

# 2026 NISA 12U Division Rules Summary

Northern Illinois Softball Association (NISA)

Age Division: 11–12 years old (as of 8/31/2025)

Recommended for: 6th & 7th graders

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## 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.

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## 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.

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## 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:** 6 innings or 1:45 time limit.
  - No new inning after 1:45; finish the inning if started.
- **Run Limits:**
  - 6 runs per inning (unlimited in the 6th inning).
- **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, no out.
  - Injury during at-bat: out for that at-bat; skip spot afterward.
  - Ejection: spot becomes automatic out.

## Pitching Rules

- **Distance:** 40 feet.
- **Limits:** Maximum 4 innings per game per pitcher; free substitution allowed.
  - One pitch in an inning counts as an inning pitched.
- **Warm-Ups:** 5 pitches before 1st inning; 3 pitches thereafter. Will be enforced.
- **Mound Visits:**
  - 4 visits per game = must remove pitcher.
  - 2 visits in the same inning = remove pitcher 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

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## Hitting & Fielding

- Max 9 players on defense.
- **Bunting & Slap Hitting:**
  - Allowed.
  - Fake bunt followed by full swing = out.
  - Slap hit from outside the batter's box = out.
- Infield Fly Rule: **In effect.**

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## Equipment Requirements

- **Facemasks:** Required for all fielders (infield & outfield).
- **Helmets:** Must have full face mask.
- **Bats:** Must have USSSA 1.20 BPF or USA Softball stamp.
- **Cleats:** No metal cleats allowed.
- **Uniforms:**
  - Softball pants required in games.
  - Leggings or shorts are not allowed in place of pants.
  - Pants encouraged for practice as well.
  - Shorts are not allowed in games.

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## 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

- Umpires: Patched umpires required unless both coaches approve otherwise.
  - Cheering: Positive only; no chanting during pitcher's windup.
  - Thrown Bats:
    - 1st offense = warning.
    - 2nd offense = ejection.
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## Substitute / Borrowed Players

- May borrow from 10U if short on players: We should not bench 12U players to allow 10U to play up.
    - Max 4 innings pitched.
    - Must bat last.
    - Must play outfield if not pitching.
  - May borrow from other 12U teams **only if** unable to meet 7-player minimum:
    - Cannot pitch or catch; must bat last.
  - No borrowing from under 10U for safety reasons.
  - All borrowed players must be from the same town rec program.
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## Tournament Play

### Spring Tournament

- Teams must play **10+ regular season games** to qualify for seeding
- Higher seeds host games until finals
- **Championship & 3rd/4th Place:**
  - **June 27, 2026 – Bates Park, Woodstock**
  - **1:45 time limit;** finish current inning
  - Ties resolved with **International Tie Breaker (ITB)**
    - Last batted out starts at 2nd base

