

Wachusett Softball Association Rules 2024

All coaches, spectators, and players must adhere to the WSA's codes of conduct below. Failure to cooperate with these codes could result in you losing the right to coach, watch, or compete in the WSA.

Coaches Code of Conduct

By volunteering to coach softball games in the WSA, you are agreeing to the following Code of Conduct. Your town softball organization or the WSA Board of Directors reserve the right to suspend you from coaching for violations of this code.

- **You will treat every player on your team with respect and dignity.**
 - E.g. You will not berate or humiliate any player on your team.
- **You will treat the umpire(s) with respect and dignity.**
 - E.g. Yelling at an umpire or showing disrespect to them can result in an umpire ejecting the coach from the game and league sanctions.
- **You will treat the coaches and players on the opposite team with respect and dignity.**
 - E.g. You will not heckle or be disrespectful to an opposing coach or player, nor will you tolerate it from your players. You will practice good sportsmanship at all times.
- **You will treat the game of softball with respect and dignity.**
 - E.g. You will not run up the score unnecessarily or create a situation where any player could be injured because of the way you coach your team. You will win or lose gracefully.
- **You will comply with your town's softball organization's rules and the rule of the league which governs play (the WSA).**
 - E.g. It is up to you to know the rules of the game and to follow regulations set down by your town coordinator and by the WSA Board of Directors.
- **You will model good behavior for your players, fellow coaches, and fans.**
 - E.g. You will not use profanity or show poor sportsmanship.
- **If the fans for your team show bad sportsmanship, you will intercede with them.**
 - E.g. As a coach, you can help defuse situations. If your fans are being inappropriate, you will attempt to stop their behavior.

Spectators Code of Conduct

By attending a game governed by the WSA, you are agreeing to all of the rules below. A violation of the rules can result in your being asked to leave the game by the umpire, your town softball coordinator, or any member of the WSA Board of Directors. We want you to cheer on your player and her team. However, poor sportsmanship by fans will result in the privilege to attend these games being revoked. In extreme circumstances, inappropriate fan behavior can result in penalties for their team.

- **Be positive, not negative.** Athletes have the right to compete in an environment that is safe and supportive. You will limit yourself to positive cheering. You may cheer for your team's players, but you may not boo, jeer, taunt, or heckle the other team. No player deserves to be targeted by opposing fans. ***Be respectful at all times and remember that every player is someone's daughter.***
- **Respect the umpire.** Game officials have the right to make calls in an environment that allows them to do their job. Umpires are human and the human element is part of the game. You will be respectful of the umpire(s) at all times. Negative comments, yelling, booing, taunting, or undermining the umpire can result in a fan being ejected from the field and losing the privilege to attend WSA games.

- **Coaches are volunteers.** Coaches on both sides have the right to manage their team in a positive environment. You will be respectful of the coaches on your team and the opposing team. Coaches in the WSA are volunteer parents donating their time to your player and her teammates. Yelling at coaches is inappropriate and will not be tolerated.
- **Stay off the field.** You should not enter either dugout or the field of play unless you are a registered coach who has undergone a background check with your town's softball organization.
- **You will set a positive example for the players.** When parents or other adults act inappropriately, it signals to players that it's okay to be disrespectful. It is not okay. You will not engage in poor sportsmanship. Nor can you use substances, profanity, or violence at a youth softball game. Any of the above could result in your ejection from the game, penalties on your team, and/or your town softball organization or the league revoking your privilege to attend games.
- **Rules are not optional:** You will comply with any regulations the town hosting the game or the league requires. This includes measures meant to keep players and coaches safe from COVID-19.

Players Code of Conduct

It is a privilege to play softball in the WSA. Coaches and parents should communicate to the players that we expect all players who compete to comply with these rules. Players who show poor sportsmanship may be benched by their coaches, ejected from the game by an umpire, and/or suspended from league play by their town softball organization or the WSA Board of Directors.

- Everyone deserves an opportunity to play softball without fear of being made fun of. Good sportsmanship is extremely important and you are expected to be a good sport whether you win or lose.
- All cheering should be positive. It's okay to encourage your teammates and to cheer when they do well. You cannot boo, taunt, or single out a player negatively on your team or on the opposing team.
- Once a pitcher starts her motion, you should not yell with the intent of interfering with her focus.
- Your play should never intentionally seek to injure any other player.
- You must respect the umpire. If he or she makes a call and you disagree with it, you should not argue or complain. Disrespecting an umpire can lead to a player being thrown out of a game and even being suspended from league play. Umpires are human and that is part of the game.
- Even if you lose the game, you still must line up to respectfully wish the other team well. Real softball players win gracefully and lose gracefully.

All coaches, players, and fans are bound by the WSA Codes of Conduct. Everyone who participates in WSA events as a player, coach, fan, etc. must be in compliance with the Code of Conduct.

In the event there is a concern or potential violation of the Code of Conduct the involved part(ies) shall report the issue through the formal complaint process of the WSA. Said complaint will be reviewed and appropriate parties will be notified of any action taken.

Additional Coaching Rules

Safety:

- An adult coach must not leave the field until "ALL PLAYERS" have left their practice or game.
- All volunteers must be CORI cleared. Only CORI-cleared volunteers should be on the field with the players.
- Coaches should ensure their players are using safety equipment, including USA Softball-approved helmets/bats. Fielding masks are recommended for pitchers and infielders. Metal cleats are not allowed in the WSA.

Fields, umpires, and dugouts:

- Coaches are responsible for having PLAYERS clean the dugout and surrounding areas after each game or practice. There should not be any water bottles or wrappers of any kind left in the dugout.
- Home coaches will pay the umpire prior to the game and provide USA Softball-approved game balls.
- Home coaches are responsible for helping to prepare the field by raking around the pitcher's mound, around the bases, and around home plate before each game. This includes putting out bases, lining the field, and placing pitching rubber from the correct distance. Please report any unsafe conditions to your league coordinator.

Behavior:

- Home and visiting coaches must have a home plate meeting before the game to review the rules and make sure everyone is on the same page and all field safety rules are covered.
- Coaches must set a positive example to the player at all times. The players should have fun and learn the fundamentals of the game. Town coordinators and the WSA board reserve the right to enforce appropriate behavior from their coaches.
- Coaches are asked to refrain from using electronic devices (cellphones) on the field during the game. If the need arises, coaches are asked to remove themselves from the field and replace themselves with another individual as needed.

Game Score Reporting:

- Scores need to be reported within 24 hours of the game.

Cancellation:

- In the WSA, it is the home team coach's responsibility to make the determination in the case of inclement weather. The visiting coach should be consulted before the decision.
- **Cancellations must be made at least 90 minutes prior to the start of the game.** In the case of a cancellation, a make-up game must be scheduled within 1 week of the cancellation. The game does not need to be played within one week, but a new date must be chosen. If two contacts are made with the other team's coach without a response, the league president and secretary have the right to declare a forfeit.
- The board members for each town NEED to be aware of all cancellations and game changes via the league email address. This will allow for the local board member (s) to avoid any unnecessary cancellations especially those that are not weather related.

- There are no cancellations allowed for non-weather reasons without the approval of the town coordinators for both towns and the umpire assignor. If a coach cannot make a game, then his/her assistant can manage the team. If a team is short players, they can pull up younger players to ensure the game is played.
- If a game is called in the middle of play by the umpire due to rain, thunder, darkness, or unsafe conditions, the game will be official if 3 innings of the 6 have been played and the home team has had their at bat in the bottom of the third should they be behind (2 ½ innings to be “official” if the home team is ahead when the bottom of the third begins). Any game which is not “official” when called by an umpire will simply be postponed and replayed in its entirety from the beginning.
- Blackout dates for school related functions should be determined prior to the schedule being made.

If a game is canceled for weather, please notify the following at least 90 min before game time:

1. Both teams
2. WSA Board and Umpire Coordinator:
 - Cancellation email: wsa.ncmasa@gmail.com

Wachusett Softball Association League Rules, Effective April 2024

Pitching

- 8U: Coaches may adjust their pitching distance as needed. They should use an 11” Softie Ball. If a player cannot hit the coach’s pitches after a reasonable number of pitches, the coach can put the ball on the tee for the player.
- All player-pitch levels: In accordance with USA Softball rules beginning in 2020, pitchers need only have their front foot (the foot on the side of their pitching arm) on the pitcher’s plate when beginning their motion. The other foot may be on the pitcher’s plate or behind it. Both feet must be on the ground within the 24” length of the pitcher’s plate when she begins her motion.
- 10U: Pitcher’s plate is at 35 feet and pitcher uses an 11” USA Softball Approved Softball
 - 10U is the level where girls learn how to pitch. As a result, unintentional illegal motions will result only in the umpire explaining to coaches why the motion is wrong, so they can teach the player. The WSA does not have a penalty (e.g. calling a ball) for illegal pitches at the 10U level.
 - Coaches are recommended to try and limit girls to pitching 4 innings per game at this level to allow for more players to experience this position.
- 12U: Pitcher’s plate is at 40 feet and pitcher uses a 12” USA Softball Approved Softball
- 14U: Pitcher’s plate is at 43 feet and pitcher uses a 12” USA Softball Approved Softball

Defensive Player Requirement:

- 8U: minimum number of players is 4 to complete infield. Infield positions include pitcher’s helper; first; second; shortstop; third and catcher. All remaining players will play in the outfield.
- 10U: Maximum number of players is 10, minimum is 6, 4 players will play in the outfield. Outfield players must all be in the grass prior to the pitch being thrown. Infield can only have 4 players excluding the pitcher and catcher.
- 12U: Maximum number of players is 10 (if both coaches agree), minimum is 6. The extra player must be in the outfield. Outfield players must all be in the grass prior to the pitch being thrown. Infield can only have 4 players excluding the pitcher and catcher. Whether to play 3 outfielders or 4 will be mutually agreed-upon by the coaches prior to the game.
- 14U: Maximum number of players is 9, minimum is 6. Outfield players must all be in the grass prior to the pitch being thrown.
- 10U, 12U, 14U: Defensively, all players will play at least 2 innings in the field; offensively, the WSA uses continuous-batting, so all players will bat.

Game Play Regulation:

Batting:

- 8U: all players will hit during their offensive half inning and switch possessions once the full team has batted. If a hitter or a base runner is out, she will need to leave the bases and return to the dugout. The inning does not end after 3 outs, but players should get used to the idea of being “safe” and “out”. The coach closest to the play makes the call. Being “out” should be used as a teaching opportunity about the way the game works.

- 10U/12U/14U will use a continuous batting (all players bat) order and free substitutions (unlimited re-entry).
- All divisions: no outs for shorthanded teams
- All divisions: there will not be an out for a player who is injured during the game and unable to continue competing.
- Players who come late should be put at the end of the batting order.
- Teams will not be penalized if a player must leave early or arrives late. Their spot in the order will just be skipped
- Bunting is allowed at all player-pitch levels
- Slashing is not allowed at any level of WSA play

Infield fly rule

- 10U Division- no infield fly rule
- 12U and 14U Division- infield fly rule is enforced.

Time limits and number of innings

There are no mercy rules which shorten WSA games. The 5-run limit per inning and the time limit make mercy rules unnecessary. Coaches must avoid running up the score unnecessarily in the interest of sportsmanship and fair play.

- 8U: No new inning will start after 1 hour and 15 minutes
- 10U: No new inning will start after 1 hour and 30 minutes, full games are 6 innings
- 12U: No new inning will start after 1 hour and 40 minutes, full games are 6 innings
- 14U: No new inning will start after 1 hour and 45 minutes, full games are 6 innings

Run Limits

- 10U/12U/14U divisions will have a run cap of 5 runs per offensive half inning with the exception of what has been declared last inning. There is no mercy rule in this league.
- Before the time limit elapses during the game, coaches will meet with the umpire to declare what the last inning will be.
 - Coaches should meet with the umpire no later than 15 minutes before the time limit for their level in order to determine which inning will be the last, based on the time remaining. (10U-1 hour 15 minutes/12U- 1 hour 25 minutes/14U – 1 hour 30 minutes)
 - Once the last inning is declared, it cannot be “undeclared”.
 - If the time limit elapses before the last inning is declared by the coaches, then they forfeit having an uncapped final inning. No one is guaranteed an uncapped final inning. No new inning begins after the time has expired. If the time expires, you must play the rest of the inning but no new inning can begin.
 - The 6th inning is the final inning of play if the 6th begins before the time has expired.
 - If in the last inning, the lead exceeds 15 at any point, possession will be switched. If the visiting team is ahead by 15 going into the last inning of play that team will be limited to the 5 run rule before possession switches. If losing, the home team will have no run limit in the uncapped inning. If the home team is winning, they forfeit their last at bat.

- No regular season game will end in tie, unless the game is called by the umpire for unsafe conditions. In the event of a tie after the time limit or the full 6 innings have been played or the time limit has expired for no new innings, USA Softball Tie Breaker rules will apply.
 1. Each team will start with a runner on 2nd base. This runner is the last batter of the previous inning.

Overthrows and Stealing

- 8U: no stealing or leading
- 10U

Overthrows:

- The batter may not advance to 2nd base on an overthrow to 1st base. Players cannot continuously steal on a overthrow from the catcher.
- In general, a player cannot advance past the base they are advancing to in the event there is an overthrow. A runner stealing 3rd cannot steal home on an overthrow from the catcher
- There is no limit on a batted ball advance, but once a play is attempted/an overthrow made, runners must stop on the base they are advancing to.

Leading:

- USA softball rules apply except the player can only leave when the ball crosses the plate (instead of leaving the pitcher's hand). When the player leads after the ball crosses the plate they must retreat to the base when the ball is in the pitcher's circle. There will only be one warning per team for a 10U player failing to get back to the base when the ball returns to the circle and then the next time, a player will be called out.

Stealing:

- Allowed only after the ball crosses the plate.
- Runners may steal all bases except home.
- Runners may not run through first on a walk.
- There is no dropped 3rd strike at this division.
- 12U
 - No continuous stealing, a runner stealing a base may not advance to the next base on an overthrow by the catcher.
 - Players may run through first on a walk and advance.
 - Stealing is allowed and will follow all USA Softball guidelines, meaning players can leave the base when the ball is released from the pitcher's hand. Runners may steal any base including home plate.
 - The "look-back" rule can be enforced. Players must be moving back to their original base or moving towards the next base when the pitcher has the ball in the circle. Any pause by the runner will result in an out unless the pitcher is actively trying to make a play on the runner (e.g. raising her arm to throw).
 - On a hit, a runner may advance as many bases as possible including overthrows.
 - Dropped 3rd strike is allowed in this division.
- 14U

- Stealing is allowed and will follow all USA Softball guidelines. Runners may steal any base including home plate, run through first is allowed, the look-back rule is enforced, and dropped third strike is also allowed.
- There are no overthrow modified rules for this division.

Selected USA Softball Rules

Equipment

All bats and helmets need to be lined up outside of the dugout for inspection prior to the start of the game. Bats must meet softball regulations and helmets must have a face guard properly attached.

Lightning

If lightning is seen by an umpire or brought to his/her attention, all play will cease for a minimum of 30 minutes. All players will seek shelter. Umpires will not instruct players and coaches where they should go.

Dead Ball Appeal

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.

Double Base

- No play at first base: Runner can touch either color bag
- Play at first from fair Territory: Runner touches orange/Fielder touches white
- Play at first from foul territory - Runner and fielder can touch either bag
- Return throws to first - Runner and fielder may touch either bag

Injuries

During a live ball situation, when a player becomes injured, and the umpire's judgment requires immediate attention, the umpire shall call "DEAD BALL" and allow or seek first aid. The umpire will award any bases that would have been reached.

Hit by pitch

- Batter MUST make an attempt to avoid being struck by a pitched ball to be awarded 1st base.
- On a ball that hits the ground before hitting the batter, it is the umpire's discretion whether or not to award a base or simply call the pitch a ball.

Sliding

Base runners are encouraged, but not required to slide on a play at a base, to avoid contact at all bases except 1st.

Pinch Runner and Courtesy Runners

- A pinch runner may be used for an injured player who has been identified to the umpire either prior to the start of the game or during the game. **The pinch runner will be the last out made and will replace the batter after she has reached base and the play is over.**
- Courtesy runners are allowed for the catcher in order to keep the game moving and will follow the pinch runner rule above.

Tournaments Rules/Standings:

- Season records will be kept to determine standings for the end of season tournaments
- Final standings are determined by criteria to be determined by the WSA Board.
- All tournament rules will be sent to coaches prior to the tournaments
- Tournament rules will include potential modification to time limit and any other age level requirements as deemed appropriate and approved by the WSA Board prior to the start of tournament play.

Select Rule modifications at a glance for umpire and coaches:

10U: No infield fly, no dropped 3rd, no steal of home. 10 defensive players are permitted. Continuous batting, free substitution. No run-through first on a walk. No advance on an overthrow from the catcher on a steal or on a fielder on an overthrow on a batted ball. Runners may lead/steal when the ball crosses the plate. 5 run limit in every inning except the last. 35' rubber. No new inning after 90 minutes. Coaches must agree on and declare the final inning to the umpire before it begins.

12U: 5 run limit in every inning except the last. No continuous stealing on a catcher's overthrow. 40' rubber. No new inning after 1 hour, 40 minutes. Coaches must agree on and declare the final inning to the umpire before it begins. 10 defensive players are permitted if both coaches agree. Continuous batting, free substitution.

14U: USA softball rules, including 43' rubber. Only exceptions= 5 run limit in every inning except the last. No new inning after one hour 45 minutes. Coaches must agree on and declare the final inning to the umpire before it begins. Continuous batting, free substitution. No slashing or metal cleats.