

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LITTLE LEAGUE SOFTBALL AND BASEBALL RULES

[rev. 2/12/05]

LL Softball rules are, for the most, part *exactly the same as for LL Baseball*. Almost all the rule book differences are listed below. A knowledgeable baseball umpire who knows these will be an *expert* softball umpire. Most are obvious and self-executing (*i.e.*, the ball they hand you is large, and perhaps yellow). Only two areas bear particular attention: 1) runners leaving early or otherwise being off base, and 2) pitching motions. Any competent baseball umpire knowing the rules in those two areas will be a competent softball umpire.

Rule 1.04 – No raised mound.

Rule 1.04 – The batter's box is 7' long (not 6'); the extra foot is ahead of the plate.

Rule 1.07 – Pitching distance is 35' for Minors, 40' for Majors and Juniors.

Rule 1.09 – 11" ball for Minors and Majors; 12" for Juniors. (Note – it may be colored.)

Rule 1.10 – Softball bats, not baseball bats, must be used. Diameter limit is 2¼" at all levels.

Rule 1.11 – Individual players may choose to wear or not wear a cap.

Rule 1.11 – No metal cleats, even for Juniors.

Rule 1.12 – The catcher can wear a catcher's mitt, first baseman's mitt, or fielder's glove.

Rule 2.00 – (Definitions.) There is no balk, only an illegal pitch.

Rule 7.08(a)(5) – The runner is out for leaving before the pitch reaches the batter (Minors and Majors) or is released by the pitcher (Juniors).

Rule 7.08(a)(4) – When the pitcher has the ball and enters the 8' (radius) circle around the rubber (which must be marked), any runner not on a base must immediately return to a base or try to advance. (Penalty: Runner is out.) A runner cannot do both, *i.e.*, begin to return or advance and then reverse direction, unless the pitcher attempts (or fakes) a play on the runner. Having the ball within the circle does not prevent an advancing runner from continuing.

Rule 7.10 – Pitcher making an appeal must step backwards with the pivot foot off the rubber. Penalty: illegal pitch.

Rule 8.01 – Pitching motions. A pitch must be delivered with an underhand motion, the wrist no further from the body than the elbow. The pitcher begins with her shoulders square to home plate, her pivot foot on and her free foot on or behind the rubber. A backward step with the free foot can be taken before or as the hands are brought together. The pitcher may use a "windmill" delivery – the arm makes a complete forward circle, and the ball is released on the second forward motion, or a "slingshot" delivery – the arm goes back and up, and the ball is released on the first forward motion. In either delivery, a forward step is taken with the free foot. The pivot foot may drag off the rubber as the pitch is delivered, but the pitcher may not drag or "crow hop" the pivot foot to a new spot ahead of the rubber and push off from there, nor leap and deliver the ball with the pivot foot in the air.

Rule 8.01 – Pitching rule violations are illegal pitches, with a ball called on the batter. The offense may elect to decline the penalty and take the play. If the batter and all runners advance at least one base, the illegal pitch simply is ignored.

Rule 8.02 – Going to the mouth while on the mound, in and of itself, is not illegal (but an actual spitball is).