

D.O.L.L.S.

Third Grade Level Rules

Revised September 2023

Emphasis of this league is on developing basic softball skills - batting, fielding ground balls and fly balls, throwing, catching, pitching, rounding bases, defensive positions, and making cut-offs. USA softball rules apply for this age group for all aspects of the game not addressed by the below rules.

1. All girls are required to play all defensive positions during the season. At every game, all girls are required to play 1 complete inning in the infield and 1 complete inning in the outfield. No player may play the outfield a 2nd inning until all players on the roster have played outfield for 1 inning. Similarly, all players must rotate sitting out, no player may sit out 2 innings in a row. Every player must sit out once before any player sits out twice. Equal playing time, best as can be maintained, is required for all players each game.
2. Outfielders are required to play in the outfield; they may not cover a base. Covering bases is the job of the infielders. A runner shall be declared safe if the out is the result of an outfielder covering a base.
3. Maximum of 10 defensive players per inning will be allowed. The infield will play the regular 6, and the outfield may play 4 defensive players.
4. A continuous batting order is mandatory. "Continuous" batting order means that all players present are placed in the batting order, regardless of which players are playing in the field any given inning.
5. This level shall use a 11" hard ball. The home team is responsible for setting up the field approximately 30 minutes before game time.
6. If a batter or runner is injured, the player that recorded the last out will replace the injured player. If the injured player is at bat, the replacement player will assume the ball/strike count.
7. A team's turn at bat concludes when either (a) the batting team scores four runs, or (b) the defensive team records three outs, whichever occurs first.
8. Inning / Time Limit:
 - A game end after the completion of 6 innings, or upon reaching the time limit, whichever occurs first.
 - Time Limit: No new inning shall begin after 1 hour 20 minutes of play. A new inning begins at the time of the third out (or fourth run) of the home team's at bat.
 - Complete the inning in progress as of the 1 hour 20 minute time limit.
 - "Drop Dead" time limit: The "drop-dead" rule will be in effect after 1 hour 50 minutes of play. This means the game will automatically end after 1 hours 50 minutes of play, no matter the inning or game situation.
9. There will be a two-minute time limit between half innings to keep the games moving. Please strictly adhere to this time limit to keep the games moving. Whenever possible please help the catcher put the gear on before the team's at-bat ends.

10. Third Grade Level Batting and Pitching: Combination Player Pitch and Machine Pitch

- The first two (2) innings of a game will feature a player-pitching inning. Pitchers will pitch up to four (4) pitches. After four (4) player pitches, regardless of the count, a coach of the batting team will come in to operate the pitching machine for the remainder of the at-bat. The ball-strike count will not re-set in the event the pitching machine is used; the count will remain. Foul balls on the third strike will result in an additional pitch.
- The Third Grade level pitching distance is 33 feet from the back tip of home plate to the pitching rubber.
- Innings 3 and beyond will be 100% machine-pitch. These innings will feature up to five (5) machine pitches per batter.
- There are no walks at the Third Grade level, but there are strikeouts. Strikes will be called when a pitch is taken for a strike, or the batter swings and misses the pitch, or the batter swings and fouls off the pitch. Foul balls on the third strike will result in an additional pitch.
- **Strike Zone:** It is recommended that the strike zone be relatively broad – anywhere below the armpits but above the shins, and less than or equal to one ball diameter outside the plate on either side. Please use the schematic below for illustration. The point of a large strike zone is to encourage batters to swing.
- Third Grade level uses the Louisville Slugger Blue Flame UPM 45 pitching machine, which will be operated by the batting team's coaches. Pitching machine settings will be determined and communicated separately.
- The designated Home team shall provide a volunteer (usually a coach) to umpire the entirety of the game.

11. Base Running

- a. The runner is allowed to take a lead-off after the pitch has crossed the plate.
- b. Batters may advance beyond first base only on a ball that travels into the outfield. A batter may continue advancing around the bases on a ball hit into the outfield until the ball is fielded and thrown so it crosses into the infield. If a runner is halfway to the next base they may continue at their risk and cannot advance to the next base. If a runner is less than halfway she must return to the base they came from at no risk of an out.
Batters/runners may not advance on an overthrow at any base.
- c. Third Grade level base peg length is generally 55 feet, although Third Grade teams will also play on fields with 60 foot base peg lengths. The Washington Park and Puffer Elementary School fields have 55 foot base pegs (Washington Park also has 60 foot base pegs, so take care in setting up the field).

12. Stealing bases is not permitted at the Third Grade level. Runners may not advance on a passed ball.

13. Coaches/Parent Helpers:

- a. When batting - 1 coach behind the plate (to call balls and strikes and assist batters), 1 coach operating the pitching machine, 1 coach at 1st base, 1 coach at 3rd base.
- b. When fielding - 2 coaches allowed in the field to assist with positioning and position

play.

14. No score is kept at the Coach Pitch Level. Each coach is responsible for tracking their own runs and batting order.

15. The infield fly rule **does not** apply at this level.

16. The dropped third strike rule **does not** apply at this level.

Strike Zone Schematic

