

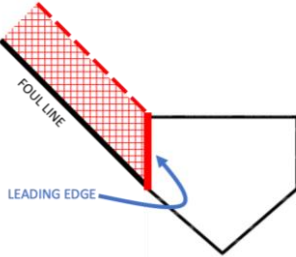


2024 and 2025 Softball Rules Changes

The following rules changes were approved by the NCAA Softball Rules Committee and the Playing Rules Oversight Panel. All rules changes are effective with the 2024 season.

Rule	Rules Change and Rationale
Bases – First Base 2.7	<p>To allow the use of a double base at first base.</p> <p>Rationale: This is currently an experimental rule. To potentially prevent collisions at first base while better protecting the runner and fielder. Also, to encourage batter-runners to utilize the runner’s lane when running through first base. In general, the defense is restricted to using the white portion and the batter-runner is restricted to the colored portion. The double base at first base is required for USA Softball and permitted for high school competition and NCAA baseball.</p>
Fences 2.15.2.1	<p>For all new construction, to require the fence distance to be 200 feet in left and right fields.</p> <p>Rationale: This is currently a recommendation. To acknowledge the continued offensive production in NCAA softball and create a more equitable experience.</p>
Bats – Knob/Handle 3.3.1.7.2	<p>To eliminate the requirement that bats have a ¼-inch knob protrusion. This will allow for the use of a manufactured bat with a tapered/flare/cone handle, 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.</p> <p>Rationale: To allow for additional bat design options, including those that may limit the pressure on the hand.</p>
Assistant Coach 4.1, 6.5, 6.6 and 13	<p>To prohibit assistant coaches, who are not in a coach’s box or serving as the acting head coach, from communicating with an umpire(s). This includes coming out of the dugout or bullpen area to appeal, question, argue or discuss any play on the field. The effect would be immediate ejection of the violator(s).</p> <p>Rationale: To emphasize that all communication from the team areas to an umpire(s) should be through the head coach, and to improve pace of play since there will be less stoppage to communicate with multiple coaches. Further, there has been an increase in assistant coaches being sent to argue calls with umpires.</p>
Electronic Equipment 5.9.8	<p>To allow the use of an exclusively one-way electronic communication device from the dugout to the field for the purpose of relaying the pitch or play call.</p> <p>Rationale: To improve the pace and flow of the game and maintain the integrity of a team’s signs.</p>
Video Review	<p>To revise video review to:</p>

<p>5.9.9 and Appendix G</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Include runners leaving the base prior to the touch on a fly ball (tagging up), runners missing a base and runners leaving early on a pitch. NOTE: Runners leaving early on a pitch is only allowed by a coach’s challenge and may not be initiated by an umpire. 2. Include all called/potential home runs. 3. Include catch vs. no catch in any situation. 4. Restrict hit batter (by pitch) reviews to: whether the ball hit the batter, whether the ball is entirely in the batter’s box, whether the batter made an attempt to get out of the way of the pitch when required, and/or intentionally tried to get hit by the pitch. 5. Allow the review of any listed reviewable item(s) if the action on the field results in a dead ball. <p>Rationale: To expand the use video review to include other situations that could directly determine the outcome of a game.</p>
<p>Postgame Review of Suspensions 5.9.10 and 13</p>	<p>To allow a postgame review of only those ejections that include a suspension. The request to review, including video of the incident, must be filed within 48 hours of the completion of the game and be submitted by the conference office or conference coordinator of umpires. A committee consisting of the NCAA Softball Secretary-Rules Editor, NCAA National Coordinator of Softball Umpires and one NCAA Softball Regional Advisor, who is not affiliated with the team or conference, will consider the review and render a decision.</p> <p>Rationale: To provide institutions and conferences with an avenue to ensure suspensions are appropriate and fair based on the rules.</p>
<p>Obstruction 9.5.1</p>	<p>To change the obstruction rule to: 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.</p> <p>While not in possession of the ball, it is obstruction if the defensive player:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. blocks any part of the leading edge of first, second or third base or home plate (as defined); or b. otherwise blocks the runner from advancing or returning to a base. <p>The defensive player is not considered obstructing if they are in possession of the ball or they are making a legitimate reaction to the trajectory of the ball after it is thrown. (See also Rule 12.13.)</p> <p>Notes:</p>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Once in possession of the ball, the defensive player can be positioned between the runner and the base/plate. 2. Obstruction may be ruled even though there is no physical contact. 3. If in the umpire’s judgment, the runner would have clearly been put out then obstruction is ignored. 4. Obstruction can occur on a force or tag play. <div style="text-align: center;">  <p><i>Leading Edge of Home Plate (As Defined)</i></p> </div> <p>Rationale: To more clearly define the basic tenets of the obstruction rule to help coaches teach their defensive players how to properly defend at the base/plate and to assist umpires in making the correct ruling in these situations.</p>
<p>Step/Stride 10.5.4</p>	<p>To allow pitchers to disengage from the playing surface during the delivery. The pitcher’s pivot foot could become airborne with one push from the pitcher’s plate. However, pitchers would not be allowed to replant their pivot foot resulting in pushing off from a second point and the pitcher being farther away from the pitcher’s plate.</p> <p>Rationale: To align with international softball pitching rules, improve the consistency of enforcement of illegal pitches and recognize that currently the majority of NCAA softball pitchers lose contact with the playing surface to a certain degree. Unlike a pitcher who replants, pitchers do not gain a significant advantage by disengaging from the playing surface and therefore should not be penalized.</p>
<p>Time Allowed Between Pitches 10.18; See also 11.2.1</p>	<p>To change the time between pitches from 25 seconds (10/10/5) to 20 seconds. The time begins when the pitcher receives the ball or the umpire calls, “Play ball.” The pitcher must begin their windup before the time expires or a ball will be awarded to the batter.</p> <p>Batters still must be within the batter’s box within 10 seconds of the pitcher receiving the ball or the umpire calling, “Play ball.” If the batter is not within the batter’s box within 10 seconds, a strike will be assessed to the batter. *Note – This is not a change, but is included to help clarify the responsibilities of the batter during the 20 seconds.</p>

	Rationale: To improve the pace and flow of the game.
Visible Action Clock 10.18; See also 6.7 and 11.2.1	To allow a visible action clock(s) to assist in enforcing all timing rules equitably. Rationale: To assist in effectively and equitably enforcing the time between innings and time between pitches and improve the pace and flow of the game. The use of a visible action clock(s) has been effective in Major and Minor League Baseball and NCAA baseball at improving pace of play and assisting umpires in properly administering these timing rules.
Warmup Pitches 10.19.2	To allow the pitcher one throw to any base during the warmup time allowed. Rationale: Currently, the pitcher is only allowed one throw to first base during warmups. This change is intended to allow the pitcher flexibility on how to use their warmup throw.

Previously Approved Rules Change Effective with the 2024 Season

Rule	Rules Change and Rationale
3.2.1 Ball Specifications	To standardize ball specifications with NFHS and USA Softball to a maximum compression of 275-375 pounds. Required implementation by January 1, 2024. Rationale: To improve inventory availability and assist in cost containment by standardizing ball specifications with NFHS and USA Softball.

Previously Approved Rules Change Effective with the 2027 Season

Rule	Rules Change and Rationale
2.15 Sideline and Home Run Fences	By January 1, 2027, to require sideline and home run fences constructed of a hard material (e.g., wood, concrete or brick) to be padded. Padding must begin not higher than 1 foot off the ground and extend to the top of the wood, concrete or brick or 6 feet from the ground, whichever is shorter. This is required for any field hosting NCAA softball competition.

	<p>Rationale: Currently, padding is strongly recommended for fences constructed of a hard material (e.g., wood, concrete and brick). This is a requirement for backstops constructed of these materials. This change would align sideline and home run fences with backstops. Although this is a non-rules change year for softball, this rules change is being made for financial and student-athlete safety reasons. The estimated budget impact varies depending on the amount of areas that require padding.</p>
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