

HUFF-N-PUFFERS

Official Guide and Playing Rules for 2026

The following rules replace and/or supersede any rules printed prior to the date below for the

Huff-N-Puffers Senior Softball League.

All competition will be conducted in accordance with rules set forth in this Official Guide and in the current edition USA Softball Playing Rules.

Proposed changes are welcome, under Rule 17.

2026 RULES COMMITTEE

Jerry Bacher, Chair

Dave Berry Bob Duray Larry Govang Tom Mays John Teron
Peter Toomey, Umpire-In-Chief

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RULE 1 Playing Field

1.1 Commitment Line

A three (3) foot Commitment Line shall be marked perpendicular to the foul line halfway (35 feet) between 3rd base and home plate. No tags allowed on Runners past the Commitment Line.

1.2 Scoring Plate

There will be a rubber Scoring Plate, eight (8) feet outside of the 3rd base line.

1.3 Strike Zone

A Strike Zone Board will be used with the front of the board centered on and in line with the front of the field home plate. The board will be twenty-two (22) inches wide and thirty-four (34) inches long. The board will lay on and completely cover the field home plate.

1.4 Double Bag – First Base

An additional base shall abut 1st base. The additional base will be orange and in foul territory.

1.5 Pitcher's Safety Screen

A pitcher's safety screen will be used:

- Seven (7)-feet tall,
- Placement is centered on the pitching rubber, in front of the rubber by:
- In Division I and II, fourteen (14) feet,
- In Division III, sixteen (16) feet.

RULE 2 Attire

2.1 Metal Cleats

Metal cleats are not permitted.

2.2 Protective Clothing

Protective equipment and cool weather clothing are allowed.

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2.3 Home vs Visitors

The home team will wear white shirts and use the 1st base bench and right field for pre-game practice. The visiting team will wear red shirts and use the 3rd base bench and left field for pre-game practice.

2.4 Uniform Requirements

Only hats, shirts, pants, and shorts approved by Huff-N-Puffers will be permitted. Players, Managers, and Coaches must be in proper uniform. Pants or shorts must be solid dark blue or black in color, stripes and logos are permitted. No Jeans. Pants of any style may be worn under the shorts. Players not in proper uniform will not be permitted to play. This rule will be enforced by Managers and Umpires.

RULE 3 Equipment

3.1 Shared Equipment

All equipment will be shared by both teams unless privately owned.

3.2 Softball Specifications

Home teams will furnish game balls supplied by the league. These balls will be determined in all particulars from time to time by the Governing Board. The Governing Board can in its discretion choose a different ball for each division of the league.

3.3 Equipment Required

The equipment specified shall be used at all regular season and playoff games.

3.4 Illegal or Altered Bats

Anyone using an illegal or altered bat (shaved, rolled, etc.) as defined by the USA Softball Rules will be subject to ejection from the game and further punishment as determined by the Governing Board.

RULE 4 Players

4.1 Division I

Division I teams will field a maximum of twelve (12) defensive players.

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4.2 Division II

Division II teams will field a maximum of thirteen (13) defensive players. In Seasons when draft is fewer than 15 players, Division Director will poll Managers to decide whether to field a maximum of twelve (12).

4.3 Division III

Division III teams will field a maximum of thirteen (13) players.

4.4 Minimum – All Divisions

A team must have nine (9) players from its own roster to start a game.

4.5 Substitute Players

Substitute players may be added to reach the maximums above. Players from Divisions II/III can be a sub player in the Division above regardless of their ranking.

Division I: Substitute players may only be “C” or lower or from a lower division. They fill any of these positions: Right Field, 1st Base, Catcher.

Division II: Substitute players may be: A “B” or lower may replace a “B” player. A “C” or lower may replace a “C” player. A “D” or lower may replace a “D” player. An “E” may replace an “E” player. Any player may replace an “A” except another “A” player. The first three fill any of these positions: Right Field, 1st Base, Catcher. If a fourth is needed: Right-Center Field.

Division III: Substitute players can play anywhere. Division III teams may replace an A for A, B for B, etc. for a total to equal the opposition (13 vs 13).

4.6 Batting Order

Substitute players must bat at the bottom of the order.

4.7 Roster List

Each Manager will have a roster list of all teams in their Division.

4.8 Forfeit

A team must be ready to play ten (10) minutes after the scheduled starting time or suffer a forfeit. Field conditions may warrant changes in starting time, the Umpire will consult Managers and then decide.

No early starts, unless both Managers agree.

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4.9 Infielders

No more than eight (8) players on the infield dirt, includes pitcher and catcher.

RULE 5 Draft

5.1 Division Managers

Based upon each year's total registration, Governing Board will determine minimum number on each team. Managers in each division will decide how they want to draft players on draft day, either by (COP) Carry Over Player from the previous season, or 1,2,3,4 – 4,3,2,1, or any other method the Managers choose until all players are drafted.

5.2 Trades

Each team is allowed one (1) trade. At the Draft, but not after.

5.3 Drafting Managers

Managers will not be drafted; they will be assigned to the team they are drafting and managing.

Before each Draft, the Manager will declare as either a player/manager or a non-playing manager. A Player/Manager will play and count toward the maximum drafted per team. A Non-playing Manager will only manage his team, not count toward the maximum players drafted per team, and make two picks in Round 8. A Non-playing Manager can never play regardless of circumstances throughout this season.

5.4 Player Can Choose Division

His Application will determine: If the ballplayer wants to go to a specific Division, he enters that Division's draft. If not selected he will drop to the next Division's draft until selected.

5.5 Injured Player

When a player becomes 'injured/out for the rest of the season', his Manager may:
A) retain him on the roster and await his return, or
B) declare him out and seek a replacement if available. If the Player recovers and wishes to return, he goes into the fill-in pool, to be assigned by the Division Director to the area of greatest need.

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RULE 6 Batting

6.1 Strike Count – All Divisions

Each batter will start with a one (1) ball and one (1) strike count.

6.2 Number of Fouls – All Divisions

Two (2) fouls after two (2) strikes is an out.

6.3 Batter's Box

Batter will be considered "in the box" if the toes of both feet are inside the box. The chalk line is considered as inside the box.

RULE 7 Pitching

7.1 Legal Pitch

Part of being a legal pitch is to be a minimum of six (6) feet from the ground when it passes the screen and a maximum of twelve (12) feet from the ground. The ball must pass *over* the screen.

A pitch striking the screen is a Dead Ball and a Ball. Striking any portion of the Strike Zone Board is a strike, except if the ball first touches dirt and bounces into the Board.

The pitcher must have one foot touching the rubber when releasing the pitched ball.

7.2 Pitcher's Safety Screen

A batted ball hitting the screen, if not touched by a defensive player prior to hitting the screen, will be called a dead ball by the Umpire and is not playable, with no change in the count. Subsequent hits against the screen in that at bat will be called strikes.

A thrown ball hitting the screen is a live ball and is playable.

RULE 8 Base Running

8.1 Courtesy Runners

Any player in the lineup may be a Courtesy Runner. Each may courtesy run not more than one (1) time per inning, any number of times per game. He must

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replace the Batter-Runner at the base he safely occupies, but BEFORE the next pitch, he is official when he touches the base. A first Courtesy Runner may be replaced by a second, only before the first pitch.

Effect: Once officially in after the first pitch, if discovered as illegal, Courtesy Runner is out.

Division III teams will be allowed as many Courtesy Runners as needed due to injury or physical disability as agreed to by the Managers before the game.

Once a Courtesy Runner is on base, he will continue to run until he scores or is out.

If he is on base when it is his turn to bat:

Division I & II: the player being run for is out, the Courtesy Runner bats.

Division III: he is replaced on base, no out is recorded, and he bats.

8.2 Commitment Line

Once any part of a Runner's body touches the ground on or beyond the Commitment Line, the Runner may not return to 3rd base. A violation of the rule will result in the Runner being called out.

No tags by a defensive player are allowed on Runners that have crossed the Commitment Line.

8.3 Scoring Plate

The Runner will be called out if he touches or crosses the Strike Zone Board.

Even in a *non-force* situation, a Runner will be out at home *without* a tag: if the Runner has crossed the Commitment Line and a defensive player possesses the ball while touching the Strike Zone Board before the Runner touches the Scoring Plate.

8.4 Physical Contact

A Runner shall not be called out for contact with a Defender unless, in the Umpire's judgment:

- A. the Defender was in contact with the Strike Zone Board, or
- B. on a Defender not involved in the play, the Runner deliberately hit or could reasonably have been expected to minimize or avoid the contact under the circumstances and failed to do so, or
- C. the Runner impeded a Defender trying to field/catch the ball.

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8.5 1st Base – Double Base

If there is a play on a Batter-Runner going to 1st base, the first baseman must touch the white bag of the double bag in fair territory and the Batter-Runner must tag the orange base in foul territory. Runners who fail to step on the orange base are liable to be called out if a defensive player appeals before the Runner returns to the base. The 1st baseman can tag a Runner before he touches 1st base for an out. To avoid a collision, a fielder or a Runner may use the other base.

8.6 Sliding

Sliding or diving into a base is permitted.

8.7 Outfield Play

An outfielder cannot throw out a Batter-Runner by throwing directly to 1st base or relaying through an infielder.

RULE 9 Scoring

9.1 Scorekeeping

All teams should keep score. Opposing teams' Scorekeepers must agree on the score of the game at the end of each half inning.

RULE 10 The Game

10.1 Required Innings

A player removed because of an injury will not be an automatic out.

All players who are present and physically able to play must play in each game. This includes a player arriving at any point in the game, added at the bottom of the batting order, as long as all players now in the lineup can play the required innings in the field.

Opposing Managers must be notified of any player physically unable to participate before the game. If any changes occur during the game, the opposing Manager must be notified immediately.

Unless physically unable to play or are the Designated Hitter (for which the opposing Manager is to be notified):

Divisions I and II – all players must play at least four (4) innings on defense.

Division III – all players must play at least three (3) innings on defense.

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10.2 Line-Up Cards

The Managers of each team will exchange lineup cards (if requested prior to the start of the game) listing the offensive players in the order in which they will bat.

10.3 Regular Season Schedule

A round robin schedule will be used during regular season play.

10.4 Innings Played and Rain-Outs

Regulation is seven (7) innings for Division III and nine (9) innings for Divisions I and II.

A complete game in Divisions I and II is a minimum of five (5) innings or four-and-a-half (4½) innings if the home team is ahead. In Division III a complete game is four (4) innings or three-and-a-half (3½) if the home team is ahead.

A game that is tied at the end of regulation shall be played until one of the teams out scores the other in extra innings. We do *not* observe the USA Softball rule of a runner being placed on second base.

Postponed games will be re-scheduled as to the time and day by the Umpire-in-Chief with the approval of the Managers involved. Games in play that are called before they are a complete game shall be made up at a later date as a new game beginning at the first inning.

10.5 Field Conditions

Field conditions for the playing of games shall be determined initially by the Parma Service Department. At game time or after a game starts, the Umpire(s) working the game will decide whether the game can continue. In extreme weather situations, the League President may cancel play.

10.6 Mercy Rule in Regular Season

Divisions I and II – A fifteen (15) run “Mercy” rule will be in effect after seven (7) innings, or six-and-a-half (6½) innings if the home team is ahead.

Division III – A fifteen (15) run “Mercy” rule will be in effect after five (5) innings or four-and-a-half (4½) innings if the home team is ahead.

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10.7 Run Limit

All games will have a five (5) run limit per half-inning for all but the last designated inning. The Umpire shall inform both team Managers before the start of the last designated inning.

In extra-inning games, the limit is lifted also for the extra innings.

10.8 Infield Practice

Infield practice between innings will be allowed by the Umpire only if time restraints allow it.

10.9 Designated Hitter

Each team has the option for only one (1) Designated Hitter. If he is able he must run for himself.

If you have fourteen (14) or more players, you field thirteen (13) in Divisions II and III, twelve (12) in Division I. Your lineup card will list all players. If you have thirteen (13) players, DH does not play in the field and you cannot pick up a substitute. Your lineup card will have thirteen (13) players. If you have twelve (12) players, DH does not play in the field, now you can pick up a substitute and your lineup card will have thirteen (13) players. Different players can DH for any game, but you cannot change the DH during the game and they cannot play in the field unless your roster falls below thirteen (13) players because of an on-field injury. Divisions I and II follow the same rule.

RULE 11 Dead Ball

11.1 Ball in Play

If a ball leaves the playing field, such as going under a fence, the player will not touch the ball, but will raise both hands as a signal to the Umpire. The Umpire will then come to the location and make a decision. Failure to follow the procedure will result in the ball being ruled in play.

RULE 12 Umpires

12.1 Umpires

The Umpire-in-Chief will be in charge of all Umpires and will be a member of the Rules Committee. His duties will include:

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1. Establish a list of qualified Umpires.
2. Assign one or more Umpires to each scheduled game.
3. Schedule make-up games.
4. Maintain the list of Warnings issued.

RULE 13 Protests

13.1 When to Make a Protest

The notification of intent to protest must be made before the next pitch or, if the final out, before both teams have left the playing field. Ineligible player protest can be made at any time. All protests shall be presented in writing by both Managers and Umpires to any member of the Rules Committee before the next scheduled game for the team submitting the protest.

13.2 Protest Ruling

The Rules Committee will rule on all protests as soon as possible.

RULE 14 Deadlines

14.1 For Rosters

The deadline for trading players with the consent of both Managers and players involved is the end of the Division's Draft Meeting.

14.2 For Membership

The deadline for filing an application for league membership shall be determined by the Governing Board.

There is NO deadline for new players entering the League. Division Directors will consult with the President and designate where new players will be placed.

RULE 15 Playoffs

Home team for first game will be determined by better overall record. If a second game is played, first's Visitors become Home. If a final game is needed, determine by a coin toss at the end of the second game.

15.1 Adding Players for Playoffs

Playoff and championship games must be played without adding any players from other teams.

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15.2 The Season

All Divisions will play a full season.

Should cancellations result in leading teams playing an unequal number of games, before Playoffs, Governing Board will schedule make-ups to even up opportunities.

15.3 Format

Each Division will determine prior to each season by vote of Division Director and Managers. Each Division may be different.

Tie breakers: Head-to-head record between the teams tied. Then if needed, head-to-head run-scored differential. Then if needed, season run-scored differential. Then if needed, flip a coin.

15.4 Complete Game

Suspended Playoff games will be re-scheduled to continue from the point of suspension.

15.5 Playoff Protocols

We conduct our playoff games under “tournament protocols”. ie:

1. There are no Protests. Any objection to Rules Interpretation or Application will result in Time Out, Umpire pulls the Rules Book, decision is rendered, game continues.
2. If a player is Ejected, he is entitled to his Hearing that same day, so he (and his Manager) know whether he is playing the next game.

15.6 Tournament

The Governing Board may declare a double-elimination tournament at the end of the regular season for all teams interested. In the tournament games, a player cannot be a Substitute unless his team has been eliminated.

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RULE 16 Player Evaluations

16.1 Evaluations

All new ballplayers applying for the Huff-N-Puffers or returning Players seeking to move up a Division will be invited to the annual evaluations before the Drafts. The evaluators will be the current and/or new Managers. All Managers will evaluate all ball players. The Managers will determine what division the new ballplayers should be placed. Players will be evaluated on hitting, fielding, throwing, and running, then given a grade of A,B,C,D, or E. This information will then be available for the drafts.

16.2 Changing Divisions

A player in Division I or II that is rated an A or B may not request to move to a lower division without the approval of the Governing Board. Only players rated a C or below may move of their own choosing to a lower division. If, however, an A or a B player has NOT been drafted back into the division of last year's play, he will be moving into a lower division.

RULE 17 Rule Changes

17.1 Rule Changes

Rule changes will only be considered before each season begins, to be submitted by the end of the February General Meeting. If you have a rule change that you would like to submit, you must put it in writing, sign it, and get it to the Rules Chairman. You can also give it to your Manager, any Officer, or any member of the Governing Board and they will submit it to the Rules Chairman.

RULE 18 Points of Emphasis

18.1 Unresolvable Disagreements

Unresolvable disagreements between a player and Manager regarding his team assignment will be resolved by the Governing Board.

18.2 Refusal to Play

A player refusing to play on a team drafting him will not play that season, with his playing fee refunded.

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18.3 Conduct

We subscribe to USA Softball's Zero Tolerance Policy Against Abuse:

"3 Emotional abuse or verbal abuse is also prohibited. These include, but are not limited to such forms of abuse as: yelling, insulting, threatening, mocking, demeaning behavior, or making abusive statements in regard to a person's race, gender, religion, nationality/ethnicity, sex or age."

Umpires will issue written warnings to violators, which will be reviewed by the Governing Board for potential additional discipline.

Conduct not considered in the best interest of the Huff-N-Puffers will be subject to disciplinary action. A player ejected from a game will also be suspended from the next game.

Fighting between players will result in removal from the game with suspension from the following three (3) games for the first offense. The second offense will result in suspension for the season. Fighting in the parking lot or near the playing area is covered by this directive. Profanity will not be tolerated on or off the fields: players will be ejected from the game and be suspended for the next game. A second offense can result in suspension for the season. (REMEMBER, LADIES AND CHILDREN ARE IN THE STANDS).

18.4 Avoiding Collisions

A Runner must make every effort to avoid colliding with opposing players while running the bases or sliding or diving. If, in the Umpire's judgment, the Runner fails to avoid a collision with a defensive player involved in the play, the ball will be declared dead and that Runner called out. If, in the judgment of the Umpire the collision is considered malicious (bowling over, throwing elbows, etc.) by either the Runner or defensive player, the ball will be declared dead and the offending individual will be ejected from the game and suspended from an additional game for the first offense. A second offense will be cause for suspension from the remainder of the season.

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