8U Division Rules (Ages 6–8)

All rules and regulations for this league shall follow **IHSA/NFHS rules**, except for the following modifications and additions.

THE PLAYERS

1. Playing Time
   - No player may sit out more than two innings per game.
   - No player may play the same defensive position for more than three innings per game.
   - Coaches are encouraged to provide equal playing time for all players.
2. Continuous Batting Order
   - A continuous batting order will be used; all players bat.
   - Late Arrivals: Players arriving late will be added to the bottom of the batting order.
   - Players Leaving Early: If a player leaves due to injury, illness, or family circumstances, her spot in the lineup will be skipped without penalty and will not be recorded as an out.
   - Injured Batter: If a player is injured during an at-bat and cannot continue, it is not an out. The last recorded out may complete the at-bat.
   - Ejected Player: If a player is ejected, her batting position becomes an automatic out for the remainder of the game. The player is not suspended from future games.
3. Minimum Players
   - Teams may play with a minimum of six 6 players.
   - Teams failing to meet the minimum player requirement must forfeit the game.

Substitute Players

- Teams may borrow players from other 8U teams within the league.
- Substitute players may play any position except pitcher.
- Substitute players must bat last.

THE GAME

1. Game Ball
   - The primary game ball shall be one new 11-inch soft-core softball.
   - A second game ball may be used if it is in very good condition.
2. Length of Game
   - Games shall consist of 6 innings, or 1 hour and 30 minutes, whichever comes first. Any inning will be completed.
   - Ties are permitted.
   - Weather-Shortened Games: A game is considered official after:
     - 3 innings are completed or 2 ½ innings if the home team is ahead.
     - If the umpire suspends the game due to weather or unsafe conditions before the inning is completed: Revert to the score from the previous completed inning.
   - Home Team Leading After Time Limit or After Top of the 6th inning
     - If the top half of an inning concludes after the time limit and the home team is ahead, the bottom half will not be played.
     - If the time limit is reached during the bottom half of an inning while the home team is ahead, the current batter will complete the at-bat and the inning will end.
     - If the home team is ahead after the top of the 6th inning, the bottom half of the inning will not be played.

- Extra Inning: If six innings are completed, the game is tied, and the time limit has not been reached: A 7th inning may be played.

3. Run Limit
   - Maximum of 5 runs per inning for all innings except:
     - 6th inning and any extra innings: Unlimited runs.
4. Sportsmanship
   - Team chants and comments must:
     - Be directed only toward teammates.
     - Be positive in nature.
     - No chanting during the opposing pitcher's windup.
   - Music
     - Warm-up and walk-up music are permitted and welcome.
     - Music volume must allow players and coaches to communicate effectively.
5. Defensive Alignment
   - Teams may field a maximum of 10 defensive players: 4 Infielders, 4 Outfielders, Pitcher, and Catcher.
   - Outfielder Positioning: All outfielders must begin each pitch on the grass. Use judgement for larger dirt fields.
   - The short center fielder may move in to cover second base.
   - No other outfielder may cover a base unless:
     - Backing up a play, or
     - Covering an unattended base.
6. Field Positioning During Coach Pitch
   - The player occupying the pitcher position must:
     - Remain level with or behind the pitching rubber.
     - Stay within the pitcher's circle.
   - Other infielders may not position themselves closer than the back edge of the pitcher's circle.
7. Ball Contacting Coach Pitcher
   - If a batted ball strikes the coach pitcher, the ball remains live.
8. Catcher Interference
   - Catcher interference will be ruled a no-pitch.
   - The batter will not be awarded first base.
9. Infield Fly Rule
   - The infield fly rule is not in effect.
10. Bunting
    - Bunting is not permitted.
11. Base Distance
    - Bases shall be 60 feet apart.
12. Makeup Games
    - Coaches should make every reasonable effort to reschedule cancelled games.
17. Umpires
    - An umpire must officiate each game.
    - By mutual agreement, coaches or parents may serve as umpires.

PITCHING

1. Pitching Distance
    - The front edge of the pitching rubber will be 30 feet from the back tip of home plate.
2. Pitching Limit
    - A pitcher may pitch a maximum of three innings per game.
    - One pitch constitutes an inning pitched.
3. Warm-Up Pitches and IF/OF Warm-up
    - New pitchers: 5 warm-up pitches
    - Returning pitchers: 3 warm-up pitches
    - Team infield/outfield warm-ups are only allowed before the first inning.
4. Hit by Pitch
    - If the umpire determines the batter was not hit by force, the pitch is ruled a ball and the at-bat continues.
    - A pitch that bounces before hitting the batter is not considered hit by force.
    - If the umpire determines the batter was hit by force, the coach pitcher enters and completes the at-bat under Rule #7 below.
5. Illegal Pitches
    - No illegal pitches will be called.
6. Walks
    - Walks are not permitted.
7. Coach Pitch Procedure
    - After the fourth ball is called:
        - The batter retains only the strike count.
        - The offensive coach pitches until the at-bat ends by hit, strikeout, groundout, or flyout.
    - Coach Pitch Limit
        - Maximum of three pitches.
        - The umpire continues calling balls and strikes.
        - If the third coach pitch is fouled off, additional pitches will be allowed until the at-bat is completed.
8. Coach Pitch Mechanics
    - The coach pitcher must begin on the mound and take only one natural step forward.
9. Pitcher Substitutions
    - Free pitching substitutions are allowed, provided the three-inning limit is observed.
10. Pitching Fundamentals (Instructional Emphasis, 12u and up: illegal pitches will be called)
    - Coaches are encouraged to teach:
        - Hands must be apart when stepping onto the pitching plate.
        - Once the hands come together, the pitching motion begins.
        - The pitcher may not separate and then reconnect her hands before delivering the pitch.

BASE RUNNING

1. Sliding
    - Players should be taught to slide to avoid contact and ensure safety.
    - Slide Rule (NFHS Rule 8-6): A runner is out if:
        - Article 13- She does not legally slide and causes illegal contact or interferes with the fielder making a play.

    - Article 14- She remains upright and maliciously crashes into a defensive player. Malicious contact overrides obstruction.

2. Leadoffs
    - Runners may leave the base once the ball crosses home plate.
    - Leaving early will result in a warning.
3. Stealing
    - Runners may steal 2b and 3b
    - Stealing home is prohibited.
    - No additional bases may be stolen on an overthrow.
    - No stealing during coach pitch.
4. Look-Back Rule and Dropped 3rd Strike
    - The Look-Back Rule is not in effect.
    - Dropped 3rd Strike is not in effect.
5. Advancement on Batted Balls:
    - Infield Hit: Batter may advance only to first base.
    - Outfield Hit: Runners may advance at their own risk until the pitcher has possession of the ball within the pitcher's circle.
6. Overthrows and Passed Balls
    - No extra bases may be taken on overthrows or passed balls. Exception:
    - If the ball is being returned from the outfield and overthrown, runners may continue at their own risk.
7. Continuous walks are not allowed.
8. Courtesy Runners
    - A courtesy runner may be used for the pitcher and catcher at any time.
    - The courtesy runner shall be the last recorded out.

SAFETY

1. Defensive Face Masks
    - All defensive players must wear face masks.
2. Batting Helmets
    - Helmets must include a full-face mask.
3. Catcher's Equipment
    - Proper catcher's protective equipment is required.
4. Approved Bats
    - Bats must display USSSA 1.20 thumbprint stamp, or USSSA 1.20 rating.
5. Cleats and Jewelry
    - Metal cleats and jewelry are prohibited.
    - Players will be given an opportunity to remove or replace improper equipment.
6. On-Deck Batter
    - The on-deck hitter must remain at the batter's back.
7. Uniform Requirements
    - Softball pants are required.
    - Leggings or shorts may not be worn.
8. Dugout Safety
    - Players must remain behind the fence while in the dugout.

COACHES

1. Ejection and/or Suspension

- Any coach ejected by an umpire will receive a one-game suspension.
- Coaching during a suspension will result in a team forfeit.

2. Multiple Ejections

- Any coach ejected from two games by an umpire, even across multiple seasons, will be:
    - Removed for the remainder of the current season, and
    - Prohibited from coaching in future seasons across all participating towns.

3. Responsibility for Conduct

- Coaches are responsible for addressing code-of-conduct violations involving coaches, players, spectators, and anyone associated with their team.

4. Defensive Coaches

- Up to two defensive coaches may be on the field.
- They must remain behind the baselines.

5. Interaction with umpires

- Only head coaches may approach and interact with umpires.