

Orillia Girls' Softball League Player Handbook & Playing Rules



Welcome

Dear Players and Parents/Guardians,

Welcome to the Orillia Girls' Softball League! We're excited to have you join us for what promises to be another fun, rewarding, and action-packed season. Whether you're a returning veteran or stepping onto the field for the first time, we hope this season brings you new friendships, skill development, and memorable experiences.

Softball is about more than just wins and losses. It teaches the values of teamwork, perseverance, respect, and sportsmanship. It's about building confidence, learning from challenges, and developing a lifelong love of the game.

Our league is built on the belief that every player, regardless of age, experience, or skill level, deserves the opportunity to grow, improve, and enjoy the game in a safe and supportive environment.

We are committed to fostering a positive and respectful atmosphere for everyone involved. Players and families are reminded that our volunteer coaches dedicate significant time and energy to supporting players' development and deserve the utmost respect and appreciation.

Inside this handbook, you'll find valuable resources to guide you through the season, including key rules, regulations, and contact information. We encourage you to review it carefully and reach out to league convenors with any questions or suggestions.

We look forward to a season filled with learning, laughter, and great softball.

Let's play ball!

Section 1: League Overview

The Orillia Girls' Softball League is a community-based recreational league designed to promote skill development, teamwork, and a love for the game in a fun and supportive environment. Our league serves players of all skill levels and is structured into three age-based divisions: Junior, Intermediate, and Senior.

League Administration

The league is organized and overseen by the **Sport and Senior Recreation Coordinator** in collaboration with the **Summer Sport Coordinator** (league convenors). These individuals are responsible for scheduling, logistics, team assignments, and overall league operations. For any questions your coach cannot answer, see contact information below:

Summer Sport Coordinator (Primary Point of Contact): Brenna Carroll, bcarroll@orillia.ca.

Sport and Senior Recreation Coordinator: Jeff King, jking@orillia.ca.

Volunteer Coaches

Our league relies on the support of dedicated volunteer coaches. Coaches play a vital role in:

- Leading practices and games
- Communicating with players and families
- Supporting player development and sportsmanship

Please be advised of the minimum requirements of our volunteer coaches to ensure safe and high-quality experience:

- Criminal Record Check with Vulnerable Sector Screening
- Experience playing or coaching softball
- Attendance at the Mandatory Coaches Meeting, or
- Completion of the Volunteer Coaching Package
- Commitment to promoting positive values, teamwork, and player development.

We are incredibly grateful to our volunteers for the time, energy, and leadership they bring to the field.

Role Responsibilities

Coaches serve as the main point of contact for their team throughout the season. This includes:

- Main liaison between the league convenors and players.
- Updates, and team information with families.
- Communicating cancellations of practices requested by coaches.
 - i.e., cancelling practice due to rain, scheduling conflict, etc.
- Answering questions as they come up from players and their parents.

The **league convenors** are responsible for:

- Creating teams and initiating introductions to coaches and league information, including the schedule and player handbook.
- Relaying league-wide communication such as advance notice of practice and game cancellations.

SECTION 2: WEATHER

- Coaches have the discretion to cancel practices due to the weather.
 - In some cases, such as extreme weather warnings, league convenors may cancel practices in advance and will communicate this with all players.
- When needed, diamond conditions will be checked at 3:00 PM. If practices need to be called off due to poor conditions, a mass-email will be sent to all players in the affected division of the cancellation by 4:00 PM.
 - Parent/guardians are responsible for providing updated contact information if any changes have occurred since registration.
- For games, league convenors will make the final decision for cancellations based on weather.
 - In some cases, such as extreme weather warnings, league convenors may cancel games in advance and will communicate this with all players through mass-email.
 - The decision will be made and communicated by 4:00 PM to all players in the affected divisions.

Due to limited diamond availability and nature of the league, practices and games will not be rescheduled if cancelled.

The following policy has been taken from the **City of Orillia Emergency Procedure Manual - 3.4 Weather and Environment-Related Emergencies** and has been modified to meet the needs of this program.

3.4.2 - Extreme Weather

Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure the safety and well-being of all participants, staff, and community members involved in activities organized by the Parks and Recreation Department during periods of extreme weather.

Procedure

1. When a supervisor is alerted that a weather watch has been issued, staff must ensure they are near an indoor location.
2. Staff and participants should not be on the water and must ensure they can relocate participants indoors quickly if the watch escalates to a warning.
3. Staff should not take participants near or on the water, biking, or too far from suitable shelter during a weather watch.
4. When a weather warning is issued, staff will be advised to remain indoors until the warning has passed, following the supervisor's discretion.
5. If the warning escalates to an imminent threat, staff will be advised to Shelter in Place (refer to [Section 3.2 - Shelter in Place](#)).
6. By following these steps, staff can ensure the safety and well-being of participants during extreme weather conditions.

3.4.3 - Extreme Heat

Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure the safety and well-being of all participants, staff, and community members involved in activities organized by the Parks and Recreation Department during periods of extreme heat.

Procedure

1. In cases of a heat wave or warning, the Parks and Recreation Department will provide notices to PRD program participants during heat warnings and heat waves. The notice will include the following information:
 - a. Decisions regarding heat will be made under careful consideration of any statements from Environment Canada or the local Public Health Unit.
 - b. Personal Considerations for Heat Safety: When deciding whether or not to participate in activities during high heat, it is important for individuals to consider their unique health profiles and personal factors. Key considerations include:
 - i. Existing Medical Conditions or Medication Usage: Be aware of how existing medical conditions or medications might affect heat tolerance.
 - ii. Level of Acclimatization to Heat: Consider how accustomed you or your participant are to high temperatures.
 - iii. Level of Hydration: Ensure you are adequately hydrated before and during activities.
 - iv. Level of Physical Conditioning and Fitness: Take into account your overall physical fitness and conditioning.
 - v. We encourage you to visit Health Canada for more information on keeping children cool in extreme heat- <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/publications/healthy-living/keep-children-cool-extreme-heat.html>
2. When temperatures reach 35°C or above with the humidex supervisors will begin discussions with staff regarding the safety of continuing planned activities.
3. As per the Humidex Based Heat Response Plan in [Policy 3.13 Heat and Cold Stress](#):
 - a. 30°-37°C: coaches are to encourage everyone to drink water before becoming thirsty, during both practices and games.
 - b. 38°-39°C: coaches are encouraged to give adequate water breaks. To manage the heat teams will be provided with:
 - i. Gatorade powder (one portion per team)
 - c. 40°-41°C- A decision will be made on running practices or games for the safety of our staff and participants. Several factors will be considered when cancelling programming. These factors include:
 - i. Access to shaded areas
 - ii. Access to water
4. Coaches will be informed of a decision before an e-mail via Activenet is sent to the parents/guardians of the players.

3.4.5 Poor Air Quality and Wildfire Smoke

Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure the safety and well-being of all participants, staff, and community members involved in activities organized by the Parks and Recreation Division during periods of poor air quality, including events caused by wildfire smoke.

Climate change is contributing to more frequent and severe air quality issues, which can negatively impact health. Children and youth, older adults, individuals with pre-existing respiratory conditions, and those participating in outdoor sports and exercise are particularly at risk.

Procedure

In cases of poor air quality, the Parks and Recreation Division will provide notices to PRD program participants, user groups, and staff. The notice will include the following information

The Parks and Recreation Division will monitor local air quality conditions using the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) and will respond to any:

1. Special Air Quality Statements (SAQS) triggered at AQHI 7–10 (High Risk) – when AQHI is forecasted or reaches 7–10 (high risk), or when wildfire smoke is expected to deteriorate air quality. This is a warning that poor air quality is either occurring or expected.
2. Air Quality Advisories (AQA) triggered at AQHI 10+ (Very High Risk) – when AQHI reaches 10+ (very high risk) due to wildfire smoke. This is a strong advisory that air quality is dangerous due to wildfire smoke. Notices will be provided to program participants, staff, and user groups when AQHI is elevated. These may include advance notice, when available, to support planning and preparedness.

Personal Considerations for Smoke Safety- Individuals should assess their risk before participating in outdoor activities. Key personal considerations include:

- Respiratory or cardiac conditions (e.g., asthma, COPD, heart disease)
- Age (children under 5 and older adults are more vulnerable)
- Pregnancy
- Socioeconomic factors that may increase vulnerability
- Level of physical exertion
- Sensitivity to air pollution and wildfire smoke

Staff Precautions & Responsibilities

- Limit prolonged/strenuous outdoor activity when AQHI is elevated.
- Adjust intensity and duration of outdoor programming
- Relocate programs indoors or to shaded/sheltered areas when possible
- Provide additional water breaks and opportunities for rest
- Monitor participants and staff for both mild symptoms (e.g. cough, irritation, headache) and severe symptoms (e.g. shortness of breath, chest pain, wheezing).

Air Quality Response by AQHI Level

Alert Type	AQHI Level	Action
No Alert	1-6	Continue programs with light precautions Begin moving activities indoors where possible Cancel or postpone outdoor programs that involve strenuous physical activity, especially with vulnerable groups (e.g., camps, outdoor fitness)
Special Air Quality Statement (SAQS)	7-10	Continue low-intensity programs outdoors only if there's no indoor alternative and the activity is mild (e.g., arts & crafts in the shade) Check in frequently with children and staff for symptoms Cancel all outdoor programs, regardless of activity
Air Quality Advisory	10+	Move all programs indoors where air quality is acceptable Limit even indoor activity intensity if needed (e.g., replace gym time with board games) Monitor all participants, even those indoors, for symptoms

Communication: Participants and coaches will be informed of any program changes or cancellations as soon as decisions are made, using email and/or phone communication.

Player Development Focus

The Girls' Softball League should be fun, inclusive, and enriching. While skill development is an important part of the game, our primary goal is to ensure every player grows in confidence, builds friendships, and leaves each season with great memories.

Coaches will be focusing on the following values:

- **Fun First:** Players should enjoy their time on the field.
- **Equal Opportunity:** All players, regardless of skill level, deserve the chance to participate, try new positions, and contribute to their team.
- **Growth:** Winning is not the main goal. We prioritize personal and team improvement, sportsmanship, and effort.
- **Teamwork:** We value teamwork, respect, communication, and resilience. These life skills last far beyond the softball diamond.

Age-Appropriate Focus by Division:

- **Junior Division (ages 7–9)**

- Emphasis on fun, learning basic rules, and fundamental skills (throwing, catching, hitting, base running).
- Rotate players through all positions to build confidence and exposure.
- Frequent encouragement, simplified drills, and lots of movement.
- **Intermediate Division (ages 10–13)**
 - Build on fundamentals with more game-like scenarios and skill refinement.
 - Teach strategy, communication, and teamwork.
 - Begin to explore player strengths while still rotating positions.
- **Senior Division (ages 14-17)**
 - Emphasize teamwork, communication, and leadership.
 - Allow more focused development by position, while continuing to support all players.
 - Encourage self-confidence, independence, and personal accountability.

Equal playing time for all players is mandatory in all divisions.

Allergies & Medical Conditions

- Coaches are informed of any relevant medical information (e.g., allergies, asthma) of participants at the beginning of the season that were identified during registration. This information is strictly confidential.
- Please ensure emergency medications like EpiPens or inhalers are available during games and practices.
- If you did not disclose a medical condition during registration, please ensure that both the league convenors and coaches are aware prior to the start of the season.

Player Request & Team Selections

- League convenors strive to create balanced teams without bias.
- Each player may request up to two teammates; however, requests are **not guaranteed**.
- **Coaching requests will not be accepted.**
- Our goal is to ensure all teams are balanced and equitable from the start of the season. If necessary, adjustments may be made no later than the third week.

Section 3: Rules and Regulations

1. **ALL PARTICIPANTS MUST BE REGISTERED PRIOR TO TAKING PART IN ANY ORILLIA GIRLS SOFTBALL LEAGUE SANCTIONED EVENT.** Absolutely NO unregistered participants are allowed to be on the diamond with the team. Our insurance policy will NOT cover any player on the diamond if an unregistered player is playing. Coaches and assistants are exempt from this rule.
2. **Player Minimums & Borrowing Players (NEW)**
 - The goal of the league is to ensure the girls have the opportunity to play ball games. In the event of a team shortage, it is expected that the opposing team will lend players as needed to field a full defensive team and allow the game to proceed.
 - Borrowed players are to participate as full members of the team, including taking their place in the batting lineup.
 - On **Day of Champions**, teams must field a minimum of **7 players**. Only if they are unable to do so may they borrow players from the opposing team.
 - **Under no circumstances may unregistered players be used as substitutes or temporary players.**
3. **Home Team Responsibilities**
 - The home team will be responsible for installing and putting the bases away. The home team is responsible for providing the game ball.
 - All **INTERMEDIATE/SENIOR** division games will be played using SPN (Slo Pitch National) rules, unless otherwise stated. **The home team will be responsible for supplying the game ball.**
4. **Batting Rules**
 - A standardized batting order will be implemented and used by all teams. This means that all the players will bat before the leadoff batter bats again.
 - Bunting is not allowed. Any attempts to, or actual bunts will be automatic outs.
 - The batter will be declared out if the ball is hit foul on a third strike.
5. **Defensive Position**
 - Teams will be allowed to field ten (10) players at a time on the field
 - Four players must be positioned in the outfield grass.
 - **JUNIOR & INTERMEDIATE ONLY:** Except for in extenuating situations, a player may not play the same defensive position for more than two (2) innings per game (**pitchers are exempt from this rule**).
 - Teams may (if they wish) employ one (1) defensive coach **ONLY**, up to the end of June. The defensive coach must stay on the outfield grass and not interfere with the game. The reason for allowing this coach is to help the girls learn their defensive positions. Junior division coaches can continue this throughout the whole season.
6. **Game Duration**
 - All games will be 7 innings in length; however, no new inning should start after 1 hour.
7. **Mercy Rule**
 - INTERMEDIATE DIVISION

- A maximum of 5 runs per inning may be scored by any team for all innings, including the last one.
- SENIOR DIVISION
 - A maximum of 6 runs per inning may be scored by any team. The last inning will be considered open with no maximum runs allowed.
 - (NEW) In the event the home team holds a lead at the conclusion of the top half of the final inning, the bottom half of the inning shall not be played.

8. Pitching Rules

- Pitchers may not pitch from a distance closer than 35 feet; however, they may pitch from a **further** distance if desired.
- An exception to this rule is in the intermediate division. In the intermediate division pitchers may pitch from 30 feet or more.
- The pitcher must pitch the ball with a perceptible arc that is at least **5 feet** off the ground.
- The pitched ball will be called a strike if it makes **contact anywhere on either the mat or plate**, or if the batter swings at the pitch and misses, or if the batter hits the ball foul and it is not caught.
- In the Junior Division, coaches pitch to their teams.

9. Bayview Diamond – Ground Rule Double

- Any ball that carries the gap in the outfield where there is no wall will be considered a home run
- Any ball that bounces at least once past the outfield fence where there is no wall will be considered a ground rule double.

10. Overthrow Rule (NEW)

- Junior and Intermediate only.
- In the event of an overthrow, runners are only allowed to advance one additional base.

NOTE A player is only allowed to advance one base during an overthrow. If the ball is overthrown in an attempt to get the player out at the base they are advancing to after the first overthrow, the player must remain at the base they advanced to.

Section 3: Code of Conduct

All players, coaches, parents/guardians and spectators are expected to uphold the highest standards of behavior, fairness, and sportsmanship. Your conduct, on and off the field, directly impacts the experience of every player in the league.

City of Orillia Respect+ Program

All participants must adhere to the **City of Orillia's Acceptable Behaviour Policy 7.3.6.1**, which promotes positive, respectful behavior in all recreational settings.

- The full policy will be provided to each player at the start of the season.
- The policy is also available at: orillia.ca/respect.
- If any player is involved in a Respect+ investigation, they *may* be removed from the league, until the investigation is complete.

The Respect+ Program reinforces our shared commitment to a safe, inclusive, and enjoyable softball environment for all participants.

Revised July 2025