

Quabbin Valley Youth Softball League

Game Rules 2026

The Quabbin Valley Softball League is a recreational softball league designed to give the children the chance to play softball, learn various skills, associated with the game, fair play and sportsmanship. While winning is an important goal, it is not the sole importance of playing the games. *League Rules: We play by NFHS rules if it is not found in this document.*

General Rules:

1. The Quabbin Valley Softball League (QVSL) is a recreational league from the towns of Belchertown, Chicopee, Frontier, Granby, Hampden, Ludlow, Monson, Palmer, South Hadley, Ware, West Springfield and Wilbraham. Any community from the surrounding area may request to join; however, they must have the backing or support from their local park and recreation department and/or a recognized parent association and they must agree to play by the rules of play as written in this document.
2. We ask coaches and parents to serve as role models and ensure that players develop positive attitudes and good sportsmanship. While we keep scores and standings, fun and good sportsmanship are the priorities.
3. The league website will be used for schedules, standings, contact info, and the distribution of information. It is www.leaguelineup.com/quabbinvalleysoftball
4. All coaches and managers in all divisions are directly responsible to their organization representatives and/or town recreation director.
5. There shall be no tobacco products on school grounds.
6. The QVSL, officials of the cities and/or towns, sponsoring organizations, coaches, managers, umpires, or any other city or town employees cannot be held responsible for any injuries incurred while participating or observing activities in this league.
7. It is mandatory that each time in all divisions have a first aid kit available for games and practices.
8. All coaches must submit a CORI check through their parks and recreation department and/or sponsoring organization.

Divisions/Rosters:

1. Players must be from the town of the team for which they are playing on and/or attend school in the town through "school choice" with the following exceptions:
 - a. If a community does not offer a team in the league or division, a player from that community may play for another community in the QVSL.
 - b. If a player wants to play for another community and their community has a team in that division, they must get permission (written and/or e-mail) between coordinators.
2. The determining effective date for all grade classifications is **September 1st, 2025**, and the participants must play in the grade division they are currently in for the 2025-2026 school year.
3. A minimum of 8 players is required to field a team. The opposing team may field 9 players.
4. Coaches may not play any player that is not on their roster.
5. There will be three divisions of play. The divisions will be as follows:
 - a. 3/4. Players cannot turn 11 **before** Sept. 1st, 2025 and cannot be in 5th grade or higher.
 - b. 5/6. Players cannot turn 13 **before** Sept. 1st, 2025 and cannot be in 7th grade or higher.
 - c. 7-9. Players cannot turn 16 **before** Sept. 1st, 2025 and cannot be in 10th grade or higher. Also participants cannot be participating on a high school varsity team. 7/8 grade JV players are allowed to register and may pitch. 9th grade JV players are allowed to register but may not pitch.
- 6 To avoid a forfeit, a team can play with 8 players. If a team has less than 10 players prior to game time, they will be allowed to recruit players from their same division or a division below to participate in the game with prior approval from the coordinator. A borrowed player may not pitch in that game. Borrowing players will not be allowed during playoffs.

7. If a player is looking to play in a lower age group, this must be approved by the QVSL directors and is done only for extreme circumstances.
8. Second graders may be used in the 3/4th divisions with the approval of their community's director. This is intended to help fill a roster that needs extra players and not as a substitute for a second grade division due to quality of play.

Lineup:

Division	Number of players	Number of outs a player MUST play defensively
3/4 th Grade	10 (may begin game with 6)	9
5/6 th Grade	10 (may begin game with 8)	9
7-9 th Grade	9 (may begin game with 8)	9

1. To avoid a forfeit, a team with 10 or less players prior to game time will be allowed to recruit a player in a division BELOW his/her age group to participate in the game with prior approval from the director.
2. All players must bat in the lineup (i.e. 1-14 if 14 players are in attendance). Any late players shall be added to the bottom on the batting order.
3. Substitutions
 - a. Players may be entered and re-entered at any time on defense (unlimited substitutions).
 - b. The batting order never changes.
 - c. It is at the coach's discretion to have players rotate positions
4. 3/4th grade divisions **ONLY** coaches may position themselves in the field on defense only (no more than 2). May not be positioned by pitcher (unless pitching or umpiring). Coaches (if on field) should position themselves on the edge of the infield in a manner that will not obstruct the play and/or runner.

Game Length:

Division	Innings	Time Limit	Run Limit
3/4 th Grade	6	2 hours	5 per inning (first (5) innings only)
5/6 th Grade	6	2 hours	5 per Inning (first (5) innings only)
7-9 th Grade	7	2 hours	7 per Inning (first (5) innings only)

Umpires must announce the time at the start of the game. A new inning will not begin **on or after** the 2 hour mark. (15 minutes prior to the 2 hour mark does not constitute ending the game)

1. 3/4th grade division **ONLY** there will be a five run limit per inning for the first five innings. Coaches need to use their best integrity and not run up the score in the last two innings.
2. 5/6th grade division **ONLY** there will be a five run limit per inning for the first five innings. Coaches need to use their best integrity and not run up the score in the last two innings.

5 RUN RULE: Each inning a team will be allowed to continue batting until one of the following has occurred, three outs, a maximum of five (5) runs have scored in the inning.

1. Any runs that score because of the hit beyond the five (5) runs for that turn at bat will not count.
2. Once a team has scored five (5) runs in an inning their at bat is over.
3. Prior to the 6th inning, if a game is tied at the end of the two hour time limit, there will no longer be a run limit in the game.
4. The 5 Run Rule applies to innings 1 – 5 only. In the 6th inning, a round robin batting will continue until one of the following: Three outs, every child on the team has batted during that inning.

a. Number of batters will be determined by the team with the most players.
Ex: team A is batting and has 10 players in the lineup. Team B has 15 players. Team A will bat 15 players in order.

b. Teams are expected to show good sportsmanship and finish and complete all games no matter the run difference, unless it is the bottom of the last inning and the home team is losing by more than five (5) runs. At which point the home team can forego their final at bats if they so choose.

5. 7-9th grade division **ONLY** there will be a Mercy Rule: 15 runs after five (5) innings. The team that is losing has the option of continuing play. Coaches need to use their best integrity and not run up the score.

6. A player registered in a younger division may be considered to move up if needed to fill a team roster as well as a playoff game with coach's discretion on limited playing time.

Equipment:

1. Games will be played with an 11" softball (optic yellow preferred) for both the 3/4th and 5/6th grade divisions. A 12" softball (optic yellow preferred) will be used for the 7-9th grade division.
2. All players must wear a batting helmet with a protective face shield when batting or running the bases. This may be wire or plastic.
3. Removing jewelry for safety concerns will be at the discretion of the umpire.
4. Teams should have uniforms of similar colors with numbers.
5. Metal cleats are not permitted. Rubber, molded cleats.
6. It is recommended for pitchers to wear a fielder's mask.

Pitching:

<u>Division</u>	<u>Pitching Distance</u>
3/4 th Grade	40 feet (option to pitch no less than from 35 feet for safety)
5/6 th Grade	40 feet
7-9 th Grade	43 feet

1. There should be an eight foot pitching radius placed on the field.
2. Any pitcher hitting 3 batters in one inning must be removed from pitching for the remainder of the inning. Any pitcher hitting 6 batters must be removed from pitching for the remainder of the game.
3. 3/4th Division **ONLY**-
Players will pitch however if a batter is thrown three balls, the batters coach will step on the mound to pitch to the batter and inherit the strike count only.
b. Batters **WILL NOT** walk.
c. Coaches should be pitching in such a way as to allow **their** players the opportunity to hit the ball (underhand).
d. A defensive player will stand alongside the pitching coach and have fielding responsibilities. The batter will either put the ball in play or be out on the **THIRD** strike. The coach will then leave the field for the next batter and the player will resume pitching.
e. Each time a coach comes in to pitch, the player who was pitching will stand alongside the coach pitching and have fielding responsibilities. This rule allows the batter an opportunity to hit the ball and is intended to keep players engaged and the game moving.

Game Play:

<u>Division</u>	<u>Base Paths</u>	<u>Bunting</u>	<u>Infield Fly Rule</u>	<u>Stealing</u>	<u>Dead Ball Situation</u>
3/4 th Grade	60 feet	No	No	No	Player has control in the infield
5/6 th Grade	60 feet	Yes	No	Yes	Player has control in the pitchers circle
7-9 th Grade	60 feet	Yes	Yes	Yes	Player has control in the pitchers circle

Batter Hit by Pitch:

- 1) Any batter hit by a pitch is automatically awarded first base.

Leading/Stealing:

- a. 3/4th division **ONLY** a runner cannot lead or steal and shall remain on the base until the ball is hit and in play.
- b. 5/6th division **ONLY** a runner may lead or steal at any point once the ball crosses home plate. The runner may look to steal until the pitcher has possession of the ball inside of the pitching circle. If the runner is off of their base once the pitcher has possession of the ball in the circle, they have to either go to the next base or the base they started on. They may stop one time in the process and then have to proceed in one direction or the other unless a play is made on them. (This is to prevent a runner from dancing back and forth). If the player leaves early, she is out. There is one warning per team per game. Stealing home is only allowed on an overthrow to any base. Players **cannot** advance home on a wild pitch, passed ball, a walk or on a throwback to the pitcher. If a team is ahead by five (5) or more runs, that team is prohibited from stealing.
- c. 7-9th grade division **ONLY** a runner cannot leave the base until the ball leaves the pitcher's hand. If the player leaves early, she is out. There are no warnings. Stealing home is only allowed on a wild pitch, pass ball or a play at another base.
- d. 7-9th grade division **ONLY** the dropped third strike rule will be in effect. A player can advance when:
 1. There are fewer than two (2) outs and first base is unoccupied at the time of the pitch.
 2. There are (2) outs in any situation. If the bases are loaded the catcher can simply step on the plate.
- e. 7-9th grade divisions – Stealing is allowed on a walk of the batter. A ball is live on a walk until it's returned to the pitcher circle. (i.e. runner on 2nd and batter walked, the runner can steal third base)

Overthrows:

1. 3/4th grade division **ONLY** – a runner will advance one base **ONLY**.
2. Outfielders must stay in the outfield until the ball is hit.
3. Throwing the bat: First offense by a team will be a warning. Second offense will be an automatic out.
4. On a contested play at any base but first base (player with the ball making a tag), the player must make every effort to slide or they must give themselves up to avoid a collision. If they don't do this, they are out. If a player flagrantly collides with another player (intent to injure), they are out and they are also ejected. Legal contact is allowed on a play where the throw brings the fielder up the line where the runner does not have time to avoid contact.
5. The defensive player may not obstruct the base without the ball; they have to allow access to the runner to be able to touch the base.

Umpires:

1. The home team is required to provide an umpire for the 5/6 & 7/9 grade division games. It is recommended to pay Jr. umpires \$40 per game and certified umpires \$60 per game.
 - a. Umpires cannot have any affiliation or relation to the players on the field.
 - b. The 3/4 division **ONLY** home team will have the option of providing an umpire for the game or choosing to have the coaches umpire the game.

Behavior:

1. All players must treat the umpires, opposing players, coaches and equipment with respect. Arguing with an umpire is not permissible and will not be tolerated.
2. Any participant (coach, player, etc.) ejected will be suspended for one game and may be subject to further review. All incidents must be reported to the league director.
3. Games may be protested if a rule is misapplied. The judgment call of an umpire may not be protested.
4. Teams are responsible for picking up their bench area and for the behavior of their fans.

Cancellations and Reschedules:

1. The home team is responsible for cancelling games due to weather or field condition, a minimum of two hours prior to the start time. The home team must update the league website and contact the opposing coach and coordinator. The home team coordinator is responsible for setting up the makeup date.
2. If a team requests to cancel a game for any reason other than weather or field conditions, that team must contact their coordinator as well as the opposing coach at least **24 hours** prior to game time. The coordinator must update the league website and notify officials.
3. If a team requests to cancel a game for any reason other than weather or field conditions, less than a **24 hours'** notice, the game will be noted as a forfeit.
4. A game should be rescheduled within two (2) weeks of the original cancellation date. If the game cannot be rescheduled within a reasonable time, the canceling team will take a forfeit.
5. All cancellations: www.leaguelineup.com/quabbinvalleysoftball

Chicopee: coaches/officials only call 594-3481 and press 2 for cancellations after 4:00 PM on weekdays, after 8:00 AM on Saturdays and Sundays.

Monson: Monson coach will call visitors.

All other towns: Coordinators will call visitors

Season:

1. The regular season will be played between May 1 and June 14, 2026.
2. Games are played anytime on Saturday & Sunday and during the evening on weeknights.
3. There will be a jamboree for 3/4 division, Saturday, June 14, held in Belchertown.
4. A single elimination, playoff is an option for 5/6 and 7/8 divisions and will be held June 17-21, rain dates for a playoff game will be held June 24-28. In order to prepare brackets, games played between June 13-14 will not count towards your playoff seeding.

Playoffs:

- a. Players must have played in 50% of their team's games to be eligible to play in playoffs unless they have written approval from the QVSL due to injury or other extenuating circumstance. A player registered in a younger division may be considered to move up if needed to fill a team roster for a playoff game with coach's discretion on limited playing time.