
LINCOLN HILLS



SENIOR SOFTBALL

Playing Rules

2026

Introduction

The purpose of the Lincoln Hills Women's Softball Team, a division of the Lincoln Hills Senior Softball League (LHSSL), is to provide Sun City Lincoln Hills residents the opportunity to participate in organized softball games and provide members the opportunity to maintain and improve softball skills in a fun, safe and supportive environment. We play the game for fun and the intent is to keep the Lincoln Hills version of the game exactly that, FUN. We promote good sportsmanship, fair play and above all, safety when playing.

We have certain philosophies regarding how the game should be played. The rules Lincoln Hills Senior Softball League (LHSSL) plays by are governed by Senior Softball USA (SSUSA), with certain exceptions compiled by the LHSSL Rules Committee with review and final approval by the LHSSL Board of Directors. The main goal of the Committee because of the wide age disparity in players, is player safety. While safety cannot be addressed in every rule, the basis for our play is safety first, and it is expected that each member of the LHSSL Women's Team adheres to basic safety whenever they play.

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Local LHSSL Women's Rules

The Lincoln Hills Senior Softball League (LHSSL) Women's Division is governed by the SSUSA rules and regulations (current edition) with exceptions/additions authorized by the LHSSL.

I. Field Layout

A. Base Distance

1. The base distance is 55 feet. Runners must run to the right side of the baseline; the runner must step on the orange bag as they run through first base. All other bases are run to.

B. Pitching Distance

1. The pitcher's mound is set at 40 - 46 feet. The pitcher's box should measure 6 feet long and 2 feet wide.

C. Batter's Box

1. The batter's box consists of a batting mat. The edge of the batting mat is the outermost edge of the batter's box. The edge of the mat is treated as if it were the outermost portion of the standard chalk line.

D. Outfield 120-130 Foot Limit Line

1. An arcing line, 120 feet from home plate to the left field line and 120 feet from home plate to the right field line and 130 feet from home plate to center field is used. It's marked by strategically placed cones. Outfielders cannot cross the line to make a play until the ball is hit. If they cross before the ball is hit, the batter is awarded first base and all other runners are advanced one base from the base last occupied.
2. The rover position can play in front of or behind the cones.

E. Run Past (Commit) Line

1. The commit line shall be 3 feet long and marked perpendicular to the foul line and 20 feet from home plate.
2. Once the runner passes the commit line they must continue toward home, crossing the scoring line before the ball is thrown to the catcher. A runner cannot return to third base if they pass this line.

II. Equipment

A. Bats

1. Bats must have an ASA or SSUSA Softball Certification Mark.
2. Bats can be single wall or double wall construction.
3. Bat barrels can be 100 percent alloy or aluminum.
4. Bat handles can be 100 percent composite or aluminum/alloy materials.
5. A bat of 100% composite construction with a rating of 1.21 is allowed.

B. Softballs

1. Softballs are 11-inch, 6oz. The COR rating is .47 with a compression of 375 and synthetic leather with a poly core. The balls have a Yellow Optic cover with red stitching. Softballs are Champion brand, Rhino model SB147NF which has proven reliable. Other brands that meet the above specifications are acceptable.

C. Pitching Screen

1. Use of a pitching screen is MANDATORY for the safety and protection of pitchers during play.
 - a) Screen Placement - The “pitching box” is 6 feet. The “pitching box” consists of 3 feet behind the rubber and 3 feet in front of the rubber. The “screen box” starts at 3 feet and can go up to 6 feet in front of the pitching rubber, the width of the “pitching box” and “screen box” is 2 feet wide. For right-handed pitchers, the screen’s foot is placed perpendicular to the pitching rubber in line with the center of the rubber. For left-handed pitchers, the screen is flipped to the opposite side.
 - b) A pitcher’s foot must come into contact with a pitcher’s plate.
 - c) Once the pitcher sets the pitching screen and pitches to a batter the screen cannot be moved for the completion of the inning. (Best practice – set the screen when doing warm-ups)
 - d) It is encouraged, but optional, for the pitcher to take a position behind the screen after the ball is pitched to avoid being struck by a line drive.

D. Pitcher’s Gear & Catcher’s Gear

1. The use of a face mask and shin guards are MANDATORY for all pitchers. **The use of a face mask is MANDATORY for all catchers. Catchers have the option to wear shin guards.** Failure to do so will result in the pitcher and/or catcher being removed from the position.

E. Uniforms

1. Uniforms are league issued jerseys and caps/visors. They shall be worn properly by all team members while playing their games.

III. Managers, Players, Courtesy Runners/Subs

A. Managers and Lineups

1. A pre-season Manager’s meeting will result in a game assignment schedule to Manage or Co-Manage.
2. Players must register, pay dues and sign up for each game they wish to play on Sign Up Genius. There is a maximum number of players allowed to sign up, based on the game schedule.
3. A member of the Women’s Board will send an email to the assigned game managers with a roster by Friday evening for Sunday games, and by Tuesday for Thursday games.
4. A great deal of consideration is made in balancing the teams fairly taking into consideration assigning key positional players, while balancing hitting and throwing strengths.
5. Opposing managers have the option to balance teams by trading players which must be concluded by Friday morning for Sunday games or by Tuesday morning for Thursday games. The final roster must be communicated to the Women’s Board in order to notify players of team assignment.
6. Managers make the lineup cards and assign positions, including pitchers.

7. Managers may play on their team, coach bases and instruct players.
8. Umpires must communicate with Managers only (who are identified by wearing the optic yellow ball cap, stating LHSSL WOMEN'S MANAGER.
9. Managers are expected to arrive at the ball field a minimum of 30 minutes before game time, with a completed lineup. A completed lineup is to include name, batting order and field positions.
10. Managers are responsible for keeping a timely pace of the game by encouraging the games to start on time, a quick return to the dugout and a quick return to the field in between innings. Warm ups will be done prior to the game being started and not in between innings.
11. Lineup Cards
 - a) Lineup cards should include names and are required for all games. Copies must be provided to the opposing manager and scorekeeper before games start.

B. Players

- a) All players must bat and be shown on the lineup card. All players appearing on the lineup card must be given the opportunity to play in the field before the end of the game, if they so desire. Players have a choice to hit and not play defense.
- b) A minimum number of players to start a game is nine (9) players. If one team has more than 9 players the manager can ask for a player(s) to switch teams so teams are even in numbers. If a player arrives late, they will be placed at the bottom of the batting order. If there are extra players on the bench, late players will sit out the inning they arrive. If there are no bench players they may enter the game.
- c) A game can be played with up to 13 batters. Substitutes will need to be used if more than 13 players per team sign up for the game.
- d) There will be a maximum of 11 players on the field, this includes the Rover position. A Rover can play anywhere in front of or behind the cones.
- e) Only team members are allowed in the dugout and area behind the dugout. For safety reasons, residents, pets, guests, and sponsors who are not actively participating in the league play are not allowed in these areas.

C. Courtesy Runner (CR)

1. Eligibility

- a) A CR is any player who runs for another player. A CR can run for anyone on base or the batter.
- b) All CR's running for a batter must start with their hand in contact with the right side of the fence (marked by a pink noodle attached to the fence).
- c) The CR's hand must stay in contact with the fence until the ball is struck. The CR may begin to run once a ball is hit and can run to all bases.

2. Limitations

- a) A player can be a CR up to four times per game, but no more than one time per inning.
- b) A CR cannot replace another CR except in the case of injury provided the runner doesn't run twice in the inning.
- c) With 9 players on a team, CR's may get a new courtesy runner if they are on base when it is their turn to bat. No penalty will be invoked.

3. Running for the pitcher

- a) A CR for the pitcher will count. There is not an exception to allow the pitcher to gear up for the next inning.

4. Misuse

- a) Misuse of a CR is an appeal play and must be made by the opposing manager before the next pitch.
Penalty: CR running illegally and appealed properly is an out.
Infractions caught before the CR is placed result in a warning by the plate umpire and a manager's removal, if repeated.

D. Players Leaving The Game

1. There is no penalty for a player leaving the game for a legitimate reason. The batter is skipped in the lineup and play continues. The clock does not stop unless there was an injury causing the player to leave the game. Once the player is off the field the clock is restarted.

IV. The Game

A. Game Duration

1. **The time limit is ninety (90) minutes or 7 innings, whichever comes first. Prior to the 90 minutes being up the umpire notifies both teams that the current inning, if it's not the open inning, will be completed and the following inning will be the open inning.** The only time the clock is stopped is for an injury. The decision is made by the plate umpire only.

B. Batting - Counts and Foul/Dead Balls

1. The batter starts with a 0-0 count.
2. If the batter hits a foul ball with two strikes, the count remains at two strikes. Another foul ball constitutes a strikeout.
3. Any batted ball tipped off the bat and caught by the catcher is considered an out.
4. Any batted ball hitting the pitching screen is a dead ball with no strikes

given to the batter. No runners can advance.

5. The infield fly rule will not be enforced.

C. Runs/Home Runs

1. In regulation play, teams can score up to 5 runs per inning.
2. Any ball hit OVER the 10-foot fence in right field, left field and/or the scoreboard/clock, in fair territory, shall be declared a home run. No limitation on home runs.
3. Players must run and cross the line to the far right of home plate. Failure to do so will result in the runner being called out.

D. Pitching

1. Pitch Heights
 - a) Pitch heights are a minimum of 6 feet and a maximum of 12 feet judged by the plate umpire.
 - b) Violation of pitching heights or mechanics will be called as illegal pitches and counted as balls by the plate umpire.
2. Pitching Screen
 - a) If a thrown ball hits the pitching screen it is a live ball and playable.

E. Force Out At First Base Exception

1. A batter-runner hitting a ball to the outfield cannot be thrown out at first base. A direct throw from the outfield to first base is not allowed. The exception is the rover position which acts as an infielder whether in front of or behind the cones.

F. Temperature and Air Quality Index (AQI) Rule

1. If a game has started and the temperature measured in the shade (under the Scorekeeper tower) at DWF is 97 degrees or below, the game will play to its conclusion. If only one team wants to stop play, they incur a forfeit. Any games scheduled to start with a temperature of 98 or above, will be canceled.
2. A game will not be played if the AQI is 140 and above. The AQI reading will be monitored using the AccuWeather application. Any player may opt out if the conditions are unacceptable to them.

G. Fair Play

1. Generally, prior to the start of the game, in order to play under a fair play rule the rule must be presented by mutual consent and approved by both managers and the plate umpire. If no agreement can be reached regarding the proposed fair play rule, then the matter shall be decided by the plate umpire. Fair play rules may, but it is recommended they not, take precedence over established rules. Fair play rules should be allowed in circumstances that will not impact the game in such a way as to give an unfair advantage over an opponent.
2. Examples of fair play rules are:
 - a) Allowing an extra player on the field for both teams
 - b) Allowing a player to wear a different hat
 - c) Allowing a player to wear a coat over their uniform
 - d) Allowing a non-playing manager to play when no substitutes are available and there are only eight available players to play

H. CODE OF CONDUCT

All League members are expected to abide by LHSSL and Association governing documents and conduct themselves courteously and respectfully. The LHSSL Board in conjunction with the Women's Division board will investigate any reported or observed violations and decide on the appropriate course of action. LHSSL members determined to violate the rules may have their membership forfeited and will not be allowed to participate in any LHSSL functions, sit on the Board, or be involved in any League business for the rest of the year.

For additional information, refer to the LHSSL's Policy, Procedures & Regulations (PPRs)

A. Definitions:

- a. "Dugout" means the dugouts and space behind the dugouts.
- b. "Individual" means a Coach, Manager, Player, Scorekeeper or Spectator.
- c. "Official" means an umpire, including the Head Umpire, the Commissioner or his/her designee, a *Women's Board* member, or a LHSSL Board Member.
- d. "Unsportsmanlike" means not displaying the qualities or behavior befitting a good sport, whether on the field or off.
- e. "Warning" means a communication advising the individual to cease the violation.
- f. "Removal from the Game" means removal from the playing field, the grandstands, the scorekeeping tower, and the surrounding area.
- g. "Probation" means that a league member is under scrutiny. For any further violations, the player will be asked to forfeit their membership.