

2026 NISA 14U Division Rules Summary

Northern Illinois Softball Association (NISA)

Age Division: **13–14 years old (as of 8/31/2025)**

Recommended 8th grade and below: **Players who also participate in high school softball are not eligible due to schedule overlap.**

Player Eligibility & Team Composition

Recreational Only

- No tryouts or cuts allowed.
- Full-time travel players are **not eligible**.

Tournament / Part-Time Players (within own rec program)

- Tournament/part-time players affiliated with the rec organization **are eligible**.
- These players must be **evenly distributed** across all teams.
- Coaches and league administrators must coordinate distribution **before drafts or team formation**.
- No team should gain an advantage due to an uneven number of advanced players.
- Violations may result in:
 - Forfeits
 - Player reassignment
 - Loss of coach eligibility
- Goal: **Fairness, integrity, and balanced development** for all athletes.

Coaches Rules

- Maximum **3 coaches** in the dugout (10U–14U).
- If using 3 coaches, **one must remain in the dugout** at all times.
- When on defense, all coaches must remain inside the dugout.
- No coaching or distractions from behind the backstop.
 - 1st violation: **Warning**
 - 2nd violation: **Ejection**
- Coaches should not smoke near players; parents must be directed to designated smoking areas.

Roster & Scorekeeping

- All registered players must be placed on a team — **no cuts allowed**.
- A player may only be rostered on **one team**.
- Minimum **7 players** required to start a game: otherwise, forfeit.
- Recommended roster size: **13 players max**.
- **Gamechanger** is required for all teams to track rosters and scores.

Game Rules

- **Length:** 7 innings or **1:45** time limit.
 - No new inning after 1:45; finish the current inning.
- **Run Limit:** 6 runs per inning (unlimited in 6th inning and beyond).

Mercy Rules

- **15 runs after 3 innings**
- **10 runs after 5 innings**
- **8 runs after 6 innings**

Lineup & Participation

- **Batting:** Continuous batting order required.
- **Defense:** All players must play at least 2 defensive innings.
- **Courtesy runner:** Will be allowed for pitcher/Catcher. Courtesy runner will be the last batted out
- **Lineup Adjustments:**
 - Late arrivals: added to end of order.
 - Injury/emergency: skip spot, not out.
 - Injury during at-bat: out for that at-bat; skip spot afterward.
 - Ejection: spot becomes automatic out.

Pitching Rules

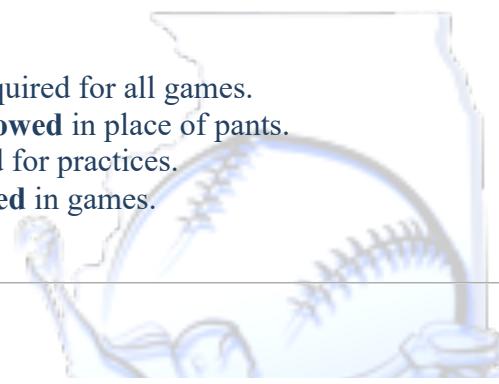
- Distance: **43 feet**.
- No inning limits: **free defensive substitution** allowed.
- Coaches should use good judgment to prevent overuse.
- Warm-ups:
 - 5 pitches before the 1st inning
 - 3 pitches before following innings
 - Coaches must train pitchers/catchers to self-manage warmup timing.
- Mound Visits:
 - 2 visits in the same inning = pitcher removed for that inning.
- Sunglasses
 - Are allowed by pitcher
- Illegal pitch: **Ball on the batter**; no runner advancement.
 - An **illegal pitch** occurs when the pitcher does not follow pitching rules, including:
 - Both feet not in legal position on and within the pitching plate
 - Hands not together before the pitch
 - Pitching motion not continuous (stop/start)
 - Replanting or stepping illegally
 - Pitch delivered before the batter is ready

Hitting & Fielding

- Maximum **9 players** on defense.
- **Bunting & slap hitting:** Allowed.
 - Fake bunt → full swing = **out**.
 - Slap hit from outside the batter's box = **out**.
- **Infield Fly Rule:** In effect.

Equipment Requirements

- **Facemasks required** for all fielders.
- Helmets must have a **full facemask**.
- Bats must have **USSSA 1.20 BPF** or **USA Softball** stamp.
- **No metal cleats**.
- **Uniforms:**
 - Softball pants required for all games.
 - Leggings **not allowed** in place of pants.
 - Pants encouraged for practices.
 - Shorts **not allowed** in games.



Base Running

- **Sliding**- *Runners must avoid contact if a fielder has the ball*; if they slide, it must be legal (feet-first or headfirst within reach of the base, avoiding rolling/pop-up slides into the fielder). If a runner slides illegally or crashes into a fielder with the ball, they are out for causing illegal contact, as safety and avoiding collisions are paramount.
- **For the Defense (Obstruction):**
 - A defender can't block a base or runner's path if they don't have the ball.
 - If a defender is fielding a batted ball, they have a right to their position, but once they field it, they must clear the path.
 - **Key rule:** If a runner is hindered (slows down, changes direction) and the fielder doesn't have the ball or isn't making a play, it's obstruction.
 - An obstructed runner is generally awarded the base they would have reached in the umpire's judgment
- **Dropped 3rd strike:** In effect.
- Stealing allowed once ball leaves pitcher's hand.
- **Look-Back Rule:** Enforced once pitcher has control in the circle.
- Plays continue until pitcher **has possession in the circle**.

Conduct & Umpires

- Patched umpires required unless both coaches agree otherwise.
- Cheering must remain **positive**, no chanting during windup.
- Thrown bats:
 - 1st offense = warning
 - 2nd offense = ejection

Substitute / Borrowed Players

If short on players:

Borrowing from 12U:

- Allowed
- Restrictions:
 - Max **4** **innings** **pitched**
 - Must **bat** **last**
 - Must **play** **outfield** when not pitching

Borrowing from other 14U teams:

- Allowed **IF** below 7 players (Borrowing another 14U when you have more then 7 regulars will result in forfeit)
- Restrictions:
 - Cannot pitch
 - Cannot catch
 - Must bat last

Safety Rule

- No borrowing from below 12U.

Borrowing Requirement

- Borrowed players must come from the **same town rec program**.

Tournament Play — Spring 2026 (14U)

General Tournament Rules

- Regular season rules apply unless noted.
- Seeding based on **regular season standings**.
- Teams must play **10 games** to qualify by win percentage.
 - Fewer than 10 games = automatic last seed.
- Higher seed hosts and supplies umpires & balls until finals.

Championship & 3rd/4th Place Games

- **Location:** Woodstock – Bates Park
- **Date:** June 27, 2026
- **Umpires & game balls provided by NISA**

Game Length

- 3rd/4th place: **1:45 finish the inning**
- Championship: **Full 7 innings — no time limit**

Tie-Breaker (All Tournament Games)

If tied at the No New Inning time or after regulation:

International Tie Breaker (ITB)

- Last batted out starts on **2nd base**.
- All pitching & position rules remain in effect.