



OHIO HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION
PRESEASON GUIDE FOR SOFTBALL UMPIRES
“THE WHITE BOOK”

2021 Supplement to 2020 Edition

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome to the 2021 Softball Season – Page 2

OHSAA Softball Rules Modifications/Recommendations - Page 4

Review Items – 2020 White Book – Page 9

State and Local Meeting Attendance Requirements – Page 9

Welcome to the 2021 Softball Season

As we enter a new year, where do we start? To me, it is as simple as “Let’s Have a Season” which has been the rallying cry for OHSAA student athletes over the past year. The same applies to all of our softball umpires as well. We must put behind us the lost season of 2020 and all work together to have a safe and healthy spring sports season this year. It will take a lot of extra effort from everyone involved – schools, their administrators and coaches, student athletes and our umpires. As I write this in early December the pandemic illnesses are growing but the hope is there for a vaccine and a much better health climate as we play softball this spring. The purpose of this WHITE BOOK SUPPLEMENT is to prepare us for the coming season.

I also want to thank you in advance for the additional efforts you will be making this spring – double checking every assignment, social distancing, wearing face coverings prior to and after each contest, when communicating closely with others, and when leaving the field (note that it is recommended that you wear these coverings at all times), and setting a good example for everyone as we fight the virus. Flexibility will be very important. I know our umpires will continue to serve Ohio’s schools and student athletes rising above the challenges during these most difficult times. The OHSAA truly appreciates all you do.

I encourage all of you to review the 2020 White Book and all the NFHS publications from last year. For 2021 there are no rules changes, no new rule books or other publications, and no postal mailing of materials from the OHSAA. As I’m sure you can imagine the association is doing everything possible to reduce its expenses as nearly all its revenue stream has been cut drastically without significant paid admissions to tournaments. If you have misplaced your printed 2020 White Book it can be accessed online at the link below – and a list of key review items is printed elsewhere in this supplement.

<https://ohsaaweb.blob.core.windows.net/files/Officiating/dod/Softball/SoftballWhiteBook.pdf>

For obvious reasons, we are going to be changing some of our training programs for this year. Here are some key points to be aware of:

- The 2021 required state meeting will be online only. A notice will be sent but look for it to be available about February 10.
- Local associations will be permitted to offer meetings either online or in-person but many will be unable to do so. The OHSAA will offer six online local meeting opportunities between mid-February and early April. Umpires will have these chances to get their local meetings, now called educational credits.
- There will be no in person mechanics clinics held around the state this year. These will return in 2022. Local meeting topics will include both rules and mechanics.

- There will be a pre-season test available – a great rules refresher and an opportunity to pick up additional points on your 2022 tournament score. The timeline for this test will be communicated in late February.
- As a result of the health crisis there will be some rules and mechanics modifications for the 2021 season. These will be covered in the state and local meetings, elsewhere in this publication, and through additional communications during the spring. Please understand that our flexibility is the key here as these modifications may be adjusted at any time – both prior to and during the season.
- These additional communications will include our weekly bulletins – as in the past these may not be out every week but we will work to get all necessary information to you as quickly as possible.

For 2021 we must work harder than ever on both recruiting and retention efforts. We need more umpires and with the decrease in some employment levels we can provide a great opportunity to those in need. I especially encourage you to recruit females and minorities - we have not had much success in recruiting female and minority umpires and ask for your help with this. Our current umpires are the best recruiting source we have. If you know of anyone interested give them this address: <http://www.ohsaa.org/Officiating/permits>. Here they will find the information they need to join a class forming near them. We need your help - please encourage your friends and neighbors to get involved!

Lastly, I've told you in past years that I especially enjoy the chance to get around the state prior to each season and meet so many of you at our preseason meetings and events. That will not happen much this year but I do look forward to seeing you on the field. Have a great season and again thanks for all your extra efforts this year. Stay healthy!

Sincerely,

Jerry Fick

Director of Officials Development – Softball

IMPORTANT NOTE

The OHSAA Softball Rules

Modifications/Recommendations are printed starting on the next page. Please carefully review this section!



2021 Softball Rules Modifications and Rules Recommendations and General Requirements and General Recommendations

With the support from the NFHS Softball Rules Committee, the Ohio Department of Health, the Ohio Governor's Office and the Ohio High School Athletic Association, the rules modifications and rules recommendations and general requirements and general recommendations outlined in this document are meant to decrease potential exposure to respiratory droplets by encouraging social distancing, limiting participation in administrative tasks to essential personnel and allowing for appropriate protective equipment. *Note:* This is not an exhaustive list and there might be additional steps in each school, city and state to help prevent the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus. Even when taking all precautions, there will still be risk of transmitting illnesses. Everyone should stay vigilant about the health of members of their teams. Lastly, the situation with COVID-19 is rapidly changing. These considerations may quickly become outdated. Please keep up with the latest from the CDC and other health officials in your area. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Visit the Ohio Health Director's Sports Order <https://bit.ly/2RWa1jh> and these two documents

- Health Department's Responsible RestartOhio guidance document for sports: <https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/static/responsible/Youth-Collegiate-Amateur-Club-Pro-Sports.pdf>
- Health Department's Responsible RestartOhio guidance document for sports venues: <https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/static/responsible/Sports-Venues.pdf>

for further requirements and recommendations that apply to all sports, including softball. Please know that some of the requirements and recommendations in this sport-specific document duplicate state guidance.

Softball rules modifications and general requirements must be adhered to and followed. Softball rules recommendations and general recommendations are optional and not required but are permitted and strongly encouraged.

Note: Some softball facilities are privately-owned. Be sure non-school facility administrators know and follow these policies and procedures prior to practices or contests.

2021 Softball Rules Modifications

Softballs:

- Each team shall be responsible for supplying game balls for use while they are on defense. A minimum of three balls are to be handed to the home plate umpire at the beginning of each half inning.

- When a ball goes out of play, the defensive team shall retrieve the ball and provide another game ball to the home plate umpire.
- At the end of each half inning, the pitcher shall take the game ball with her to the dugout and the catcher shall take all other balls from the home plate umpire to the dugout.
- All balls must meet NFHS and OHSAA requirements and may be new or in good condition (this may vary based on level of competition – Varsity, JV, JH and budget).
- *Reference NFHS Rule 1-3-7*

Player Equipment:

- Personal items such as towels, facial coverings and water bottles shall not be shared.
- If equipment such as helmets and bats must be shared, proper sanitization must be performed between users.
- No team water coolers or shared drinking stations are permitted.
- Player/team equipment shall be sanitized before and after each practice or game.
- *Reference NFHS Rules 1-4, 1-5, 1-6, 1-7*

Face Shields:

- Per guidance from the NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee, plastic shields covering the entire face (**unless integrated into the face mask and attached to a helmet**) shall not be allowed during contests.
- Use of these items during practices increases the risk of unintended injury to the person wearing the shield and their teammates.
- *Reference NFHS Rules 1-7-1, 1-8-4*

Additional Equipment:

- Face coverings must be worn when not participating (must be worn at all times in the dugout or bench area – no color/design restrictions).
- *Reference NFHS Rule 1-8*

Pregame Conference:

- Attendees are limited to the head coach from each team plus the umpires.
- Coaches shall stay outside the width of the batter's box at home plate, maintaining six feet of distance between each person.
- Everyone attending this meeting must wear a face covering.
- *Reference NFHS Rule 2-14-2*

Substitutions:

- Verbal exchanges shall occur six feet from the coach or substitute to the plate umpire and from the plate umpire to the opposing team's coach.
- *Reference NFHS Rule 3-3-3*

Coaching:

- Umpires shall not handle equipment on the field during play.
- Coaches must wear face coverings at all times.
- Coaches must ensure that players are legally equipped as well as following all safety measures included in the playing rules and in the regulations established by the Ohio Department of Health and the OHSAA.
- *Reference NFHS Rule 3-5-1 NOTE*

Coaching:

- Coaches who wish to discuss a rule or a ruling on the field must maintain at least six feet of physical distance from the umpire.
- *Reference NFHS Rules 3-5-3, 3-6-14*

Coaching:

- Base coaches must stay six feet from all runners at all times.
- *Reference NFHS Rule 3-5-2*

Bench and Field Conduct:

- Players are not permitted to leave the dugout area to congratulate players scoring or after home runs.
- The number of individuals in the dugout is dependent on the size of dugout.
- Players and coaches must maintain six feet of social distance.
- NFHS rules allow for dugouts/designated warm up areas to be extended to provide for social distancing. If needed, these areas shall be clearly marked and located beyond the end of the dugout furthest from home plate (Rule 10-2-3a).
- Players and all team personnel shall follow the “no touch” rule – refraining from high fives, handshakes and other physical contact with teammates, opposing players, coaches, umpires and fans. A “tip of the cap” can be used following the game in lieu of the handshake line.
- *Reference NFHS Rule 3-6-6*

Charged Conferences:

- Coaches holding defensive conferences must stay on the home plate side of the pitcher’s circle and the player(s) must be on the opposite side of the pitcher’s circle maintaining the six feet distance.
- Only one coach is permitted during the conference.
- When a coach visits the pitcher, all other players shall stay outside the pitching circle.
- Team huddles without physical distancing are prohibited.
- *Reference NFHS Rules 3-7-1, 3-7-2, 3-7-3*

Exchange of Lineup Cards:

- Lineups shall be handed to the umpire, and the umpire will verbally approve or ask any questions about the lineup.
- *Reference NFHS Rule 4-2-1b*

Infractions by the Pitcher:

- The pitcher is not permitted to lick her fingers and wipe them off.
- Pitchers are not allowed to put their hands to their mouths or blow into their hands prior to pitching the ball. This will be a "no pitch." Any umpire shall make this call. The ball is dead immediately. The ball will be replaced and sanitized and the pitcher must sanitize her hands before play continues.
- A pitcher using a resin bag or comparable drying agent shall take that item to the dugout with her at the end of each half inning.
- *Reference NFHS Rule 6-2-2*

Plate Umpire:

- The plate umpire calling balls and strikes shall allow adequate distance behind the catcher while still being able to perform his or her duty.
- *Reference NFHS Rule 10-2-1*

Equipment and Apparel:

- Prior to and after the game, umpires shall wear a face covering.
- Facial coverings shall be of one color, not distracting and have no designs.
- *Reference NFHS Rule 10-4-2*

Softball Umpire Mechanics Modifications

- The plate umpire calling balls and strikes shall allow adequate distance behind the catcher while still being able to perform his or her duty. — *Reference Section 2B*
- The catcher and batter shall be at a six-foot distance when the umpire is dusting off home plate. — *Reference Section 2E*
- Fielders shall be at a six-foot distance when the umpire is dusting off the pitcher's plate or any other base. — *Reference Section 2E*
- Base umpires shall maintain six feet from any player when in any starting or initial position. — *Reference Sections 3, 4b and c*

2021 Softball Rules Recommendations

Player Equipment:

- Players and coaches should use their own equipment (gloves, mitts, bats, helmets, hats and other on and off field equipment and gear) whenever possible.
- It is recommended that each team have an equipment handler to remove bats and helmets from the field of play. This person may wear gloves and/or sanitize equipment after use.
- It is recommended that sunflower seeds, gum and similar products be prohibited in the confines of the field.

- If equipment must be shared, proper sanitation must be administered between users.
- *Reference NFHS Rules 1-4, 1-5, 1-6, 1-7*

Additional Equipment:

- Cloth face coverings for players are recommended but not required on the field of play.
- If worn on the field, face coverings may be of any number of colors, not the color of the ball and not be distracting.
- Gaiters may be worn as face coverings.
- *Reference NFHS Rule 1-8*

Exchange of Lineup Cards:

- It is recommended that lineup cards be exchanged team-to-team and teams-to-scorekeeper being shared via photo or text.
- *Reference NFHS Rule 4-2-1b*

Equipment and Apparel:

- Umpire cloth facial coverings are recommended but not required while on the field during play.
- If utilized while on the field during play, facial coverings shall be of one color, not distracting and have no designs.
- Umpires may wear disposable glove and masks.
- *Reference NFHS Rule 10-4-2*

General Requirements

People (players, coaches, officials, spectators, etc.) feeling sick or that have been exposed to someone sick should not attend or participate in competitions or practices. The OHSAA requires all participants and spectators to practice social distancing and wear face coverings whenever possible. Host facilities shall communicate with spectators “know before you go” before each event.

- Anyone attending a practice or game – players, coaches, officials, trainers, cheerleaders, volunteers, staff, spectators, etc.: Must conduct a symptom assessment before each practice or contest, and anyone experiencing symptoms must stay home (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>).
 - Individuals with COVID-19 symptoms should isolate themselves per CDC’s guidance and contact their healthcare provider (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/isolation.html>).
 - Individuals with confirmed COVID-19 or who have symptoms should follow CDC’s guidance for when they can be around others again (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/end-home-isolation.html>).

Requirements for Officials:

- Facial coverings must be worn at all times with the exception of active officiating or warm up.
- Take your temperature prior to attending your competition. If temperature is above 100.4 or you do not feel well, notify your contracted school immediately.

- No congregating before or after games is permitted.
- Six-foot social distancing required during pre- and post-game conferences and during stoppage of play during contests.
- Do not shake hands or fist bump other officials, players or coaches.

Recommendations for Officials:

- Arrive at the facility dressed in partial or full uniform and plan to leave the facility in partial or full uniform.
- Bring personal hand sanitizer. Wash hands frequently.
- Do not share equipment.
- Follow social distancing guidelines. Consider six feet minimum distance when talking to others (players, coaches, other officials).
- Cloth face coverings/masks/shields are permitted, if an individual prefers to wear one.
- Gloves are permissible.

Review Items – 2020 White Book

- OHSAA Points of Emphasis – pages 2-4 – we are repeating these in 2021 – they are Noisemakers, Bats, Jewelry, and Game Management.
- Professionalism and Ethics – pages 5-7 – our responsibilities should be reviewed.
- NFHS Rules Changes and Points of Emphasis – pages 10-13 – these are now effective for the coming season.
- OHSAA Reminders – pages 13-15 – repeated for 2021.
- Sporting Conduct and Ejections – pages 16 & 17
- Safety Rules – page 17 - Concussion and Weather
- Game Ending Procedures/Suspended Games/Interrupted Games – pages 17-18
- Tips for Newer Umpire – Pages 18-20

State & Local Meeting Attendance Requirements

- The 2021 required state meeting will be online only. A notice will be sent but look for it to be available about February 10.
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