

NCAA Baseball & Softball Padding Compliance Checklist

The NCAA has mandated a new rule that requires increased ballpark padding to cover all hard surfaces in the playable area. The new rule will help to prevent potential impact injuries and increase player safety.

➤ **Deadline for All Facilities: January 1, 2027**

Step 1: Identify Your Target Zones (Audit Your Field)

Walk the perimeter of your field. Under the new mandate, you must account for all “hard surfaces” including:

- Brick or Concrete Walls:** Backstops, sideline walls, and outfield walls.
- Wood Fences:** All wooden perimeter or sideline fencing.
- Dugout Railings & Steps:** Any hard metal or wood contact points.
- Sideline Fencing:** Foul territory fences adjacent to play.

Step 2: Measuring for Compliance

The NCAA requires padding to start no more than 1 foot from the ground and extend to at least 6 feet high (unless the surface is shorter).

MEASURE THE HEIGHT (THE “1-TO-6” RULE)

- **For walls OVER 6’:** Measure from the ground up to the 6’ mark.
- **For walls UNDER 6’:** Measure from the ground to the very top of the surface.
- **Clearance:** Check for any “gap” requirements. National Sports Products recommends measuring the total height of the area you want to cover, and we will help you calculate the necessary clearance for the 1-foot-off-the-ground rule.

MEASURE THE LENGTH (LINEAR FEET)

Measure the total horizontal length of each section.

- **Break it down:** Don’t just give one total number. Measure each wall segment (e.g., “Third Base Dugout Front”: 14’, “Left Field Corner: 12’).
- **Note the Corners:** Specify if corners are square or rounded. For wrapped corners, measure to the edge and tell us the thickness of the wall.
- **Use a “Site Map”:** Sketch a quick bird’s-eye view of your field and label each section (Wall A, Wall B, etc.). Take photos of each section and send them to National Sports Products along with your measurements. This allows the team to double-check for potential fit issues before manufacturing begins.

ACCOUNT FOR OBSTACLES & CUTOUTS

Standard pads won’t fit over integrated equipment. Note the location and dimensions of:

- **Gates/Doors:** Measure the width of the opening and the distance from the nearest corner.
- **Outlets/Obstructions:** Note any utility access points that need to remain exposed.

Step 3: Choose Your Padding

ATTACHMENT METHODS:

Douglas manufactured outdoor padding is offered in various mounting options depending on your surface:

- **Wood-Back Pads (Z-Clips): Best for brick or concrete.**
Z Clip installation provides a rigid, professional look that is easy to install, and also conceals all hardware/attachment points. Pads are fabricated with preinstalled zclip tracks on the back of the pads and include identical predrilled tracks to be installed on the wall.
- **Bolt + Backup Plate: Best for chain-link fence.**
Pads are fabricated with a full vinyl encased backside – ensuring a clean and appealing appearance for spectators behind the fence. Rust proof stainless steel back up plates anchor the padding securely.
- **Sewn/ Non-Wood Back: Ideal for smaller railings or temporary setups.**

PADDING COLOR AND GRAPHICS:

- **Color Options:** All exterior padding is encased with durable 18.5oz UV rated vinyl. Standard colors include: Dark Green, Black, Royal Blue, Navy Blue, Red, Maroon, Purple, Gray, and Yellow. Other colors are available upon request.
- **Graphics:** Enhance your facility by adding vibrant full color digital printing. Simple text, sponsor logos, and full scope multicolor designs are all available for consideration. Artwork design proofs are provided from the skilled team at Douglas to ensure you get the exact look you are aiming for.

Step 4: Action Plan

- Phase 1 (Now): Conduct a field audit and take measurements.**
- Phase 2 (Spring 2026): Finalize budget and select materials.**
- Phase 3 (Summer/Fall 2026): Installation and inspection.**
- January 1, 2027: Compliance Deadline.**

The National Sports Products Quality Standard

Extra padding leads to extra safety.

Don’t just meet the mandate—exceed it with USA-made durability.

- **USA Manufactured:** Sourced and built in the USA for superior quality control.
- **Custom Fit:** Measured and manufactured to your field’s exact dimensions.
- **Weather Resistance:** UV-protected vinyl and mildew-resistant foam for outdoor longevity.
- **Quality:** Our production team has over 100 years combined experience and we adhere to strict quality control procedures. The result; unmatched quality and workmanship.

Ready to get started? Download our [Official Douglas Measurement Template](#) and send your specs to our team for a custom quote on USA-made protection.

Get a Quote for Your Facility: Visit [NationalSportsProducts.com](https://www.NationalSportsProducts.com) or call 1-800-478-6497 to speak with a padding expert.