



2025 NFHS SOFTBALL RULES INTERPRETATIONS

Publisher's Note: The National Federation of State High School Associations is the only source of official high school interpretations. They do not set aside nor modify any rule. They are made and published by the NFHS in response to situations presented.

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SITUATION 1: Team A's catcher is wearing an earpiece connected to a one-way communication device. During the second inning, the umpire can hear the coach communicating to the catcher instructing the catcher to (a) have F1 throw a drop ball, (b) have the defense play in for bunt coverage, or (c) following a pitch throw to third base to play on R1 who is leading off. **RULING:** Legal in all cases. One-way communication to the catcher on defense is legal. There is no restriction to when or what the coach communicates to the catcher while on defense. (1-8-6, 3-6-11)

SITUATION 2: As Team A takes the field, F2 notifies the coach that the one-way communication device being used is no longer working. Team A's coach notifies the umpire that the team's communication device has broken and requests the umpire to advise Team B coach that Team B can no longer use its one-way communication device. The umpire informs Team B that since Team A's device has broken, Team B can no longer use its communication device. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling. There is no requirement that both teams have functional one-way communication devices. Team B would be allowed to continue to utilize its device even if Team A's device is broken. (1-8-6, 3-6-11)

SITUATION 3: During the fourth inning, Team B's catcher asks for time as the one-way communication device's battery needs replaced. The umpire does not allow F2 to take the device to the dugout; instead the umpire requires Teams B to wait until the inning is over. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling. Although the umpire

should not allow the game to have an extended delay due to one-way communication devices, the umpire should allow a nominal amount of time as with other equipment issues. For example, if a player needed to remove sunglasses and place them in the dugout or needed to reconnect a strap on a shin guard, a minimal amount of time would be allowed to do so.

SITUATION 4: During the sixth inning of a game, the umpire notices that (a) the pitcher is receiving pitch calls through one-way communication from the coach, (b) the coach is using one-way communication to the catcher while the team is on offense, or (c) F4 is receiving one-way communication from the coach while on offense. **RULING:** Penalties are assessed to the participant that violated the one-way communication rule. This would be the pitcher in (a), the coach in (b), both F4 and the coach in (c). These participants will be ejected unless the umpire determines the offense is minor in nature. (1-8-6, 3-6-11)





SITUATION 5: During the third inning of a game, Team A's coach informs the umpire that Team B's catcher is wearing an earpiece that has a microphone attached to it. The umpire agrees that the device does have a microphone and requires F2 to remove the device since it is capable of two-way communication. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling. The rule states that one-way communication is allowed from the coach to the catcher while on defense. It does not limit the type of device that is used to perform this one-way communication. F2 is allowed to utilize this earpiece with

the microphone, so long as it is only used to receive communication from the coach while on defense. This is no different from the catcher utilizing a smartwatch; most smartwatches are capable of two-way communication, but if the catcher only receives messages from the coach in the dugout (one-way communication), it is considered legal. (1-8-6, 3-6-11)

Last year, the permanently affixed NOCSAE stamps on both the batting helmet and catcher's helmets were updated to match current production stamps. This year verbiage was updated to better describe the certification process in Rules 1-6-6 and 1-7-1. As with the change last year, this is information for currently produced products moving forward, older products that comply with the standards at the time of manufacture are still allowable in NFHS softball play. As a reminder, below is the interpretation from the 2024 NFHS Softball editorial change.

2024 SITUATION 5: During the first inning of a game, Team A's coach points out that Team B's batting helmets have the older NOCSAE stamp and do not have the current stamp shown in Figure 1-8. The umpire rules Team B is not allowed to use these helmets and can only use helmets with the new stamp as shown in the current 2024 NFHS Softball Rules Book. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling. Figures 1-8 and 1-9 were updated to reflect the current NOCSAE stamp. The only change in this new stamp is the wording above the boxed area of the stamp. As long as the helmet has the correct helmet drawing (batting helmet shown in Figure 1-8 and catcher's helmet shown in 1-9) and the words "Meets NOCSAE Stan-

Standard” inside the boxed area of the stamp, the helmet is allowed to be used. In addition, Team B must comply with the other requirements for helmets listed in Rule 1-6 for batting helmets and Rule 1-7 for catcher’s helmets.

<p>Manufacturer Certifies</p>  <p>MEETS NOCSAE</p> <p>STANDARD®</p>	<p>SEI Certified</p>  <p>MEETS NOCSAE</p> <p>STANDARD®</p>	<p>Manufacturer Certifies</p>  <p>MEETS NOCSAE</p> <p>STANDARD®</p>	<p>SEI Certified</p>  <p>MEETS NOCSAE</p> <p>STANDARD®</p>
<p>Previous Figure 1-8</p>	<p>Current Figure 1-8</p>	<p>Previous Figure 1-9</p>	<p>Current Figure 1-9</p>