1 The ball is dead. 2 "No pitch" is declared. 3 The runner is out.	8.7S	Base runner leaving a base prior to release of the pitch is a delayed dead ball.	12.14.1 EFFECT	Same as USA Softball	<b>8-7-18</b> PENALTY
<b>Look Back Rule</b>					
The "Look Back" rule shall be in effect for all runners when the ball is live, the batter-runner has reached first base or has been declared out, and the pitcher has possession and control of the ball within the pitcher's circle. When a runner is legitimately off a base... the runner may stop once, but then immediately return to the base or advance to the next base. Once the runner stops at a base for any reason, the runner will be declared out if leaving the base. There are five (5) scenarios describing the batter-runners responsibilities after touching first base, etc.	8.7.T 1-3[a-e] EFFECT Exception	The look-back rule is in effect when the ball is live, the batter-runner has touched first base and the pitcher has possession (for example, has the ball in her hand or glove, under her arm or chin, or between her legs) and control of the ball within the pitcher's circle. The pitcher is considered to be in the pitcher's circle when both her feet are within the circle or on the lines.	12.16.1 EFFECT	Same as USA Softball, with the exception of control, placing the ball under her chin or between her legs is still considered control of the ball.	<b>8-8-1</b>



USA Softball		NCAA		NFHS	
<b>Base Runners Switching Bases</b>					
When runners switch bases after a conference each runner on an improper base will be called out and the head coach ejected. An appeal is not required, it can be called when noticed by the umpire.	8.7.Y EFFECT	After proper appeal, when after a conference, base runners switch positions on the bases they occupied, the ball has been put back in play, and before the end of the half inning. Each runner on the improper base shall be declared out and ejected, in addition the Head Coach shall be ejected for unsportsmanlike conduct.	12.8.3 EFFECT	No rule in NFHS	
<b>Courtesy Runners</b>					
A courtesy runner may be used for the pitcher and the catcher. Defensive changes involving the pitcher and catcher must be reported to the plate umpire.	8.10.A- G	NCAA has no rule.		Same as USA Softball with the following exception: 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). Defensive changes of pitcher and catcher do not have to be reported.	8-10
<b>Offensive Team Personnel congregating near Home Plate.</b>					
USA Softball has no such rule. This is controlled by the umpire with good game management. The players should be kept in foul territory as in NCAA's rule.		Offensive team personnel shall congregate only in foul territory around home plate to congratulate runner(s). The offending team will be warned, any subsequent offense the batter-runner is declared out.	12.17.3.4. 2 EFFECT	NFHS has no such rule. This is controlled by the umpire with good game management. The players should be kept in foul territory as in NCAA's rule.	
<b>Check Swing</b>					
The Plate umpire may ask for help on check swings if they feel they did not have the whole play. The umpire on a pick off may ask for help if they feel they were missing an element of the play. They need not nor should not ask on pure judgment calls.	Umpire Manual	On a decision regarding a checked swing, when asked by the defense, the plate umpire must seek a decision from the appropriate base umpire when the pitch is called a ball. On a decision regarding a pick- off when asked by either coach, the base umpire must confer with their associate(s).	7.3.3 Exception	Same as USA Softball.	10-1-4

USA Softball		NCAA		NFHS	
No Huddle					
No such rule		After an out, the defense is allowed to throw the ball around the infield, but then must throw the ball directly to the pitcher. A team cannot huddle at the pitcher's circle or elsewhere. EFFECT – The umpire shall charge the team with a player-to-player conference.	9.1	No such rule	
RULE 9: PROTESTS					
Types of Protests					
There are three types of protests A. Misinterpretation of a playing rule must be made: 1. Before the next pitch legal or illegal 2. before the next play 3. before all infielders have left fair territory 4. on the last play of the game, before the umpires leave live ball territory B. Illegal Player: must be made while the player in question is in the game and before the umpires leave the playing field NOTE A-B An umpire cannot reverse a decision after a pitch, legal or illegal C. Ineligible player, can be made any time. Eligibility is the decision of the protest committee.	9.1.	During regular-season play, the coach shall immediately notify the plate umpire of his/her intent to protest before the next pitch. If the game ends (legal contest) in a situation that can be protested, the offended team must voice it's protest intentions before the umpires exit the playing field. <b>Protests much be resolved during the game, they can no longer be played "under protest" to be resolved by the Secretary-Rules Editor.</b>	7.2.5	Once a game has started on a non-regulation facility it shall not be protested for this reason. It is the option of a State Association as to whether protests are permitted. When the game is played under the auspices of an organization which permits protests to be filed the Plate Umpire shall report the protest to the organization along with all related conditions at the time of the protested play, provided the protest is brought to the attention of an umpire by the offended team at the time of the play and before the next pitch after such play.	1-1-9 4-4 10-2-3i

USA Softball		NCAA		NFHS	
Rule 10: Umpires					
Misconduct					
Warnings can be used in a few circumstances. i.e. Arguing Balls & Strikes, Dugout Conduct are examples of when warnings can be used. This is handled with good game management.	4.8C, 5.12 Effect	"Warning": 13.1, Inappropriate conduct by participants may result in either informal or formal warnings at the discretion of an umpire. Umpires are not required to warn participants for inappropriate behavior before assessing a penalty except as noted specifically in the rules. 13.1.1: An informal warning may be given for circumstances where preventive umpiring is needed to prevent a situation from escalating to a degree when the umpire will be compelled to act. They are advisory in nature and carry no consequences if the undesirable behavior ceases. 13.1.2: A formal warning is issued for circumstances when the umpire needs to intervene and prevent inappropriate behavior from occurring and reoccurring. When given, they are clearly articulated as warnings and noted on the plate umpire's line-up card.13.2.1: Whether a warning is issued or not, umpires have the authority to remove a player and/or other team personnel from further participation in a game for rule violations, unsporting acts or behavioral or verbal misconduct. The on-site administrator shall make him/herself available to assist the umpire crew in removing the violator from the field.	13.1 13.1.1 13.1.2 13.2.1	In some circumstances a Team Warning is given out for the first offense. (See Improper Conduct Penalty Summary Chart - page 86).This is handled with good game management.	
INTENTIONALLY PITCHING AT A BATTER OR UMPIRE					

USA Softball		NCAA		NFHS	
This handled by good game management and can result in ejections of players and coaches		Regarding intentionally pitching at a batter or an umpire, separate the two actions so there can be different effects. The pitcher shall not intentionally attempt to hit a batter with a pitch. If the batter is hit, the umpire shall warn the pitcher, catcher and head coach that future violations will cause the immediate ejection of the pitcher, and possibly the catcher and head coach. If the umpire is intentionally hit it results in immediate ejection of the pitcher, catcher and head coach without warning.	10.14.1 10.14.2 13.8	This is handled by good game management and can result in ejections of players and coaches	

Rule 5.2 requiring bat testing at all levels by 2022, this really isn't a rule difference to leave it off?  
Noise maker rule isn't really different than ours is it?