

8U Division GHVSL Rules

In general, we follow USSSA 8U – with some differences to simplify game management, promote player safety, and encourage coaching flexibility (4/16 Update)

Sportsmanship Rules

All GHVSL participants (Players, Coaches, Umpires, Spectators) must follow the [GHVSL Code of Conduct \(COC\)](#). Our expectations are clear and must be adhered to by all participants. Not every game situation is covered in the COC, so some game situations fall into “general sportsmanship” – For example, No Heckling of Pitchers is permitted. Team is welcome to cheer on their players in a positive tone, but there shall be no outbursts when a pitcher starts their windup to distract or gain an advantage.

[GHVSL CODE OF CONDUCT](#)

Game Day Logistics

Game Balls – Each team (Home & Away) must supply new 11” game balls (2) each game. After that, teams alternate providing umpires with new softballs starting with the away team. GHVSL provides approved Baden Softballs for use. We may approve additional models of softballs for play.

Umpires – Umpires are paid at the pregame meeting. Teams split the cost of one umpire @ \$80.

Single Games or Doubleheaders – Inability to field 8 players for a game shall result in forfeit. You may play with at least 8.

Game Time Limits – 6 inning games – Inning does not start after 1:45 (clock starts at first pitch). Make good judgment – tie game at 1:45 is ump discretion. **Time Limit Exception** – In limited cases, some field complexes have time limits and/or tight scheduling with back-to-back games. Home team is expected to let the opponent know in advance of any unique time constraints – and should be confirmed at the pre-game meeting with the umpire. Note - the new inning starts the moment the last out is made of the home team at bat.

Coaching staff – may consist of a Head Coach, Assistant Coach, Scorekeeper, & One Bench Coach for a total of no more than 4 coaches. There should never be more than 4 coaches in the bench area.

Base Coaches – Not allowed to touch player when ball is in play. At umpire discretion – batter runner may be directed back to base OR called out.

Pitching Distance (8U) - 30' - for BOTH PITCHER & COACH PITCH

Doubleheaders – Each team will be home one game. The host team will have a choice of which dugout they will use regardless of which team arrives at the field first.

Forecast for Rain – HOST team always makes the call – Most importantly – please contact opposing coaches and call umpires DIRECTLY. Secondly, in the event of cancellation, cancel via the team portal & contact league coordinator Dave Zaslaw - ghvsoftball@gmail.com – Please make a call at least two hours before game time – if game is called after the umpire travels to the game – they are entitled one-half game fee. After first pitch is thrown, the responsibility shifts to the UMPIRE for any/all cancellations.

IMPORTANT – Game Cancellation Policy (non-weather related) – when a game must be canceled, we prefer BOTH teams to inform the league to give our league coordinator enough time to redeploy the umpire crew. Please update the game via the team portal and the league - ghvsoftball@gmail.com AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. If the non-weather related cancellation occurs within 24 hours of game time – canceling team is subject to forfeit & must pay the umpire(s) FULL FARE if we can not reassign for the game (or games if a doubleheader). Remember, we have great umpires that depend on our league for their income. It is not fair to leave them hanging.

Darkness or weather shortened games – Official games (4 innings complete in 6 inning games) are final. Unofficial games (not yet reaching the above length) are suspended and played the next day (only in the playoffs meaning we do not suspend games in the regular season). With away team leading or tie game, and home team does not complete their home at bat, game reverts back to the last completed inning, if that results in an official game – game is final. With home team leading in a shortened game, home team is not required to complete their at bat for the game to be final.

Protesting Games – GHVSL Protest Policy – The protesting manager must notify the home plate umpire of a protest before the next pitch is thrown. The umpire must note the point of protest in the scorebook and/or note exact moment of the protesting manager and then notify the umpire coordinator after the game via email. Protesting manager must email league within 24 hours – ghvsoftball@gmail.com with the game situation, the rule being protested, and the teams and umpires involved. You may not protest a judgment call by an umpire, the only situation where protests are considered are where a rule is incorrectly interpreted.

Game incidents – Any conduct deemed detrimental to the game by the game umpire shall result in a game ejection or forfeiture. If anyone associated with a team (coach, player, or spectator) is ejected from a game, that person will have an automatic one (1) game suspension, for the following game, the first time. In the event the following game is not played due to inclement weather or schedule conflicts, the suspension applies to the next game played; The second time that same person is ejected, the GVHSL Director will review the matter for further disciplinary action. Game umpires will notify the appropriate league director of the suspended player's name and game conduct. Specifics in this area are detailed in the league Code of Conduct.

Safety Rules

Helmet – Any player at-bat, on the bases, or in the coaching boxes must wear a double ear-flapped helmet & **FACEMASK**

On Deck, Warm Up Batter – On Deck Batter – ONLY IF THERE IS AN ENCLOSED designated area. NO open area on deck batters.

Cleats – 8U – Plastic Molded Cleats, Turf, Sneakers only - no spikes.

Catcher Safety – An extended “dangling” throat protector is considered a required part of the catcher’s mask. Hockey-style catcher’s masks with built-in extended throat protection are approved and do not require an extended “dangling” throat protector. The catchers mask shall not have a chrome or mirror-like surface. The catcher’s helmet and mask combination shall meet the NOCSAE standard which includes having full ear protection with dual ear flaps. The skull cap and mask combination does not meet the NOCSAE standard nor does it provide full ear protection with dual ear flaps and is not permitted in GHVSL.

Double Bag @ First – Games may be played with or without the double bag at first. If a field has a double base, all infield outs runner must touch the orange (outside) base and the first baseman must be in contact with the white part of the base when a play is being made. If there is a base hit the runner can touch either base.

Blocking Bases or Plate – Obstruction shall be called if a runner does not have access to the bag/plate. The runner could/will be awarded 1 base. A defensive player cannot block a base without the ball.

Slash Bunting (Show bunt, pullback and swing away) - **NOT ALLOWED** - Player is called out immediately upon swing motion, regardless of if they make contact or not. **7/22/24 ADD**

Thunder & Lightning Policy – Thunder and lightning necessitates that games be suspended. The occurrence of thunder and/or lightning is not subject to interpretation or discussion - thunder is thunder, lightning is lightning. With any weather in the forecast, please set up a plan for shelter prior to the start of a game. When thunder is heard and/or when lightning is seen, the following procedures should be adhered to:

Suspend play and direct participants to go to shelter, a building normally occupied by the public or if a building is unavailable, participants should go inside a vehicle with a solid metal top (e.g. bus, van, car). Do not permit people to stand under or near a tree; and have all stay away from poles, antennas, towers and underground watering systems. After thunder and/or lightning have left the area, wait 30 minutes after the last boom is heard or strike is seen before resuming the game.

Seasonal Rules

Age Requirements - GHVSL 2025 Fall & 2026 Spring & Summer Age Groups

Age Calculator - <https://www.usssa.com/fastpitch/ageCalculator>

We continue to follow USSSA Age Requirements

AGE REQUIREMENTS FOR SPRING 2026 & SUMMER 2026

8U - Player must be born AFTER 8/31/2016 - 30ft Pitch Distance (Kid/Coach Pitch) - 11" Softball

10U - Player Born AFTER 8/31/2014 - 35ft Pitch Distance - 11" Softball

12U - Player Born AFTER 8/31/2012 - 40ft Pitch Distance - 12" Softball

14U - Player Born AFTER 8/31/2010 - 43ft Pitch Distance - 12" Softball

16U and/or HS - Player Born AFTER 8/31/2008 or HS Graduating Classes of '25 to '29 - 43ft Pitch Distance - 12" Softball

Game Play Rules

Offensive Lineup – A team may bat 9 players, the entire lineup/roster or anything in-between. Once the number of batters is determined, it must remain for the entire game. No automatic outs recorded unless an ejected player's turn comes up and there are no subs available. In the event a team has 8 players, the 9th position in the order will be recorded as an automatic out. TEAMS MAY PLAY WITH 8 PLAYERS.

Once a substitution bats or runs for a player, the sub and the original starter are locked into that batting position – players may be interchangeable in this situation, they are “linked/married” in that spot in the order. Either one may bat or run in that position ONLY and are interchangeable for the game – no limit on re-entry. If a player is removed due to injury (and skipped in the lineup – that player MAY NOT RETURN TO THE GAME)

Courtesy Runners / Speed-Up – With any # of outs, running for the catcher, pitcher OR INCOMING catcher, pitcher is allowed. However, it is not mandatory. Courtesy Runner must be last batted out.

Leading & Stealing – 8U – Runner may lead and/or Steal a base(s) (after ball passes home plate) at their own risk and is subject to pickoff. One base only on successful steal - no base on overthrow - **player MAY steal when a player OR coach is pitching** - No stealing of home in any circumstances.

Baserunning – GHVSL is a slide or avoid contact league – Forceful, purposeful collisions are grounds for immediate ejection. Players are not required to slide into all bases, if they are avoiding contact. No headfirst sliding into a base although you may slide headfirst BACK to a bag. If a play is being made, player may go in standing but must make every effort to avoid contact. Batter runner does not lay claim to the baseline – batter runner must avoid any collision (may veer out of baseline to avoid

collision – and will not be penalized for going out of the baseline to avoid contact with defensive player in baseline) – this is an umpire judgment call.

Hit By Pitch - A player hit by pitch has the option of taking the base. We would prefer the player stay in the box and hit - but if a player is hit by the pitch and upset and/or hurt - they are welcome to first base award. A pitcher that hits a player (and the player decides to continue to bat) will be removed for the Batter's coach for the rest of that at bat.

Bunting - Allowed, but only on a PLAYER pitched ball.

Slash Bunting (Show bunt, pullback and swing away) - **NOT ALLOWED** - Player is called out immediately upon swing motion, regardless of if they make contact or not. **7/22/24 ADD**

Pitching Circle - once the ball is in the possession of the pitcher in the pitching circle, the runner must proceed directly to the next base OR retreat to the last touched base. No intentional run downs in 8U

Infield Fly Rule – Not applicable in 8U

Dropped Third Strike – No Dropped Third Strike in 8U

Run Limits – 8U – **Maximum of 4 runs per half inning** unless teams agree to alternate limits at pregame meeting. (4 runs or 3 outs ends every inning - except the 6th) Unlimited runs may be scored in 6th inning only.

Knockout Rule – If a team is winning by 10 runs after 4 full innings, game is complete. Home team gets last licks.

Extra Inning Rules & Ties – All games in tie after 6 innings use California Rule (Last Batted out goes to second base & inning starts with ZERO OUTS). Game is TIE after 9 innings. Regulation games called due to darkness or weather related MAY end in a tie.

Defensive Lineup – Open & unlimited defensive substitution. Any player on the roster may play in any defensive position at any time, regardless of being in the batting order. 8U – 10 Fielders (4 Outfielders)

Player Positioning - Outfielders must play on outfield grass (or at least 10' beyond bases).

8U Pitching Rules - Inning starts with player pitch. **8U GHVSL will have NO WALKS**. After four balls, the batter's coach will pitch and inherits the strike count. 3 strikes & the batter is out. If pitcher is removed (for coach pitch) three batters in a row, the batter's coach pitches the rest of the half inning.

Coach Pitch - when Batter's coach is pitching (must be from 30'), the removed player pitcher must remain on the field (preferably with at least one foot in the pitching circle).

In 8U, pitchers may pitch a maximum of three innings, all divisions - the innings do not have to be consecutive. Inning restriction is INNING, not 9 outs. One pitch = One Inning

The GHVSL is all about player development - keeping the game moving with batted balls and fielding is important to the player development vs. walking around the bases.

Batter's designated pitcher should be ready to pitch each inning to keep the game moving.

Catching/Pitching Restrictions – No restrictions on pitchers going to catch or catchers going to pitch

Balks – 8U – There are no balks. Illegal Pitches or Quick Pitches will be recorded as balls after one warning per pitcher.

Trips to the Mound – 8U – 2 trips per inning, the third, player must be removed. At any time in the game – the third visit to a pitcher must result in the removal of the pitcher.

Minimum Play Rule – In 8U no minimum play rule.

Bat Rules – 8U – USSSA or Wood Bats

Post-Season Rules

Postseason Eligibility (Team) – Team must play 4 games (Spring/Fall) or 6 games (Summer) in order to be eligible for playoffs. ALL eligible teams are entered into the playoff tournament. Higher Seed has option of hitting first or second. Higher seed may host for first two rounds of playoffs.

Postseason Seeding – Based on a weighted point system for regular season games. First 12 (16 in SUMMER) complete games played count in playoff seeding standings. Additional games do not count in standings.

Postseason Eligibility (Players) – Each team member must play in at least 3 games (Spring/Fall) and 4 games (Summer) (FOR THE TEAM THEY ARE PLAYING WITH IN THE PLAYOFFS) to be eligible for participation in Post-Season Play. Rare exceptions made in situation of injury – contact league email for league exception consideration. PLAYERS may not play playoffs for more than ONE TEAM in the same DIVISION.

Darkness or weather shortened games – Official games (4 innings complete in 6 inning games) are final. Unofficial games (not yet reaching the above length) are suspended and played the next day (only in the playoffs meaning we do not suspend games in the regular season). With away team leading, and home team does not complete their home at bat, game reverts back to the last completed inning, if that results in an official game – game is final. With home team leading in a shortened game, home team is not required to complete their at bat for the game to be final.

The GHVSL Playoffs are a single elimination tournament. Teams are expected to be ready to play on any day of the tournament. League guidance and expectations are given for playoff game days, please meet (or beat) guidance to keep the tournament moving forward. Playoff scheduling posturing (gamesmanship) is not tolerated and is grounds for removal from tourney. If you are participating in an outside tournament that conflicts with GHVSL playoffs – please do not participate in the playoffs.