

# Cuny-Zink National League Rules\_rev 5.20.26 (BW)

1. The Cuny-Zink National League is open to any male 45 and over in the calendar year of play (that is, 45 years of age or turning 45 by December 31). This is a competitive league, but you do not need to be a tournament/traveling team type of player. You should, however, be in good health and be able to play senior softball. League players typically range in age from 45 to their mid-60s. (Please see the Player Wavier, available at [www.cunyzinksoftball.com](http://www.cunyzinksoftball.com)).
2. All players must bat and should play on defense a minimum of three innings per game (or may not play defense, if being utilized as an extra hitter only). If sick or injured, a player must leave the game; however, it is left up to that player's decision. Coaches will place players where he feels they will best help his team. Trades may be made, if first approved by all coaches, the players involved, and by the director of the National League.
3. Team rosters will typically be 13-14 players, though sometimes a team may start a season short a player or may have an extra player, depending on the total number of players registered and the number of teams the league is trying to field that year. A player registering late may be assigned to a team that is short a player at the start of the season, after review by the league director and the other coaches. Late registering players may also be added to a defined National League Substitute List or placed on a waiting list for the next season.
4. Eleven (11) players is the usual and expected number of players to play each game. After attempting (and failing) to reach at least 11 players for a game, teams short of players fall into three categories:
  - a) 10 Players - Teams may play one player short, sacrificing an outfield or infield position, but not the catcher's position. The opposing team will NOT supply a "courtesy substitute" if 10 players can be fielded by the team that is short.
  - b) 9 Players - A team may play short two players - but must play a catcher - and must have 8 members of its regular roster present for the game. The opposing team or another National League team may lend a player to get that team to at least 10 players.
  - c) 8 Players - A team unable to field at least 9 players – including at least 8 of its originally rostered/drafted players – must forfeit the game.
5. Substitute players may be drawn/borrowed (in this order) from: the NL Sub List, the Central League, from an opponent (subject to the rules below) or from another National League team with a surplus of players beyond 11 for that night's game(s). The usage of players from outside of these sources is prohibited and will result in automatic forfeiture.
  - a) Substitute players must be identified/shared with the opposing coach before the game(s). Both coaches should agree with the use of all substitutes before commencing play.
  - b) Substitute players must be identified/shared/recorded with the League Director before games are played.
  - c) The League Director will manage the weekly placement of all National League Sub List players. All other substitutes within the guidelines above should be secured by team coaches.
  - d) Substitute players may play any position on the field.
  - e) Substitute players must bat from the bottom of the line-up. If more than one substitute player is used, they should follow each other at the bottom of the batting order.
  - f) A team able to field 11 or more players should not be seeking substitute players to "stack" its line-up, especially if it results in fewer innings that can be played by regular, originally rostered players. Such a practice would also be counter to the purpose and spirit of the pre-season player draft.

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- g) For postseason play, players on teams eliminated during the City Tournament are ineligible for further tournament play. They cannot serve as substitutes for teams still playing in the Tournament.
  - h) The National League Director will make the final determination on the eligibility of all players.
6. The home team is the official score keeper. Players arriving late will be placed at the end of the batting order. If the late batter is replacing a pool (borrowed, National League) player, then the late player will take his place in the batting order.
  7. If an injury occurs after a game has started, a team can only replace an injured player with a team-rostered player (no pool player can be entered into the game). Thus, a team playing with only 9 players that experiences an injured player who cannot return to play in that game, must forfeit the game.
  8. Continuous batting will be used. You may skip a sick or injured batter's turn at bat if/when he is out of the game. His turn at bat is not an out.
  9. A player is automatically out if he/she is ejected; their turn at bat becomes an automatic out in the lineup.
  10. The National League will use (6-12ft) arc limits for pitches.
  11. There are six (6) bases in Cuny-Zink National League softball games. Here are their functions:
    - a) 1st base for running (Red/orange-colored base, extending into foul territory) – This is the base that batters/runners should use when running to first base, with the exception listed below. This base is designed to help avoid collisions between runners and fielders heading to 1st base.
    - b) 1st base for fielding (White-colored base) – This is the base that fielders should normally use for plays to first base, with the exception listed below.
      - *EXCEPTION: On any force-out attempt by the fielder from the foul side of 1st base, or on an errant throw that pulls the defensive player into foul territory, the defensive player and batter/runner can use either the white or orange/red base. Ideally, the runner and fielder should always make an attempt to use whichever base is not used by the other.*
    - c) 2nd base, 3rd base – These bases are used for fielding and running.
    - d) Home Plate #1 – This is the home plate used for pitching and for fielding. This home plate will be a rubber or wooden rectangular surface between each of the batters boxes. The placement of this surface is at the discretion of the umpire. This plate has two functions:
      - For Pitching, Balls & Strikes Calls:
        - Any pitched ball that hits behind, in front of, or otherwise outside of the edges of Home Plate #1 (that is, the entire rubber or wooden home plate mat or board, plus the white home plate itself) will be called a “ball” on the batter.
        - Any pitched ball hitting any part of the white home plate and/or its adjacent mat or board used for Home Plate #1 will be called a “strike” on the batter, subject to the following rule/exception:
          - *EXCEPTION: Any pitched ball that bounces backward toward the pitcher – even if it appears to strike the front edge of a rubber or wooden home plate – will be called a “ball.” This is to eliminate confusion or doubt about whether a pitched ball hit the surface in front of the Home Plate #1 and/or ricocheted off the front edge of Home Plate #1. Since these calls are sometimes hard to evaluate, especially when*

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*the pitched ball bounces back toward the infield, the league makes a blanket ruling that such pitches are not strikes. In other words, for a pitch to be eligible to be called a "strike," it must hit on the rubber mat or wooden board and go in any direction except back toward the pitcher and infield.*

- For Fielding:
  - Within or aligned with the rubber mat or wooden board used for Home Plate #1 is a smaller, painted, traditional white home plate used for fielding plays only. This portion of Home Plate #1 and 1st base are treated the same as a force out. The catcher must touch the white, painted portion of Home Plate #1 (located between the batters boxes) before a runner touches 1st, 2nd, or 3rd base or Home Plate #2 (located 8 ft. from the back tip of Home Plate #1).
  - For plays at the plate, the catcher must be standing on the white-painted, five-sided home plate portion of Home Plate #1 on the rubber mat or wooden board upon receiving a throw. Proper placement of the catcher's foot/feet on such a throw is subject to the umpire's discretion and call, but as a rule regarding fielding, touching a portion of the rubber mat or wooden board *outside* of the five-sided home plate section is the equivalent of standing on grass or dirt, and is not considered the actual base. That is, while the larger rubber mat and/or wooden board adjacent to traditional, 5-sided, white home plate will be used for calling balls and strikes, only the white painted, 5-sided portion will be used for fielding plays and calls.

## e) Home Plate #2

- This base is strictly used for scoring runs.
- There is to be no sliding at this base.
- The catcher may never tag a runner trying to score at Home Plate #2, nor is the catcher or any player permitted to tag a runner who has passed the Commitment Line.
- A runner may be tagged prior to the Commitment Line or a throw should be made to a base or to the catcher standing on the white portion of Home Plate #1 to secure an out.

12. Sliding: Sliding into 1st base, 2nd base, and 3rd base IS permitted, subject to the following rules:

- a) If an offensive player makes malicious contact with a defensive player, then he will be called out.
- b) A defensive player may not block a base without control of the game ball.
- c) Again, there is to be no sliding at Home Plate #2; it will be an automatic out.

13. Over-Running a Base: If a player over-runs 2nd or 3rd base, he can be tagged out. A player over-running 1<sup>st</sup> base can be tagged out if he turns into fair territory.

14. Leads and Base Stealing – A player must be on a base as a pitch is being made. He may begin to lead or run after a ball is batted in play. Otherwise there is no leading nor base stealing permitted.

15. The Cuny-Zink National League uses a pitching screen for all games. Senior Bats (BPF 1.21 rating) are permitted, provided a pitching protective screen (see below) is still used. There are no exceptions to this rule for screen usage.

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16. All batters start their at-bats with a starting count of one ball and one strike (1 & 1). After the batter has two strikes, they will be allowed ONE “free” foul ball. This applies to balls hitting the pitching screen, as well. That is, after two strikes, if a ball is hit back into the pitching screen, or hit outside of fair territory, it counts as that player’s “free” foul. The next foul ball, no matter where it’s hit, including the pitching screen, results in that batter being out.
17. Courtesy runners may be used at any time, but any particular courtesy runner may only provide that function one time per inning. That is, the penalty for a player “courtesy running” more than once in any inning is an out.
  - a) Once a courtesy runner touches a bag he is considered in the game.
  - b) If a courtesy runner is on base when it is his turn to bat, he is declared out at the plate. Runners may not be used to circumvent this rule.
  - c) A courtesy runner may only be replaced in the event of sickness or injury. The sick or injured player must then leave the game.
18. Once a runner touches the ground on or past the commitment line – a line perpendicular to the third base foul line between 3rd base and home plate – the runner must proceed to Home Plate #2 or be declared out.
19. A runner is out if he touches or crosses over any part of Home Plate #1, the batter’s box, or the strike zone. The purpose of this rule is to avoid contact at the plate.
20. The pitching rubber, per WSL rules, should be 53 feet from home plate and pitchers should endeavor to pitch within six feet of this rubber (or roughly 53-59 ft from home plate).
21. The pitching screen must be placed near the middle of the pitching mound, approximately between first and third bases, and not more than half the width of the screen to the pitching rubber or center of the mound; that is, not more than 24” off the center line between home plate and second base. Coaches, pitchers, and umpires are encouraged to review the screen position and any potential in-game adjustments to the screen position BEFORE play begins. The position of the screen during the game is ultimately subject to umpire approval.
22. When a ball is pitched, pitchers must remain behind the pitching screen until the ball is hit. Upon bat-to-ball contact, the pitcher may become a defensive player (like any other player) and field the batted ball.
23. The Scoring limit per inning for any non “open” inning shall be (5) runs. Scoring in the open inning is unlimited.
24. There is no limit on home runs per-player, per-inning or per game, subject to the per-inning scoring limit.
25. The “mercy rule” (run rule) is employed when one team is ahead of the other by 15 runs after 5 innings have been completed (or any point in the bottom of the 5<sup>th</sup> inning once the home team is leading by 15 runs).
26. A normal game should last 70 minutes or less. Coaches should confirm with the home plate umpire the exact starting time of the game. At the 60-minute mark, the umpire will alert each coach that the existing inning will be finished, and that the next inning will be the final/open inning. All future, extra innings (beyond the open inning) will go to a one-pitch-per-batter format and employ the Tie Breaker rule below.
27. Tie Breaker Rule: The team at bat will place its last batter of the previous inning on second base to start the extra innings. No courtesy runner for the runner at second base will be allowed until the first batter of the extra inning completes his turn at bat.
28. No games are to end in a tie.

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29. League games are considered “official” after five full innings have been completed... or 4 ½ innings have been completed if/when the home team is leading.
30. Annual/Seasonal Draft: The National League no longer uses retained, or “frozen,” lists of players from year-to-year. That is, each draft involves a collection of past and new individual players, age 45 and over (or turning 45 by December 31). The coaches will meet prior to the season to appraise league players and then begin the allocation of talent across however many teams can be adequately staffed that season (often a minimum of six teams, each ideally featuring rosters of 13-14 players). The allocation of players will utilize a “serpentine” (back-and-forth) series of rounds, assigning players to numbered teams (i.e. first round, in a league with 6 teams: Team 1 through Team 6; second round, Team 6 through Team 1; and so on) until all players are drafted. The coaches will then assess the numbered teams for balance/parity, making trades, if necessary, and then draw, via lottery, which team will be assigned to which coach. After a coach has been assigned a numbered team, the draft may or may not include the additional step of using a lottery to assign team colors.
31. All players coming into the National League must be vetted and approved by the league director. Any players registering for the league and season after the draft date – called “provisional players” – may be temporarily assigned to a waiting list. The league director will then discuss with coaches the most appropriate placement of those players either onto existing teams for the duration of the season, or as available substitute players. Provisional players will be able to register up through the 50% point (games or weeks) of the season, after which they will be encouraged to register for the Fall Season. (Provisional Players are also subject to a higher post-draft/in-season registration fee).
32. ALL PLAYERS MUST SIGN AN ELECTRONIC (CUNYZINKSOFTBALL.COM) OR PRINTED VERSION OF THE NATIONAL LEAGUE'S PLAYER/PARTICIPANT RELEASE/WAIVER before practicing or playing with Cuny-Zink Softball. This form must be presented/acknowledged by the league director before such play begins.
33. All players must also agree with – and sign – the Cuny-Zink National League's Player Code of Conduct, as developed by the D.A.S.C. (Dayton Amateur Softball Commission).

*2026 Cuny-Zink National League Rules, Player Release/Waiver and Code of Conduct are all posted at [www.cunyzinksoftball.com](http://www.cunyzinksoftball.com). The Release/Waiver form and Code of Conduct form are each part of the online registration for the National League, conducted through the same web site.*