

GREATER MADISON SENIOR SOFTBALL RULES (2024)

Generally, our league follows the Official USA Senior Softball Rulebook (2019-20), [Official Senior Softball USA Rulebook \(2019-20\)](#), with notable exceptions, variations and clarifications as provided below.

1. PLAYERS AND TEAMS

- A. *Player eligibility.*** A player is eligible to play if he is at least 55 years old by December 31st of the current year, has signed a current Registration/Waiver of Liability form and has paid his fees.
- B. *Player draft.*** New players who have not registered with a particular team will be assigned to a team via a draft.
- C. *Teams.*** Teams must have at least 12 eligible players on their roster to be viable. There is no maximum limit to the number of players on a team's roster. During the regular season, a team may add new players to its roster, but a player may not switch teams without the written consent of his manager.
- D. *Divisions.*** Teams will be assigned to two divisions for play on both Wednesday and Thursday, based on their records the previous year. Teams in the first division are presumed to be more skilled than those in the second division.
- E. *Sportsmanship.*** All players are expected to exhibit good sportsmanship, to avoid bodily contact with other players, to refrain from using abusive or profane language, and to accept the decisions of the umpire. Only managers may discuss disputed calls with the umpire. The umpire, in his discretion, may eject a player for an egregious violation of this rule.

2. LEAGUE SCHEDULE

- A. *Initial schedule.*** During the first five weeks of the season, teams will play a round robin schedule against the other teams in their division. In divisions with seven teams, each team will play a double header so that there are no byes.
- B. *Remaining schedule.*** After five weeks the team(s) with the worst records in the first division and the team(s) with the best records in the second division will switch places, as determined by the board of directors. When multiple teams have the same record, ties are broken first by record against common opponents, then by head-to-head record, then by a coin toss. The remaining games between teams in their respective divisions will then be scheduled. Any games rained out during the first ten weeks will be made up thereafter, in the same order, at the same times, and at the same fields as originally scheduled.
- C. *Home team.*** The team listed first on the schedule is the home team, and occupies the third base bench.

3. PLAYING FIELD

- A. *Bases.*** Bases are 60 feet apart. First base has both a white bag in fair territory and an orange bag in foul territory. A "runner's plate" is placed in foul territory eight feet from the third base line and even with the front of home plate.
- B. *Commitment lines.*** There is a "batter's commitment line" 30 feet from home plate on the first base line, and there are "runner's commitment lines" halfway between first base and second base, halfway between second base and third base, and 30 feet from third base on the third base line. See Rules 8(B), 8(G) and 9(B) regarding these lines.
- C. *Pitcher's rubber.*** The rubber is located 45-50 feet from home plate.

- D. **Outfield line.** The “outfield line” is an arc, with the two endpoints 80 feet from first base and third base.
- E. **Courtesy runner’s line.** The umpire shall establish a “courtesy runner’s line” at least three feet behind the imaginary extension of the third base line, and positioned so that the runner does not interfere with the batter, catcher or umpire.

4. EQUIPMENT

- A. **Ball.** The ball is the soft-core deBeer Clincher #F12.
- B. **Bats.** Only adult softball bats may be used. No youth bats, baseball bats, loaded bats or bats which may separate are permitted.
- C. **Shoes.** Metal cleats are not allowed.

5. LINEUPS and SUBSTITUTES

- A. **Minimum number of players.** If a team does not have at least eight rostered players available and ready to play by the scheduled game time, it loses by forfeit. By mutual agreement of the managers, the forfeiting team may then add players from other teams and the teams may play an unofficial game. Using an ineligible player results in a forfeit.
- B. **Substitutes.** To replace rostered players who are either absent or too injured to play the field, a team may add enough substitutes to enable it to play 11 players in the field.
- C. **Batting order.** All players who play the field must be in the batting order, but all batters need not play the field. A player who becomes too injured or sick to bat may not play the field, and after at least one turn at bat, may be deleted from the batting order without penalty to his team. Substitutes must bat last.
- D. **Fielders.** Fielders may be freely substituted. Substitutes may play any position in the field.
- E. **Ejected players.** A team may replace an ejected player in the field, but must take an out whenever it is the ejected player’s turn at bat.

6. GAMES

- A. **Regulation game.** A regulation game is nine innings. However, no inning may start more than 70 minutes after the scheduled game time unless the score is tied. When, with the managers’ consent, a game is started before its scheduled starting time, the appropriate amount of time is added to the 70 minute limit.
- B. **Official game.** Games terminated by inclement weather or the time limit will be official if at least 6 ½ innings have been played and the home team is ahead, or at least 7 innings have been played and the visiting team is ahead.
- C. **Suspended games.** Games terminated before they have become official will be suspended and resumed at a later date if at least two innings have been played. If less than two innings have been played, the game will be replayed from the start.
- D. **Tie games.** If the game is tied after nine innings or the 70 minute time limit has been reached, additional innings will be played until a winner is determined, except that no inning may start more than 80 minutes after the scheduled game time. If a tie game is stopped due to the 80 minute rule, the game will be declared a tie. In extra innings, each team begins its turn at bat with its last batter from the prior inning on second base. If the last batter from the previous inning had a courtesy runner, a courtesy runner may start the inning on second base.
- E. **Maximum runs per inning.** A team may score no more than five runs per inning, but when behind, may score five more runs than are needed to tie the score. No maximum applies in the ninth inning, when the umpire announces that only one more inning will be played due to the time limit, or in any extra innings.

- F. **Mercy rule.** If a team is behind by 15 or more runs after seven innings, the game is over.

7. PITCHER and BATTER

- A. **Legal pitch.** For a pitch to be legal, the pitcher must pause for one second while facing the batter, and with his foot on the rubber, must deliver the ball in one continuous, forward motion, with an arc of between six and twelve feet. During windy conditions, the managers may agree to permit pitches with a flatter arc. If the umpire declares a pitch to be illegal the pitch is a ball, but the illegality is nullified if the batter swings at the pitch.
- B. **Strike.** A strike is called when a legal pitch touches the plate or the mat, or when the batter swings at a pitch and fails to hit a fair ball.
- C. **Walks and strikeouts.** Three balls result in a walk. Two strikes result in a strikeout.
- D. **Intentional walk.** A pitcher may issue an intentional walk by notifying the umpire, without having to throw any pitches.
- E. **Illegal hits.** A batter who bunts, chops down on the ball or hits the ball twice (other than during a follow-through swing) shall be declared out, and any runners must return to their bases.

8. FIELDERS and RUNNERS

- A. **Positioning of fielders.** A team may play no more than 11 players in the field. Any fielders playing in the outfield grass must be positioned at or behind the “outfield line,” see Rule 3(D), when the pitch is delivered. Such fielders may field a batted ball in front of the line, but may not throw out the batter at first base on any batted ball that has touched the grass. Infielders may, however, go into the outfield to field a batted ball and may throw out the batter at first base.
- B. **Sliding and baserunning.** A runner is not permitted to slide feet-first. However, a runner may slide head-first to return to a base. A runner who falls down when advancing or returning to a base may crawl or lunge to that base. When a play is being made or will potentially be made on a runner, he is permitted to over-run or run wide of a base if necessary to avoid a collision with a fielder. Runners who have touched or crossed a “runner’s commitment line” must continue to the next base, except that a runner who has done so in anticipation of a fielder failing to catch a flyball may return to his previous base. Except when forced to advance by another runner, a runner who rounds a bag without touching or crossing the “runner’s commitment line” may be tagged or forced out at the base last reached.
- C. **Tags and force-outs.** Except at home plate, see G below, a fielder may either tag or force out a runner to put that runner out. A runner is forced out when a fielder possessing the ball touches the base before the runner reaches it. A runner who runs wide of the base is deemed to have reached that base if his foot touches the ground at or beyond the imaginary line extending from the front of the base.
- D. **Interference.** A runner will be called out for interference if he collides with a player fielding a thrown or batted ball or one who reasonably expects to make a play on the runner. A runner must run either inside or outside of the base path and/or the base to avoid a collision with a fielder. If the interference is deemed to have prevented another runner or runners from being put out, the umpire will call them out as well. Whenever a collision with a fielder is not imminent, a runner must touch all bases.
- E. **Obstruction.** A fielder may not obstruct a baserunner by being in the basepath or near a base unless the fielder is fielding a thrown or batted ball or he reasonably expects to make a play on the runner. Multiple fielders must refrain from converging on a base to make a play on a runner if by doing so they impede the progress of a runner. When

attempting to field an errant throw, a fielder must attempt to avoid a collision with a runner. Fake tags are considered obstruction. The umpire will award an obstructed runner the base or bases he would have safely reached without the obstruction.

- F. *Plays at first base.*** When a play is being made at first base on the batter/runner, he must touch the orange “safety base” in foul territory when advancing to that base, but may touch either bag or run wide of the bags if necessary to avoid a collision. A fielder must touch the white base in fair territory or tag the runner to put the runner out.
- G. *Plays at home.*** A runner who touches or crosses the “runner’s commitment line” on the third base line, see Rule 3(B), must continue toward the “runner’s plate,” see Rule 3(A), and cannot return to third base. To score a run, a runner must touch the runner’s plate and will be called out if he touches home plate. To put out a runner who has touched or crossed the commitment line on the third base line, or who is forced by another runner to advance to the plate, a fielder must touch home plate or the mat while in possession of the ball. A tag is not permitted.
- H. *Runner leaving a base.*** A runner will be called out if he leaves a base before the batter swings at a pitch.

9. COURTESY RUNNERS

- A. *Request for courtesy runner.*** A batter or runner who is injured, sick or otherwise disabled may request a courtesy runner. A player may not request a courtesy runner simply because he is a slow runner and wishes to be replaced by a faster runner. A courtesy runner for either the batter or a runner must report before a pitch is thrown.
- B. *Courtesy runners for the batter.*** A courtesy runner for the batter must stand behind the “courtesy runner’s line”, See Rule 3(E), before a pitch is delivered. Once the pitch is delivered, the batter will be called out if the courtesy runner moves before the batter has struck the pitch. A batter who has requested a courtesy runner will be called out if he crosses the batter’s commitment line.
- C. *Eligibility to be a courtesy runner.*** A player may serve as courtesy runner only once in an inning and only three times in a game. A player should not be used as a courtesy runner if his position in the batting order would potentially require him to bat while he is on base. A batter will be declared out if his turn at bat arrives while he is on base as a courtesy runner. To avoid this result, another player may be substituted for the courtesy runner before the latter’s turn at bat arrives.
- D. *Courtesy runners during tie-breakers.*** Except as provided in Rule 6(D), a team may not use a courtesy runner for the designated runner who begins the inning on second base until the designated runner reaches third base.