

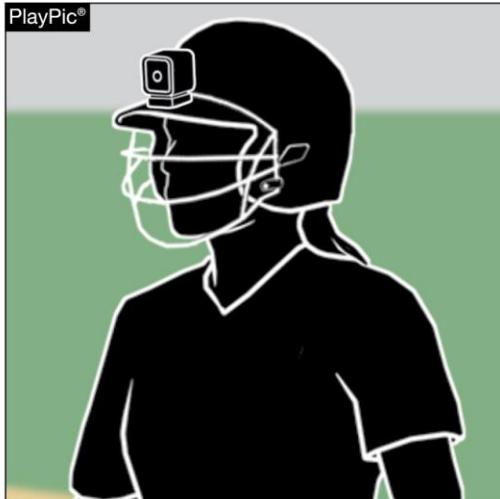


2026 NFHS SOFTBALL RULES CHANGES

OTHER EQUIPMENT

1-9-6

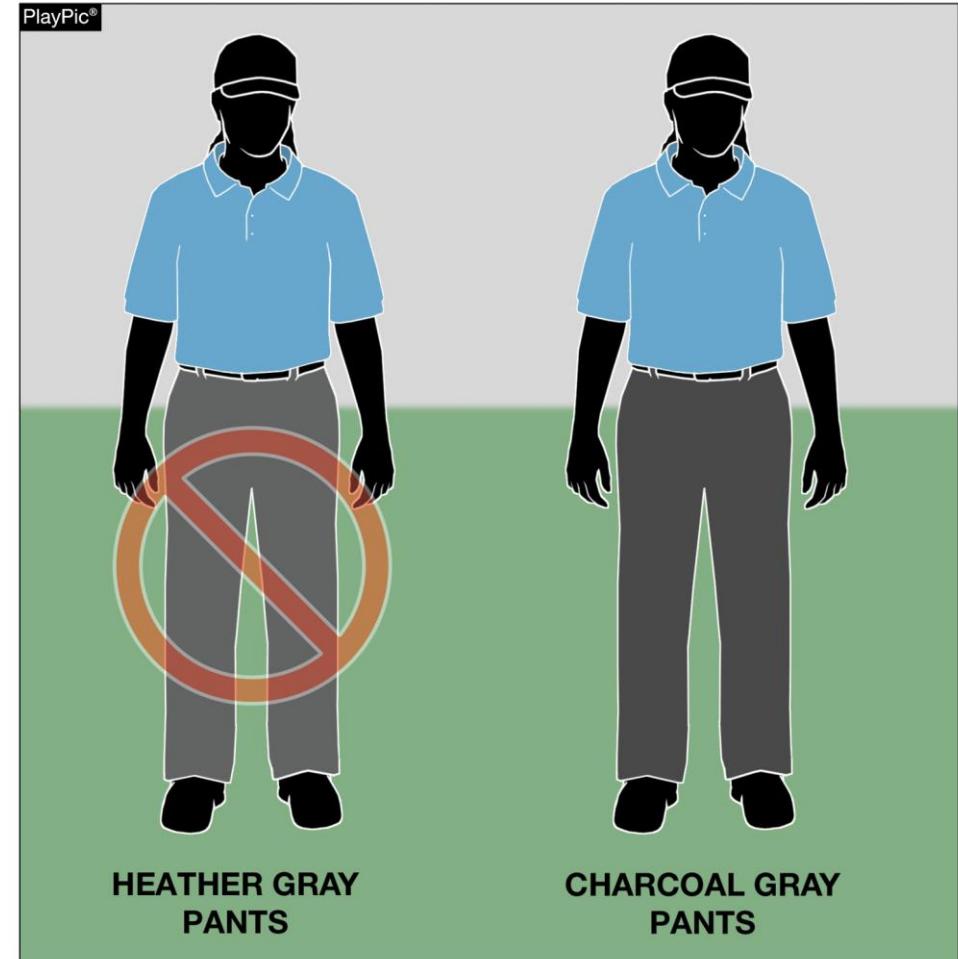
- Players shall not transmit or record audio or video from the playing surface.
- Penalty: Ejection of the offender from the game, unless the offense is judged to be of a minor nature. If minor, the umpire may warn the offender and eject if the offense is repeated.



EQUIPMENT AND APPAREL

10-4-2

- Umpires have had the option of wearing heather gray, charcoal gray slacks.
- Effective 2026, heather gray slacks will no longer be permitted as part of the umpire's uniform.



FORFEITED GAME

4-3-2

- If a game is forfeited after the number of innings required for a regulation game and the offending team is behind the score remains as recorded.
- * IN N.J. GAMES ARE TERMINATED NOT FORFEITED. THE CONFERENCE WILL DECIDE

MechaniGram®

BALL		2	STRIKE		1	OUT		0	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	TOTAL
GUESTS		2	3	1	1				7
HOME		3	1	2					6

UNIFORMS, PLAYER EQUIPMENT

3-2-5 CASE BOOK

- Edits to 3.2.5
Situations B & C
reflect rule
change for 2025.
- There are no
color restrictions
for headbands.

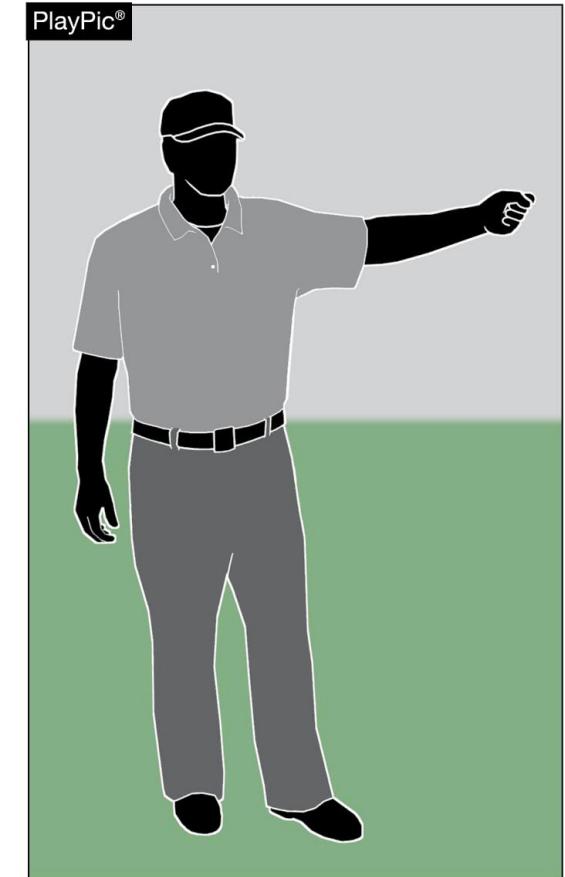




2026 NFHS SOFTBALL POINTS OF EMPHASIS

OBSTRUCTION

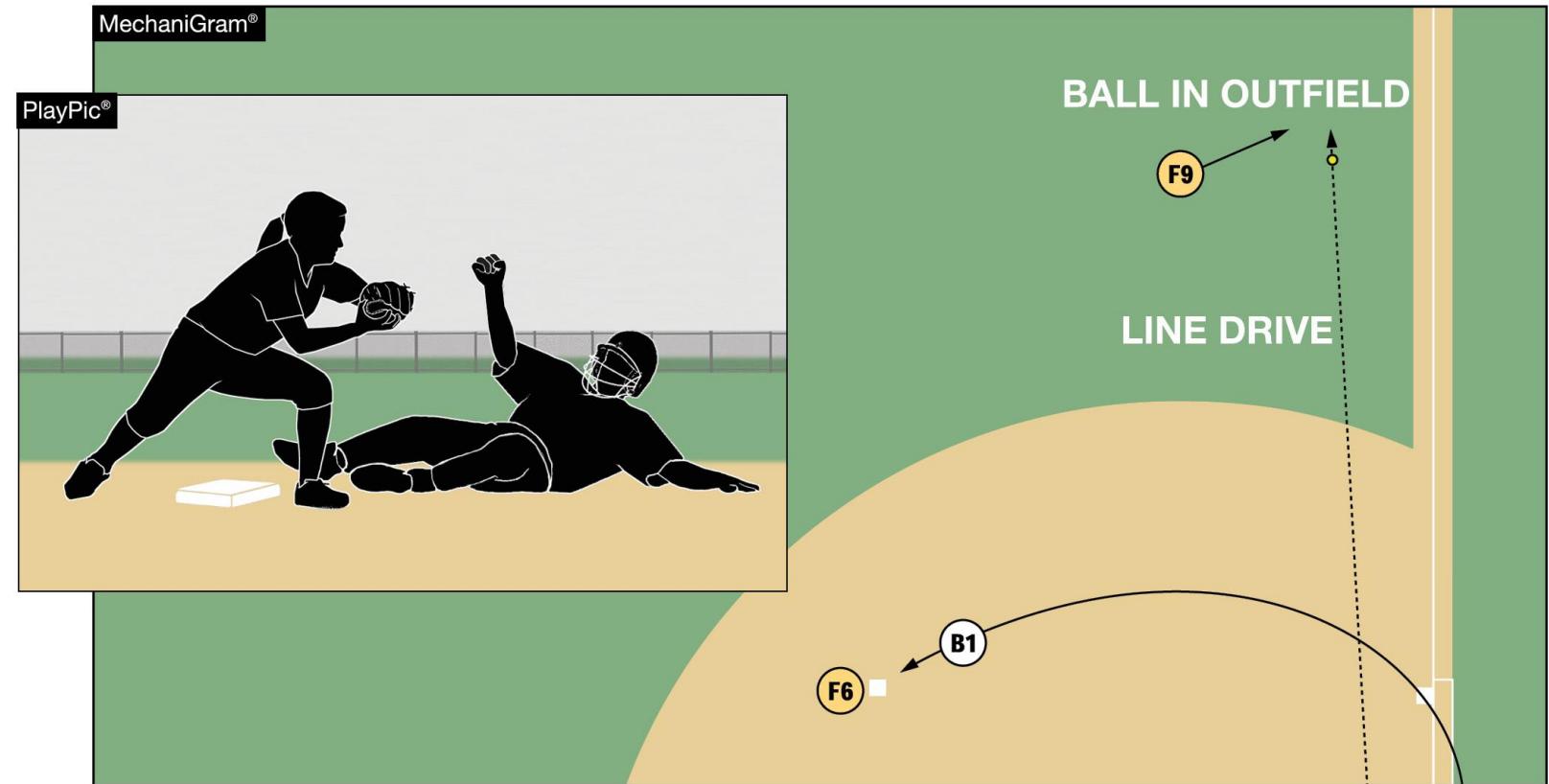
- Obstruction is the act of a defensive team member that:
 - *hinders or impedes* a batter's attempt to make contact with a pitched ball, or
 - *impedes the progress* of a runner or batter-runner legally running the bases.



REMEMBER OBSTRUCTION DOES NOT APPLY IF
THE FIELDER HAS THE BALL OR IS MAKING THE
INITIAL PLAY ON THE BALL OR IF THE BALL IS
WITHIN A STEP AND A REACH OF THE FIELDER

OBSTRUCTION

- If the runner or batter-runner is not impeded, there is no obstruction.
- With the exception of a fake tag, as shown, a fielder's actions or positioning alone can never result in an obstruction ruling.



OBSTRUCTION

- Impeding a runner means creating a negative effect on their ability to run the bases. This might include:
 - a runner slowing down
 - altering their intended path
 - stopping altogether
 - retreating to the previous base, or
 - making contact with a fielder that disrupts their movement
- The umpire must rely on judgment to determine both whether the runner was impeded and to what extent their progress was affected.

Unlike many rule violations in softball that carry standardized penalties—such as awarding two bases for a thrown ball that goes out of play or one base for a pitched ball entering dead ball territory—obstruction rulings are situational and vary based on the specifics of each play. The purpose of the obstruction award is not to penalize the defensive team arbitrarily, but to nullify the negative effect of the obstruction. The runner is not being granted an advantage; rather, they are being restored to the position they would have achieved had the obstruction not occurred. This could mean advancing the runner or, in some cases, returning them to a previous base—whatever is necessary to correct the disruption caused by the obstruction, based on the umpire's judgment.

Uniforms

Rule 1, Section 6, Article 1 (p. 14)

Players may participate while wearing a different style uniform for religious reasons (notification to NJSIAA) or inclement weather.

Game Halted, Suspended, Ended

Rule 2, Section 25, Article 1 (p. 25)

Rule 4, Section 2 (p. 42)

Approved for all tournament and regular season play. A tournament game is resumed from the point of suspension at a later date. A regular season game is resumed at a later date if not already a regulation game

Conduct

Rule 3, Section 5, Article 1 (p. 38)

Eye black shall not include intimidating, offensive, or “unsporting” marking on the face or under the eyes. Smearing is not a violation.

Conduct

Rule 3, Section 5 (p. 40)

The head coach provides proper supervision of all players at all times. NJSIAA procedures supersede a playing rule which requires a coach or player to leave the premises upon disqualification. An ejected player is confined to the bench area to remain under the supervision of the head coach. If the ejected player remains disruptive or unsportsmanlike the umpire may terminate the game.

Line-Up Card

Rule 3, Section 1, Article 3 (p. 32)

The head coach presents the umpires with a completed lineup card.

When exercising the DP/Flex option, the designated player is listed in her position of the batting order and the flex player she is batting for is listed in the tenth position. Line up cards should be in triplicate for the home team, the visitors and the umpire-in-chief.

Ending a Game

Rule 4, Section 2, Article 3 and Article 7 (p. 42-43)

Only the umpire may end a game.

The 10-run rule: If after 5 innings of play, the visiting team is ahead by 10 runs, or 4 ½ innings if the home team is ahead by 10 runs the game ends.

The 15-run rule: If after 4 innings of play, the visiting team is ahead by 15 runs, or 3 ½ innings if the home team is ahead by 15 runs, the game shall be ended.

Tie-Breaking Procedure

Rule 4, Article 5-6 (p. 43)

At the top of the 10th inning and during each half inning used to enforce the tie breaker, the offensive team shall begin its turn at bat with the player who is scheduled to bat ninth being placed at second base.

(Example: If the number five batter leads off, the number four batter is on second base. A substitute may be inserted for the runner.)

TAKE NOTE OF THIS: IF THE PITCHER OR CATCHER HAS MADE THE LAST OUT A COURTESY MAY NOT BE USED TO RUN. A SUBSTITUTE MUST BE USED WITH ALL SUBSTITUTION RULES APPLYING.

Forfeit

Rule 4, Section 3, Article 1, (p. 43)

An umpire may terminate a game but only the NJSIAA may declare a forfeit.

Protests

Rule 4, Section 4 (p. 44)

Not permitted

Illegal Bat

Rule 7, Section 4, Article 2, (p. 59)

Penalty: When the illegal bat is an altered or non-approved bat, the batter

and head coach are ejected. Damaged bats are not illegal and are removed from the game without penalty. This does not carry the additional penalty of the NJSIAA Disqualification Rule.

Sub-Varsity Games

Leagues and conferences can establish sub-varsity game modifications with approval of the NJSIAA.

Sub-Varsity Extra Hitter and Defensive Substitution

This allows for wider sub-varsity student/athlete participation by adding an extra hitter to the batting order and permission for free defensive position substitution. Sub-varsity coaches may switch player defensive positions without impacting the batting line up and without notification to the plate umpire or opposing coach.

1. The extra hitter (EH) and defensive substitution are for sub-varsity softball.
2. An EH can be added to the line-up anywhere in the batting order at the pregame line-up exchange between the head coach and the umpires.
3. The batting order cannot be changed once the line-up is approved by the head coach and accepted by the home plate umpire at the pregame meeting.
4. The use of an extra hitter does not prevent a sub-varsity team from also applying the DP/Flex rule prior to the game.
5. Use of the EH and Flex causes the Flex to be listed in the 11th position.
6. A sub-varsity team with an extra hitter and no available substitutes which experiences an injury to a starting player shall have the injured player's spot in the batting order skipped without penalty.
7. However, the batting position of a player ejected from the game, without an available substitute, shall be deemed an automatic out in the line-up.
8. Batting order changes must consist of re-entry at the same spot in the line-up.
9. Defensive position changes are permitted without umpire consultation with the exception of a pitching change. The opposing team and home plate umpire shall be notified of all pitching changes.
10. Conference rules supersede this when a game is in-conference.
11. Non-conference opponents are not required to invoke the free defensive player substitution rule if one of the two head coaches' objects.

Double Base

1. White portion is in fair territory; colored side is foul
2. Generally, a play made on the batter-runner, the defense must use the white portion; batter-runner must use colored side
3. If the batter-runner touches only the white portion, the batter-runner would be out if properly appealed.
4. Appeal must be prior to the batter-runner returning to the base.
5. On any force out attempt from the foul side of the base, the defense and the batter-runner may use any side of the base.
6. The defense may use the colored portion of the base if an errant throw pulls the defense into foul territory.
7. On balls hit to the outfield with no play at first base, the batter-runner may touch either portion of the bag.
8. Once the batter-runner reaches first base, the base becomes one big bag and runners and fielders may use either portion.
9. This is also true when tagging up on a fly ball or making appeals at first base.

Pitching

1. Pitchers may have both feet off of the ground at the same time
2. Both feet must remain within or partially within the 24-inch width of the pitcher's plate
3. The pitcher may not replant the pivot foot
4. This means the push off may only be from the pitcher's plate
5. Pitchers may use dirt, powdered resin or an approved drying agent
6. Gorilla Gold (original) is legal; Gorilla Gold for golf is illegal.
7. Gold for golf is more tacky and leaves residue on the ball and is illegal
8. A pitcher's back pocket towel cannot contain a substance which leaves residue on the ball; the towel must be removed.
9. A pitcher licking her fingers must wipe the fingers before contacting the ball

COACH HAS THE OPTION

1. Primarily, an illegal pitch and catcher's obstruction on batter
2. Delayed dead ball; allow the play to continue
3. If the batter reaches first base and all other runners gain at least one base, the illegal pitch is nullified; all action stands
4. If the batter does not reach at least first base and/or all runners do not each gain at least one base, the coach has the option
5. The option is the result of the play or the rule
6. The rule is a ball on the batter; runners return; outs nullified
7. No option if illegal pitch hits the batter out of the strike zone or if the illegal pitch is ball four; runners only advance if forced
8. A runner is on second; the batter hits an illegal pitch into the gap for a double but the runner is thrown out at home. No option. Illegal pitch is nullified.
9. A runner is on first; the batter hits an illegal pitch into the gap. The defense appeals that the batter-runner missed first base. Called out. Missed base is considered reached. No option. Illegal pitch is nullified.
10. The same applies for catcher obstruction on the batter

Portable Fence

1. Fielder has the fly ball in her glove and then falls over the fence.
2. Fielder catches the fly ball while standing on a flattened temporary fence
3. Fielder leaps over the temporary fence and then catches the fly ball on the other side

Umpire Interference

1. Interfering with the catcher making an initial play (throw):

- ❑ Catcher reaches back to throw, hits your mask, etc.
- ❑ Catcher bumps into umpire
- ❑ Always a delayed dead ball
- ❑ If the runner is safe; all runners return
- ❑ If the runner is out, play remains live; no interference

2. Being hit by a fair batted ball:

- ❑ Only if not touched by any fielder, including the pitcher
- ❑ And the ball has not passed a fielder other than pitcher
- ❑ If the hit passes the pitcher but a fielder had a chance to play the ball, it's still umpire interference
- ❑ Ball is dead on umpire interference
- ❑ Batter-runner awarded first base
- ❑ Other runners advance only if forced
- ❑ Runners return unless base achieved before the interference
- ❑ Position yourself to not be in front of a fielder, when possible

3. Base umpire is not interfering if contacted by a fielder who is converging to catch a batted ball.
Base umpire is part of the field.
4. Umpire bumping into a runner is treated like a runner tripping on the ground; not interference

- ***HAVE A TERRIFIC SEASON***
- ***ANY QUESTIONS DURING THE YEAR***
- ***PLEASE DO NOT HESSITATE TO CALL***