

The Rule Book tells us that a softball game is normally 7 innings long (6½ if the home team is ahead), and a regulation game is a minimum of 5 innings (4½ if the home team is ahead). A game also ends in the bottom of the seventh inning if the home team scores enough runs to go ahead. In Section IX MHAL a game also ends when one team is 12 or more runs ahead (and a regulation game has been played – 5 or more innings).

If a game is tied after 7 innings, extra innings are then played until one team scores more runs than the other team. If the game gets into the 10th inning, the tiebreaker rule (see below) is used. (This is a New York State exception; USA softball starts the tiebreaker in the eighth inning.)

Mechanics: when a game is tied after seven innings, safely get both coaches together to go over extra inning rules. It will prevent problems. One defensive conference per half inning (with no carryover from previous innings), tiebreaker starts in the 10th inning.

In Section IX MHAL there is also a time limit for JV and Modified softball. 2½ hours for JV and 2¼ hours for Modified. The current inning is finished and the game ends, even if tied. There is no time limit for Varsity play.

Games can also end due to forfeit. Rule 5 Section 4 discusses the reasons for a forfeit.

What about games that are stopped due to conditions (rain, lightning, darkness, etc.)? A game that is not regulation (not 5/4½ innings) is continued from the exact point at which it was suspended. This means that the umpires should take note of the game situation (write it down): who is batting, number of outs, count, who is on base, etc. A regulation game that is tied is also continued from the exact point at which it was stopped.

If a regulation game is stopped the score at the last completed inning is the final score. (The inning being played does not count.) However, if the home team has scored at least as many runs in the bottom of the inning (as compared with the visiting team in the top of the inning), then the final score is the score at the time the game was stopped, even if the bottom of the inning has not been completed. See below for examples.

Tiebreaker Rule. When a game gets to the 10th inning the tiebreaker rule is employed (and in every inning thereafter). The batter who would be up last in the inning is put at second base to start each half inning. If a team is playing shorthanded and the player who should be at second is not available, use the player prior, with no penalty. It is the responsibility of the umpires and scorekeepers to designate the correct player. If the wrong player is designated, there is no penalty - just put the correct player on base and continue. (Preventative officiating tells us to have both scorekeepers agree on which player should be placed on second base. The player should not go out to second base until all warm-ups are completed – no need for her to get hit in the head by a thrown softball.)

Examples of stopped games. Team V is the visiting team, Team H is the home team:

Example 1. A game is stopped in the bottom of the third due to rain. The score is 5-3 in favor of Team V. There are two outs. Player H23 is at bat. Player H12 is at second base. The count is 1 ball, 2 strikes. The game will be resumed at the exact point that it was stopped.

Example 2. After six complete innings, a tie game is stopped due to lightning. The game will be resumed with Team V batting in the top of the seventh inning.

Example 3. At the end of five innings the score is 6-4 in favor of Team H. In the top of the sixth inning Team V scores 8 runs. In the bottom of the inning Team H has not scored. There are two outs with a 0-2 count on batter H11. The game is stopped due to a sinkhole. The score reverts back to the last completed inning. Team H wins with a final score Team V 4 runs, Team H 6 runs.

Example 4. At the end of five innings the score is 6-4 in favor of Team V. In the top of the sixth inning Team V does not score. In the bottom of the inning Team H scores 8 runs. There are two outs with a 0-2 count on batter H11. The game is stopped due to a sinkhole. Team H wins with a final score Team V 6 runs, Team H 12 runs.