



APEX
PARKS, RECREATION &
CULTURAL RESOURCES

Youth Softball Handbook



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Dear Coaches and Parents,

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the parents and coaches involved with our youth baseball/softball program. Everyone is working hard to make this season fun and successful.

The goal of the Parks and Recreation Softball program is to provide quality instruction which promotes sportsmanship, teamwork, development, participation and FUN! Individually, to develop technical skills which will enhance the ability, desire and confidence of each player. It is the coach's responsibility to instill this concept into all participants and their parents.

If anyone associated with your team loses sight of these objectives, please remind them that this is about children playing a game. Our job, as parents and coaches, is to facilitate a fun learning experience, and to lead by example. Often, the way we react to things on and around the field teaches them more than the game itself.

Also, please remember to use the designated parking areas. If you have children that are not participating in our programs, for their safety, be sure to watch them. Remember to keep our facilities clean and beautiful for everyone to enjoy.

Sincerely,
Apex Parks & Recreation

Apex Parks and Recreation Parental Code of Conduct

- Exhibit socially acceptable behavior at practice sessions, games, and matches or refrain from attending these events.
- Ensure that your children have the proper equipment.
- Ensure that your children arrive and are picked up at the stated time.
- Applaud all good effort and good plays or remain silent.
- Allow the coaches to instruct without outside interference or influence.
- Support the coaches in what they want the players to learn.
- Treat the coaches and league leaders with dignity and respect.
- Ensure that your children receive ample positive encouragement regardless of the outcome of their events.
- Allow your children to play without negative pressure, verbal or physical.
- Ensure that your children do not intentionally injure other players.
- Help your children adhere to the written and unwritten rules of honesty, fair play and good sportsmanship.
- Assist in helping other players, the team, or the program when asked.
- When possible, provide your children with extra instructional opportunities.
- When possible, provide your children with opportunities to learn other sports so that they have a more balanced development.

1. League Management

National Federation of High Schools rules will apply except where stated in the Handbook.

2. Coaches & Assistants

- All coaches must complete an online background check.
- A coaching staff not to exceed three (3) (For games). The three coaches should consist of one (1) head coach and two (2) assistant coaches.
- All coaches will be evaluated after each season.
- All coaches must understand and agree to carry out the duties, responsibilities, policies, and philosophies as established by the Apex Parks and Recreation Department.
- Only the head coach and their assistants will be allowed to be in the dugout with the team during an official game. Upon notification by an umpire, or staff member, additional adults are to be removed from the dugout. Failure to adhere to this ruling will result in the ejection of the head coach. **One coach must remain in the dugout with the players at all times. If there aren't enough assistant coaches present at the game, the head coach must assign a parent the duty to monitor the dugout.** Excessive playing, roughhousing, etc. are not allowed in the dugout area. Absolutely no swinging of bats is allowed while in the dugout or fenced in area. Bats should only be handled while batting or in the on-deck circle.

3. Player Eligibility

- League age for the 2022 Fall Season is the player's age as of October 31st of 2022.
- Players returning to a team in the same age group must still register. However, these players will be excused from skills assessments. No player shall be eligible to participate in assessments, player selection, practices, or games until they have completed the registration process. Teams will incur a penalty of forfeiture of all games in which an ineligible player participates. Coaches may face disciplinary action if they allow an ineligible player to participate.

- Players ages nine (9) and above that are new to the age group should attend player assessments to be eligible for selection in the draft. Players that do not attend for the entire assessment period will be randomly assigned to a team. No Special requests will be honored.
- Player assessments for ages nine (9) and above will be supervised by designated Parks and Recreation staff.
- Players ages eight (8) and under returning to the same age group will have the option to return to the same team from the previous season (fall to fall and spring to spring). Participants entering a new age group will be placed on a new team. No Special requests will be honored.

4. Player Placement and Draft

- Registered players ages eight (8) and under returning to the same age group will have the option to return to the same team from the previous season (fall to fall and spring to spring). Participants entering a new age group will be randomly placed on a team. No special requests will be honored.
- Registered players ages nine (9) and above who are new to the age group must attend player skills assessments to be eligible for selection in the draft.
- Registered players ages nine (9) and above returning to a team in the same age group will be excused from skills assessments.
- Player assessments are intended to provide coaches the opportunity to evaluate the abilities of registered players which, in turn, should promote greater skill equity within each league. Player skills assessments for ages nine (9) and above will be supervised by designated Parks and Recreation staff.
- The draft and player placement shall take place following the conclusion of player skills assessments and will be supervised by the Recreation staff.

5. Draft Procedures

To be organized and operated by APR&CR and the league coaches under the following guidelines:

- Teams shall draft in reverse order of their finish in the previous season. Teams with no returning players shall be treated as a new team and will start at the top of the draft.
- New teams added to the league and teams with no returning players shall be placed at the top of the draft order. These teams will be ranked based on number and age of option players
 - Teams with the fewest option players will draft first.
 - Coin flip will determine draft order of new teams with same number of option players.
- All teams will be age balanced (as close as possible, dependent on the make-up of the league).
- Each team shall be permitted to keep returning players and sons under the following conditions:
 - Options may be awarded to a coach and /or coach's child who has registered to participate. All options must be declared in writing prior to the draft. All options on the oldest age for the league will be protected through the second round. All options on the next oldest age will be protected through the third round. Sister options will be protected in the last round. A team is allowed two option players.
 - Note: A team may not have more than two option players on its roster during a season. Any player designated an option player the previous year who returns to the same team will remain an option player.
- Based on the total number of players needed to equalize the number on each team, each coach will draft until he reaches this number and then withdraw from the draft.
 - Exception: When a team reaches 6 players on their roster, that team must hold until all other teams reach 6 players. Note: Any team that returns 6 or more players will receive a first round choice, and then have to hold until all other teams have the same number of players.
- If any teams are short players after the draft, players will be assigned to the team at the discretion of APR&CR. Appointments shall be made per draft order and waiting list policy.

- If a player drops from a team prior to games beginning, APR&CR will attempt to replace that player from the established waiting list.

6. Team Composition

- The Recreation Programs Manager or designated staff will determine the number of registrants the program can accommodate and develop the player selection based on the needs of all teams, including possible modifications of draft order depending on returning players and other factors.
- Players may be replaced in the event of sickness or injury. The Recreation Staff member may replace players that are withdrawn during the season with players from the waitlist.
- Parental consent to participate may be withdrawn at any time. Requests to withdraw must be submitted to the Parks and Recreation Department in writing.

7. Uniforms and Equipment

- Jerseys and socks will be provided by the Parks and Recreation Department. **Parents are required to provide primarily grey pants for league play** and a glove. It is mandatory that the jersey provided by the Parks and Recreation Department be worn at all the games. Teams shall not, in any manner, alter the uniforms that are distributed.
- The Parks and Recreation Department will provide catcher's equipment and batting helmets for each team. Parents are encouraged to purchase their own bat for their child. For specific league bat specifications, check league specific rules.
- **No jewelry** allowed once play has begun except for medical identification. The referee may ask that a player take off all jewelry. Also, by rule they may ask a player with glasses to wear a protective strap while they are playing. Players with earrings will have to either take the earrings out or wear tape over them to be able to play.

Note: Taping over earrings is only acceptable in the case of new earrings and must be approved by the referee and Field Supervisor. Hair adornments, including beads, may be worn by players, provided they are secured in a bun and do not present a safety hazard to the player, teammates or opponents.

- Tennis shoes or shoes with molded cleats may be worn. Metal spikes and metal toe plates are prohibited in all leagues.
- All batters, base runners, youth base coaches and batters in the on-deck circle must wear a batting helmet.
- Catchers must wear all protective equipment. This includes masks, helmet, shin guards, and chest protector.

8. Team Practice

- The Recreation Programmer or designated staff will determine the number of practices based on availability, number of teams, and weather. The Parks and Recreation Department will try to schedule two practices a week prior to the start of scheduled games. After the start of games, each team **may** be scheduled one practice per week.
- Due to limited field availability, practices can be scheduled any day of the week.
- Teams may not reserve field and/or batting cage time for more than one week at a time and may not do so before **8:00am on Thursday** of the week before they wish to practice.
- For practice and game days, the Parks and Recreation Department will have the final decision on field cancellations. The weather hotline can be reached at (919) 249-3348. Decisions will be made by 4:00pm on weekdays, 8:00am on Saturdays, and 12:00pm on Sundays.

9. Tournaments

- There will be no end of season tournaments for Instructional League.
- If the schedule permits, in the leagues for ages nine (9) and above there will be a single elimination end of season tournament. Seeding for these tournaments will be determined by the regular season standings. There will be no time limit during championship games.

10. Code of Conduct and Penalties

- Apex Parks & Recreation Department has a zero tolerance for unsportsmanlike conduct or behavior by an individual (players, coaches, officials, spectators, or

parents) at any town function or event and said behavior will be subject to partial or permanent suspension.

- Unsportsmanlike conduct is defined as but not limited to the following: harassment of officials or participants, use of profane language or gestures, and public threat or physical violence.
- The length of any suspension will be determined by the Athletic Programs staff.
- No player, coach or spectator shall refuse to abide by an official's decision.
- No player, coach or spectator shall be guilty of objectionable demonstration of dissent at an official's decision.
- No player or coach, other than the Head Coach, should discuss with an official in any manner the decision reached by an official.
- No player or coach shall be guilty of using unnecessary rough tactics in the play of the game against an opposing player.
- No player, coach or spectator shall be guilty of personal verbal abuse upon any official for any reason.
- No player, coach or spectator shall be guilty of physical attack as an aggressor upon any players, official or spectator.
- No alcoholic beverages are allowed on any Town of Apex property. Anyone violating this rule is subject to arrest and expulsion from the League.
- No player, coach or spectator shall use profanity. Offending players/coaches may be subject to ejection, possible suspension/expulsion from the league.
- If ejected, a player or coach must vacate the premises. Failure to abide by this will result in forfeiture of the game.
- Any player, coach or spectator ejected by an official or a supervisor will be removed from the facility and suspended for one (1) or more of the team's subsequent games. The duration of any suspension will be determined by Apex Parks and Recreation staff. Anyone who has been ejected from a game must leave the playing site immediately.

- Suspensions may apply to regular season games and/or tournament play and may, at the discretion of Apex Parks and Recreation, be carried over to future seasons.

11. Protests

- The only legal protests are protests involving the use of an ineligible player or violations of the mandatory play rule or league rules.
- Protests based on an umpire's judgment will not be permitted.

12. Playing Rules

All Baseball and Softball games will be governed by the official rules of the National Federation of State High School Athletic Associations, with the following exceptions.

- **Game Start Times:** The clock will start for the first game of the day/night when the home team takes the field.
- All game schedules are final. Coaches are not allowed to reschedule league games or schedule games/scrimmages against teams outside of our league. The Parks & Recreation department may reschedule games for reasons that affect the whole league such as weather cancelations and school make up days. Coaches are allowed to switch practice times with another coach.
- Games that are tied after reaching regulation will play 1 extra inning.
- Game time will be indicated on the league schedule. There is no grace-period for any youth softball game. Game time is forfeit time, unless the start of the game is delayed because of an umpire or scorekeeper absence.
- If a team is unable to field seven (7) players at any time during the game, the game will be declared a forfeit.
- In the event of a forfeit, a practice game may be played between the two teams. All innings pitched will count toward pitching limits, and code of conduct violations will be enforced.

- If both assigned umpires are absent, the game will be postponed and rescheduled at the discretion of the Recreation Programmer or designated staff. If only one (1) assigned umpire is present, they will work the game alone.
- 3 1/2 innings (home ahead) and 4 complete innings (visitors ahead) shall constitute a complete game.

BATTING ORDER AND SUBSTITUTION

- All levels of play will use a continuous batting order. The batting order will consist of all players present to play the game.
- Players arriving after the start of the game will be added to the end of the batting order.
- If a player must leave the game for any reason, the coach must notify the umpires and the opposing coach. The player's position in the batting order will be skipped with no penalty.
- When using the continuous batting order, all players may enter to play defense an unlimited number of times. In the Instructional League, all players present will play defense each inning. Extra players will play in the outfield. In the Farm League, 10 players will play defense. The Major and Junior Leagues will play with 9 players on defense.
- In the event of an injury, the injured player may be replaced in the field by a player from the dugout. When replaced at bat (if not walked), the next batter assumes his count. If the injured player is a runner he/she may be replaced by the player who recorded the team's last out.

MANDATORY PLAY RULE

- All players who dress out for a game cannot sit consecutive innings unless authorized by the program supervisor

SPEED UP RULES

- **Catchers** on base with **1 out (may) or 2 outs must be removed** and a pinch runner substituted in his place. The runner is the player who made the **last out** that inning. The catcher is the player who will be catching when the team goes on defense. The player who scored the team's last out will run for the catcher.

- Following a put out with no one on base, the ball will be returned to the pitcher without being thrown around the infield.

BASE COACHES

- The offensive team will be allowed to have two (2) base coaches. One (1) base coach will be positioned near first base and the other coach will be positioned near third base.
- Base coaches must be an eligible player in team uniform or one of the coaches. One (1) adult must always remain in the dugout area to monitor for safety. If there aren't two (2) assistant coaches present, the head coach must recruit a parent to monitor the dugout at all times. **A player or anyone under the age of 18 must wear a batting helmet while coaching bases.**
- Base coaches must remain in the area of the coach's box and move to avoid interference with defensive players.

PITCHING

- Any member of a team may pitch subject to the restrictions of the pitching rules in their age division.
- If it is discovered that a team is using an ineligible pitcher, there will be no penalty if upon the discovery, the pitcher is removed from the mound. If the coach refuses to remove the ineligible pitcher, the offended team may play the game under protest. Note: It is the responsibility of the scorekeeper and the head coaches to work together to avoid violations of this rule. Remember that these rules are for the safety of the players.
- A pitching change must be made when a coach makes the second visit to the mound to the same pitcher during the same inning. A trip to the mound will be charged whenever a defensive coach enters the playing field to confer with the players. A visit will not be charged if the coach enters the playing field because of an injury. **Teams will not have a limit on the total number of mound visits per game.**

COLLISION

- When a defensive player has the ball and the base runner remains on her feet and crashes into the defensive player, the base runner will be declared out. All other base runners must return to the base last touched at the time of the

collision. If the act is determined to be flagrant, the base runner will be ejected. This is an umpire's judgment call.

13. Instructional Softball (7-8) Specific Rules

- Games will have a 1-hour time limit dead stop.
- Game scores and standings will not be recorded in the coach pitch league.
- A batter shall be given 4 pitches from the coach. If the ball is not put into play on 4 pitches, the batter will be allowed one swing off the tee to put the ball in play. If the ball is not put in play the batter is declared out. The manner of pitch (overhand, underhand, coach kneeling, etc.) and distance between the pitcher and hitter, is at the discretion of the coach.
- The ball will be considered dead when it reaches the infield after being thrown in from the outfield. The base to which the runner will advance is determined by the halfway point between bases and the judgment of the coach instructing in the area.
- The field will be occupied defensively by all players present.
- 1 catcher, 1 "pitcher-fielder," and 4 other infielders. Two defensive coaches are allowed in the outfield to verbally assist their players.
- The team at bat will bat through the entire line-up before changing sides. Outs will be called and players have to go to the bench, but the number of outs in an inning does not matter. 3 outs will clear the bases.

14. Farm Softball (9-10) Specific Rules

- 9-10 Softball league will play a 6-inning game with an 80-minute time limit. No new inning will begin after the time limit has expired. A new inning begins immediately after the final out of the previous inning. A game stopped due to the time limit will be considered a complete game.
- Games that are tied after reaching regulation will play 1 extra inning.
- Each team is only allowed to score a maximum of ten (10) runs per inning.

- Games will be stopped under the mercy rule after reaching regulation (3.5 innings) if one team is ahead by 10 or more runs and has had equal times at bat, or the home team is leading.
- Ten (10) fielders may be on the field each inning but play may go on with as few as seven (7).
- In situations where the second game of a week night cannot begin before 8:30pm, said game will be played on a later date in the season.
- Runners are permitted to steal bases. However, runners are not permitted to leave the base until a pitched ball reaches the plate. Runners may "steal" to 2nd base only after the pitch has crossed the plate beginning with the 3rd game of the season. They may not "steal"/advance to 3rd or home except on a hit or walk).
- The batter will be declared out in the event of a dropped third strike.
- No infield fly rule.
- In the event of an overthrow at first base, the runner(s) may only advance one base with the risk of being thrown out. **EXAMPLE: If a runner is on first base and a ground ball is hit to the pitcher, the pitcher then overthrows the first baseman. The runner going from 1st to 2nd may advance to 3rd with the risk of being thrown out. The same goes for the batter, they may advance to 2nd with the risk of being thrown out.**
- Pitchers can pitch a maximum of 3 innings per game. One pitch thrown constitutes an inning pitched.
- The Farm League will use an 11" softball.
- Bats must be permanently stamped with an ASA or USA logo.
- Pitching plate shall be set at 35ft. Bases shall be set at 60ft.
- There will be no walks in 9-10 softball. When a batter receives a pitched 4th ball, an offensive coach will come in to pitch a max of three (3) pitches. If the player is unable to put the ball in play they are declared out. The coach must pitch the ball underhand to the batter and from the pitching plate. Base runners may not steal while a coach is pitching.

15. Major (11-12) and Junior (13-15) Softball Specific Rules

- Will play a 6-inning game with an 80-minute time limit. No new inning will begin after the time limit as expired. A new inning begins immediately after the final out of the previous inning. A game stopped due to the time limit will be considered a complete game.
- Games that are tied after reaching regulation will play 1 extra inning.
- Each team is only allowed to score a maximum of ten (10) runs per inning. No run limit per inning in 13-15 softball.
- Games will be stopped under the mercy rule after reaching regulation (3.5 innings) if one team is ahead by 10 or more runs and has had equal times at bat, or the home team is leading.
- In situations where the second game of a week night cannot begin before 8:30pm, said game will be played on a later date in the season.
- Runners are permitted to steal bases but can only leave the base after the ball crosses the plate (11-12 SB). Runners leaving early will be declared out
- Runners are permitted to steal bases but can only leave the base after the ball leaves the pitcher hand (13-15 SB). Runners leaving early will be declared out.
- The infield fly rule shall apply in this league.
- Batter/runner may not advance to 1st on a dropped third strike (11-12 SB). Batter runner may advance to 1st on dropped third strike it 13-15 SB.
- Pitchers can pitch a maximum 3 innings per game. One pitch thrown constitutes an inning pitched.
- 12" softball will be used
- Bats must be permanently stamped with an ASA or USA logo.
- Pitching plate shall be set at 40ft. Bases shall be set at 60ft.