

**MANITOWOC COUNTY YOUTH SPORTS, INC.
GIRL'S SOFTBALL PROGRAM**

2026 JUNIOR FAST PITCH LEAGUE RULES

*******SPECIAL NOTE: Unless noted in this document, all league rules are to follow the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Softball Rules Book. Reference <http://www.nfhs.org/>.**

Additions or clarifications to rules for 2026 are in bold block font. Deletions to rules for 2026 are struck out.
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I. ORGANIZATION

1. All entries for teams desiring to play in the Junior Fast Pitch League must submit entry by the date established at the Annual Spring Meeting each year.
2. An official master schedule with designated Junior Fast Pitch League regular season game dates and starting times will be released no later than one day after the Annual May Coaches Scheduling Meeting each year.
3. Junior Fast Pitch League regular season games will be generally played on Thursday evenings.
 - a. Any team may, by mutual agreement with the opposing team, change the date or time of play if necessary. Postponed games should be made up in good faith and in a timely manner. The Junior Fast Pitch League Commissioner must be notified of the date or time change.
 - b. Teams must schedule make-up games within 2 (two) weeks after postponement due to weather or other conflict. If a new date and time cannot be agreed upon, teams are directed to work with the Junior Fast Pitch League Commissioner to facilitate rescheduling. If they are not scheduled within this time, a letter request may be filed by one of the teams with the Junior Fast Pitch League Commissioner regarding forfeiture.
 - c. If one team does not show or is not ready to play 15 (fifteen) minutes after the designated starting time, a forfeit can be requested from the Junior Fast Pitch League Commissioner.
 - d. A team failing to field 9 (nine) players at game time shall forfeit the game.
 - e. All forfeits in this rule must be presented to, and granted by the Junior Fast Pitch League Commissioner.
4. A Junior Fast Pitch Tournament may be scheduled upon the completion of the regular season. A Junior Fast Pitch Tournament will be structured as follows:
 - a. Team participation in the Tournament is voluntary.
 - b. Tournament bracket structure and seeding will be set by the Junior Fast Pitch League Commissioner, but will be generally based upon regular season record.
 - c. Member Communities may bid on hosting the Junior Fast Pitch Tournament

Games at the Annual May Coaches Scheduling Meeting.

- i. Junior Fast Pitch Tournament championship games may be bundled with other League Tournament championship games.
 - ii. If multiple bids are received, the games shall be awarded to the Community with the longest time passing since last hosting.
 - iii. In case of a tie, a random drawing of bidding Communities will determine the winner.
 - d. In Tournament championship games for first/second or third/fourth place, establishing Home Team is by means of the flip of a coin - heads or tails.
 - e. If any team fails to show up for their scheduled first/second or third/fourth place games at the appropriate tournament site and date, the MCYS would:
 - i. Impose a fine of \$500 (five hundred dollars) which would be paid by the Community who the team plays for and paid to the MCYS Treasurer. This monetary amount would be then given back to the community hosting the tournament.
 - ii. All MCYS awards acquired during the year would be forfeited.
 - iii. Penalties in this rule must be approved by the Steering Committee.
5. The following dimensions shall apply for the layout of the ball diamonds for Junior Fast Pitch games:
- Base path distance – 60 (sixty) feet
 - Pitcher’s mound distance – 40 (forty) feet (this distance is from the front of the pitching rubber to the rear point of home plate)
 - A 16 (sixteen) foot diameter circle is required to be marked (chalked) around the center of the pitcher’s mound
 - Starting in 2019, an emphasis shall be placed on batter’s & catcher’s boxes being properly marked to start any Junior Fast Pitch game. If they are not marked, or if the lines have been removed by normal play, the Home Plate Umpire’s judgement shall apply to whether the batter or catcher is positioned correctly relative to the batter’s or catcher’s box, for all plays. See Appendix B for dimensions.
6. All Junior Fast Pitch half innings shall end once the 8th (eighth) run of that half inning crosses the plate, regardless of the number of outs. The 7th (seventh) and subsequent innings (extra innings) shall have an unlimited run limit.
7. All Junior Fast Pitch regular season and tournament (non-championship) games shall be 7 (seven) innings duration, unless tied. If weather or darkness interferes with play so that the game is called (ended) by the umpire, it is a regulation game:
- a. If 5 (five) full innings have been played, or if the home team has scored a greater number of runs in four or four and a fraction turns at bat.
 - b. If play has gone beyond 5 (five) full innings. If the game is called when the teams have not had an equal number of completed turns at bat, the score shall be the same as it was at the end of the last completed inning; except that if the home team is in its half of the incomplete inning and scores a run (or runs) which exceeds the opponents score, the final score shall be as recorded when the game is called.

- c. If a game is called before completion of the number of innings and conditions as specified above, the umpire shall declare the contest “no game”. A “no game” shall be rescheduled.
 - d. Any game that is tied at the end of 4 ½ (four and one-half) or at least 5 (five) full innings when the game is called, shall be a tie. Game shall be rescheduled. The official score book is used to restart the game where it ended.
8. All Junior Fast Pitch regular season and tournament (non-championship) games shall have the following run rules limits.
 - a. The 12 (twelve) run rule after 5 (five) innings shall constitute a complete game.
 - b. A 20 (twenty) run rule lead after 3 (three) complete innings shall constitute a complete ball game upon mutual agreement by both coaches.
9. There is no run rule limit for MCYS Tournament Junior Fast Pitch Championship games. Any MCYS Tournament Junior Fast Pitch championship game shall be a 7 (seven) inning game unless tied, or unless called before 7 (seven) innings by agreement of both managers.
10. Lightning or thunder protocols during games shall be per NFHS Guidelines on Handling Practices and Contests during Lightning or Thunder Disturbances (see Appendix A). It is recommended that practices use these same protocols.

II. EQUIPMENT

1. Steel spikes are **NOT ALLOWED!** Any player actively listed in the lineup found wearing steel spike shoes, shall change them immediately before the player can continue to participate in the game.
2. All catchers must wear full equipment, mask, chest protector, and shin guards.
3. Players shall wear a full protective helmet while batting and running the bases. Face guards on batting helmets will be mandatory.
4. The official ball for the Junior Fast Pitch League will be determined each year at the Officer', Director's, and Commissioner's Meeting. 1 (one) dozen balls are supplied with each team entry. See the General Commissioner to purchase additional balls from MCYS inventory, or to obtain the official ball make and model for purchase elsewhere.
5. The use of the aluminum bat is legal, however, if used, it must be intact. All bats must be taped or equipped with rubber grips. Any change in the basic form of the bat causes it to be outlawed.
 - a. Approved bats must have ASA 2000, ASA 2004, or USA Softball All-Games certification marks and must not appear on the list of the USA Softball Non-Approved Bats with Certification Marks. This list can be found at <https://usa.asasoftball.com/e/BB1P2000.asp> It is a listing of bats that were approved initially and were given certification marks, but are no longer approved by NFHS.

III. ROSTERS (PLAYERS - RESTRICTIONS)

1. To be eligible to play in the Junior Fast Pitch League, a player may not reach her 15th (fifteenth) birthday before June 1st of the current year.
 - a. Any appeal for an age or other MCYS roster exemption must be submitted to the MCYS Steering Committee before the Annual May Coaches Scheduling Meeting.
 - b. Junior Fast Pitch League participation is open to girls only, defined as female (girls) as indicated on the child's birth certificate.
2. No player may participate in this program unless they have a current liability form on file with the MCYS. A player is not eligible to participate in any game until a current liability form is properly filed with the Junior Fast Pitch League Commissioner.
 - a. Penalty for using a player that does not have a current liability form properly filed will be forfeiture of those games played. Penalties in this rule must be approved by the Steering Committee.
3. No players shall change from one Junior Fast Pitch team to another after the start of the season. Before the first league game is played, a roster is to be filed with the Junior Fast Pitch Commissioner. Failure to do so will result in forfeiture of all games played until such roster is filed.
 - a. Players can be added to a roster at any time during the regular season. A player is not eligible to participate in any game until they have been added to the official roster. Penalty for using a player that has not been added to the official roster will be forfeiture of those games played.
 - b. Penalties in this rule must be approved by the Junior Fast Pitch League Commissioner.
 - c. The number of players on a roster will be limited to 18 (eighteen) players.
4. Players are generally limited to play on one team and one league only within the MCYS program to give as many players as possible an opportunity to play.
 - a. Starting in 2020, Junior Fast Pitch players that are currently eligible and actively playing on an MCYS Junior Fast Pitch Team, may also play on an MCYS Senior Fast Pitch Team. To be eligible for this special roster exemption, players must be registered to play on Junior Fast Pitch and Senior Fast Pitch teams from the same community, and must have reached their 14th (fourteenth) birthday by June 1st of the current year. This special roster exemption will apply for the regular season, and for tournament play.
 - b. Starting in 2020, each Junior Fast Pitch Team Roster may have up to 3 (three) players that are currently eligible and actively playing on an MCYS Grade School Modified Fast Pitch Team. To be eligible for this special roster exemption, players must be registered to play on Grade School Modified Fast Pitch and Junior Fast Pitch teams from the same community, and must have reached their 11th (eleventh) birthday by June 1st of the current year. This special roster exemption will apply for the regular season, and for tournament play.

5. To be eligible for tournament play, players must have a current liability form on file and must be on the official roster in the Junior Fast Pitch League Commissioner's possession before July 1st. Exceptions to this rule must be approved by the Steering Committee.
6. The Junior Fast Pitch League will play with a maximum of 10 (ten) players on the field of which 4 (four) must be outfielders.
7. Note: There are no residency rules for all Leagues starting in 2017.

IV. BASE RUNNING

1. Junior Fast Pitch players **may "lead off" or "steal a base"** after the ball is released from the pitcher's hand. If a runner leaves the base before the ball leaves the pitcher's hand, the ball is dead, "no pitch" is declared, and the runner is out.
2. **No more than 2 (two) base** Runners may **advance and/or** score on a passed ball or a wild pitch **per inning.** (Clarification: ~~Any ball that has not been secured by the catcher, which must be retrieved outside the catcher's box).~~ Additional base runners attempting to score in this manner, in the same inning, are out if they cross home plate (a dead ball is called, with all other runners returning to their previous legal base). ~~Additional base runners attempting to score in this manner, in the same inning, but not crossing home plate, may return to third base at their own risk, but they cannot score if a play is made on them.~~ **Any Other** runners may advance at their own risk, **including from third to home,** if there is a play made upon **that specific** ~~any~~ base runner.

If for any pitch, the ball is retrieved by the catcher outside of the catcher's box, it is considered a passed ball or a wild pitch.

3. On a dropped third strike, the batter is out ~~The batter may not attempt to go to first base.~~ **with less than 2 (two) outs and first base occupied at the time of the last pitch, or if the batter-runner is legally put out prior to reaching first base with a) 2 (two) outs or b) with less than 2 (two) outs and first base unoccupied at the time of the last pitch. Runners may advance and score if forced to move up due to the batter-runner successfully reaching first base. If the dropped third strike carries out of the catcher's box, the pitch is considered to be a passed ball and runners may advance / score per Section IV.2 above.**
4. When ball 4 is issued, and upon reaching first base, the batter/runner is not allowed to continue towards second base, when unoccupied.

5. The Infield Fly rule shall be in effect. An infield fly is defined as “a fair ball, not including a line drive or an attempted bunt, which can be caught by an infielder, pitcher, or catcher with ordinary effort, when first and second base, or first, second, and third bases are occupied, with less than 2 (two) outs”.
6. Play is live until the pitcher has possession of the ball inside the pitching circle. Runner may continue on to the next base if in motion, but **cannot** continue beyond.
7. If a defensive player, in a force out situation has already touched the base and is no longer in the base line, the runner shall not go out of the baseline in an attempt to make contact with the defensive player.
8. If a runner stands up and runs into a defensive player, the runner will be declared out for the interference. If such contact is, in the opinion of the umpire, malicious or flagrant, the runner shall be ejected from the game. If in the opinion of the umpire, the runner’s interference also prevented an out on the batter-base runner; the umpire shall declare the batter-runner out.

(Special emphasis should be placed on double play situations where this rule will apply!)

9. No base runner shall, upon seeing the catcher or another defensive player who has the ball waiting for the runner, deliberately and with great force, crash into the defensive player in hopes of jarring the ball loose. The umpire shall declare such runner out, and if in the umpire’s opinion, it is flagrant act; the runner shall be ejected from the game.
10. The Steering Committee recommends, that all managers instruct the base runners that have run past first base and have not made a break or started for second base to return to first base via foul territory so there is no question as to their intent.
11. Appeal procedures and guidelines for:
 - a. Missing a base.
 - b. Leaving a base on a caught fly ball before the ball is first touched.

LIVE BALL APPEAL-can be made by any fielder in possession of the ball touching the base missed or left too soon on a caught fly ball or by tagging the runner committing the violation if still on the playing field.

DEAD BALL APPEAL-once all runners have completed their advancement and time has been called, a coach or any defensive player, with or without the ball, may make a verbal appeal on a runner missing a base or leaving a base too soon on a caught fly ball. The umpire shall then make a decision on the play. If the ball has gone out of play, runners must be given the opportunity to complete their base running before the “DEAD BALL APPEAL” can be made.

12. In a situation where there are baserunners on first base and third base (second base is unoccupied), the runner at third base may not advance home unless played upon. A play

can be made on the runner stealing to second base without the penalty of the runner from third base scoring.

V. BATTING

1. Batters are allowed to bunt. The exception is a batter that shows bunt and pulls back to swing ... this is not allowed. A dead ball shall be called and the penalty is a strike.
2. A batter may be in motion while bunting or swinging, as long as either (motion) is clearly established. The exception is a batter that shows bunt and pulls back to swing ... this is not allowed. A dead ball shall be called and the penalty is a strike.
3. Roster Batting Option. For regular season games only, either coach may use what is known as Roster Batting to create their batting order. The following modifications to NFHS rules would then apply.
 - c. All eligible players present must be included in the batting order. Any eligible players arriving after the game officially starts are added to the bottom of the order. Players may not be moved to another batting order position.
 - d. If a player leaves the game due to injury or illness, **the opposing coach and umpire must be notified prior to the at-bat**, that player is removed from the batting order, and no out is recorded when that spot in the batting order comes up later in the game. If removal of the player reduces the number of players to 9 (nine) or less, an out will be recorded when that spot in the batting order comes up later in the game. The player **removed from the game or batting order for any reason** cannot re-enter the game.
 - e. If a player leaves the game due to reasons other than injury or illness, that player is removed from the batting order and an out is recorded when that spot in the batting order comes up later in the game. The player cannot re-enter the game.
 - f. All players are eligible for defensive play, and can be substituted into any defensive position at any time.
 - g. A courtesy runner for the Pitcher or Catcher is the player (not currently on base) that has made the last offensive out.

VI. PITCHING

1. Pitchers may appear on the mound in no more than 4 (four) innings per game. One pitch thrown in a half inning constitutes an inning pitched.

VII. HOME TEAM RESPONSIBILITY

1. The home team shall furnish the umpires, 2 (two) per game. Once a game starts, the umpires shall have complete control over how the game proceeds. The umpires shall eject from the game, any player, coach, or manager for using profane language. The umpires may also eject from the game, for good reason, any person or player at any time they it is necessary for the good of the game and the program. Such ejections shall be agreed upon by all umpires working the game and shall be reported to the Junior

Fast Pitch League Commissioner as soon as possible, but in no case later than the following day.

2. The umpires must be well versed in the rules of the game, especially MCYS special rules. At least 1 (one) adult umpire is required per game ... must be 18 (eighteen) years of age or older, while the second umpire must be 16 (sixteen) years of age or older. The adult umpire may be positioned either behind home plate or on the bases. The umpires shall, in all cases, be persons worthy of the position, of sufficient maturity to use good judgment, and do a satisfactory job.

The manager or coach of a team involved in a game shall not umpire that game, unless by mutual agreement with the manager or coach from the opposing team.

- a. If the home team has not supplied the required, qualified umpires within 15 (fifteen) minutes after the designated starting time, a forfeit can be requested by the visiting team (**see Rule I.3.e**).
 - b. If both teams agree to use umpires that do not meet these requirements, then all decisions made by those umpires will be upheld as final (MCYS will not allow protest of the game results).
3. The home team shall furnish the official scorer. Both teams shall submit full names, first and last, to the official scorer.
 4. The winning team shall be responsible for reporting results to the Junior Fast Pitch League Commissioner. Results should be phoned, texted, or emailed to the Junior Fast Pitch League Commissioner, preferably the night of the game or the morning following the game, but in no case, later than 2 (two) days after the scheduled date of the game.
 5. The home team shall have available a current year or one year old copy of the Softball Rules Book from the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), and the current year Junior Fast Pitch League Rules for each game. The MCYS shall provide a new NFHS rules book to each coach in every even-numbered year. (The expectation is that new coaches in odd-numbered years will receive their copy of the NFHS Rules Book from their predecessor).
 6. The home team shall furnish official game balls for regular season and non-championship tournament games, 1 (one) in new condition and others in good condition, as needed.

VIII. MISCELLANEOUS MCYS RULES

1. To promote sportsmanship and fair play, umpires, managers, and coaches should insist that conversation between opposing teams during the game be addressed to play position, rather than name, nickname, or other forms of razzing. This is of prime importance in the younger leagues. We feel it is equally important for spectators to act in the same manner.

2. The Steering Committee will be composed of the Officers, Directors, and Commissioners of the MCYS. It shall be their responsibility to evaluate any problems or questions submitted to them by any member of this program and to make such decisions and take such action as they feel is necessary to rectify these situations. They shall have authority to suspend temporarily or permanently any member of the program, or to make such reprimands as they deem necessary.
3. Game Protest Procedures and Requirements.
 - a. All game protests must be submitted verbally (no texting) to the appropriate MCYS League Commissioner within 24 (twenty-four) hours of game completion.
 - b. The protest shall then be presented in writing (email is acceptable – texting is not) to the MCYS President within 48 (forty-eight) hours of the verbal submission.
 - c. A \$100 (one hundred dollar) protest fee shall accompany any written protests and must be in the MCYS President’s possession before the protest will be reviewed. This fee will be refunded if the protest is ruled in favor of the protesting team.
 - d. No protests will be allowed on judgement calls. Protests will only be allowed on the application of MCYS or NFHS rules.
 - e. Any protests will be decided by the MCYS Steering Committee and the teams involved. If a protest is upheld, the original game shall be declared a “no-game”, and will be rescheduled by the appropriate MCYS Commissioner, with the rule infraction corrected.
 - f. There will be no protests allowed in tournament games.
4. Smoking or alcoholic beverages will not be allowed on the playing field or in the play area (dugouts, benches, etc.).
5. Any proposed changes or modifications of these rules must be submitted in writing to the MCYS General Commissioner by February 1st of the next year. The appropriate League Commissioner (or Commissioners, should the requested change directly affect multiple Leagues) shall review the request and shall decide whether to submit the request to the full Steering Committee for review and a formal vote on adoption, or to place the request on the MCYS next business meeting agenda as a discussion item only. If the decision is to submit for review and formal vote, the Commissioner(s) shall work with the Requestor and the MCYS General Commissioner to draft language for the Steering Committee review. If the decision is for discussion only (not to submit for review and formal vote), The Commissioner(s) shall provide feedback to the Requester after the Steering Committee discussion has been completed. The Steering Committee shall conduct either the reviews with formal vote, or the discussions only, at a regular or special business meeting prior to the annual Spring Meeting.

Appendix A

NFHS GUIDELINES ON HANDLING PRACTICES AND CONTESTS DURING LIGHTNING or THUNDER DISTURBANCES

National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC)

These guidelines provide a default policy to those responsible or sharing duties for making decisions concerning the suspension and restarting of practices and contests based on the presence of lightning or thunder. The preferred sources from which to request such a policy for your facility would include your state high school activities association and the nearest office of the National Weather Service.

Proactive Planning

1. Assign staff to monitor local weather conditions before and during practices and contests.
2. Develop an evacuation plan, including identification of appropriate nearby safe areas.
3. Develop criteria for suspension and resumption of play:
 - a. When thunder is heard or a cloud-to-ground lightning bolt is seen, the leading edge of the thunderstorm is close enough to strike your location with lightning. Suspend play for thirty minutes and take shelter immediately.
 - b. Thirty-minute rule. Once play has been suspended, wait at least 30 minutes after the last thunder is heard or flash of lightning is witnessed prior to resuming play.
 - c. Any subsequent thunder or lightning after the beginning of the 30-minute count will reset the clock and another 30-minute count should begin.
4. Review annually with all administrators, coaches and game personnel.
5. Inform student athletes of the lightning policy at start of season.

For more detailed information, refer to the "Lightning Safety" section contained in the NFHS Sports Medicine Handbook.

Revised and Approved October 2014

DISCLAIMER – NFHS Position Statements and Guidelines

The NFHS regularly distributes position statements and guidelines to promote public awareness of certain health and safety-related issues. Such information is neither exhaustive nor necessarily applicable to all circumstances or individuals, and is no substitute for consultation with appropriate health-care professionals. Statutes, codes or environmental conditions may be relevant. NFHS position statements or guidelines should be considered in conjunction with other pertinent materials when taking action or planning care. The NFHS reserves the right to rescind or modify any such document at any time.

Appendix B

Batter's & Catcher's Box Diagram for Junior Fast Pitch League

Softball Diamond Marking
Batter's Box Dimensions
Catcher's Box Dimensions

