

National Federation of State
High School Associations



NFHS Softball

2012
Rules Changes
Major Editorial Changes
Points of Emphasis

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NFHS Softball

2012
Rules Changes

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Permissible Softball Colors (1-3-1)


- The color “white” was removed from the list of permissible colors for softballs.
- All softballs used for competition must now be optic yellow.
- The “white” language was out of date and white softballs were not being used in the field.



 **Permissible Softball Colors**
Rule 1-3-1

Illegal

Legal

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Bat Knob Requirements

(1-5-2a)

- The requirement that the bat knob protrude at a 90-degree angle from the handle was removed.
- There are bats on the market that meet the ASA Bat Performance Standard but do not meet the 90-degree provision due to the handle being shaped like an ax.

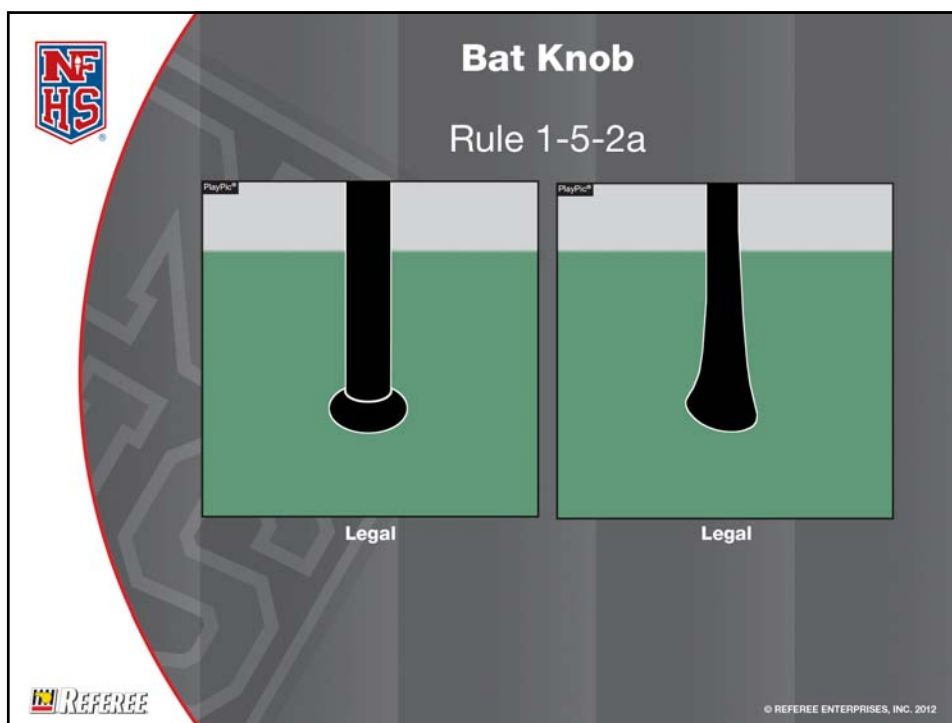


Bat Knob Requirements

(1-5-2a)

- The rules committee is primarily concerned with the performance portion of the bat – the barrel – especially when other portions of the bat do not pose any undue risk to participants.





Headwear Requirements (3-2-5)

- Headwear requirements were revised and clarified.
- Headwear (caps, visors, headbands, ribbons, etc.) may be mixed, but if worn, they must be white, black, beige or school colors (the colors are not required to be the same among team members).



Headwear Requirements

(3-2-5)

- Permitting more colors and options for players regarding headwear is consistent with other NFHS sports.
- A less restrictive rule may also improve enforcement and school spirit.



Headwear Requirements

(3-2-5)


- The logo may be any color.
- Flat items, no longer than 2 inches, used to control the hair, such as bobby pins, barrettes and hair clips are permitted.
- Plastic visors, bandannas and hair-beads are prohibited.



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Headgear Requirements

Rule 3-2-5



Legal Legal Illegal

REFEREE

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Penalty Increased For Altered or Non-Approved Bat (7-4-2 Penalty)

- A more severe penalty was added when a batter uses an altered or non-approved bat.
- In addition to an out being called on the batter, the batter and head coach will be ejected from the contest.



Penalty Increased For Altered or Non-Approved Bat (7-4-2 Penalty)


- Coaches and players must be held accountable for using this type of illegal bat.
- Coaches must be responsible for the equipment being used in each game, even when it is not issued by the school, but a player's personal equipment.




Penalty Increased For Altered or Non-Approved Bat (7-4-2 Penalty)


- Player safety and the integrity of the game must be maintained.
- This type of illegal equipment has no place in the game.



 **Penalty Increased for Altered or Non-Approved Bat**
Rule 7-4-2



Batter is Out; Batter and Coach Ejected.

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Major Editorial Changes

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Altered Bats (1-5-1c)

- Clarified that shaving, rolling or artificially warming the bat barrel are prohibited.
- Recent data indicates a significant improvement to bat performance when bat warmers are used (approximately 2 MPH to batted ball speed).



Altered Bats (1-5-1c)

- The clarification now clearly states the prohibition in the rule, not just in a Point of Emphasis.
- Editorial change coincides with previously mentioned rules change – use of an altered bat results in ejection of player and coach.



Definition of Legal and Illegal Bats (2-4)

- The definitions of legal and illegal bats were revised and updated.
- Illegal bats include altered bats and non-approved bats.



Definition of Legal and Illegal Bats (2-4)

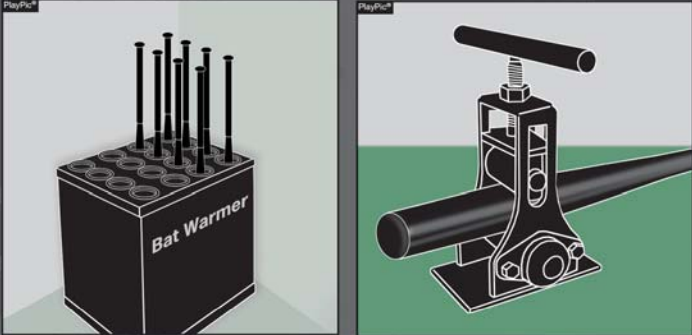
- Editorial change coincides with previously mentioned rules change – use of an altered bat results in ejection of player and coach.
- Clarification for proper penalty administration.



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Altered Bats

Rule 1-5-1c; 2-4-2a



Warming, shaving or rolling a bat is ALTERING the bat.

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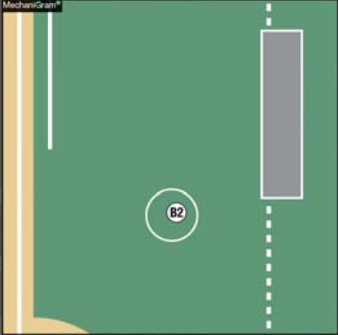
Offensive Interference

(2-5-3; 3-5-6; 7-5 New; 7-4-12; 8-6-15;
8-6-16 New)


- Several rules were updated and reorganized to clarify the different types of offensive interference and the penalty associated with each.
- The rules were all related, yet inconsistently described/ penalized.



On-Deck Batter
Rule 2-5-3; 7-5 New



On-deck batter near team's dugout



On-deck batter interference

NFHS

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On-Deck Batter

(2-5-3; 7-5 New)

- Text was moved from the on-deck batter definition to a new Rule 7-5.
- The new section specifically addresses actions permitted and prohibited of an on-deck batter.



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Offensive Interference

Rule 3-5-6; 7-4-12; 8-6-16



Batter and runner may be out due to coach interference.

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Offensive Interference

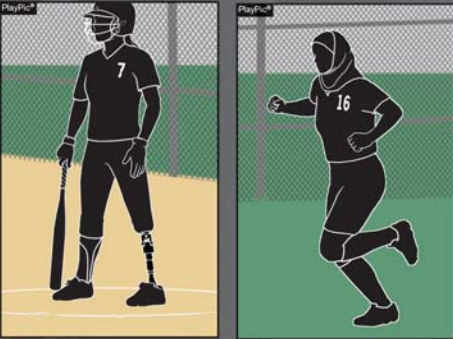
(3-5-6; 7-4-12; 8-6-15; 8-6-16 New)

- Several rules were updated and reorganized to clarify the different types of offensive interference and the penalty associated with each.
- **RULE BOOK CORRECTION:**
 - 8-6-16c – Delete the 10th word, “intentionally,” from the first sentence.



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Participants with Disabilities/Special Needs
Rule 3-2-13



State Associations may grant exceptions to NFHS playing rules for special needs and/or extenuating circumstances.

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Exceptions to NFHS Playing Rules (3-2-13 NOTE)

- Clarifies that an individual state association may authorize exceptions.
- Such exceptions are not considered rules modifications since they are not general in nature; rather, they are limited to the circumstances of specific individual participants.




Exceptions to NFHS Playing Rules (3-2-13 NOTE)

- The Note was revised to clarify that state associations may grant exceptions to NFHS playing rules for participants with disabilities, special needs and/or extenuating circumstances.



Courtesy Runner Procedure

Rule 8-9-2 New Exception



Courtesy Runner Procedure Clarified.



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The slide features a dark grey background with a large, faint, stylized 'NFHS' watermark on the left side. In the center, there is an illustration of a baseball field. A player in a grey uniform stands on the field, while another player in a dark uniform is kneeling on the ground, possibly providing medical assistance. The text 'Courtesy Runner Procedure Clarified.' is positioned below the illustration. The bottom left corner contains the 'REFEREE' logo, and the bottom right corner has the copyright notice '© REFEREE ENTERPRISES, INC. 2012'.

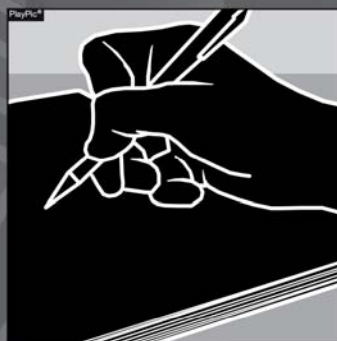
Courtesy-Runner Procedure (8-9-2 New Exception)

- Clarified the courtesy-runner procedure for when the pitcher/catcher on the lineup card is unable to face the first batter in the bottom of the first inning due to injury/disqualification.
- Player who ran for her is retroactively her substitute and no longer a courtesy runner.
- All substitution rules apply and the pitcher/catcher has left the game.



Administrative Duties/Game Reports

Rule 10-1-2 New Note



New note added clarifying the administrative responsibilities of game officials through the completion of required reports.

Umpires: Administrative Duties (10-1-2 New Note)

- A note was added clarifying the administrative responsibilities of umpires through the completion of required reports.
- State Associations may continue to develop and implement policies that allow for review of unusual incidents that occur while the game officials have jurisdiction or after the game.



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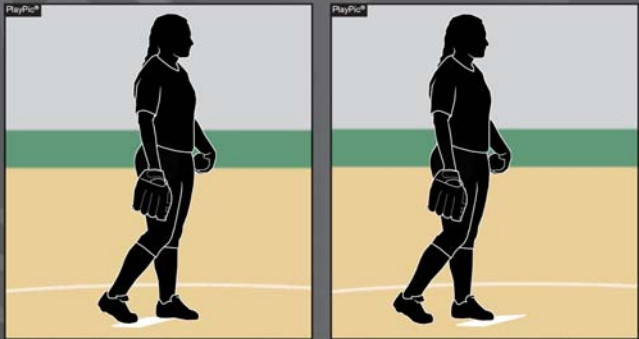
2012 Points of Emphasis

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Pitching Regulations

POINT OF EMPHASIS



Legal Legal

NFHS pitching rules more permissive (only one foot required on the pitcher's plate) to allow pitchers to have different styles.

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Pitching NFHS Rules

- NFHS pitching regulations were created and are maintained for high-school-age pitchers of all skill levels, not just those seeking participation opportunities at higher levels.
- A high school pitcher may begin with one or two feet on the pitching plate.
- The pitcher may also step back (before the hands come together) and then forward to gain momentum in her pitching motion.

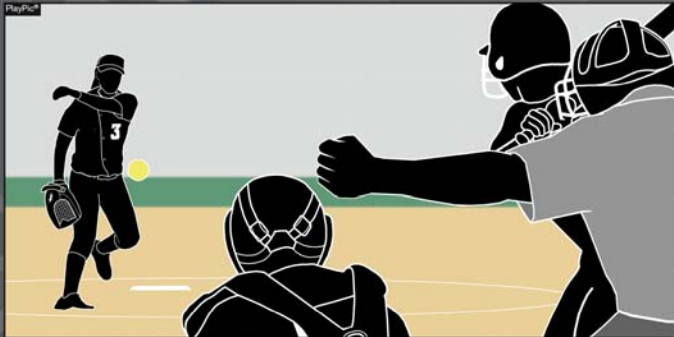


Pitching NFHS Rules


- This enables younger and/or less experienced players to have success within the rules of the high school game.
- The interscholastic community believes the high school rule in this regard is appropriate for the participants it serves.




24-Inch Width Infraction



Stepping out of the 24-inch width is an advantage to the pitcher/defense and may promote pitching injuries.



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The slide features a dark grey background with a large, semi-circular graphic on the left side. The graphic is a stylized representation of a baseball field, with a pitcher's mound and bases. A pitcher is shown in silhouette, stepping out of the 24-inch width of the pitcher's box. A batter is also shown in silhouette, ready to swing. A yellow ball is visible in the air. The text '24-Inch Width Infraction' is centered at the top. Below the illustration, a caption explains that stepping out of the 24-inch width is an advantage to the pitcher/defense and may promote pitching injuries. The NFHS logo is in the top left corner, and the Referee Enterprises logo is in the bottom left corner. A circular logo with the text 'POINT OF POE EMPHASIS' is on the left side. The copyright notice '© REFEREE ENTERPRISES, INC. 2012' is in the bottom right corner.

Pitching

24-Inch Width Infractions

- The NFHS Softball Rules Committee is still concerned over the enforcement of the 24-inch width pitching requirement.
- Pitchers are starting and/or finishing outside the 24-inch width limitation without an illegal pitch being declared, giving a significant advantage to the pitcher and defensive team.



Pitching

24-Inch Width Infractions

- In addition, research indicates that pitchers are more susceptible to arm injuries when they attempt to throw a “screwball.”
- Throwing this type of pitch sometimes forces the pitcher to release the ball and conclude her natural pitching motion outside the 24-inch width of the pitching plate.



Pitching

24-Inch Width Infractions

- Since tracking the pitch from the release point to the catcher's glove is the priority for the home plate umpire, he/she must use his/her peripheral vision to detect this violation.
- However, this should not be an excuse for ignoring obvious violations.



Pitching

24-Inch Width Infractions

- The base umpire may also detect this illegal pitch, depending on the field position, looking for pivot and landing foot marks outside the lane in the dirt as the pitcher finishes her motion.



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Legal Apparel and Equipment

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Head coach is responsible to ensure all equipment used by players is legal and proper.

Teams must make all bats and helmets available for inspection.

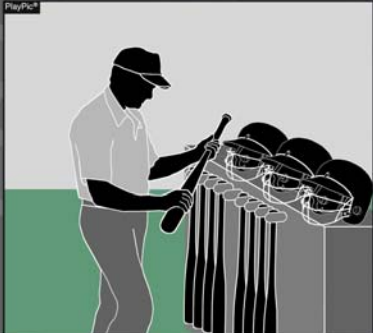
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Equipment Check

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Umpires shall check equipment prior to the contest.

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Legal Apparel and Equipment Equipment Check

- The Softball Rules Committee and softball administrators around the country continue to be concerned about the use of illegal and/or non-approved equipment.
- So concerned that a rules change was approved this year to strengthen the penalty for use of altered or non-approved bats.



Legal Apparel and Equipment Equipment Check

- The head coach is responsible to ensure all equipment used by his or her players is legal and proper.
- Umpires are still required to check bats and helmets prior to each contest.
- Teams must make all bats and helmets available for the pregame equipment check.
- All equipment is expected to meet safety standards and rule requirements.





Pitcher's Uniform



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Umpire judges if pitcher's apparel/equipment is distracting to batter.



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Legal Apparel and Equipment Pitcher's Uniform

- A pitcher is prohibited from wearing or using any item that, in the umpire's judgment, distracts the batter.
- There have been reports of the pitchers wearing items with optic yellow in prominent locations.



Legal Apparel and Equipment Pitcher's Uniform

- Any use of equipment or part of the uniform that, in the umpire's view, would distract the batter, shall be addressed on a case-by-case basis and could require the removal of such equipment.



On-Deck Batter Location

On deck circle safe location.
To the side and away from home plate
or 30 feet if space allows.

On-deck circles shall be a safe distance from home plate – 30 feet recommended.

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The diagram shows a top-down view of a baseball field's on-deck area. A green rectangular area represents the on-deck deck, with a yellow home plate area at the top. Two white circles represent the on-deck batter locations. A dashed white line indicates the boundary of the on-deck area. The text 'On-Deck Batter Location' is centered at the top. Below the diagram, text explains the safe location for the on-deck circles. A circular logo on the left side of the diagram reads 'POINT OF POE EMPHASIS'. The NFHS logo is in the top left corner, and the 'REFEREE' logo is in the bottom left corner. The copyright notice '© REFEREE ENTERPRISES, INC. 2012' is in the bottom right corner.

On-Deck Batters/Location

- It is the responsibility of the home team/game management to place the on-deck circles in the appropriate locations (Rule 2-37) so as to reduce risk to those players.
- Additionally, it is the responsibility of the coach to ensure that his/her players are aware of the rules related to the on-deck circle.




On-Deck Batters/Location

- The players must remain aware of the risks posed by being in the circle during play.
- Players must be in the on-deck circle (Rule 2-5-3) and be aware of the status of the ball at all times.



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QUESTIONS?

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NFHS Officials Association Central Hub

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Contains

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- Searchable rules book and case book
- Video content on officiating sport, competition situations and interpretations