



North Jersey Christian Softball League

Official League Rulebook

The North Jersey Christian Softball League is Christ-centered, and all involved should act in the way that best represents our churches and our Christian faith. Players are encouraged to build fellowships with their teammates and with members of other teams. A complete understanding of these rules will improve the quality of play and help avoid conflicts between teams during games.

1. General Rules

- 1.1. The NJCSL follows the American Softball Association (ASA) rules with the following modifications listed in this rule book. *(Added for the 2004 season)*
- 1.2. There will be no alcoholic beverages on or near the field of play. A team ruled in violation forfeits two games in the playoff standings.
- 1.3. There will be no smoking on or near the field of play. A team ruled in violation forfeits one game in the playoff standings.
- 1.4. There will be no swearing on or near the field of play by players or spectators. A team ruled in violation forfeits one game in the playoff standings.
- 1.5. There will be no unsportsman like behavior (arguing with umpires, blocking base paths, running up scores, taunting others, etc.). A team ruled in violation forfeits one game in the playoff standings.
- 1.6. When teams do not furnish fields for use during the season. They are assigned to a "Virtual Field". A virtual field is a non-existent field that, for scheduling purposes, is deemed to be available Monday through Friday throughout the season. It is the responsibility of the home team captain to obtain a field when his/her team is scheduled as the home team on a virtual field. The home team captain must obtain a field on a date that is acceptable to the visiting team captain. The visiting team captain must be notified of the field assignment no less that 7 days prior to the scheduled game. Failure to obtain a field within the designated time frame will result in a forfeit for the home team. Any dispute resulting from the virtual field assignments must be reported to and will be resolved by the League's Dispute Committee.
- 1.7. There will be no metal spikes on the field of play.
- 1.8. Bunting is not permitted. A batter who bunts the ball is out.
- 1.9. The use of official softball bats in NJCSL sanctioned games is permitted in accordance with the ASA rules governing approved and banned bats. All bats to be used in the game must be brought to home plate for inspection by both teams as part of the ground rules review. Please see www.asasoftball.com/about/certified_equipment.asp for a list of banned bats. Any team found to be using an illegal bat will forfeit the game on the first offense. *(Modified for the 2008 season)*
- 1.10. Pitching is underhand according to ASA rules.
- 1.11. Pitchers must deliver the ball to the plate with an arc of at least 6 and not more than 20 feet from the ground. A pitch with an arc of less than 6 or more than 20 feet will be called illegal by the Umpire before the ball reaches the plate. An illegal pitch is considered a ball. The batter may choose to waive the illegal pitch by swinging at the ball. In this case the pitch is then treated as a normal pitch and the ball is in play. *(Modified for the 2008 season)*
- 1.12. Pitchers can deliver the pitch standing anywhere between the pitcher's rubber (see 2.1) and second base as long as they are standing in a direct line between home plate, the pitching rubber and second base. *(Added for the 2008 season)*
- 1.13. The strike zone consists of home plate and a mat that is 23 inches wide and 34 inches deep. If the pitched ball touches any part of the plate or the mat, it is a strike.
- 1.14. Catchers are encouraged to wear masks when behind the plate.
- 1.15. Double, orange and white first bases are allowed for use in league play. The middle orange-white line of the base will be placed on the foul line with the orange side outside of the foul line. Runners must step on the orange part of the base; fielders must step on the white part of the base. Failure to step on the appropriate color of the base will be considered missing the base. Runners may safely step on the white partition of the base when rounding the base in route to second base if there is no play at first base.
- 1.16. Players may not play on more than one team or represent more than one church within a single season unless they are in compliance with rule #10.7. *(Added for the 2004 season)*

Report violations of General Rules to the Commissioner immediately at commissioner@njcsl.org. The Commissioner's ruling will be final.

2. Field Dimensions

- 2.1. Per ASA rules, an adult, slow-pitch softball diamond has 65-foot baselines and a 50-foot pitching distance. If these distances are found to be wrong during a game, the best possible adjustments should be made during the game and the game continued.

3. Umpiring

- 3.1. Umpires are supplied by the hitting team and are positioned behind home plate and between 1st and 2nd bases. Umpires may not be positioned anywhere on the infield inside of the base paths at the beginning of the play. Umpires may not coach bases. The home plate umpire is responsible for ball and strike counts, outs, plays at 3rd base and home plate, and foul and dead-ball calls. The field umpire is responsible for plays at 1st and 2nd bases.
- 3.2. A team captain can make a formal request to the opposing team captain at anytime during a game to remove, restrict and prevent a player from further participation in umpiring duties. No explanation or discussion is required beyond the formal request. The opposing captain cannot refuse such a request. No more than two such requests can be made during a single game. Requests do not carry over from one game to the next.

4. Outs

- 4.1. The ASA two-strike foul rule *does not* apply in the NJCSL
- 4.2. If the hitting team does not provide umpires, any close play arising from the lack of an umpire goes against the hitting team. This rule must be invoked at the time of play.
- 4.3. Leading and stealing are not permitted. If a baserunner breaks contact with his/her base before a pitch reaches home plate or is batted, "no pitch" is declared and the baserunner is out.
- 4.4. If a base runner interferes with a defensive player in the act of making a play, the baserunner is out.
- 4.5. When a defensive player has the ball, a base runner must avoid contact (by sliding or other means) so as not to interfere with the play and to avoid injury. If the umpire deems the contact is non-incidental, the base runner is out and all other base runners are out as well. Base runners may not slide to "take out" or interfere with the defensive player (see rule # 4.4). Defensive players must not block access to the base at any time. The defensive player must avoid contact with the base runner if the defensive player does not have the ball.

If contact between the defensive player and the base runner is made, the umpire responsible for that base must determine if the contact was incidental and whether an adequate effort was made to avoid the contact. A flagrant violation of this rule should be brought to the attention of the Commissioner who may declare the game a forfeit for the team in violation. *(Modified for the 2004 season)*

Non-incidental contact is defined as:

- Contact between the base runner and a defender in the process of receiving a throw that causes either player to be involuntarily moved or dislodged from their position.
- Contact that prevents the defending player from playing his/her defensive position.
- Contact that prevents the base runner from touching the base.
- Contact that is made when the base runner makes no effort to avoid contact with the defensive player.

For contact to be considered "incidental" the contact must not satisfy any of the above points.

- 4.6. If, after scoring or being put out, a base runner interferes with a defensive player in the act of making a play on another runner, the runner closest to home plate is out.
- 4.7. If a fair ball hits a base runner while off base, and before it passes an infielder (other than the pitcher), the runner is out
- 4.8. If, when a ball is in play, a base runner receives assistance from anyone other than another base runner, a dead ball is called and the base runner is out. If the batted ball is caught the batter is out.
- 4.9. If a base runner runs more than three feet from a direct line between the bases to avoid being put out, he/she is out. Exception: The base runner is not out if he/she runs outside the base path to avoid interfering with a defensive player attempting to field the ball.
- 4.10. The infield fly rule applies. A batter is automatically out if he/she hits a fair fly ball which can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort when 1st/2nd or 1st/2nd/3rd bases are occupied, with no outs or with one out.

5. Overthrow Rule

- 5.1. An overthrow occurs when a ball thrown by a fielder goes beyond the boundary lines of the playing field and into dead ball territory. Base runner(s) are awarded 2 bases from the base(s) last possessed at the time the ball left the thrower's hand. Base runners must touch the intermediate bases on an overthrow award, or they can be called out on appeal by the defensive team.

6. Team Lineups and Scoring

- 6.1. Players must be at least 16 years old to play in NJCSL sanctioned games. It is strongly recommended that all captains check with their church's insurance company to see any further restrictions on player participation are required. *(Added for the 2004 season)*
- 6.2. Teams must have at least seven players to field a team. If a team does not have seven players by 15 minutes after game time it forfeits the game. If a team has 7, 8 or 9 players, the opposing team must supply a catcher to return the ball to the pitcher, but not to make defensive plays at the plate. The opposing team cannot supply players for any positions other than catcher. *(Modified for the 2003 season)*
- 6.3. A player may leave during a game with no penalty to the team, provided advance notification is given to the opposing team by the time of his/her prior at-bat. The opposing team at its discretion may waive this rule.
- 6.4. Teams may allow more than ten players in the batting order, but only ten players can play on defense at a time. Defensive players may be substituted at will as long as they are in the batting line-up and take full turns at bat. Teams with more than ten players must bat all players. *(Modified for the 2010 season)*
- 6.5. There are no substitutions, replacement or removal of batters from the line-up at any time during the game except when a player leaves the game as stipulated in *rule 6.3* or due to an injury. Players leaving the game, except as in *rule 6.3*, cannot be replaced in the line-up and must be counted as an out in their turn at bat. *(Modified for the 2010 season)*
- 6.6. The batting order is set at the beginning of the game and may not be changed once the team has batted around. After the line-up is set, late arriving players may be added to the end of the line-up. *(Modified for the 2010 season)*
- 6.7. A player who bats out of order is out. *(Modified for the 2010 season)*
- 6.8. Substitute runners may be used when necessary. The player who made the last batted out must be the sub. *(Modified for the 2008 season)*
- 6.9. Each team must keep an accurate scorecard and compare scores each inning to be sure they agree.
- 6.10. The league encourages all teams to field and bat at least 10 players at all times. If a team has less than 9 players (7 or 8) a penalty of 1 out will be assessed after the last batter in the line-up. For example; a team with 7 players will place an out in the 8th batting position or team with 8 players will place an out in the 9th batting position. *(Added for the 2009 season)*

7. Home Team Responsibilities

- 7.1. The home team reviews the ground rules (out-of-play areas, foul lines, rulings on balls hit over fences, in bushes, etc.) at the beginning of each game.
- 7.2. The home team furnishes bases; a league supplied blue mat, and a new league-supplied ball. Either team may substitute an ASA approved double first base for the normal first base.
- 7.3. Bases must be movable to avoid injury.
- 7.4. The home team leads both teams in prayer before and after each game.

8. Scheduling and Cancellations

- 8.1. The season schedule given out at the league's pre-season meeting has a review period lasting until the start of the season. During this period teams may adjust schedules as necessary. Teams are responsible for adjusting field reservations. Adjustments must be reported to the Scheduling Commissioner by 6:30 PM on opening day, at which time the schedule is "locked in". After lock-in, the schedule may not be changed without the agreement of both teams. If agreement cannot be reached, the team that cannot keep the scheduled game forfeits the game.
- 8.2. Games should be played as scheduled (see rule # 8.1). If a team does not arrive at the scheduled field by 15 minutes after game time (see rule # 8.1), it forfeits the game. Two such forfeits make a team ineligible to participate in playoffs. A game may be postponed and rescheduled if both teams agree and there is time to notify players. A game may be forfeited with no playoff penalty or eligibility loss if both captains agree by direct conversation at least 48 hours before the scheduled game is to be played. The captains of both teams must notify the scoring commissioner via the league website's e-memo facility immediately upon the game being forfeited. Waving of the forfeit penalty is solely at the discretion of the Commissioner of scoring. *(Modified for the 2005 season).*
- 8.3. If there is inclement weather, the home team captain(s) should make every effort to contact the visiting team captain(s) to decide whether to play or postpone the game. If contact cannot be made, the decision must be made at game time at the playing field.
- 8.4. Games should be postponed only for legitimate, church-related reasons, not for the convenience of a few players.
- 8.5. The home team must reschedule postponed games for the earliest possible date. The Scoring Commissioner must be notified of the rescheduled date and field.
- 8.6. A game is official after the losing team has batted four times. If a game is called before it is official (due to darkness, inclement weather, or other problem), it must be replayed from the beginning.

- 8.7. If an official game (see rule # 8.6) is called because of darkness (by agreement between the two captains), the score at the end of the last full inning of play becomes the final score, even if it is a tie.
- 8.8. Teams may not play more than three games in a week.
- 8.9. Teams may not schedule league games during the week between the end of the regular season and the beginning of playoffs without the Commissioner's agreement. This week is needed to finalize standings and arrange the playoff schedule.
- 8.10. Failure to field a team for a playoff game may result in loss of playoff eligibility in the following season at the Commissioner's discretion.
- 8.11. During the months of April and May games will start at 6:30 PM. In June and July games will start at 6:45 PM.

9. Scores and Standings

- 9.1. A team trailing by 15 or more runs may stop a game if it wishes to do so. The captains can decide to end a game before, during, or after any inning.
- 9.2. The winning captain is required to report scores as soon after the game as possible through the league's Internet. Teams that do not report scores in a timely manner may be awarded forfeits at the discretion of the Commissioner. *(Modified for the 2008 season)*
- 9.3. Scores and standings will be available on the NJCSL's web site (www.njcsl.org). *(Modified for the 2008 season)*
- 9.4. The league will use a point system to determine league standings and playoff eligibility. Each team will be awarded two points for a win, one point for a tie and no points for loss. One point will be deducted for each forfeit a team receives. The overall standings are based on the number of points a team has been awarded.
- 9.5. Teams with two or more forfeits are not eligible for playoff berths. Playoff eligibility is determined by the number of points a team has in the league, the conference and finally the division. *(Modified for the 2005 season)*
- 9.6. The home team for all single playoff games will be the team with the higher playoff seeding. The team with the better regular season record will determine the home team for the first game of all multi-game playoff series. After that, games will alternate home teams. Playoff games will be scheduled on the home team's field when possible. *(Modified for the 2005 season)*
- 9.7. Because the makeup of the divisions and conferences changes year to year the play-off format for the current season will be posted on the league's website (www.njcsl.org). *(Modified for the 2005 season)*
- 9.8. Tiebreakers for final standings in the divisions and for playoff eligibility will be determined first by the number of overall points, points from conference games, points from division games, head to head record and finally a coin toss at the end of the season. *(Modified for the 2003 season)*

10. Fellowship League Rules Addendum

- 10.1. There must be at least three females in the field and in the batting order at all times. If there are less than three females, a maximum of seven males may be played, and the positions in the batting order corresponding to the missing females will be automatic outs. If there are no women available to play, the opposing team may request a forfeit.
- 10.2. If there are more than ten in the batting order, a 2:1 male-female ratio must be maintained. (Example: If there are 15 in the batting order, at least five must be female.)
- 10.3. *Rule 6.4* notwithstanding, substitutions (designated runner, pinch hitter, pinch runner, etc.) must be done so as to maintain the 2:1 male-to-female ratio. *(Modified for the 2010 season)*
- 10.4. Teams must bat at least one female during every three batting positions (ex. you can have one female in any of your first three positions, one female in any of your next three positions, etc). *(Added for the 2010 season)*
- 10.5. Infielders (except pitcher and catcher) may not take defensive positions in front of the base paths until the ball is hit. Outfielders may not take defensive positions closer than fifteen feet behind the base paths until the ball is hit.
- 10.6. Fielders may not switch positions once an inning has begun except as a result of a pitching change or an injury.
- 10.7. A maximum of 10 batters may bat in any inning. After the 10th batter in an inning the batting team must retire, regardless of the number of outs.
- 10.8. There will be no walks in a game. Batters must hit the ball or strike out during their at bat. *(Added for the 2010 season)*
- 10.9. If a church has both a Competitive and a Fellowship League team, no more than three Competitive League team members may be in the Fellowship League team lineup at any one time.

11. Protests and Resolution

- 11.1. Protests must be submitted to the Commissioner by e-mail (scores@njcsl.org) or in writing within 48 hours of completion of the game under protest.
- 11.2. A three-person committee consisting of the League Commissioner, the Asst. Commissioner, and the League Scorekeeper will resolve protests. If the dispute involves a team on which any of the above plays, another League Commission member will be assigned in his/her place.

12. League Administration

- 12.1. All teams must have a representative present at both the spring and fall league meetings. Teams not having a representative present will be penalized one point in the standings in the following season for each missed meeting. *(Modified for the 2006 season)*
- 12.2. The following rules apply to the appointment and conduct of the Board of Commissioners. It should be noted that these rules apply moving forward and cannot be applied retroactively to any infraction or any perceived infraction prior to the February 5, 2007. *(Added for the 2007 season)*
 - 12.2.1. Application of all persons seeking to join the Board of Commissioners shall be reviewed and be accepted or denied by a simple majority vote of the Board.
 - 12.2.2. The League Commissioner must be selected from the current Board of Commissioners and have served at least one full year on the board. Election of the League Commissioner is by a simple majority vote of the Board of Commissioners.
 - 12.2.3. All commissioners must be members in good standing in a church that is currently active in the league. If a church should drop out of the league while a church member is serving on the Board of Commissioners that person may continue their tenure as a commissioner with a simple majority vote of the Board of Commissioners. Failing an affirmative vote that commissioner must step down immediately.
 - 12.2.4. Commissioners must be of sound moral character and conduct themselves accordingly in their public and private lives. A commissioner violating this rule can be removed from the Board of Commissioners for cause and two thirds majority vote of the entire Board of Commissioners.
 - 12.2.5. Failure to attend three consecutive league and Board of Commissioners meetings will be considered a tender of resignation. The defacto resignation will be accepted by a simple majority vote of the Board of Commissioners at the earliest board meeting.

Ideas, comments, concerns, and suggestions about the NJCSL are welcome and appreciated. They may be communicated to the Commissioner by sending an e-mail to commissioner@njcsl.org.

The NJCSL continually seeks to build its membership. Teams from any Christian church or church-affiliated organization are welcome. Contact the Commissioner or any member of the League Commission if you know of a church or organization that may be interested in joining the NJCSL.