

TRI SPORTS Softball Rules (revised July 2015)

Equipment/Field Set-Up: TRI SPORTS supplies game balls, bases, scoreboard, lineup sheets and bats (upon request). It is the teams' responsibility to bring gloves as well as any warm-up softballs. ***Metal cleats are not allowed; players wearing metal cleats must remove them in order to play.*** Field dimensions are governed by available playing sites and may not be uniform for all fields.

Game Time: Game clock starts at scheduled time or 3 minutes after the completion of the prior game (whichever is later); have your team waiting outside the dugout, ready for intros, with your batting order filled out, at the time the prior game finishes.

Format: Games are seven innings in length, but a new inning will not be started after the 50-minute-mark. The last inning of a game, regardless if it is the seventh inning or not, will have no run limit. Losing team will always bat in the top of any inning that begins after 45 minutes of play.

Games tied in regular season after seven innings or after time limit expires will be recorded as a tie. *Games will be played to a winner in playoffs.*

PLAYOFFS: Extra innings will begin with a runner on second base; runner will be person who made last out of previous inning, regardless of gender.

Teams are comprised of nine (9) players (4of/5if) with a minimum of four (4) women; there are no infield/outfield minimums for females. Home/Away is determined by rock/paper/scissors or Odd/Even Guessing Game.

PLAYOFFS: Higher-seeded team has choice of home or visitor.

Forfeits: Forfeit will occur if a team can't field a squad by 15 minutes after start time. A team can play with a minimum of 8 (3of/5if), as long as 3 of the players are women. Forfeits reported by 2 p.m. on Friday are recorded as a loss (0 points). Forfeits reported 24 hours in advance of game time are recorded as (-.5) points. Inside of 24 hours, or at the field, (-1) point will be recorded.

Player Eligibility: SUBSTITUTES are not allowed, ***all players must be on official team roster***

PLAYOFFS: Players must be on the team roster and have played in one regular-season game to play in the playoffs. No exceptions.

Running

- 1) No stealing/leading off. ***NEW FOR Summer 2015*** A runner stepping off a base (and immediately returning to the base) following a missed swing/ball crossing front of home plate is NOT out.
- 2) A player can overrun 1st base ONLY. If, after overrunning 1st, the player turns inside (towards 2nd base) but makes no legitimate attempt to advance to 2nd base, that player may return to 1st without being tagged out.
- 3) **Sliding is an automatic out.** A "slide" (*leaving the feet to reach a base safely, or to return to a base, either feet- or head-first*) has to be deemed intentional by official; ***unintentional trips or falls, or crawling back to an overrun base does not constitute sliding.***
- 4) First base and home plate have "safety bases". Runner must use the safety base and defensive player must use normal first base to make a play; if defensive player only tags safety base, runner is safe. Runners using first base instead of safety base on an obvious play at first (umpire's decision) will be ruled out. On extra base hits, runner should round normal first base and keep going. ***Runners always use safety home plate; touching or crossing regular home plate (one foot must touch ground on other side of the plate) will result in an automatic out.***
- 5) "Commit-line" is 25 feet from home plate on third base line, marked by orange cone. It is a force out once the runner has crossed this line. ***Once runners have crossed this line, they cannot return to third base; if they do, it is an automatic out.***
- 6) Runners must make a reasonable attempt to avoid colliding with a fielder that is attempting to make a play in the area of a base (including but not limited to slowing up to avoid overrunning second or third base). Intentionally running into a defensive player making a legitimate attempt to field or catch a ball or throw will result in a dead ball, automatic out by the baserunner, players returning to last base reached safely and a possible ejection of the offending baserunner.

Hitting

- 1) First ball hit over fence by each team is a home run. All subsequent balls over the fence are outs. ***Team hitting home run or foul balls over the fence are responsible for retrieving balls.***
- 2) Every batter receives a maximum of three (3) pitches. All foul balls, wild pitches, strikes and balls count as one of the three.
- 3) **No bunting or faking to bunt.** However, a ball hit with a full swing, but not very far, IS a playable ball.
- 4) Teams bat any combo of M/F or M/M/F, so long as 3M NEVER bat in a row; if short, Fs may be cycled. Sportsmanship requires that use of the M/M/F combo be kept to the absolute minimum necessary.
- 5) Teams must use the full roster for batting (players cannot only play field). Batting order can't be altered during the game.
- 6) The team at bat provides its own pitcher. **If a hit ball touches the pitcher, it is an automatic out.** Pitchers must make a reasonable attempt to move out of the way of a fielder making a play on a ball; any attempt to hinder a defensive player's ability to make a play will result in a dead ball call, batter being called out, runners returning to previous base and pitcher receiving a sportsmanship warning.
- 7) **Mercy rule:** If a team is up by 15 runs or more after the 5th inning (4½ if the home team) or 10 runs after the sixth inning (5½ if the home team), the score will be considered final and recorded, and teams may scrimmage the remainder of their allotted field time (up to 5 minutes before scheduled start of next game).
- 8) A team can only score a maximum of eight (8) runs in one inning until the final inning, which has no run limit. EXCEPTION: If a team is down by more than 8 runs prior to the final inning, it may score **until the game is tied.**

- 9) Foul balls must pass above the batter's head to be caught as an "out" by the catcher and cannot touch anything prior to being caught.
- 10) When hitting the ball, batters must have at least one foot *behind the front edge of the plate*. Otherwise, the batter is out.
- 11) Throwing the bat will result in a warning on first occurrence; subsequent occurrence by any player will result in automatic out. Base runners return to previous base.
- 12) Warm-up pitches are not allowed on the ball field. Please warm up prior to the game, off the field
- 13) Pinch runners are allowed from first base only and must be the person of the same sex immediately before the batter who made the last out. If there are no outs, pinch-runner must be person of the same sex at the bottom of the batting order. Player must be injured during the game or at risk of further injury to receive a pinch runner. If a player is too injured to run prior to the start of the game, they should not be included in the batting order.
- 14) Offensive players calling "I got it" when their team pops up a fly ball, yelling, making any other loud noise or any other unsportsmanlike attempt to distract fielders from making a play will result in an automatic out, a sportsmanship warning and runners returning to previous base.
- 15) Dugout gates should be closed at all times. Balls thrown through an open gate into the dugout result in an extra base awarded to runners, **HOWEVER**, if the ball is thrown through the batting team's gate, no bases will be awarded. Ball must be completely inside gate (on concrete) to be considered in the dugout. A ball thrown into any dugout through holes in bottom of dugout fence is out of play; runners awarded an extra base.
- 16) **Only USSSA/ASA approved slow-pitch bats may be used; fast-pitch and baseball bats are prohibited.** Refer to: <http://www.baseball-bats.net/softball-bats/approved/index.html> Any player using an illegal bat will be ejected from game.

Fielding

- 1) Plays at home must be made at home plate; any play made on the safety bag or attempting to tag the runner will result in an automatic "Safe" call. Catcher must have possession and control of ball and be in contact with home plate to make an out.
- 2) Runners always have right-of-way. Defensive players must avoid contact with the runner and *cannot place themselves in the base path or on the base to await a throw*. Interference with runners or hindering their ability to get to the base can result in a "safe" call (umpire's discretion; contact caused by fielders trying to make play on balls thrown off-line is NOT always interference).
- 3) Infielders must remain outside the base path (the edge of the base closest to home plate), and outfielders must remain on the outfield grass until the ball is hit. Infielders may play past the edge of the outfield grass.
- 4) It is the shortstop's responsibility to let the pitcher know if defensive players are not ready for the pitch.
- 5) The infield fly rule is NOT in effect in rec leagues, but double plays may not result from un/intentionally dropped balls (umpire's discretion).
- 6) Base players pretending to catch an incoming ball or making a "phantom" tag, which may or may not cause the runner to slow, duck, or endanger their safety in any way, will receive a sportsmanship warning, and all base runners will be awarded the base they are approaching PLUS an extra base.
- 7) Defensive switches are NOT allowed once a half-inning has begun, except to replace a player injured during play. No switching during play based on who is batting.
- 8) "Time" (timeout, signifying a play is over) can only be called by the umpire -- **NOT by any player (offensive or defensive)**. Time is called after **all** action on a play has ceased (runners are on base and/or making no attempt to advance, or ball is in process of being thrown to the pitcher if no one is on base). Calling time is entirely at umpire's discretion. Defenders cannot attempt to end a play by calling "time!" or deliberately throwing ball back to the pitcher while plays on the base paths are in progress. The pitcher is NOT a defensive player and is not required to touch the ball **until AFTER all action on the bases is complete and time is called**. Defensive players are responsible for completing any plays on baserunners before time can be called and ball is returned to the pitcher.

Officials/Sportsmanship: Officials' calls are final. Arguing with/disrespecting the official is grounds for ejection; refusal to leave the playing field or additional arguing or inappropriate behavior can result in forfeiture of game and suspension from league participation. Players should always act in a sportsmanlike manner, even when disagreeing with a call.

Rules not specifically covered here will be governed by the official 2015 ASA rules of slow-pitch softball.