



2017 Softball Experimental Rules

Updated February 1, 2017

The following experimental rules have been approved for the 2017 season. By February 6, 2017, any conference wishing to use the three experimental rules must submit the request in writing to the NCAA Softball Rules Committee through Vickie Van Kleeck, softball secretary-rules editor, at ncaasbsre@gmail.com and Ashlee Ferguson, NCAA, at aferguson@ncaa.org.

Any Division I, II or III conference may request approval as long as all teams in the conference agree to use all three experimental rules. Any conference that has been granted permission to use the experimental rules will be required to collect data (as outlined by the rules committee below) and submit it to the rules committee by June 2, 2017, to the email addresses above.

The experimental rules may only be used in conference games (when two conference teams play each other in a conference game), including the conference tournament. The experimental rules will not be used in non-conference games or tournaments hosted by a school using these rules.

EXPERIMENTAL RULE 1 – CONFERENCES:

- Each team is allowed 6 charged conferences of either kind—offensive or defensive.
- Each team is allowed 1 charged conference, offensive or defensive, for each extra inning. Any remaining conferences from regulation do not carry over to extra innings.
- The team representative(s) or player(s) who initiates an additional charged offensive or defensive conference shall be immediately ejected. EFFECT—(6.11.4 to 6.11.4.3) and EFFECT—(6.11.5 to 6.11.5.3).
- During the regulation game, Rule 6.11.4.1 will still apply. In the half inning, the defense is entitled to one conference. Once it is used, one additional conference is allowed for each pitcher entered into the pitching position who has not yet pitched in that inning. This additional defensive conference will be counted toward your six conferences.
- In each extra inning, Rule 6.11.4.1 will not apply.
- With the exception of the total number of conferences allowed, all other guidelines in Rule 6.11 are in effect, including only one charged offensive conference per half inning.

EXPERIMENTAL RULE 2 – NO HUDDLE DEFENSE:

- After an out, a team may throw the ball around the infield, but then must throw the ball directly to the pitcher. A team cannot huddle at the pitcher's mound or elsewhere.
- A warning will be given for the first time a team does not comply. For any subsequent violation, a ball is awarded to the batter due up next. One warning per team per game.
- A huddle is defined as more than one player meeting together on the field. A huddle requires a minimum of two players.
- Huddles after an out are not permitted. Huddles at other times during the game are permitted.
- Player-to-player conferences are not huddles. Two players may get together to talk as long as it is not directly after an out.

- **EXPERIMENTAL RULE 3 – TIME BETWEEN INNINGS:**

- **Teams are allowed 90 seconds between innings.**
- The 90 seconds will begin when the last defensive player(s) crosses the foul line closest to their dugout.
- At the end of the 90 seconds, the defensive team must be in position to start including the pitcher in the circle ready to pitch. The lead-off batter needs to be at the plate ready to take the signal from her coach and enter the batter's box ready to bat.
- The time between innings will be kept with a stopwatch by the 3rd base umpire in a 3-person crew. In a 2-person crew, it will be kept by the base umpire.
- The umpires will give each team a warning when there are 30 seconds remaining. In a 3-person crew, the 3rd base umpire gives this warning to the team in the 3rd base dugout and the 1st base umpire gives this warning to the team in the 1st base dugout. In a 2-person crew, the base umpire will give the warning to the team in the 1st base dugout and the home plate umpire will give the warning to the team in the 3rd base dugout.
- The pitcher is allowed an unlimited number of warmup pitches in all games with the 90-second time limit between innings.
- In the event of undue delay by the team leaving the field, in the sole judgement of the home plate umpire, the team that is to take the field may begin warmups by requesting permission from the home plate umpire to do so. In this case, the 90-second time limit will still begin when the last defensive player(s) crosses the foul line closest to their dugout.
- This 90-second time includes the catcher throwing down to 2nd base and any huddle that the defense wants to have before play is started.
- If the defensive team is not ready to play at the end of the 90 seconds, a ball will be awarded to the batter. If the lead-off batter is not ready to bat, a strike will be assessed to the batter. Either team may use one of its six charged conferences to avoid the penalty for not being ready to play.
- If the catcher is the third out of the inning or is on base, another player must be ready to warm up the pitcher while the catcher is getting her equipment on.
- If a coach wants to make substitutions, he/she must do so at the beginning of the 90-second time between innings so the half-inning can start on schedule. If the coach fails to make a substitution at the correct time, a substitution may not be made until the first batter in the half inning completes her turn at bat.
- In a non-televised game, if both teams are ready to play before the end of the 90 seconds, the home plate umpire can start the half-inning.
- In a televised game with commercial breaks of longer than 90 seconds, the umpires will still give a 30-second warning and the same penalties will apply if teams are not ready to start.
- In the event of an injury, a field maintenance situation, or any other special circumstance(s), the umpires may exercise discretion in timing the 90 seconds.