ELKHORN ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

2023 FUTURES

SOFTBALL RULES OF PLAY

Table of Contents

Mission Statement 3

Vision Statement 3

EAA Core Values 3
- **Integrity** 3
- **Respect** 3
- **Commitment** 3
- **Discovery** 3
- **Inclusion** 3

General Evolution Softball Rules 4

Borrowing Players 4

Game Cancellations/Postponements 5

4/5 Division – Co-Ed Tee Ball 6
- **Rules 1 through 4** 6
- **1st 30 Minutes** 6
- **2nd 30 Minutes** 6
- **Season Progression** 6

6/7 & Under Division – Coach Pitch & Tee 7
- **Team** 7
- **The Game** 7
- **Umpires** 7
- **Pitching/Catching** 7
- **Batting** 7

8 & Under Division – Coach Pitch 8
- **Team** 8
- **The Game** 8
- **Pitching/Catching** 8
- **Batting** 9
- **Base Running** 9

9/10 & Under Division – Player/Coach Pitch 10
- **Team** 10
- **The Game** 10
- **Pitching/Catching** 10
- **Batting** 11
- **Base Running** 11

11/12 Under Division – Player Pitch 12
- **Team** 12
- **The Game** 12
- **Pitching/Catching** 12
- **Batting** 13
- **Base Running** 13

Mission Statement

We are an Elkhorn-based non-profit youth sports organization dedicated to providing a safe, enjoyable, positive learning environment. We serve families with children of all ages and all skill levels from the community and across the region. We encourage and support the holistic development of every child, teach leadership and other essential skills, and inspire our athletes to seek excellence in all aspects of their lives. We will accomplish this by encouraging parental involvement and by providing professional staff, state-of-the-art facilities, and programs commensurate with ability, potential, and interest at the developmental, recreational, and competitive levels.

Vision Statement

We aim to develop a culture of excellence that establishes standards and expectations that are shared among all of our coaches, parents, players, volunteers, staff, board, and the community. Every member of the organization will hold each other accountable and strive to make meaningful contributions. Our ongoing success will be determined by every individual's character, leadership, beliefs, passion, and commitment, resulting in a first-class youth sports organization.

EAA Core Values

Integrity

Being honest and showing a consistent and uncompromising adherence to strong moral and ethical principles and values.

Respect

Putting people first – players, families, colleagues, officials, opponents, etc.

Commitment

Everyone is committed to the developmental process, as well as to the organization's mission, vision, and values.

Discovery

We use player-centered learning and teaching as well as coaching and parent education.

Inclusion

We provide programs for all children of all skill levels and abilities who want to play.

General Futures Softball Rules

The age cutoff for Division is December 31st of the previous year for the current year/season of play. Players may play up one age level from their current age.

In general, Futures Softball players should have the opportunity to play multiple positions in order to learn to play and enjoy the games.

- No player shall play the same position for more than two innings per game.
- Players should not sit more than one innings in a row unless the player is injured or sick.

Futures teams are not allowed to play in sanctioned tournaments during the regular season. They are allowed to enter tournaments post-season (after Futures End-of-Year Tournament) if they wish.

All players must wear a helmet with a facemask while batting at practices, in warm-ups, in batting cages, while in the on-deck circle, and while on base.

We recommend that all players ages 9 and above wear a fielding mask when playing infield.

Softball equipment provided for each team is the responsibility of the coach and should be returned at the end of the season.

A maximum of three coaches will be allowed in the dugout during the game; only two coaches are allowed on the field during a game.

For 8U and above, the home team is responsible for entering and checking the game score on the EAA Futures Softball website within 48 hours after the game is completed. This will allow us to keep track of standings for seeding in the End-of-Season Tournaments. Scorekeepers from each team should check with each other after the game to make sure they agree on the score.

Borrowing Players

Futures teams may borrow players from other Futures teams in their age division or one age division below if they are short for a game. Borrowed players must be placed in the last position of the batting order and are only allowed to play outfield on defense.

Game Cancellations/Postponements

Game cancellations/postponements are the responsibility of the Field Crews and the Schedule Director. Coaches may not reschedule games on their own. Coaches who know they cannot field a team should contact the Schedule Director no later than 72 hours prior to the scheduled game time. Games will only be rescheduled for valid reasons approved by the EAA Softball President such as

important school functions or other emergency circumstances and only if time permits to reschedule the game. All other games should be played as scheduled by using borrowed players or the game will be recorded as a forfeit.

A final call will be made at 4pm on which fields, if any, are playable. Field status can be seen at https://elkhornathletics.demosphere-secure.com/softball/field-info

Rained out games will not be re-scheduled unless the number of games played falls below the range of game numbers noted on our website on the Futures page. If a game does need to be re-scheduled, coaches are responsible for contacting each other to come up with 2-3 alternate dates that work for each and then notify our scheduling director, Scott Tingelhoff: scotttingelhoff@elkhornathletics.org

4/5 Division – Coed Tee Ball

These are IN ADDITION to the EAA Futures General Rules starting on page 4.

Rule One: ENCOURAGE every player and make it FUN!
Rule Two: Each team will work with their own players.
Rule Three: RECRUIT all parents, grandparents, siblings, relatives to help during station drills- don't let them sit around.
Rule Four: See Rule One.

1st 30 minutes
Practice Stations will consist of providing instruction to players in **smaller groups**. Each station will be manned by a volunteer coach and players will rotate between stations every **7 minutes**. Stations may include teaching basic fundamentals of these possible stations:

- Catching
- Fielding
- Hitting
- Throwing
- Base-Running

All stations will be provided with age-appropriate techniques and games to make it FUN for the new ball players.
Recommend coaches have **three** practice stations for players before playing t- ball game. Coaches have discretion to pick the stations they want each week; however, we would recommend always having a **hitting** and **throwing** station each week.

2nd 30 minutes
T-Ball Game will consist of **one inning (two, if time permits)** with every player batting and playing the field. The general rules will be as follows:

- No score shall be kept.
- Rotate fielding positions throughout game and season.
- All players play in the field with maximum of six-infielders (to avoid dog-piles).
- Emphasize throwing the batter out at 1st base.
- Every player bats through the line-up.
- Every batter must wear helmet with face guard when hitting or running bases.
    - Base line is 40'
- Base runners may advance to next base only after the ball is hit off the tee.
- The ball must travel at least 10 ft from home plate to be considered fair.
- There will be no recorded outs. If player hits the ball and is out at 1st base they will stay at 1st and run bases.
- Last batter of each inning will hit a home run to clear the bases.

As the season progresses, coaches may at their discretion play a T-ball game for complete hour (this would be recommended for last 1 or 2 games of the season).

6/7U Division – Coach Pitch & Tee

These are IN ADDITION to the EAA Futures General Rules starting on page 4.

This division is for girls ages 6 through 7 as of December 31st of the previous year. They play on a smaller field with a base length of 40 ft. Pitching distance is 25'. A 9" reduced injury factor ball is used. *This is a developmental league and no scores are kept.* Coaches should teach fundamentals, rules, and object of the game.

Team

All players play positions on the field, but no more than 6 on the infield. A team needs 6 players to field a team; they may borrow players from the other team to complete their infield. Opposing players will still bat for their own team.

- When on defense, up to 2 coaches may be on the field to help their players with instructions. Coaches may not be in base paths or touch any player or ball.

The Game

A game will consist of 6 innings or 60 minutes. Please wrap it up as close to 60 minutes as possible so that the teams playing in game following will be able to get on the field. An inning will consist of 7 batters for each team. The inning is over when play on the 7th batter finishes her at bat.

Umpires

None

Pitching/Catching

A player will be placed at the pitching and catching positions on the field for defensive purposes. The catcher can assist with providing the ball to the batter's coach. The pitcher must remain in the pitching circle while the coach is pitching.

Batting

Coaches pitch (4) pitches maximum per batter, no matter the count or number of foul balls. If the player does not hit the ball into play, a tee is placed on home plate. The batter's coach should assist in placing the ball on the tee and helping the batter get positioned correctly. Once the ball is placed, the coach should move behind the catcher. Each batter will swing until they put the ball into play off the tee.

Base Running

- The runner must hold base until the ball is hit.
- The runner may advance more than one base per ball in play when a hit allows.

Play Stoppage

- Outs will be enforced to award good defensive skills, but 7 players bat each inning no matter the number of outs.
- Runners at each base are allowed to advance (1) base on an overthrow, **unless** it is decided at the plate meeting by both coaches not to award any bases on overthrows.

8U Division – Coach Pitch

These are IN ADDITION to the EAA Futures General Rules starting on page 4.

This division is for girls 7 through 8 years old as of December 31st of the previous year. This league plays on the field with a base length of 55 ft. Pitching distance is 30'. Circle is 8' radius around the pitching rubber. A 10-inch reduced injury factor ball is used. This division will utilize umpires as standings will be recorded for the end-of-season tournament.
Teams will utilize all Nebraska USA Softball J.O. rules and regulations with the following exceptions:

Team

Each team shall use 10 players on defense, six (6) infielders and four (4) outfielders. Outfielders must line up 15' beyond the base path. All games should be played with no less than eight (8) players on the field; they may borrow players from the opposing team to complete the field. The borrowed players will still bat on their own team.

The Game

A game will consist of 6 innings or 70 minutes, Finish-the-Inning, with no new inning starting after 65 minutes. Games may end in a tie. If home team is ahead after 5 ½ innings, the game is over. At this point the game ends with the score at the time as official.

- Inning: Each team on offense will be allowed five (5) runs or three (3) outs at which time the teams will alternate offense and defense. Balls and Strikes will not be kept or called.
- Run Ahead Rule: The game will be called at the end of five innings if one team is ahead by six (6) or more runs.
- Tiebreaker: Ties are allowed.
- Before the game each coach should provide a line-up card to the other coach with numbers and first names.
- The home team is responsible for entering and checking the game score on the EAA Futures Softball website within 48 hours after the game is completed. This will allow us to keep track of standings for seeding in the End-of-Season Tournaments.

Pitching/Catching

At the start of each pitch, all outfielders shall be positioned in the outfield, and the player-pitcher shall take a position within the eight (8) ft. pitcher's circle and shall not take a position directly in front of the coach/pitcher.

- Coach-Pitcher: Shall be a member of the team's coaching staff & shall pitch the ball in an underhand motion to each batter of his/her team. *Coach-Pitcher Interference*: The coach-pitcher shall be considered part of the playing field. Exception: In the judgment of the umpire, if coach-pitcher interference occurs, the ball will be declared dead. Effect: All runners will return to the last base occupied.

- Player-Pitcher: Shall be an 8-Under playing member of the team. The player should stand in an area close to the coach-pitcher for defensive purposes.
- Note: The game moves faster if a coach is behind the catcher to speed up the return of the ball to the pitcher.

Batting

All players present must bat using a continuous batting order. Players shall be listed by their first and last name in the order in which they will bat. Walks are not allowed.
Coach Pitch: Each batter will be allowed 6 pitches to bat the ball into play. This means that they must swing the bat on the 6th pitch no matter what or be called out. If the ball is fouled off, they are allowed another pitch, up to 10 total pitches by the coach. The batter is out if the 10th pitch is fouled off. Each batter that fails to bat the ball in play will be counted as an out, and the next batter in the batting order will take his/her place at bat.

- A caught foul fly ball will be an out whenever it occurs, including the sixth pitch or any subsequent pitch.
- No Bunting allowed.
- The Designated Player (DP) Rule will NOT be used.
- Infield-fly rule: Not in effect.
- Dropped Third Strike: Not in effect. If a batter strikes out and the ball is dropped by the catcher. EFFECT: The batter is out, and the ball is dead.

Base Running

- Each base runner may lead off when pitched ball crosses home plate.
- Runners can score on a batted ball or an overthrow, with a limit of 1 base advancement for each runner on overthrows.
- Base Stealing: Not allowed, including home plate with passed balls.

Play Stoppage

- Runners may continue to advance bases until the ball is under control of an infielder and **on the dirt.** Should runners be, in the umpire's judgement, beyond the half-way line between bases they may advance to that base.
- Overthrows: There shall be a limit of one (1) overthrow on a play, with a maximum of one (1) base advancement for each runner. Should a second overthrow occur in the same play, the umpire shall immediately call Time and base runners will be returned to the last base occupied.
- A runner attempting to advance beyond the one base they are allowed to advance. EFFECT: May be put out while between bases. A runner cannot be put out while sole contact with a base.
- After all play ceases and the ball is dead, if a runner occupies a base beyond the one the runner was allowed to advance. EFFECT: The runner will be returned to the correct base without liability to be put out.
- NOTE: The umpire shall call Time when the lead runner has been stopped.

9/10U Division – Player/Coach Pitch

These are IN ADDITION to the EAA Futures General Rules starting on page 4.

This division is for girls 9 & 10 years old as of December 31st of the previous year. This division plays on a field with a base length of 60 ft. Pitching distance is 35' ft. All teams will play with an 11-inch (soft) ball in good condition. *Teams will utilize all Nebraska USA Softball J.O. rules and regulations with the following exceptions:*

Team

All games should be played with no more than 10 (10th shall be a rover in the outfield) and no less than 8 players on the field. When playing with 8 players, the 9th spot in the batting order does not constitute as an out. A team must field a minimum of eight (8) of its own players or the game will be declared a forfeit. A team may borrow players (see borrowed player policy).

The Game

A game will consist of six (6) innings, or 70 minutes, Finish-the-Inning, with no new inning starting after 65 minutes. Games may end in a tie. If home team is ahead after 5 ½ innings, the game is over. At this point the game ends with the score at the time as official.

- Either 3 outs or 5 runs determine a 1/2 inning.
- There will be unlimited substitutions allowed. Batting order will remain the same.
- All teams must keep a scorebook in the event of a dispute over the game scores. One is provided to you.
- Before the game each coach will provide a line-up card to the other coach with numbers and first names.
- Both teams are responsible for entering and checking the game score on the EAA Evolution Softball website within 48 hours after the game is completed. This will allow us to keep track of standings for seeding in the End-of-Season Tournaments.

Pitching/Catching

Each new pitcher is allowed 5 warm-up pitches when entering a game, then 3 warm-up pitches to start her other innings.

- **New USA Softball pitching rule changes**:
    1. Allows the pitcher to choose to start with their stride foot behind (not touching) the pitching rubber.
    2. Allows the pitcher to choose to step back off of the rubber with their stride foot before striding forward.
    3. Allows the pitcher to choose to start with both feet touching the rubber.
- Coach will pitch (to their own batters) after 4 (four) balls have been called or a pitch hits the batter. When the coach comes in, they will **continue with the count**

started by the pitcher and will pitch until the player strikes out or puts the ball into play, up to five (5) additional pitches. This means they need to swing at the 5th pitch no matter what or be called out.

- The coach who is the designated pitcher can also act as infield umpire when needed.

Batting

All offensive players on the bench will bat consecutively whether they are playing the field or not. The infield fly rule does not apply.

- Drop 3rd strike rule is NOT in effect; batter is out on strike three.
- A ball that hits the ground and, then the batter, will be called a ball.
    - No bunting allowed.
    - No walks will be allowed.
    - Batter can strike out against the coach.

Base Running

- Each base runner may leave the base after the ball has been released from the pitcher's hand.
- Stealing is allowed only when the player (not coach) is pitching; home is closed **on passed balls or wild pitches**. When the coach is pitching, the runner must hold their base until the ball is batted into play. **Runners can score on a batted ball or an overthrow.**

Play Stoppage

- Runners may continue to advance bases until the ball is under control of an infielder in the pitcher's circle.
- Runners may advance at their own risk on any overthrows.

11/12U Division – Player Pitch

These are IN ADDITION to the EAA Futures General Rules starting on page 4.

This division is for girls 11 & 12 as of December 31st of the previous year.

This division plays on fields with a base length of 60 ft. Pitching distance is 40 ft. All teams will play with a 12-inch regular optic yellow softball. Game rules may be altered with the mutual agreement of team coaches to complete the game in the allotted time. *Teams will utilize all Nebraska USA Softball J.O. rules and regulations with the following exceptions:*

Team

All games should be played with no more than 9 players on the field.

The Game

A game will consist of six (6) innings or 70 minutes, Finish-the-Inning, with no new inning starting after 65 minutes. If the game is tied, then declare a tie. If home team is ahead after 5 ½ innings, the game is over. At this point the game ends with the score at the time as official.

- Either 3 outs or 5 runs determine a 1/2 inning.
- Run rule: 12 runs after 3 innings, game can continue to time limit at coach's discretion.
- All teams must keep a scorebook in the event of a dispute over the game scores. One is provided to you.
- Before the game each coach will provide a line-up card to the other coach with numbers and first names.
- There will be unlimited substitutions allowed. Batting order will remain the same.
- Both teams are responsible for entering and checking the game score on the EAA Futures Softball website within 48 hours after the game is completed. This will allow us to keep track of standings for seeding in the End-of-Season Tournaments.

Pitching/Catching

A pitcher is allowed to pitch only 2 consecutive innings and no more than 3 innings total in any game.

- Each new pitcher is allowed 5 warm-up pitches when entering a game, then 3 warm-up pitches to start her other innings.
- **New USA Softball pitching rule changes**:
    - Allows the pitcher to choose to start with their stride foot behind (not touching) the pitching rubber.
    - Allows the pitcher to choose to step back off of the rubber with their stride foot before striding forward.
    - Allows the pitcher to choose to start with both feet touching the rubber before striding forward.

Batting

All offensive players on the bench will bat consecutively whether or not they are playing the field. A batter who throws her bat is out. (This is an umpire's ruling).

- The infield fly rule does not apply.
- Bunting is allowed.
- On a walk the batter is awarded first base and may advance another base until the next pitch is thrown. Batter may not slow down or stop if attempting to advance to second.
- Drop 3rd strike rule is in effect.
- A ball that hits the ground, and then the batter, will be called a dead ball and the batter is awarded first base.

Base Running

- Base stealing is allowed; home is open.
- Each base runner may leave the base after the ball is released from the pitcher's hand. Runner's leaving the base before the pitch is released will be called out.

Play Stoppage

- Runners may continue to advance bases until the ball is under control of an infielder in the pitcher's circle.
- Courtesy runner for the pitcher & catcher is allowed. Last available player inserted as runner.