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Softball Comments on the Rules - 2026

BY NFHS ON AUGUST 26, 2025 | SOFTBALL, RULES



1-9-6: With the increasing accessibility and use of electronic devices, it is important to establish clear boundaries for their use in competitive softball. Players shall not record audio or video while on the playing surface, as doing so presents significant safety risks and potential distractions that can compromise the integrity of the game. Movement and recording during live play—whether with handheld devices, wearable cameras, or phones—can interfere with a player's ability to perform safely and effectively. Handheld equipment may limit a player's capacity to catch or throw a ball, while wearable devices can become entanglement hazards or create impact risks during high-speed plays or collisions. Additionally, extra foot traffic or positioning for the sake of capturing footage can unintentionally place individuals in the path of play, leading to unnecessary contact or disruption. Beyond safety, the use of recording equipment on the field raises concerns around focus and liability. Players distracted by filming may not respond as quickly to the ball or to their teammates, and their inattention could increase the chance of injury. Moreover, audio recordings introduce privacy and liability considerations, especially when capturing

conversations during competition. For these reasons, no player is permitted to record while on the field of play. The emphasis must remain on maintaining a safe, focused, and fair playing environment for all participants.

Rule 8: To improve clarity and enhance the overall usability of the rules, the existing content was reorganized into a structured outline format. This new layout allows for easier navigation and better comprehension of key concepts by clearly separating topics and presenting information in a logical, accessible sequence. One significant change involved dividing the original Section 8-4 into two distinct sections. This split more clearly distinguishes between situations in which runners are entitled to advance without liability to be put out and those where they advance with liability. By isolating these scenarios, officials, coaches, and players can more readily understand the conditions under which runners are protected or at risk during play. Additionally, article references were added to corresponding PENALTIES and EFFECTS. This change provides direct links between specific rule violations and their consequences, eliminating ambiguity and helping users quickly identify the appropriate rulings and applications. The result is a cleaner, more intuitive rule structure that supports accurate rule enforcement and improved learning.

10-4-2: Effective January 1, 2027, heather gray umpire pants will no longer be permitted for use, as manufacturers have discontinued their production. This update reflects a practical shift to ensure that umpires can purchase and wear uniform pants that are currently being manufactured and readily available through suppliers. Moving forward, umpires will be expected to wear pants in either charcoal gray or navy, both of which are actively produced and supported by major manufacturers. The transition to these colors—particularly charcoal gray—provides consistency in appearance while allowing state associations and officials to align with what is accessible in the current marketplace. This change comes in response to ongoing feedback from state associations, which emphasized the challenges officials face in locating heather gray pants and the need for standardized, available uniform options. By establishing a clear implementation date and aligning with existing production trends, this adjustment supports both uniformity and ease of compliance across all levels of competition.

Pants in either heather or charcoal gray will be legal until January 1, 2027, when charcoal pants will be required.



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