



MTBSA Pony Softball Rules

Age Group – 7-8 years old

League Objective

MTBSA Softball offers the girls in our local communities an athletic forum to help develop both their physical and social skills through the game of softball. Our supervised program is designed to provide softball instruction in recreational and competitive environments, while promoting the ideals of good sportsmanship, fair play, honesty, loyalty, and a respect for authority. We want to offer an enjoyable and positive experience for the girls enrolled in the program. All directors, officers, coaches, and members shall bear in mind that, although important, the attainment of exceptional athletic skill and the winning of games are secondary to the goal of helping to mold the future women of our community.

Although MTBSA Softball does provide a competitive environment for girls with better than average skills, though our Select and Travel programs, many of the girls enrolled will play in the recreational divisions, which are intended to provide the players with an environment where they can learn the game of softball and have fun at the same time. These are instructional divisions with an emphasis on providing the player with the proper development and guidance needed to learn and acquire the necessary skills to grow in the sport and progress through each division.

DIVISIONAL OBJECTIVES

Pony division is an instructional and developmental division and a very important transition for 7- & 8-year-olds. An 11-inch softball is introduced at this level and a coach will pitch. As this division precedes the level (Minors) where girls will begin to pitch, player pitching will be introduced as the season progresses. Score and standings are not kept. Catcher is a new position introduced at this level. Players should be exposed to all positions that they can play erring on the side of player safety.

We want to create an environment where the player will learn, have a good time and continue to enroll in the program in subsequent years. The player will continue to be taught the skills of softball, working with teammates and coaches to learn and master their softball skills. This is an instructional, non-competitive division; thus, the parents, coaches and players should place their emphasis on the sport and having a good time.

The Game

1. During warm up the home team will have use of the field from thirty (30) minutes prior to the game for fifteen (15) minutes and visiting team use fifteen (15) minutes prior to the game for fifteen (15) minutes.
2. All games will be six (6) innings or 90 minutes whichever comes first.
3. An 11-inch optical yellow ball will be used.
4. Team must have a minimum of 8 players to start game and must have at least 7 to finish or team will forfeit game.
5. Score can be kept, but official scoring and standings will not be maintained at this level.



Responsibilities

The Home team is responsible for the following:

1. Lining of the field.
2. Setting up bases and pitching rubber.
3. Providing two game balls.
4. Returning bases and any other field equipment to the field storage box and locking the box.
5. Calling off the game due to rain or field conditions by contacting the opposing coach and Commissioner and rescheduling through the Commissioner.

Players

1. All players must be in proper uniform (i.e., shirts, pants, socks, and visor).
2. Shirts should be tucked in, and visors worn forward.
3. No jewelry should be worn during game or practice time (i.e., necklaces, watches, bracelets, rings, or earrings).
4. Mouthpieces are recommended, but not required.
5. Plastic cleats are recommended, but not required. Metal spikes are forbidden.

Offense

1. After three swinging strikes, the batter is out (a foul ball counts as a swinging strike, except for the third strike). There will be no walks or called strikes. Once the batter has struck out, there will be no more balls pitched to that batter for that at bat (coaches should take great care to enforce this rule. Allowing more than three swinging strikes to any one player is not only unfair to the rest of the players on each team but slows down the pace of play and jeopardizes the goal of playing a full 6 inning game).
2. When there is player pitching employed, the batter's coach must encourage the batter to swing at hittable pitches instead of waiting for the coach to take over. (This not only speeds up the pace of the game but also prepares the batter for player pitching at the Minors level).
3. The end of an inning occurs after three (3) outs or after the tenth batter. The tenth batter automatically causes three outs on the offense. Any runs that score during the tenth batters at bat will count toward the score.
4. All players bat whether they are playing the field or not, the batting order is continuous.
5. The batter and all base runners are required to always wear helmets, with chinstraps attached. Two (2) helmets with face guards will be provided to each team and are optional. This face guard helmet is intended for use by the batter only. If the batter chooses to wear it and reaches first base safely, the coach at first base must replace that batter's face guard helmet with a standard helmet with no face guard so that it is available for subsequent batters.
6. If a base runner is to be catcher in the next inning, they can have a substitute runner. This is to occur with two outs or tenth batter.
7. Throwing of bats is not permitted. On the first occurrence, their coach will warn the player. On the second occurrence they will be called out. This is a per batter rule.
8. Aluminum or wooden bats are permitted.



Defense

9. The defense shall consist of 10 fielders in normal playing positions. 10 fielders will consist of 5 infielders (including a pitcher), 4 outfielders and a catcher.
10. Up to two coaches are permitted on the field of play to provide instruction to the defensive players on the field. At no time is a coach permitted to field the ball or otherwise make any type of defensive play (unless it is in the interest of safety for a player).
11. When there is an opposing coach pitching, the player pitcher should position herself defensively on either side of the coach (typically on the right arm side of the coach for right-handed batters and on the left arm side of the coach for left-handed batters).
12. Assuming they arrive at the beginning of the game, and the game lasts the maximum 6 innings:
 - a. Each player should play a minimum of four innings per 6 inning game.
 - b. Each player should play a minimum of two innings in the infield (pitcher is considered an infield position).
13. Outfielders must position themselves in the grass behind the dirt infield.
14. There should be no more than five players in the infield (including the pitcher).
15. If there are less than 10 fielders, an outfielder is removed first, and then the coach can remove players at any position except pitcher. If the catcher is removed and a coach plays catcher, the coach may not make a play at home plate. (Pitcher needs to cover home plate).
16. If a ball is overthrown and goes out of play, the runners may only advance one (1) base. However, if a ball is overthrown and remains in the field of play, play continues until the ball is returned to the pitcher.
17. A live ball is declared dead when a fielder throws the ball to the pitcher. The play stops at this point.
18. If a runner is less than halfway to the next base when the ball is in the hands of the pitcher, then that runner must return to the base they came from, otherwise, they are entitled to the next base.

Pitching

1. The first half of the season will be coach pitch.
 - a. Coaches will pitch to their own team.
 - b. At no time is a coach permitted to field the ball or otherwise make any type of defensive play (unless it is in the interest of safety for a player).
2. The second half of the season will introduce player pitch under the following provisions:
 - a. Players will pitch to the opposing team.
 - b. The player is to pitch from the regulation distance outlined in "Field Layout.2" below, or at a safe distance as determined by both coaches.
 - c. If the player pitches three (3) un-hittable balls, the coach will step in and finish pitching to that hitter and the player will assume a defensive posture at the pitcher position (this rule must be adhered to keep the pace of the game moving with the goal of finishing a 6-inning game in 2 hours or less).
 - d. Coaches will determine "un-hittable" balls for their own pitcher.
 - e. Offense.1 rule above will apply to the batter during player and/or coach pitching



Umpires

1. There are no umpires required at the Pony level.
2. Swinging strikes will be called by the batter's coach.

Field Layout

1. Base paths will be fifty (50) feet.
2. Pitching distance will be thirty-five (35) feet from the back of home plate to the front of the pitching rubber.
3. A double first base will be used to minimize the risk of injury. The white portion of the base will reside in fair territory while the orange portion of the base will be in foul territory. If the runner decides to run through first base (instead of taking the turn towards second base), every attempt should be made to step on the orange portion of the double base and into foul territory, although the runner will not be penalized for contacting any white portion of the base.

SAFETY

1. At the first sign of lightening the game is called. Manager to use best judgment and err on the side of caution.
2. Any bleeding caused by impact with ball, player, or anything else will require player to come out of the game and appropriate medical attention given. Manager to use best judgment to decide if a player may return to the game.

Rule Changes

The MTBSA Softball Pony Division Rules and Guidelines contained herein may be changed during the season by the Commissioner or VP Softball to allow for changes in League Policy, introduction of piloted training programs, or any other factor that seeks to improve the quality of instruction and recreation for the player.