

# Larger First Base Option Allowed in High School Baseball

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Beginning next year, high school baseball teams will be given the option to use an 18-inch first base or the double first base. The larger base is presented as an alternative to the previously mandated double first base, which goes into effect in 2027.

The larger first base option was one of seven rules changes recommended by the NFHS Baseball Rules Committee at its meeting last month in Indianapolis and which were subsequently approved by the NFHS Rules Review Committee and NFHS Board of Directors.

In conjunction with the double first base, allowing a larger first base has proven to be effective in reducing player collisions and enhancing player safety.

“The NFHS Baseball Rules Committee believes that providing schools with the option of using either an 18-inch first base or a double first base gives administrators the flexibility to enhance player safety while recognizing the varying needs and resources of member schools,” said Elliot Hopkins, director of sports and liaison to the NFHS Baseball Rules Committee. “Both options are designed to reduce the potential for collisions at first base and support a reduced risk playing environment without changing the fundamental nature of the game.”

One-way electronic communication will now be allowed from the coach to the pitcher and/or the catcher for the purposes of calling pitches. Prior, the catcher was the only defensive player allowed to receive communication from the coach. While the coach must still be located in the dugout/bench area, the committee believes this change responsibly integrates electronic communication that enhances game management.

Bat certification was addressed with USA Baseball assuming bat-testing standards. Effective in 2028, there will be an additional class of permitted non-wood bats. Bats that are not made of a single piece of wood shall meet either the USA Baseball Batted Ball Coefficient of Restitution (USA Baseball BBCOR) of .50 or the USA Baseball Bat Performance Standard (-4, -5, -6). Bats must be labeled with a silkscreen or other permanent certification mark.

“In addition, the NFHS remains committed to fostering the growth and development of high school baseball players,” Hopkins said. “As the game continues to evolve with the adoption of the USA Baseball BBCOR standard, expanding the available drop-weight options provides younger and developing players with additional opportunities to build proper mechanics, confidence and skills while maintaining the safety and performance standards expected in education-based athletics.”

Additional rules changes include:

- Eye shade must be a solid stroke and not include words, numbers, logos or other symbols within the eye shade.
- Use of electronic communication devices by players on the field is prohibited (except as outlined with one-way coach to player communication). This includes amplifying devices, wireless communication devices, headphones, etc., for the purposes of recording, streaming or transmitting audio or video. The prohibition does not include medical devices.
- Coaches will be allowed to use a handheld electronic scoring device or other scoring material while in the coach's box.
- When using a tiebreaker to end a regulation game, an option is now available to start each half-inning with a runner on second base. The runner would be the last scheduled batter in that respective half-inning.

A complete listing of the baseball rules changes will be available on the NFHS website at [www.nfhs.org](http://www.nfhs.org). Click on "Sports" at the top of the home page and select "Baseball" and then "Rules." The print version of the 2027 Baseball Rules Book will be available for purchase in October at [www.NFHS.com](http://www.NFHS.com), and the digital version will be available in September via NFHS Digital at [www.NFHS.org](http://www.NFHS.org).

According to the 2024-25 NFHS High School Athletics Participation Survey, baseball is the fifth-most popular sport for boys with a total of 472,598 boys participating at 16,110 schools across the country. In addition, 1,381 girls played high school baseball.