

# 2026 TOP GUN SOFTBALL EXCEPTION RULES

REVISED February 20, 2026

## AGE REQUIREMENTS

AGE REQUIREMENTS—2026 AGE CUTOFF SEASON RUNS FROM SEPT. 1, 2025 TO SEPT. 1, 2026  
What is the age of the player as of 8/31/2025? That is the age they are eligible for in 2026

- GIRLS 8 UNDER CANNOT TURN 9 BEFORE SEPTEMBER 1, 2025 TO BE ELIGIBLE TO PLAY 8U FOR THE REMAINDER OF 2026 SEASON WHICH IS JANUARY 1, 2026 TO SEPTEMBER 1, 2026.
- GIRLS 10 & UNDER CANNOT TURN 11 BEFORE SEPTEMBER 1, 2025 TO BE ELIGIBLE TO PLAY 10U FOR THE REMAINDER OF 2026 SEASON WHICH IS JANUARY 1, 2026 TO SEPTEMBER 1, 2026.
- GIRLS 12 & UNDER CANNOT TURN 13 BEFORE SEPTEMBER 1, 2025 TO BE ELIGIBLE TO PLAY 12U FOR THE REMAINDER OF 2026 SEASON WHICH IS JANUARY 1, 2026 TO SEPTEMBER 1, 2026.
- GIRLS 14 & UNDER CANNOT TURN 15 BEFORE SEPTEMBER 1, 2025 TO BE ELIGIBLE TO PLAY 14U FOR THE REMAINDER OF 2026 SEASON WHICH IS JANUARY 1, 2026 TO SEPTEMBER 1, 2026.
- GIRLS 16 & UNDER CANNOT TURN 17 BEFORE SEPTEMBER 1, 2025 TO BE ELIGIBLE TO PLAY 16U FOR THE REMAINDER OF 2026 SEASON WHICH IS JANUARY 1, 2026 TO SEPTEMBER 1, 2026.
- HS DIVISION CANNOT TURN 19 BEFORE SEPTEMBER 1, 2025 TO BE ELIGIBLE TO PLAY HS FOR THE REMAINDER OF 2026 SEASON WHICH IS JANUARY 1, 2026 TO SEPTEMBER 1, 2026.

## AGE:

There are no birthdate or grade exemptions allowed to the age calander

## EXAMPLE: Starting January 1, 2026

If you have an 8u player that turned 9 anytime **before** September 1, 2025 she would have to play 10u starting January 1, 2026

If you have an 8u player that turned 9 anytime **after** September 1, 2025 she will be eligible to play 8u starting January 1, 2026 and can play 8u until September 1, 2026. She would move up for the 2027 season starting Sept. 1, 2026—Sept. 1, 2027

**2027 Season will start September 1, 2026 and Run to August 31, 2027**

## AGE GROUPS, BASE PATH, & PITCHING DISTANCE

- GIRLS 8U & 10U - 60 FEET BASE, 35 FEET PITCHING-6 INNINGS
- GIRLS 12U- 60 FEET BASE, 40 FEET PITCHING- 7 INNINGS
- GIRLS 14 & UP- 60 FEET BASE, 43 FEET PITCHING- 7 INNINGS
- BAT & BALL - USE THE NFHS RULE ON BATS.
- [CLICK HERE](#) for list of ILLEGAL BATS

**ALL GHOST BATS ARE ALLOWED IN TOP GUN UNLESS LISTED ON THE ILEGAL BAT LIST.**

- 8U & 10U USE 11" BALL & 12U & UP USE 12" BALL

**RUNNERS FOR THE PITCHER AND CATCHER**

- EACH TEAM MAY USE A RUNNER FOR THE PITCHER OR CATCHER IF SO DESIRED.
- ANYONE ON ROSTER MAY RUN FOR PITCHER & CATCHER (DOES NOT HAVE TO BE SUB OR LAST BATTED OUT) IF RUNNER ON BASE TURN TO BAT COMES UP, BASE SHE IS OCCUPYING IS OUT AND THE PLAYER RESUMES HER PLACE IN BATTING ORDER. CANNOT SUB FOR THE COURTESY RUNNER AFTER 1ST PITCH IS COMPLETED AFTER SUBSTITUTION TO AVOID AN OUT

**INTENTIONAL WALK**

PITCHER DOES NOT HAVE TO PITCH TO THE BATTER. BATTER CAN BE PUT ON 1ST BASE BY THE COACH OF THE OPPOSING TEAM TELLING THE UMPIRE.

**TEAMS MUST HAVE 8 PLAYERS TO START**

A TEAM MUST BE ABLE TO FIELD AT LEAST 8 PLAYERS IN ORDER TO START OR FINISH A GAME.

- AT THE START OF THE GAME THE 9TH PLAYER MAY BE INSERTED AT ANYTIME UPON ARRIVAL AT THE BOTTOM OF THE LINE UP BUT AN OUT IS TAKEN TO HOLD THEIR PLACE UNTIL ARRIVAL.
- IF DROPS BELOW 9 PLAYERS DURING GAME AN OUT MUST BE TAKEN AT BAT IN THE LINE UP. IF DUE TO INJURY OR ILLNESS. (INJURY OR SICKNESS RULE DOES NOT APPLY IF TEAM DROPS BELOW 9 PLAYERS-9<sup>TH</sup> PLAYER WILL BE AN OUT REGARDLESS)

**BATTING LINE-UPS—WE DO NOT ALLOW THE FLEX PLAYER**

TEAMS HAVE THE OPTION OF BATTING 9 PLAYERS UP TO THEIR ENTIRE ROSTER. THE RULE TO BAT MORE THAN 9 IS NOT MANDATORY. TEAMS MAY CHOOSE THEIR OWN WAY TO PLAY REGARDLESS OF WHAT THE OTHER TEAM DECIDES TO DO.

**IF ALL ROSTERED PLAYERS BAT:**

- THERE WILL BE NO SUBS.
- IF AN INJURY OR SICKNESS OCCURS, IT IS AN OUT WHEN THAT PLAYER COMES UP TO BAT. TEAMS WILL RECEIVE ONLY 1 OUT FOR THE SICK OR INJURED PLAYER IF THE PLAYER IS NOT RETURNING TO THE GAME.
- IF THE INJURED PLAYER INTENDS TO RETURN TO THE SAME GAME, THEN AN OUT IS TAKEN FOR EVERY AT BAT TO HOLD THE PLAYERS SPOT IN THE LINE UP.
- IN THE CASE OF AN EJECTION AND NO ELIGIBLE SUBS ARE AVAILABLE, THAT POSITION WILL BE AN OUT EACH TIME AT BAT.

### **DEFENSIVE FREE SUBSTITUTION:**

TEAMS WILL BE ALLOWED FREE SUBSTITUTION FOR DEFENSIVE PLAYERS. YOU DO NOT HAVE TO BAT YOUR FULL LINE-UP. IF YOU BAT 10 OR 11, THOSE PLAYERS WILL BE LISTED ON THE LINE-UP CARD AS EP'S. IF YOU SUB INTO BATTING LINE-UP THOSE MUST BE REPORTED.

**A SUBSTITUTE MUST BE REPORTED IF ENTERING BATTING LINEUP. PENALTY: FOR NOT REPORTING THE SUBSTITUTION IN THE LINE-UP IS CONSIDERED AN UNREPORTED SUBSTITUTION AND IS AN OUT ON THE BATTER AND A WARNING TO THE HEAD COACH.**

### **TEAMS MUST HAVE 8 PLAYERS TO START**

A TEAM MUST BE ABLE TO FIELD AT LEAST 8 PLAYERS IN ORDER TO START OR FINISH A GAME.

- AT THE START OF THE GAME THE 9TH PLAYER MAY BE INSERTED AT ANYTIME UPON ARRIVAL AT THE BOTTOM OF THE LINE UP BUT AN OUT IS TAKEN TO HOLD THEIR PLACE UNTIL ARRIVAL.
- IF DROPS BELOW 9 PLAYERS DURING GAME AN OUT MUST BE TAKEN AT BAT IN THE LINE UP. IF DUE TO INJURY OR ILLNESS. ( **INJURY OR SICKNESS RULE DOES NOT APPLY IF TEAM DROPS BELOW 9 PLAYERS-9<sup>TH</sup> PLAYER WILL BE AN OUT REGARDLESS**)

### **BATTING LINE-UPS—WE DO NOT ALLOW THE FLEX PLAYER**

TEAMS HAVE THE OPTION OF BATTING 9 PLAYERS UP TO THEIR ENTIRE ROSTER. THE RULE TO BAT MORE THAN 9 IS NOT MANDATORY. TEAMS MAY CHOOSE THEIR OWN WAY TO PLAY REGARDLESS OF WHAT THE OTHER TEAM DECIDES TO DO.

### **IF ALL ROSTERED PLAYERS BAT:**

- THERE WILL BE NO SUBS.
- IF AN INJURY OR SICKNESS OCCURS, IT IS AN OUT WHEN THAT PLAYER COMES UP TO BAT. TEAMS WILL RECEIVE ONLY 1 OUT FOR THE SICK OR INJURED PLAYER IF THE PLAYER IS NOT RETURNING TO THE GAME.
- IF THE INJURED PLAYER INTENDS TO RETURN TO THE SAME GAME, THEN AN OUT IS TAKEN FOR EVERY AT BAT TO HOLD THE PLAYERS SPOT IN THE LINE UP.
- **ANYONE ON ROSTER MAY RUN FOR PITCHER & CATCHER (DOES NOT HAVE TO BE SUB OR LAST BATTED OUT) IF THE RUNNER ON BASE TURN TO BAT COMES UP, BASE SHE IS OCCUPYING IS OUT AND THE PLAYER RESUMES HER PLACE IN BATTING ORDER. CANNOT SUB FOR THE COURTESY RUNNER AFTER 1ST PITCH IS COMPLETED AFTER SUBSTITUTION TO AVOID AN OUT**

### **IF YOU ARE NOT BATTING THE ENTIRE LINE-UP (IF YOU CHOOSE TO BAT 10 OR 11:**

- IN THE CASE OF AN EJECTION AND NO ELIGIBLE SUBS ARE AVAILABLE, THAT POSITION WILL BE AN OUT EACH TIME AT BAT

**DH RULE:** TOP GUN WILL ALLOW A DH.

- IF A TEAM ELECTS TO USE A DH, ONLY 9 PLAYERS MAY BAT.
- A HITTER MAY BE (NOT MANDATORY) DESIGNATED FOR ANY ONE STARTING PLAYER (NOT JUST PITCHERS) & ALL SUBSEQUENT SUBSTITUTES FOR THAT PLAYER IN THE GAME.
- A STARTING DEFENSIVE PLAYER CANNOT BE LISTED AS THE DESIGNATED HITTER IN THE STARTING LINEUP. A DESIGNATED HITTER FOR SAID PLAYER MUST BE SELECTED BEFORE THE START OF THE GAME, NAME INCLUDED ON THE LINEUP CARDS & PRESENTED TO THE PLATE UMPIRE & SCOREKEEPER. IF NOT COMPLETED IN THIS MANNER & IDENTIFIED PRIOR TO THE START OF GAME- THEN YOU FORFEIT THE OPTION FOR A DH.
- IF A PINCH HITTER OR PINCH RUNNER FOR THE DESIGNATED HITTER IS USED, THAT PLAYER BECOMES THE NEW DESIGNATED HITTER.
- THE PLAYER WHO WAS THE DESIGNATED HITTER MAY RE-ENTER AS THE DESIGNATED HITTER UNDER THE RE-ENTRY RULE.
- A DESIGNATED HITTER AND THE PLAYER FOR WHOM HE IS BATTING ARE LOCKED INTO THE BATTING ORDER. NO MULTIPLE SUBSTITUTIONS MAY BE MADE THAT WILL ALTER THE BATTING ROTATION.
- IN CASE OF AN EJECTION-AND NO ELIGIBLE SUBS ARE AVAILABLE THAT POSITION WILL BE OUT AT EACH AT BAT.

**SLIDING RULES -** HEADFIRST SLIDES ARE ALLOWED

- RUNNERS DO NOT HAVE TO SLIDE AT A BASE OR HOME PLATE BUT CAN DO SO IF THEY ELECT.
- RUNNERS ***MUST*** AVOID MALICIOUS CONTACT WITH A DEFENSIVE PLAYER WHICH INCLUDES THE CATCHER OR ANY OTHER FIELDER. THIS IS A JUDGEMENT RULE BY THE UMPIRE.
- MALICIOUS CONTACT PENALTY – THE PLAYER IS EJECTED. NO SUBSTITUTIONS WILL BE ALLOWED TO TAKE HER PLACE & AN OUT IS RECORDED EACH TIME IN THE BATTING ORDER. THE PLAYER IS TO LEAVE THE FACILITY WITH A GUARDIAN OR COACH & WILL HAVE TO SIT THE NEXT SCHEDULED GAME.

**TRIPS TO THE MOUND/DEFENSIVE CONFERENCES -** TEAMS GET 3 TRIPS PER GAME.

- PITCHER MUST BE REMOVED FROM THE MOUND ON THE FORTH TRIP. TEAMS WILL NOT BE CHARGED WITH A TRIP IF THE PITCHER IS REMOVED.
- ONCE A TEAM USED 3 TRIPS THEN EACH TIME THEY MAKE A TRIP TO THE MOUND AFTER THAT THE PITCHER MUST BE REMOVED.
- CONFERENCES WHILE PLAYING INTERNATIONAL TIE BREAKER WILL FOLLOW NFHS ITB CONFERENCE RULES

**COACHES TO REMAIN IN DUGOUT WHILE ON DEFENSE.** - REMINDER THAT COACHES MUST REMAIN IN THE DUGOUT WHILE ON DEFENSE – THIS IS A NFHS RULE

**METAL CLEATS** -ARE ONLY ALLOWED IN 14 & UP DIVISIONS

PENALTY FOR 12 & UNDER - PLAYER IS EJECTED FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE GAME & CAN RETURN TO THE NEXT GAME WITH PROPER MOLDED CLEATS.

COACH IS EJECTED FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE GAME AND THE NEXT GAME.

**ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION DEVICES:** ARE ALLOWED. FOLLOW THE NFHS RULES. In the dugout for one-way communication to the catcher while the team is on defense. This rule change specifies that coaches are prohibited from using the device to communicate with any other team member while on defense or any team member while on offense and the coach cannot use the device outside the dugout/bench area. PENALTY FOR VIOLATORS: COACH IS EJECTED FROM THE GAME AND NEXT SCHEDULED GAME.

**SLINGING OF THE BAT:** ONE WARNING PER EACH BATTER. IF BATTER REPEATS, THEN SHE WILL BE CALLED OUT.

**SAFETY GUARDS AND SHIELDS ON HELMETS:** The FULL COVER SAFETY SHIELDS OR THE FULL-FACE COVER CAGE ON ALL BATTING HELMETS & JAW GUARDS ARE **NOT** CONSIDERED SAFETY SHIELDS.

PENALTY-A WARNING, IF PLAYER DOES NOT ACT ON WARNING IMMEDIATELY, IT WILL RESULT TO THE PLAYER BEING EJECTED FROM GAME.

**MOUTH PIECES:** ARE REQUIRED FOR ALL 8U THROUGH 14U WHO PLAY ON THE INFIELD (WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE CATCHER) THEY MUST WEAR A MOUTHPIECE OR FACE PROTECTIVE GEAR **16U AND**

**UNDER ARE EXCLUDED FROM THIS RULE.**

**PENALTY** - A WARNING. IF THE PLAYER DOES NOT ACT ON WARNING IMMEDIATELY, IT WILL RESULT IN THE PLAYER BEING EJECTED FROM GAME.

**GAME FACE IS NOT REQUIRED BUT IS HIGHLY RECOMMENDED FOR ALL**

**JEWELRY:** NFHS ALLOWS PLAYERS TO WEAR JEWELRY BUT UMPIRES HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO RULE ON ANYTHING THAT THEY CONSIDER TO BE A SAFETY HAZARD OR DISTRACTION.

**PENALTY:** A WARNING. IF THE PLAYER DOES NOT ACT ON WARNING IMMEDIATELY, THE PLAYER IS EJECTED FROM THE CURRENT GAME ONLY.

**OPEN ROSTERS:** -ALL ROSTERS ARE OPEN.

- ALL ROSTERS MUST BE COMPLETE ONLINE BEFORE YOUR FIRST SCHEDULED GAME OF A TOURNAMENT.
- TEAMS MAY PICK-UP PLAYERS TO FILL THEIR ROSTER AT ANY TIME BUT THE PLAYERS MAY NOT PLAY ON MORE THAN 1 TEAM AT ANY TOP GUN EVENT IN THE SAME WEEKEND.
- IN THE EVENT A RAINOUT CREATES THE OPPORTUNITY FOR A PLAYER TO PLAY SATURDAY IN A COMPLETE ONE DAY TOURNAMENT AND THEN ON SUNDAY IN A DIFFERENT COMPLETE ONE DAY TOP GUN TOURNAMENT, THE PLAYER WILL BE ALLOWED TO PARTICIPATE IN BOTH.
- NO PLAYER CAN PLAY IN A ONE DAY TOURNAMENT ON SATURDAY AND THEN PICK-UP ON SUNDAY FOR A TOURNAMENT THAT WAS A TWO DAY EVENT.
- ALL PLAYERS MUST BE LISTED AS ACTIVE ON THE ONLINE ROSTER TO BE ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE WITH A TEAM.
- IF A TEAM IS PROTESTED AND A PLAYER IS NOT LISTED ACTIVE ON THE ROSTER THE PLAYER AND HEAD COACH WILL BE EJECTED FROM THE GAME. THE PLAYER MAY REMAIN IN THE DUGOUT BUT HER SPOT IN THE LINE-UP WILL BE AN OUT EACH TIME SHE COMES UP IN THE BATTING ORDER FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE GAME (THERE WILL BE NO SUBSTITUTIONS FOR HER SPOT) SHE MAY BE ADDED TO THE ROSTER BY THE TOURNAMENT DIRECTOR AND IS ELIGIBLE TO PLAY IN THE NEXT GAME.
- THE HEAD COACH IS EJECTED FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE GAME AND THE NEXT GAME AND MUST LEAVE THE PARK IMMEDIATELY.

**TIME LIMITS:** THE GAME BEGINS AT THE COMPLETION OF THE HOME PLATE MEETING. ALL TEAMS ARE REQUIRED TO BE PRESENT 45 MIN PRIOR TO SCHEDULED GAME TIME.

**POOL GAMES ALL AGES TIME LIMIT:**

- UMPIRES WILL FLIP AT HOME PLATE FOR HOME / VISITOR
- ALL POOL GAMES WILL HAVE A 1 HOUR FINISH THE INNING TIME LIMIT. NO
- NEW INNING TO START AFTER 55 MINUTES. If home team is batting and goes ahead after 55 minutes ball game is over. EACH TOURNAMENT DIRECTOR CAN DO STRICTLY ONE HOUR FINISH THE INNING WITH NO 55 MINUTE RULE IF THEY CHOOSE
- POOL GAMES CAN END IN A TIE.
- ANYTIME THE HOME TEAM GOES AHEAD AFTER THE 1 HOUR TIME LIMIT HAS EXPIRED BALL GAME IS OVER.

**RUN RULE**

- 12 RUNS AFTER 3 INNINGS, 10 RUNS AFTER 4 INNINGS, 8 RUNS AFTER 5 INNINGS, OR AFTER 2 ½, 3 ½, OR 4 ½ INNINGS IF THE HOME TEAM IS AHEAD BY 12, 10, OR 8 OR MORE RUNS.

**8U BRACKET PLAY TIME LIMITS:** SEE ALL SPECIFIC 8U RULES HERE ([LINK](#))

- **BRACKET GAMES** – HIGHEST SEED HAS CHOICE OF HOME/VISITOR & 1 HOUR FINISH THE INNING - **NO TIES ALLOWED.**
- **CHAMPIONSHIP GAMES** – HIGHEST SEED HAS CHOICE OF HOME/VISITOR UNLESS THE UNDEFEATED TEAM IS NOT THE HIGHER SEED. IF THIS IS THE CASE THEN THE UNDEFEATED TEAM WILL HAVE CHOICE OF HOME/VISITOR & 1 HOUR 15 MIN. FINISH THE INNING - **NO TIES ALLOWED.**
- **IF TEAMS ARE TIED,** ONCE TIME LIMIT EXPIRES & INNING IS COMPLETE, THEN THE INTERNATIONAL TIE BREAKER WILL BE USED UNTIL A WINNER IS DETERMINED.

**10U THROUGH HS BRACKET PLAY TIME LIMITS:**

- **BRACKET GAMES** - HIGHEST SEED HAS CHOICE OF HOME/VISITOR & 1 HOUR 15 MIN. FINISH THE INNING - **NO TIES ALLOWED**
- **CHAMPIONSHIP GAMES-** HIGHEST SEED HAS CHOICE OF HOME/VISITOR UNLESS THE UNDEFEATED TEAM IS NOT THE HIGHER SEED. IF THIS IS THE CASE THEN THE UNDEFEATED TEAM WILL HAVE CHOICE OF HOME/VISITOR & 1 HOUR 30 MIN. FINISH THE INNING -**NO TIES ALLOWED.**
- **IF TEAMS ARE TIED,** ONCE TIME LIMIT EXPIRES & INNING IS COMPLETE, THEN THE INTERNATIONAL TIE BREAKER WILL BE USED UNTIL A WINNER IS DETERMINED.

**COIN FLIPPING / IF GAME EXCEPTION:** ALL IF GAMES WILL HAVE A COIN FLIP TO DETERMINE HOME OR VISITOR.

**IF GAME RULES (FOR TWO DAY TOURNAMENTS)**

- PLAY 1 FULL REGULAR INNING. WHEN THE INNING IS OVER, IF EITHER TEAM IS AHEAD THE GAME IS OVER.
- IF TEAMS ARE TIED AFTER THE FIRST INNING WE WILL CONTINUE TO THE NEXT INNING AND ANY INNING AFTER THAT USING THE INTERNATIONAL TIE BREAKER RULES UNTIL A WINNER IS DETERMINED.

**INTERNATIONAL TIE BREAKER RULE**

- 1) TO START THE EXTRA INNING, THE VISITING TEAM WILL PLACE THE LAST RECORDED OUT DURING THE PREVIOUS INNING, AS A RUNNER AT 2ND BASE.
- 2) TO COMPLETE THE EXTRA INNING, THE HOME TEAM WILL PLACE THEIR LAST RECORDED OUT DURING THE PREVIOUS INNING AS A RUNNER AT 2ND BASE.
- 3) PLAY EACH EXTRA INNING UNTIL THREE OUTS ARE RECORDED.
- 4) CONTINUE WITH THIS PROCEDURE UNTIL A WINNER IS DECIDED.
- 5) TRIPS TO MOUND/DEFENSIVE CONFERENCES WHILE PLAYING INTERNATIONAL TIE BREAKER WILL FOLLOW NFHS ITB CONFERENCE RULES

