**Softball Junior Division Rules**

**Unless otherwise stated in these rules, all Canton Little League Softball games will be played under USA Softball rules. Where the below rules depart from USA Softball rules, these rules will control. Some rules below have been specifically called out for emphasis and do not differ from those of USA Softball.**

**Field and Equipment**

1. All players shall be properly equipped for every game. Uniforms must be worn for all games.
2. Batting helmets must have a protective cage or face shield that protects the batters face. The cage or shield must be secured to the helmet. If the helmet is not secured on both sides, the helmet may not be used.
3. All infielders and the pitcher must wear a fielding cage covering their face. Fielding cages are strongly recommended for outfielders at this level also.
4. Cleats may be worn, but must be rubber. Metal cleats are not permitted at this age level. Any player wearing metal cleats will not be permitted to participate while wearing metal cleats.
5. All bases shall be set at a distance of 60 feet from the prior base. Measurements are made from the back point of home plate to the back corner of first base, and the back of third base. The center of second base should be positioned 60 feet from the back corner of first base and 60 feet from the back corner of third base.
6. The pitching rubber shall be 35 feet from the back point of home plate and should be placed in alignment with home plate.
7. A circle with an 8 foot radius should be drawn around the center of the pitching plate.

**Playing Rules**

1. We DO NOT maintain or track regular season records in Junior Division softball. The purpose of this rule is to encourage coaches to give all players the opportunity to play every position that the coach determines they can safely play. Example. If a player cannot catch a thrown ball, first base may not be a safe position for her to play. However, she should be given the opportunity to play other positions and the coaches should emphasize catching drills with the player during practices. A player’s inability to throw strikes is not a reason not to let her try pitching in a game at the Junior Level.
2. All regular season and playoff games shall be 6 innings. If a regular season game is tied after 6 innings, the game shall end in a tie.
3. A new inning should not commence more than 90 minutes from the first pitch of the game. A new inning begins as soon as the third out of the bottom of the prior inning is made. Under no circumstances should the game last more than 2 hours from the first pitch.
4. If a game reaches the two hour mark during an inning, the game is over. If the home team is not leading, then the score shall revert to the score prior to the start of the inning.
5. Teams may utilize 10 fielders. If a team utilizes 10 fielders, 4 of those fielders must be aligned on the outfield grass and may not enter the infield until after the ball crosses home plate. If a team utilizes 9 fielders, 3 of those fielders must be aligned on the outfield grass and may not enter the infield until after the ball crosses home plate.
6. This is an instructional league – illegal pitches should not be called by the umpires or requested by the coaches/ players.
7. Runners may leave on the release of the pitch, but may only advance one base on a stolen base play. Runners may not take an additional base on an overthrow.
8. Runners must be batted or walked in. Runners may not steal home or take home on a wild pitch or an overthrow.
9. Infield fly rule is not in effect.
10. Continuous walk rule is not in effect.
11. A pitcher may pitch no more than 3 innings per game. The innings need not be continuous but a pitcher may only leave and return once per game.
12. A half inning ends when the fielding team records three outs or the batting team scores 5 runs – whichever occurs first.
13. A continuous batting order must be used.

**Umpires**

1. Canton Little League’s Board of Directors has made the determination to give back to the players who have come through our program by engaging current and former players as umpires. We compensate the umpires for their time and encourage them to proactively control the game. This advances both our charitable goal of giving back to the community and encourages the Little League principles of developing leadership and community skills. As such, the umpires at the Junior level of softball and the umpires and Minor and Major league baseball are not patched umpires. They are primarily teenagers and many of them played in the league you are coaching or watching within the last few years. They are young, impressionable and stepping outside of their comfort zone. GIVE THEM A BREAK!
2. You are NEVER permitted to argue judgement calls with umpires, whether patched or children.
3. If the umpire makes a call that you disagree with, ask the other coach to join you and go talk to the umpire quietly between innings. This conversation should be cordial and identify a specific rule that you believe they may have incorrectly made. If you plan to go this route, you should have the rule ready in the LL rule book to provide to the umpire. We recommend starting with:
	1. “XYZ, you are doing a great job back here. There was one call in the last inning that we wanted to bring to your attention in case you were not aware of the rule. Under Little League Rule 7.06(a), a runner who has been obstructed by the fielder who is not making a play on a batted ball, shall be awarded the next base to which they were advancing. We think that may have applied in that situation. Don’t worry about it, we just wanted to bring it to your attention. Keep up the good work.”
	2. If you do not have the language of the rule ready to provide to them, you are complaining and not teaching – keep your feedback/comments to yourself
4. If there is a concern about the strike zone that is being called, you and the other coach can approach the umpire between innings and ask if she is willing to adjust it. Keep in mind that this is a request and the umpire may refuse. The umpires have been given the instruction that we want batters swinging and have been asked to provide a broad strike zone.
5. Concerns about a specific umpire should be addressed to the Umpire in Chief of Softball. When addressing the issue, please copy the Vice President of Softball.

**Playoffs**

1. Playoffs shall commence in the first week after the regular season finishes. All playoff games must be completed prior to the first Summer softball games, which typically begin in the third week of June.
2. Playoff format will be determined at the beginning of the spring season by the Junior League Player Agent and the Vice President of Softball. Common playoff formats are double elimination bracket, modified double elimination bracket, single elimination bracket or round robin followed by a championship game.
3. Trophies will be awarded to the champions and runners up after the championship game.
4. Time limit does not apply to championship games. All championship games shall be 6 innings.

**Softball Senior Division Rules**

**Unless otherwise stated in these rules, all Canton Little League Softball games will be played under USA Softball rules. Where the below rules depart from USA Softball rules, these rules will control. Some rules below have been specifically called out for emphasis and do not differ from those of USA Softball.**

**Field and Equipment**

1. All players shall be properly equipped for every game. Uniforms must be worn for all games.
2. Batting helmets must have a protective cage or face shield that protects the batters face. The cage or shield must be secured to the helmet. If the helmet is not secured on both sides, the helmet may not be used.
3. Players playing first base and the pitcher must wear a fielding cage covering their face. Fielding cages are strongly recommended for other players as well.
4. Cleats may be worn, but must be rubber. Metal cleats are not permitted at this age level. Any player wearing metal cleats will not be permitted to participate while wearing metal cleats.
5. All bases shall be set at a distance of 60 feet from the prior base. Measurements are made from the back point of home plate to the back corner of first base, and the back of third base. The center of second base should be positioned 60 feet from the back corner of first base and 60 feet from the back corner of third base.
6. The pitching rubber shall be 40 feet from the back point of home plate and should be placed in alignment with home plate.
7. A circle with an 8 foot radius should be drawn around the center of the pitching plate.

**Playing Rules**

1. Records are maintained at this level. The final score of each game shall be recorded by the winning team.
2. All regular season and playoff games shall be 6 innings. If a regular season game is tied after 6 innings, the game shall end in a tie.
3. A new inning should not commence more than 90 minutes from the first pitch of the game. A new inning begins as soon as the third out of the bottom of the prior inning is made. Under no circumstances should the game last more than 2 hours from the first pitch.
4. If a game reaches the two hour mark during an inning, the game shall be stopped. If the home team is not leading, then the score shall revert to the score prior to the start of the inning.
5. Teams may utilize 9 fielders. Three of those fielders must be aligned on the outfield grass and may not enter the infield until after the ball crosses home plate.
6. This is an instructional league – illegal pitches should not be called by the umpires or requested by the coaches/ players. Umpires may inform the pitcher if an illegal pitch is made and provide an explanation but the pitch shall count.
7. Runners may leave the bases on the release of the pitch. Stealing of all based including home is permitted.
8. Continuous walks are permitted.
9. Infield fly rule is in effect.
10. A pitcher may not pitch more than 3 innings in a game. The innings need not be consecutive but the pitcher may only leave and return once.
11. A team must have a minimum of 8 players to begin a game and may not continue if they have fewer than 7 players.
12. A half inning ends when the fielding team records three outs or the batting team scores 5 runs – whichever occurs first.

**Umpires**

1. You are NEVER permitted to argue judgement calls with umpires. Balls, strikes, close plays at a base – these are judgment calls and are not subject to dispute.
2. If the umpire makes a call that you believe is not the proper application of a rule, you may ask the umpire politely about the application of the rule. The coach should be prepared with the specific rule that they believe was improperly interpreted. Once the umpire hears your point of view and makes a ruling, the dispute is over.

**Playoffs**

1. Playoffs shall commence in the first week after the regular season finishes. All playoff games must be completed prior to the first Summer softball games, which typically begin in the third week of June.
2. Playoff format will be determined at the beginning of the spring season by the Junior League Player Agent and the Vice President of Softball. Common playoff formats are double elimination bracket, modified double elimination bracket, single elimination bracket or round robin followed by a championship game.
3. Trophies will be awarded to the champions and runners up after the championship game.
4. Time limit does not apply to championship games. All championship games shall be 6 innings.