



2020-21 Softball Rule Considerations

In support of the Guidance for Opening Up High School Athletics and Activities, the NFHS Softball Rules Committee offers this document for state associations to consider whether any possible rules could be altered for the 2020-21 season. The considerations outlined in this document are meant to decrease potential exposure to respiratory droplets by encouraging social distancing, limiting participation in administrative tasks to essential personnel and allowing for appropriate protective equipment.

1. Softball Rule Considerations

Face Shields (1-7-1, 1-8-4) - Per guidance from the NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee, Plastic shields covering the entire face (**unless integrated into the face mask and attached to a helmet**) shall not be allowed during contests. Their use during practices increases the risk of unintended injury to the person wearing the shield or teammates.

Additional Equipment (1-8): Cloth facial coverings are recommended but not required. Facial coverings must be of one color, not distracting, and no designs. Pitchers cannot wear optic yellow cloth facial coverings.

Pregame Conference (2-14-2): Limit attendees to one coach from each team plus the umpires. Coaches should stay outside the width of the batter's box at home plate, maintaining 6 feet of distance between each person.

Substitutions: (3-3-3): The verbal exchange should occur 6 feet from the coach to scorer and opposing team when making lineup changes.

Coaching (3-5-1 NOTE): Umpires do not handle equipment on the field during play. Contact with the game balls should be as limited as possible. There are several strategies to protect the student athlete from cross contamination due to exposure to game balls. It is recommended each state choose a strategy that best fits their specific circumstances.

Coaching (3-5-3, 3-6-14): Coaches who wish to discuss a rule or a ruling on the field must maintain at least 6 feet of physical distance from the umpire.

Coaching (3-5-2): Base coaches must stay 6 feet from a runner at all times after suspension of play.

Bench and Field Conduct (3-6-6): Players are not permitted to leave the dugout area to congratulate players when scoring or after home runs. The number of individuals in the dugout is dependent on the size of dugout. Players and coaches must maintain 6 feet of social distance. NFHS rules allow for dugouts/designated warm up areas to be extended to provide for social distancing.

Charged Conferences (3-7-1, 3-7-2, 3-7-3): Coaches holding defensive conferences must stay on the home plate side of the pitcher's circle and the player or players must be on the opposite of the pitcher's circle maintaining the 6 feet distance. No more than 2 players plus the pitcher is allowed. Only one coach is permitted during the conference. If a coach visits the pitcher, all other players should stay outside the pitching circle.

Exchange of Lineup Cards (4-2-1b): Lineups should be handed to the umpire, and the umpire will verbally approve or ask any questions about the lineup. Recommended for lineup cards exchanged team to team and teams to scorekeeper to be shared via photo or text.

Infractions By the Pitcher (6-2-2): Prohibit licking of fingers and wiping them off. Pitchers are not allowed to put their hands to their mouths or blow into their hands prior to pitching the ball. This will be a "no pitch." Any umpire is permitted to make this call. The ball should be called dead immediately and it will be a "no pitch." Ball goes to the dugout for sanitizing, pitcher sanitizes hands before play continues.

Plate Umpire (10-2-1): Plate umpire should stand deeper than normal to call balls and strikes.

Equipment and Apparel (10-4-2): Cloth facial coverings are recommended but not required. Must be of one color and not distracting and no designs. Umpire may wear disposable glove and masks.

2. Softball Umpires Manual Modifications

Mechanics Sections 3, 4b and c

Base umpires should maintain 6 feet from any player as a starting position when rotated and/or counter rotated.

Section 2E

Keep the catcher and batter at a 6-foot distance when dusting off the plate.