

Fall Middle School League, aka FMSL

*Official * *USSSA Fast Pitch Softball Rules*

<<http://www.ussa.com/ussa/ussa-general/2006FifthEditionRuleBook.pdf>>*

shall govern all play. In addition, the following rules shall govern the play and conduct of all teams. FMSL has the authority and reserves the right to remove and discipline any coach, parent, player, or spectator for unsportsmanlike conduct, harmful and/or abusive language directed towards officials, staff or the opposing team. Discipline by the FMSL board can result in warnings, suspensions, and expulsion from league activities. *

As the program evolves changes to the FMSL league rules will be denoted on this document in red. *

Practices

1. Practice dates and times to be determined by Middle School Head Coach.
2. No girl shall participate on a team until her waiver forms and fees have been received by the League President.
3. After team assignment and games have begun, no girl shall change teams unless approved by the FMSL board.
4. A team must have **at least** 8 players to play a game.
5. Game Play: Every effort should be made to play the game. For example, if one team shows up with 4 players and the other team has 12, the teams should be divided up and each play with 8. The team that does not have enough players at game time will forfeit, but every effort to play the game should be made, including dividing up both teams into 8-9 players.
6. Coaches should be at the playing field at least 30 minutes prior to the start of a game. The first team listed in the league schedule will be the home team. The home team shall occupy the first base dugout.
7. Free substitution will be allowed. Any player may re-enter the game in any defensive position after she has been removed. (The intent of the rule is to make it easier for a coach to play all the girls on the team in every game.) A girl entering the game must play a minimum of 1 inning (6 outs). Exceptions would include injury, illness or ejection from the game.
8. All players must play a minimum of three innings and bat at least once per game. This rule is based on a full regulation game. (The intent is to insure meaningful participation from ALL players. When a game does not run the full number of innings due to darkness, weather, time, etc., each coach should make every effort to have each girl play at least one or two innings.
9. If a batter is unable to take or finish her at bat due to illness or injury, she will be removed from the game until she is ruled able to return by her coach and the home plate umpire. The next batter will assume her count (if any) and complete the at-bat. If the player returns to the game, she shall assume her normal place in the batting order.

10. If a runner is unable to finish her stay on the bases due to illness or injury, she shall be removed from the bases until she is ruled able to play by her coach and the home plate umpire. The player furthest from batting and not already on base will run in her place.

11. Coaches removing a player from the game due to illness or injury must notify the opposing coach and the home plate umpire before removing the player. The player will remain removed until she is ruled able to play by her coach and the home plate umpire.

12. Players arriving after the start of the game may enter the game at the next side change after notifying the umpire. They will be placed at the bottom of the batting order.

13. A coach has the right to hold a player out of a game for disciplinary reasons. The coach **MUST** communicate with the girl's parents.

14. Any player with an open, bleeding wound will be removed from the game until the wound is cleaned and covered. If there is blood on the clothing, a change of uniform is required before re-entering the game.

Harassment/Sportsmanship

15. Each coach is responsible for controlling the fans and parent's of his/her team. Failure to do so shall result in one warning and then a forfeit.

16. No Taunting. Cheers must be limited to those that are positive in nature and must not be directed at the opposing players, coaches, or team.

17. Players shall remain on or around the team bench when not on the field.

18. Only players, coaches, bat people and the scorekeeper should be allowed on the team bench.

19. If a player or coach is ejected from a game, the umpire should report the incident within 24 hours to the League President. In the event that a coach or player is ejected from a game, the coach or player must also sit out the next scheduled game to be played.

20. If an umpire or coach is displaying inappropriate behavior is encountered, the coach(s) observing the behavior **MUST** report the incident to the Field Supervisor and League President.

Forfeit/Postponement

21. A team must have at least 8 players to start or continue a game or they will forfeit. A team will have 10 minutes past the scheduled game time to produce at least 8 players or forfeit the game. The game will start as soon as both teams have at least 8 players. If a team can not field and bat 8 players at any time, they will forfeit the game.

*22. Games shall not be postponed except for unplayable field or weather conditions. Both teams are to be present at the field ready to play at game time until a decision is made to postpone the game. The decision whether a field is playable or not is made solely by the League President or designated Complex Lead. Weather updates will be posted on our webpage: www.fallsoftball.org <<http://www.fallsoftball.org>>. *

23. In the event of lightning in the area, FMSL will follow the NFHS guidelines (if lightning and thunder distance are within 30 seconds of one another, the game will be suspended until the last lightning has been 30 minutes removed). There are no exceptions. The game will be suspended as not completed unless game ending procedures are in place (teams have played their age group regulation innings, an hour and a half has expired or run rules after inning apply).

24. Postponed or cancelled games will not be re-scheduled.

Pitching/Playing

25. A pitcher is considered to have pitched one inning if she pitches to one or more batters.

26. If a batter is hit by a pitch (whether or not the ball strikes her or the ground first), and in the umpires judgment, tries to avoid the ball, she shall be awarded first base.

27. If a runner is attempting to steal home and the batter does not vacate the batter's box before the runner is within 15 feet of home, the batter will be called out and all runners must return to the base they occupied at the time of the pitch.

28. A strikeout is the result of the pitcher getting a third strike charged to a batter. In fast pitch, this usually results in the batter being out. **In the Senior division** anytime first base is unoccupied, or there are two outs, and the third strike is not caught, the batter-runner is entitled to advance. This is considered a dropped third strike. If a batter goes outside the three foot foul territory on a dropped third strike she shall be called out. When, with two outs on a dropped third strike, she does not attempt to reach first base before all infielders leave the diamond or she gives up by entering the bench or dugout area the half-inning ends, she is considered out. **The dropped third strike rule does not apply in the Junior division.**

29. Teams will have two minutes to switch sides including warming up the pitcher. Violation of this rule by the team batting will result in the batter being awarded a strike every 20 seconds they are not ready. A violation by the team in the field will result in the batter being granted a ball for every 20 seconds they are not ready. We want to emphasize that the catcher needs to be ready to take the field as soon as the team finishes their time at bat. All umpires should instruct coaches to have their catchers ready at all times and recommend using the courtesy runner for the catcher only in order to keep the game moving.

30. If, at the instant the home team completes their at bat (3 outs or maximum runs scored), there is any time left on the game clock, another inning will be allowed (if required).

31. A game which is stopped because the time limit has expired will be considered a completed game even if the full regulation number of innings were not played. The inning in progress will be completed unless the home team is batting and ahead, at which point the game is over.

32. No inning shall begin after the expiration of the time limit.

33. The International Tie-Breaker is not used by FMSL.

34. Any runner is out when:

(A) She does not slide and collides with the fielder making a play on her.

(B) She does not attempt to avoid a fielder in the immediate act of making a play on her and a collision occurs.

(C) Malicious contact occurs. (Umpire may eject violator if flagrant)

Note: This gives the umpire discretion to call the runner safe if the umpire believe the runner tried to avoid contact.

35. A defensive player is responsible for avoiding the runner at any base when there is no play on the runner. Failure to do so could result in the runner being awarded the next base.

36. Fake tags are not allowed. First offense is a team warning. Second offense and any subsequent violation the player is restricted to the bench for the remainder of the game.

37. A batter may be called out if she throws her bat in a careless manner (as determined by the umpire).

38. There is no automatic out.

39. Defining the look-back rule: When a base runner is legitimately off base (i.e. moving off a base after a pitch or rounding a base after a hit, walk or dropped third strike), the pitcher is obligated to allow sufficient time for the runner to return. However, once the pitcher has the ball within the 16 foot circle, the runner is obligated to move directly toward the next base or the base last touched without any motion or recognition by the pitcher. The runner may not stand motionless or, after returning to the base, may not move off that base even though the pitcher is standing off the pitcher's plate. Failure of the runner to respond as indicated shall cause the umpire to signal the runner out. The ball shall be declared dead. However, if the ball is not in the 16 foot circle or a fake throw is made, the runners are not governed by this note. Being in the 16 foot circle is defined as both feet within or partially within the line. The feet may touch the line and extend outside the line. When the pitcher is in the pitcher's circle and a runner(s) is off the base, the pitcher is considered to be playing on the runner(s) when the throwing arm is raised or any forward movement of the body is made toward the runner. Movement of the head is not considered an attempt play.

40. The defensive team will have three conferences without penalty for a legal game. Penalty on the fourth visit regulation or second visit in extra innings will be the removal of **the pitcher** from the pitching position for the remainder of the game.

41. Penalty for illegal pitch: It is a delayed dead ball and should be signaled by the umpire calling the illegal pitch and verbalized so a player could hear the call. The pitch is declared a ball and base runners are awarded one base without liability to be put out if the ball is not hit. If the pitch is hit then the coach will have the option of taking the results of the play or accepting the penalty.

Overthrow Clarification

42. Fields without fences - A thrown ball that passes a line parallel to the baseline extending from the corner or the backstop on the side of the overthrow.

43. Fields with fences - A thrown ball that passes over, through or under the fence.

Clothing/Equipment

44. Players may not wear jewelry of any kind. Players shall not carry combs or other items that protrude from a pocket.

45. Batting helmets MUST be worn by all girls. Batting helmets with extended ear flaps, which cover both ears and temples are mandatory for all batters, on deck batters, base runners, non-adult bat & ball shaggers, players coaching bases and any offensive player in live ball territory, even if the ball is dead. Batting helmets must have attached face mask/guards.

46. Catchers helmets MUST be worn by all catchers. A catcher's helmet MUST be worn by any girl warming up a pitcher.

47. Shorts, jeans, sweat pants, or uniform pants are required for play. Suitable shoes must be worn.

48. The league will provide one new game ball for the beginning of each game. Additional balls are the responsibility of the two teams.

Scores

49. The home team is responsible for keeping the official score. Both teams should keep adequate scorekeeping to insure that every girl plays her minimum innings. Periodic cross-checking of score will help insure accuracy. However, it is not an excuse to delay the game.

50. The _home team_ coach is responsible for reporting the game score to the Field Supervisor or League President within 72 hours after the game is played. Failure to do so may result in a forfeit by the home team.

Protests

55. Protests are not allowed.

League/Tournament Rules

School Grade Levels	5th to 8th graders
Innings per Game	7
Time Limit	75 minutes; no new inning after 7; game can end in a tie
Game Over: Inn / Runs Ahead	4/15
Maximum Runs per Inning	5
Maximum Innings / Pitchers	N/A
Pitching Distance	40 feet
Base Distance	60 feet

Home to 2nd Base	84' 10 1/4"
Bunting / Sliding	yes
Stealing	yes
Run on Dropped 3rd Strike	yes – Senior division only
Run When Ball . . .	pitched
Infield Fly Rule	yes
Batting Order	all
Players on Field	9
Size of Ball Used	12 inch

Supplemental Rules

1. A regulation game will be seven (7) innings or 1 hour 15 minutes, whichever occurs first. Teams will still finish the inning if appropriate
2. Players are not allowed to lead off bases. They may leave/steal the base only after the pitcher has released her pitch.
3. Each half inning shall consist of five (5) runs, three outs or ten (10) batters. After each half inning, the team will resume their defensive positions.
4. Full catchers gear must be worn by catchers. Soccer shin guards are acceptable.
5. On an overthrow (**dead ball**) the maximum amount a girl can progress is one base beyond where the overthrow occurred. **(Editorial note: This is generally explained as the runner gets the base she is going to plus one base.)**

End of FMSL rules

Note: This is what the USSSA Rules say about collisions:

Sec. 18. Any runner is out when:

- B. She does not legally slide and causes illegal contact and/or illegally alters the actions of a fielder in the immediate act of making a play on him. **PENALTY:** The runner is out and the ball is dead immediately and interference is called. **NOTE:** Runners are never required to*

slide but, if the runner elects to slide, the slide shall be legal.

- C. She does not legally attempt to avoid a fielder in the immediate act of making a play on him. **PENALTY:** The runner is out and the ball remains alive unless interference is called. **NOTE:** Jumping, hurdling, and leaping are all legal attempts to avoid a fielder only if the fielder is lying on the ground.*
- D. Malicious contact occurs (always supersedes obstruction).*

Sec 54. SLIDE. *A legal slide can be either foot first or head first. If a runner slides feet first, at least one leg and buttock shall be on the ground. If a runner slides, the runner shall be within reach of the base with either a hand or a foot when the slide is completed. A slide is illegal if:*

- A. The runner uses a rolling, cross-body or pop-up slide into the fielder.*
- B. The runner's raised leg is higher than the fielder's knee when the fielder is in a standing position.*
- C. The runner goes beyond the base and makes contact with or alters the play of the fielder.*
- D. The runner slashes or kicks the fielder with either leg.*
- E. The runner tries to injure the fielder.*