



**NATIONAL FEDERATION
OF STATE HIGH SCHOOL
ASSOCIATIONS**

**2024 SOFTBALL RULES CHANGES and POINTS OF EMPHASIS
(includes rationale and comments)**

Rules Reference	NFHS 2024 Softball Rules Changes, Rationale, Comments
1-8-6	<p>Permits electronic information to be transmitted to the dugout from anywhere outside of live ball area.</p> <p>Rationale: The rule change reflects current technology and still requires that electronic devices used for coaching purposes may only be used in the dugout but does not stipulate where the video is recorded or how it is transmitted.</p>
3-2-3	<p>Beginning January 1, 2027, uniforms may only bear a single manufacturer's logo, school name, school logo, mascot and/or the participant's name. Advertisements, messages, team slogans, etc., will no longer be permitted.</p> <p>Rationale: Consistent language has been established for NFHS sports that describe what information is permitted on the uniform. A player's name, school name, school nickname, school mascot and/or the school logo may be placed on the uniform.</p>
3-2-5	<p>Removes the color restriction for headbands and ribbons.</p> <p>Rationale: Adds consistency amongst headwear requirements for other NFHS sports.</p>
3-2-7	<p>Defines where a wristband with a playbook/playcard may be worn. If worn by the pitcher, the wristband with a playbook/playcard must be worn on the non-pitching wrist or arm.</p> <p>Rationale: Clarifies where this equipment can be worn. This change will prohibit wristbands from being worn on the belt. It remains legal for players to keep the wristband with a playbook/playcard in their back pocket.</p>
4-2-7, 10-2-3e,h	<p>The umpire may call (end) a game if playing conditions in or around the facility become unacceptable to safely continue the game.</p> <p>Rationale: Provides rule justification when an umpire ends a contest due to unacceptable playing conditions to continue play in addition to weather.</p>

<p>6-1-2c, 2-47</p>	<p>The pitcher may now have both feet off the ground at the same time as long as both feet remain within the 24-inch width of the pitching plate and the pitcher does not replant the pivot foot. A definition for a replant was added.</p> <p>Rationale: The rule change permits both feet to disengage from the playing surface while delivering a pitch. The addition of Rule 2-47 defines that a replant of the pivot foot occurs when the pitcher pushes off the playing surface from anywhere other than the pitcher’s plate prior to the act of delivering the pitch.</p>
<p>6-2-2</p>	<p>Pitchers can only use dirt, powdered rosin or comparable drying agents that are listed on the USA Softball’s certified equipment webpage to dry the hand.</p> <p>Rationale: Clarifies the difference between tape and other non-approved substances on the pitching hand or fingers versus the use of approved substances under the supervision and control of the umpire.</p>

	<p>2024 NFHS Softball Editorial Changes</p>
<p>1-5-1c & 2-4-3 BATS</p>	<p>Adds the words “when initially detected” to clarify what occurs when a damaged bat is initially discovered in the game.</p> <p>Rationale: Clarifies what occurs when a damaged bat is initially discovered in a game.</p>
<p>1-6-1 & 1-7-1 Batting and Catcher’s Helmets</p>	<p>Rule 1-6-1: Updates the current stamp used by NOCSAE for approved batting helmets.</p> <p>Rationale: The NOCSAE stamp (Figure 1-8) and legible exterior warning label on helmets, which is mandatory for each batter, on-deck batter, players/students in the coach's boxes, runners and retired runners, was updated several years ago. The current stamp should be included in the rules book.</p> <p>Rule 1-7-1: Updates the current stamp used by NOCSAE for approved catcher’s helmets.</p> <p>Rationale: 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. The NOCSAE stamp (Figure 1-9) was updated several years ago, and the current stamp should be included in the rules book.</p>
<p>6-1-1b Pitching Regulations</p>	<p>Adds the wording “in contact with the pitcher’s plate” to clarify where the pitcher is required to take (or simulate taking) a signal from the catcher.</p> <p>Rationale: The change will eliminate the decision whether F1 did or did not simulate taking a signal from the catcher. This also is consistent with the Case Book play 6.1.1, Situation B on page 42 of the NFHS Softball Case Book.</p>

7-1-2 Penalty 2 Position and Batting Order	<p>Changes the formatting in the penalty to clarify the effects of when an improper batter becomes a runner or is put out and the defensive team appeals to the umpire before the next pitch.</p> <p>Rationale: Formatting of this penalty clarifies the effects of when an improper batter becomes a runner or is put out and the defensive team appeals to the umpire.</p>
7-1-2 Penalty 3 Position and Batting Order	<p>Rule 7-1-2 PENALTY 3: Formats the penalty to clarify the effect for when an improper batter has completed their turn at bat and no appeal has been made before the next pitch.</p> <p>Rationale: Formatting of this penalty clarifies the effect when an improper batter has completed their turn at bat and no appeal has been made.</p>
7-4-4 Batter is out	<p>Rule 7-4-4: Formats the rule to clarify the various ways the batter can interfere with the catcher’s fielding or throwing.</p> <p>Rationale: Formatting the rule more clearly defines the actions of the batter that would constitute interference with the catcher's fielding or throwing.</p>

	2024 NFHS Softball Points of Emphasis
	<p>The NFHS Softball Rules Committee and the NFHS Board of Directors believes there are areas of the game of interscholastic softball that need to be addressed and given special attention. These areas of concern are often cyclical – some areas need more attention than others, and that is why they might appear in the rules book for consecutive editions. These concerns are identified as “Points of Emphasis.” For the 2024 high school softball season, attention is being called to: Game management, Unacceptable Conditions, Unreported vs. Illegal Substitutions, and Pitching Mechanics;Replant. When a topic is included in the Points of Emphasis, these topics are important enough to reinforce throughout the academic year because additional attention is warranted.</p>
Game Management	<p>GAME MANAGEMENT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coach and umpire communication should be conversational, not confrontational. ▪ There must be a mutual respect for each other and a professionalism that is followed by both coaches and umpires to maintain the working relationship that is imperative to have a successful game. ▪ Last year, there was a point of emphasis about the 60 seconds between innings. Although umpires are not there to “rush” players, one of the responsibilities of an umpire is to help maintain a good flow of the game. This can be done without being overly aggressive. <p>Game Management</p> <p>Coach and umpire communication should be conversational, not confrontational. Passion for their team is often the root of fiery responses from coaches about plays or rulings that they felt went against their team. As an umpire, it is important to balance an understanding of the passion coaches hold for their teams and the sporting expectations of education-based athletics. There has to be a mutual respect for each other and a professionalism that is followed by both coaches and umpires to maintain the working relationship that is imperative to have a successful</p>

	<p>game. Listening to understand a coach’s issue so you can properly respond to their concerns is a huge part of defusing the situation. Maintaining a calm demeanor when speaking to the coach also often helps to lower the temperature of the conversation and assists in having a more meaningful discussion. Another helpful tool for the umpire is utilizing rule book terminology to help keep discussions on topic and achieve resolution more quickly.</p> <p>Another key aspect of game management is managing the flow of the game. Last year NFHS had a point of emphasis about the 60 seconds between innings. Although umpires are not there to “rush” players, one of the responsibilities of an umpire is to help maintain a good flow of the game. This can be done without being overly aggressive, often just a simple “here we go” or “let’s get ready to play red” is all the encouragement that a team needs to know that it is time to get back to playing. Utilizing these simple reminders during each half-inning as well as during charged conferences can help make sure a good game flow is maintained.</p>
<p>Unacceptable Conditions</p>	<p>UNACCEPTABLE CONDITIONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Umpire jurisdiction is limited to the confines of the field of play. Issues outside of the field of play such as spectator behavior is monitored and controlled by event management. Absent a designated event manager, the home team’s head coach assumes this responsibility. However, if conditions become unacceptable for play due to spectator conduct, umpires have the authority to call (end) the contest. ▪ In addition to spectator behavior, other external conditions could result in the umpire having to call (end) the contest. For example, at the start of a game, a wildfire might be a safe distance with winds carrying the smoke away from the field. If these conditions change and result in conditions becoming unacceptable for play, it may result in an umpire having to call (end) the game. <p>Unacceptable Conditions</p> <p>Umpire jurisdiction is limited to the confines of the field of play. Items outside of the field of play, like spectator behavior, is monitored and controlled by event management. Absent a designated event manager, the home team’s head coach assumes this responsibility. Most spectator behavior never reaches a level that would be considered dangerous or severe enough to cause a concern for participant safety. However, if conditions become unacceptable for play due to spectator conduct, umpires have the authority to call (end) the contest. Again, this is a very rare occurrence and all attempts should be made to have event management control the situation prior to ending a contest.</p> <p>In addition to spectator behavior, other external conditions could result in the umpire having to call (end) the contest. For example, at the start of a game, a wildfire might be a safe distance with winds carrying the smoke away from the field. If these conditions change and result in conditions becoming unacceptable for play, it may result in an umpire having to call (end) the game.</p>
<p>Unreported vs. Illegal Substitutions</p>	<p>UNREPORTED VS. ILLEGAL SUBSTITUTIONS:</p> <p>An illegal substitute is a player who is ineligible to occupy a position in the lineup. This can occur when a player:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enters or re-enters the game without eligibility to do so (illegal re-entry). 2. Re-enters the game in the wrong position in the batting order. 3. Is the (F.P.) FLEX and enters the game as a batter or runner in a different position in the batting order than the DP. 4. Violates the courtesy runner rule. <p>All of these violations result in an illegal substitution and the offender is restricted to the</p>

	<p>bench/dugout for the first offense. Additional penalties for offensive violations are defined in rule 3-4-2 and defensive violations are detailed in rule 3-4-3.</p> <p>In contrast to an illegal substitute, an unreported substitute is a player that could legally occupy the position they are in the lineup but has simply failed to report that they are entering the game. The first offense results in a team warning.</p> <p>In contrast to an illegal substitute, an unreported substitute is a player that could legally occupy the position they are in the lineup but has simply failed to report that they are entering the game. All substitutions and courtesy runners are required to be reported to the plate umpire upon entering the game. When a player enters the game unreported, a warning is issued to the head coach. Any subsequent violation results in both the head coach and player being restricted to the dugout for the remainder of the game.</p>
<p>Pitching Mechanics: Replant</p>	<p>PITCHING MECHANICS: REPLANT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The allowance for both feet to disengage from the playing surface while delivering a pitch has increased the concern about pitching mechanics involving a replant of the pivot foot. A replant prior to the delivery would result in an illegal pitch. ▪ It is an illegal action if the pitcher slides their foot forward past the pitching plate pushing off to start their movement from a position in front of the pitching plate (no part of their foot is still in contact with or over the pitching plate). ▪ Another common action, often referred to as “closing the hip,” is pushing with the pivot foot while delivering the pitch. Depending on the pitching style, the pitcher will either bring their pivot foot forward to square up toward the batter or they will tuck the pivot foot behind the non-pivot foot. This push is during the act of delivering the pitch and is legal. <p>Pitching Mechanics: Replant</p> <p>The allowance for both feet to disengage from the playing surface while delivering a pitch has increased the concern about pitching mechanics involving a replant of the pivot foot. A replant during the delivery would result in an illegal pitch. To help assist in enforcement of this rule, a new definition of replant was created. Rule 2-47 now defines that a replant of the pivot foot occurs when the pitcher pushes off the playing surface from anywhere other than the pitcher’s plate prior to the act of delivering the pitch. With this definition in mind, it is an illegal action if the pitcher slides the foot forward past the pitching plate pushing off to start their movement from a position in front of the pitching plate (no part of their foot is still in contact with or over the pitching plate). Another common action, often referred to as “closing the hip,” is pushing with the pivot foot while delivering the pitch. Depending on the pitching style, the pitcher will either bring the pivot foot forward to square up toward the batter or the pitcher will tuck the pivot foot behind the non-pivot foot. This push is during the act of delivering the pitch and is legal.</p>