



2017 SOFTBALL

Rules Changes, Editorial Changes, Points of Emphasis, Comments on the Rules

- 1-5-2c Taper. The taper is the transition area which connects the narrower handle to the wider barrel portion of the bat. The taper shall have a ~~solid surface and shall have a~~ conical shape. Its length and material may vary.
- Rationale:** This change brings the NFHS in line with other rules codes concerning the surface of the taper.
- 3-2-1 **ART. 1 . . .** 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.
- Rationale:** There may be circumstances in which state associations make accommodations relative to inclement weather, religious exceptions, or other situations.
- 3-2-7 **ART. 7 . . .** 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 solid school color.
- a. For individual players, exposed upper-body undergarments do not have to be the same color as exposed lower-body undergarments.
- b. ~~Among players~~ For all team members, all exposed upper-body undergarments shall be the same solid single color, and all exposed lower-body undergarments shall be the same solid single 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.
- Rationale:** Multi-color undergarments and sleeves are a distraction and create a possible safety concern. This rule establishes solid color requirements similar to other NFHS sport rules.
- 3-2-15 **ART. 15 . . .** All equipment shall be inspected by the umpire, and is to be placed outside the dugout/bench prior to the start of the game.
- NEW
- Rationale:** Placing all equipment in one location at one time is a more efficient method to conduct this inspection.
- 3-6-7 **ART. 7 . . .** Players and substitutes shall not enter the contest unreported.
- PENALTY: (Arts. 2 through 10) 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. (Art. 2) A fake tag without the ball is**

obstruction (8-4-3b). (Art. 7) The head coach is also restricted to the dugout/bench for the remainder of the game for a second violation. (Arts. 8, 9, 10) For coaches who violate, depending on the severity of the act, the umpire may issue a warning, restrict the offender to bench/dugout for the remainder of the game or eject the offender.

Rationale: Language in the Article 7 penalty was not clear as to when the coach is restricted. This added statement makes it clear that the coach is only restricted on the second offense.

Editorial Changes

6-2-2 **ART. 2 . . .** The pitcher shall not at any time during the game be allowed to use tape or any other substance on the ball or contact points of the pitching hand or fingers; nor shall any other player apply a foreign substance to the ball. A pitcher who licks her fingers shall wipe them off before bringing them in contact with the ball. Under the supervision and control of the umpire, powdered resin or any comparable drying agent may be used to dry the hand. It is not necessary to wipe off the drying agent before making contact with the ball. The pitcher shall not wear any item on the pitching hand, wrist, arm or thighs which the umpire judges to be distracting to the batter.

Rationale: Confusion exists regarding whether drying agents must be removed from the hand before making contact with the ball. This language clarifies the rule.

7-4-8 NOTE **ART. 8 . . .** The batter hits the ball fair or foul while either foot is touching the ground completely outside the lines of the batter's box or while touching the plate.

~~**NOTE:** A follow-through with the bat may carry one of the batter's feet entirely outside the box so it touches the ground as the ball is leaving the bat. It is customary for the umpire to ignore this if both feet were in legal position at the start of the swing and if it is not considered an attempt to circumvent the spirit of the rule.~~

Rationale: The note does not clarify the rule, and often creates confusion in the administration of the rule.

8-1-2 b. (F.P.) a pitched ball is entirely within the batter's box and it strikes the batter or her 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.
c. (F.P.) 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.

Rationale: Language that was originally inserted in 2013 was inadvertently omitted.

8-2-4 Exception The batter-runner shall be called out when:

ART. 4 . . . The batter-runner fails to advance to first base and enters the dugout/bench area after a batted fair ball, a base on balls, a hit batter (F.P.), a dropped third strike (F.P.), or catcher obstruction.

EXCEPTION: ~~(S.P.)~~ The ball is dead on a base on balls (S.P.), or on a hit batter who is injured (F.P.), the ball is dead, the batter-runner is not out and runners cannot advance unless forced.

Rationale: Rule 8-2-4 states that the batter is out if the player does not advance to first base and enters the dugout/bench area after being hit by the pitch. The exception (F.P) excludes a batter who enters the dugout because the player was injured by a pitched ball. The change clarifies language in the exception.

Points of Emphasis

Pitching

1. There has been a noticeable increase in the use of wristbands to communicate pitching signals in the last few years. Typically, the pitcher is behind and not in contact with the pitcher's plate when this occurs. While in this position, the pitcher must take (or simulate taking) a signal from the catcher. Even if the pitcher takes the actual signal behind and not in contact with the pitcher's plate she must comply to this section of the rule by simulating taking the signal from the catcher once she is on the pitcher's plate with her hands still separated. Then the pitcher must bring the hands together in front of the body for not less than one second and not more than 10 seconds before releasing the ball. The hands may be motionless or moving.
2. Rule 6-1-1 states that the pitcher shall take a position with the pivot foot on or partially on the top surface of the pitcher's plate and the non-pivot foot in contact with or behind the pitcher's plate. Both feet must be on the ground within or partially within the 24-inch length of the pitcher's plate. Once the hands are brought together and are in motion, the pitcher shall not take more than one step, which must be forward, toward the batter and simultaneous with the delivery. **Any step backward shall begin before the hands come together.** The step backward may end before or after the hands come together.
3. NFHS Softball's pitching rule supports a wide range of pitching styles by allowing a pitcher to start with both feet on the pitcher's plate, one foot on and one foot behind or to step backward as a part of their pitching motion. The NFHS softball committee continues to believe the pitching rule, as written, allows players the greatest opportunity to pitch at the high school level.

Uniforms

The Committee discussed concerns about the use of glitter or reflective materials on hair control devices. Coaches and players are reminded that a uniform shall not have any reflective adornments. Reflective materials on ribbons, bows, and headbands, including glitter and rhinestones, are considered illegal and should not be permitted. A headband made of elastic material that is designed to be tied in the back is not considered a bandanna, and is legal if it meets the color and manufacturers logo restrictions.

DP/Flex Reminders

1. The DP can never play defense only.
2. The FLEX can never be on offense only.
3. The FLEX and DP can NEVER play offense at the same time. The FLEX and DP positions are linked by the DP/FLEX rule. If the FLEX is going to play offense they must do it in the original DP's position, therefore only one of them can play offense at a time.
4. The FLEX and DP can play defense at the same time. The DP can play defense for any player other than the FLEX and no one has left the game.
5. The player starting DP and starting FLEX have one re-entry just as all players do.

6. Once the game is started with the DP/FLEX positions in the lineup those positions are available for the entire game. Even if the starting DP or starting FLEX has left the game a second time, the position is still available and an eligible substitute can enter the game as the FLEX or DP. So even though the starting player(s) left the game twice and cannot re-enter, their positions are still active as long as the team has eligible substitutes.

Comments on the Rules

Field and Equipment: 1-5-2c verbiage has been deleted concerning the solid surface. The NFHS has had the words solid surface and no other code uses this term.

3-2-1: Added language to include options for uniforms relative to inclement weather and other situations. State Associations may adopt uniform accommodations.

NEW 3-2-7c: A requirement was added defining the color of sleeves which must adhere to the same color standards specified by rule 3-2-7. Exposed upper body and lower body undergarments shall be a solid single color: black, white, gray, or a solid school color. Upper and lower body undergarments do not have to be the same color.

NEW- 3-2-15: All equipment to be inspected by the umpire is to be placed outside the dugout/bench prior to the start of the game. Umpires will not have to enter the dugout/bench while players and coaches are warming up before the game.

3-6-7 Penalty: This rule has been clarified to address the restriction of coaches to the dugout/bench after a second violation for an unreported substitution.

6-1-1: Prior to delivering the pitch, the pitcher shall have both feet in contact with pitcher's plate. Effective January 1, 2018.