



Game Day - What You Need to Know

Early Planning

Players should be instructed to arrive a minimum of 30 minutes before scheduled game time. You may want to have a longer period of time to get in some practice if the team is able to do that. Routine is very important so give some thought to what you want to do in warmup and plan accordingly. Make sure your players understand the plan as well.

Before arriving

Things to do on the day of the game or earlier.

Planning

- Make sure you have the Emergency Action Plan (EAP) including specific information for where you are playing
- Confirm players who are going to be attending
- Have a plan for the warmup - ideally this should be consistent throughout the season
- Know where the park is and leave ample time to get there. Your league schedule will include park locations.

Lineups

- Plan the starting lineup and substitutions for the game. Starting pitcher and catcher should be chosen early.
- Fill in scoresheet ahead of time - you can always cross players out if they are unable to make it at the last minute.
- All players present at the game will bat in the lineup
- Ensure players get relatively even numbers of at bats and the opportunity to bat at the top of the lineup at some point. Some teams have a set batting order and just continue on from the last batter of the previous game. This usually works out fairly and reduces questions or confusion as batters always know who they follow.
- Have a magnet board or sheet of paper that explains the inning-by-inning positions for the players so they can look ahead and know where they are going.

Weather

For home games:

- if weather is questionable check with AMSA website. Alerts will be posted on the main page to notify you of status for home games.
- contact the visiting team a minimum of 2 hours before gametime
- AMSA will contact umpires to cancel

For away games:

- be sure to check for messages from the home team about cancellations



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At the Park - Pregame

What to do when you arrive at the park

- Try to arrive early, before the players if possible.
- Inspect playing/warmup areas as much as possible for safety concerns.
- Ensure you find a suitable warmup area.
- Try to greet players as they arrive
- Discuss pregame and game plans with assistant coaches
- Give scorebook to the scorekeeper to get lineups
- Get players into the warmup routine
- Make sure you have time for the starting pitcher and catcher to warm up for at least 10 minutes before game time.
- Have lineup ready to exchange with opposition a minimum of 15 minutes before gametime
- At about 10 minutes to start time call team together for a meeting. Share the starting lineup/batting order and remind them of team rules.
- Remind players of between inning warmup routine (see below).

Umpires will call for a Coaches and Captains meeting about 5 minutes prior to start time. Be sure you've done your team preparation before that and are ready for the meeting.

- Appoint 2 players to act as captains for the game. If you have bench players it is a good idea to use them. Avoid pitchers and catchers if you are home team so you don't delay them being ready to play.
- Ground rules will be discussed by the umpire. Be aware of any unusual features of the park so you can pass on to your players.
- Handshakes between players/coaches and umpires at the meeting then game can begin.

Game Play

What should happen during the game.

- When the first pitch is thrown one of the umpires will call out the time of first pitch. Have your scorekeeper record that time on the sheet so you know when the time limit will be. Games cannot start a new inning more than 90 minutes after first pitch (i.e. at 90 minute is OK, 91 is not)
- You need to have one coach at first base and one at third base. For U14/U16 Local League the base coaches can be players for however they must wear a batting helmet when on the field
- Ideally you should also have a bench coach to attend to players there as well.
- All players and staff should be neatly attired and wearing proper footwear (no open toes).



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Between Inning Warmups

- First Baseman should take a ball to the infield and throw grounders to other infielders who can throw back to first.
- Center fielder should take a ball to throw with fielder farthest from team bench. Someone from the bench (player or coach) should throw with the outfielder nearest the bench.
- Pitchers get 5 warmup pitches the first inning they pitch. All other innings they will get 3 pitches.
- If the catcher is not ready then a coach can substitute for warmup. A mask must be worn by that catcher
- When warmup pitches are complete balls should be thrown back to bench and quickly retrieved by a player or coach
- The entire warmup should take less than 2 minutes. 1 minute is an ideal target time.

Defensive Substitutions

You have unlimited substitutions on defense. At U10 and U12 we recommend changing player positions every couple innings.

- Players should not sit more than 1 inning on the bench before getting (back) in the game.
- A player should not sit a second inning until all players have sat 1.
- If you are going to make a pitching change be sure to notify the pitcher ahead of time so he/she can warm up. You will need to have a catcher for the pitcher to warm up in a safe area. **The warmup catcher MUST wear a mask - regardless of who it is or where.**

Batting out of Order

Make sure players are able to check the batting order and have the scorekeeper watching for anyone batting out of order.

If you notice your team batting out of order request time from the umpire and explain who should be batting. The proper batter can then continue the at-bat with the existing count. Once a pitch has been thrown to a new batter the previous batter has now become official. The player who follows the previous batter in the lineup must now be up.

If you notice the other team is out of order request time from the plate umpire and let them know. This can be done any time before the following batter has been pitched to.

It's best for everyone if you keep watch and let the umpire/other team know as soon as you see it happens.

Run Limits

Run limits of 6 runs per inning are set by the league. No runs will count beyond the 6 and play will continue the next inning with the player who is due to bat next. If the 6th run scores while a batter is still at-bat (ex. Steal of home) then the same batter will lead off next inning with a fresh count.



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Pace of Play

- Every effort should be made to keep the game moving quickly and get as many innings as possible. The less time spent between innings, the more game time the players get. Hustle players on and off the field and encourage catchers and batters to be ready to go early.
- Have players get into a routine of finding one specific place for all of their equipment. This makes it much quicker to find it when needed. A player's hat, glove, batting gloves, water bottle and anything else should all be in one location.
- On offense and with 2 outs if your catcher for the next inning is on base you may request time and have a courtesy runner for the catcher. You replace the runner with the next person up the batting order who is not currently on base. This gives the catcher a little extra time to get dressed for the upcoming inning. This can only be done if that catcher was catching the previous inning.

Positive Energy

The game is much more fun when everyone is engaged.

- Encourage cheering on teammates throughout the game.
- Being as lively and energetic as you can will keep everyone in the game. Hustle on and off the diamond yourself and try to connect with each player individually at some point during the game. Reinforce good efforts and offer some minor corrections when needed.
- Try not to introduce new instruction during a game, that is what practice time is for. Reminders of what you have already worked on is good as long as it is not overwhelming or negative.

End of Game

- The game will end when 7 innings have been played OR the time limit has expired OR the umpires deems the game over for any other reason (weather, darkness, field conditions, etc.).
- At the conclusion of the game the teams (players and coaches) will line up at home plate and shake hands. Any comments should be positive during the handshake.
- Opposing coaches sometimes like to chat. Try to avoid any discussions about the umpires or anything negative in general. Sometimes coaches take this opportunity to ask about upcoming scheduled games. Keep the conversation brief and friendly.
- If there is a game following yours you should vacate your bench area immediately. Have players gather equipment and go to a predetermined place for the wrap-up meeting.
- If there is no game following you just proceed to a meeting, often in the outfield nearest your bench.
- Thank the umpires if you get an opportunity. You won't always agree with them but the game doesn't happen without them. It's a tough job and they will appreciate acknowledgement.



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Wrap-Up Meeting

- Ask your players what they thought of the game and try to get some specific responses. Call on all players at some point every couple games. Look for things that went well and discuss what you can improve on. Use this feedback to help planning practices and warm-up activities for future games.
- Let players know when the next game/practice will be and ask if anybody will not be there. You should do the same with parents later.
- Keep meeting to no more than 5 minutes.
- Make sure players clear out all of their belongings and you have all of yours.
- Make sure all players have a ride home before leaving park

General Tips

A few more notes to help you along.

- Make any game decisions in the interest of fairness to the players.
- Effort is more important than results. If a player is making a good honest effort it should be acknowledged. Results will come from continued effort and development.
- Always treat umpires and opponents with respect, even if you don't feel it is being reciprocated. You are representing our association and we work very hard to promote a good reputation for sportsmanship.
- Get familiar with the rules of the game. You have been provided with league and official softball rules. The more you understand, the less difficulties you will encounter.
- Keep umpire interactions to a minimum but if you legitimately have a question about a call it is acceptable to ask for time to discuss it. Keep it brief and accept the umpire's ruling. We do not have protests in Local League and all umpire decisions will be final.
- If you have any questions about something that happened in a game please let us know so we can help you understand and maybe add to this document.
- There will be many new experiences for you as you begin coaching. Embrace them as learning opportunities.

Above all, have FUN! If you're having fun there's a good chance the kids and other parents will as well.

Thank you for becoming a coach and feel free to ask for help from other coaches or the association. We're here to help each other.

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