

IWSPSSA SOFTBALL RULES – UPDATED 2024

BASIC SOFTBALL RULES AND INFORMATION FOR PRIMARY TEACHERS

Coaches/ Umpires should be aware that the nature of the game is an enjoyable learning experience for all players and should therefore apply the rules with discretion and judgement.

It is recommended where possible coaches discuss the results of each of your school's games with the opposing coach before leaving the field. Coaches are also encouraged to keep all score sheets in a safe place as if there are any discrepancies in the final score sent by opposing teams the umpiring coach will be asked to send through the completed score sheet for the convenor to make a decision. If a score sheet is not sent when asked, the decision will remain with the convenor.

Coaches must enter their scores in the results spreadsheet. Please do this before 12 noon the following Monday as per the WSPSSA by-laws (14). Any result sent after this time will not be counted. Additionally if no result is entered from a particular game both schools will forfeit and be penalised with a 10 - 0 loss. These measures align with keeping for and against.

PLAYERS:

- **A team shall consist of no more than 12 players and no less than 7.** The team can consist of a 40/ 60 ratio of max of male and female players in each team.
- **Team A and Team B ARE NOT STREAM TEAMS.**
- Provided three outs are not achieved by the fielding team all 12 players shall bat in every half inning.
- **Each time a team bats they can only bat a maximum of 12 batters.** If the fielding team achieve 3 outs the inning is over.
- All 12 players shall play on defence (play on the field) during each game. However, **only nine players are permitted on the field at any one time (fielding positions can change throughout the inning BUT not during an inning).**
- **The batting order does not change at anytime in the game.**

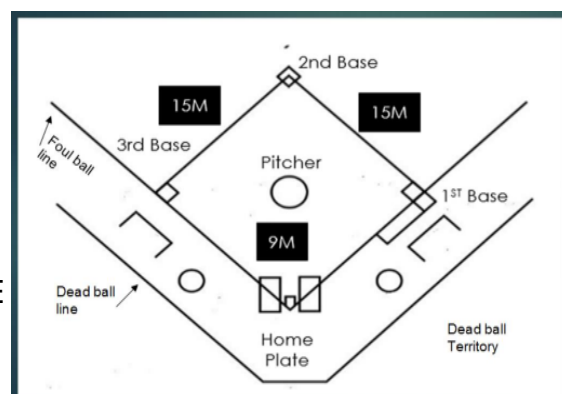
RULES FOR SCORING AND CALLING GAME

- Games start at 12:30 (as per WSPSSA by-laws) and a minimum of 2 completed innings must be played to constitute a game.
- Games must be finished by 2:15 and the top of an innings cannot start after 2pm. A game can go no longer than 5 completed innings.
- An innings is defined as a top and a bottom
 - **TOP** of the innings: Team A bats and Team B fields
 - **BOTTOM** of the innings: Team A fields and Team B bats.
 - Completed innings: both teams have batted and fielded
 - Once a team has both batted and fielded the second innings starts with team A batting again and Team B fielding. This would now be referred to as the top of the 2nd innings.
- **The winner of the game shall be the team that scores the most runs in a regulation game.** That is the score at the end of the last completed innings,
- **UNLESS:** The team second at bat (the bottom of the innings) in their uncompleted innings has scored more runs than the first team at bat. In this case the score shall be that at the end of the incomplete innings. The score reverts back only when the 2nd at bat (at the bottom of the innings) are behind and have less than 3 outs when the game ends (time runs out or conditions are unplayable)

RULES FOR SETTING UP (Diamond Dimensions)

- Running lines between bases 15m
- Pitching distance 9m
- Teams are required to use a leather or synthetic 11" mod. Ball.
- Dead ball line runs parallel to the foul line
- Coaches have the options of putting all their team on the batting line up (up to 12 players) so that all players get to bat. **ONLY 9 PLAYERS CAN TAKE THE**

COACHING:



The offensive team is permitted a coach to be stationed in the coaches Box near 1st and 3rd bases. The offensive coach must not interfere with the ball or any fielder and must not physically assist the batter/runner in any way.

The Umpire is not permitted to 'coach' teams in a way that ensures an unfair advantage.

TERMS:

- **STRIKE:** is called when:
 - A **legally pitched ball passes between the knee and the sternum of the batter** when they are in their normal batting stance, over home plate and a ball width either side without bouncing
 - Any legally pitched ball that is swung at and missed
 - Any foul ball hit by the batter, until two strikes are called. A batter may hit any number of foul balls, but the call remains at 'Strike Two'.
- **BALL:** is called when any legally pitched ball passes between the knees and the sternum of the batter, or does not pass over home plate, **PROVIDED the batter does NOT make an attempt to swing at it.**
- **FOUL:** is any ball that settles in foul territory, or which is first touched by a fielder in foul territory, or does not conform to the requirements of a fair batted ball. A strike is called on the batter and no runner can advance.
 - **If the ball is caught in foul territory the batter is out.** Any runners on base can be thrown out if they don't tag up but may also advance after they have tagged up.
 - **If the ball is caught in dead ball territory the batter is NOT OUT**
 - **If a ball lands in fair territory IN THE INFIELD then bounces into foul territory it is deemed a foul ball.**
- **FAIR BALL:** is a batted ball that settles in fair territory between home and first base or home and third base (infield hit); or bounces past first or third base on or over fair territory (including any part of the 1st or 3rd bases). **If a ball lands in fair territory IN THE OUTFIELD then bounces into foul territory it is still deemed a fair ball.**
- **FOUL TIP:** is a ball which **the catcher catches from the batter on the full**, but which does not rise above the batter's head. **A foul tip is called a strike and is only an out if it is the third strike.**
- **DEAD BALL:** The ball is not in play following a foul ball and is not in play again until the pitcher is holding the ball in the pitching circle and the umpire has called 'Play Ball'.
 - The following outlines when a Dead Ball is called:
 - When a pitched ball touches any part of the batter's person or clothes whether the ball is struck at or not.
 - When a foul ball is not caught.
 - When a runner is called out for leaving the base before a ball is pitched.
 - When the ball is outside the established limits of the playing area.
 - When a wild pitch or passed ball goes under, over or behind the catcher and over the 'passed ball' line.
 - When any part of the batter's person is hit with their own batted ball when in the batter's box. We don't have batter's boxes marked so use your own discretion when applying rules concerning batter's boxes.
 - ***Runners cannot advance on a dead ball unless forced to do so by reason of the batter having reached first base as entitled to OR they are awarded a base or bases e.g., on a passed ball/ wild pitch or on an overthrow by an infielder into dead ball territory.***

SAFETY:

- **Players**
 - Whilst the game is in progress those children not involved on the field should be

- sitting down watching the game - not playing with equipment.
- Players should be wearing hat while feilding.

- **The Catcher**

- **Caters must wear mask, fitted with throat protectors, leggings and chest plate.**
- **The catcher MUST wear full catcher's gear before the pitcher can pitch a ball and in warm up.**
- **No player can catch a pitch unless they are in full gear.**
- Players (exculding the catcher) DO NOT need to wear shin pads

- **Batters - HELMETS**

- **Batters must wear a helmet while batting an base running.** If the helmet has a chin strap, it must be secured. Batters must be square on to home plate when batting.
- All batters must wear helmets and they must remain on until the player is out or at home. **If the player removes the helmet they are out. If the helmet falls off the umpire should call TIME so the player can fix the helmet.**

- **Throwing the Bat**

- A batter will be called out if the bat is thrown dangerously. **Usually the batter is given a warning and the team given a general warning that any other batter who throws the bat will be out.**

THE UMPIRE:

- Umpires should stand behind HOME PLATE to umpire.
- They should stand immediately behind the catcher, wearing appropriate protective gear, leggings, chest plate and mask. (Umpires are not covered for injury if they refuse to wear the protective gear).
- If an umpire is unable to wear ALL of the protective clothing they are to call the game from behind the pitcher but in front of second base.
- The umpire will call **PLAY**, when a batter is in the batting box. the umpire will call: **BATTER READY... FIELDERS SET... PLAY BALL.**
For each batter and after every strike, foul ball, dead ball or after time has been called.
 - **BATTER READY:** Once the call is made and the umpire can see that the batter is ready, the batter is no longer able to move. Batters must be square on to home plate when batting.
 - **FIELDERS SET:** The fielders are no longer able to move until the ball is hit. Then finally the umpire calls...
 - **PLAY/ PLAY BALL:** The batter hits the ball. The batter CAN NOT move their back foot after you have called batter ready.

SUBSTITUTES

- Players may change position on the field but must still bat in the same order listed on the score sheet.

RULES WHEN BATTING:

BATTERS

- Batters must wear a helmet while batting and base running. If the helmet has a chin strap, it must be secured. Batters must be square onto the home plate when batting.
- Batters are NOT allowed to swap positions during the game.

- The team can have a maximum of 12 BATTERS for per innings. If the fielding team achieve 3 outs then the Umpire will call 'SIDE AWAY' and teams will swap.
- At the 12th batter the umpire will announce to the fielders in a loud clear voice 'LAST BATTER'
- When the 12th batter hits the ball the ball MUST be thrown home where the catcher or any other fielder stands on home plate with the ball in their glove/ hand to stop play and then the umpire will call SIDE AWAY.

The batter is out when:

- The ball travels through the strike zone and the catcher takes the ball on the full, on the 3rd strike.
- A legal catch is taken by any fielder
- If the batter intentionally interferes with the catcher
- If the batter swings and misses the 3rd strike and the catcher catches the ball on the full.
- **DROP 3rd STRIKE RULE:** if the batter swings and misses the ball and the catcher does not catch the ball on the full or drops the ball the batter is NOT OUT and has to be thrown out at 1st base. The ball is live unless it goes into dead ball territory, then the batter stays on 1st base and any base-runners advance one base. **As per the passed ball rule. If the first base is occupied and the catcher drops the ball, the batter is out. However, if there are 2 outs and the catcher drops the ball the batter and any forced base runners have to run.**

AUTOMATIC 2 BASE RULE:

- When a ball is hit fair to the outfield and rolls over/under/through a fence/bush/cricket boundary/ or any other obstacle which the **umpire deems** to interfere, or obstruct the fielder the batter is awarded two bases. Additionally, if there are baserunners on they also receive 2 bases. The runners are advanced 2 bases from where they were before the ball was hit.
 - *Example. Runners on 1 and 2 and the ball is hit over the cricket boundary the batter gets awarded 2nd base and the runner on 2 goes home and the runner on 1 goes to 3rd. **If runners have already reached the next base before the ball goes over the boundary they are still only award two bases from where they started.***

HOME RUN RULE:

- If the ball is hit into any area that would give a batter automatic 2 bases on the full it is classed as an automatic home run. For example, the field backs onto a cricket game and the ball is hit and goes over the cricket boundary on the full it is an automatic homerun.

HIT OFF A TEE RULE:

- After the pitcher throws the fourth ball to the batter the umpire brings out the Tee for the batter to hit off. **If the batter has two strikes and misses the ball it is strike three, batter out. Foul balls are strikes but the batter cannot be called out on a foul ball strike.**
- Once the Tee is brought into play the umpire is to call the following: The umpire will call PLAY, when a batter is in the batting box. the umpire will call: BATTER READY... FIELDERS SET... PLAY. For each batter and after every strike, foul ball, dead ball or after time has been called.
 - BATTER READY: Once the call is made and the umpire can see that the batter is ready, the batter is no longer able to move. Batters must be square onto the home plate when batting.
 - FIELDERS SET: The fielders are no longer able to move until the ball is hit. Then finally the umpire calls.
 - PLAY/ PLAY BALL: The batter hits the ball. **The batter CAN NOT move their back foot after you have called batter ready. In the case of a batter moving their back foot and hitting the ball TIME is called and the batter is awarded a strike. In the case where their back foot moves and its strikes 3 the batter is out.**

The batter becomes a baserunner immediately when:

- They hit a fair ball
- The third strike is dropped by the catcher - unless the first base is occupied and there are less than two outs. When there are two out the play must be made to make the out. (see drop third strike rule)
- The catcher interferes with or prevents them from making a strike in the ball (catcher's interference)

The baserunners are out when:

- A fair ball is held securely by the fielder on 1st base before the base runner reaches it
- The runner is tagged while off a base (except when they are returning to a base after a foul hit or when immediately returning to first base after correctly running through it). Any fielder may tag a runner, but the ball must remain controlled in the tagging hand. *NB Runners are not automatically out for running 2nd or 3rd bases - but they can be tagged when off the base.*
- The runner fails to touch the bases in the proper order when running
- The runner moves approximately 1m either side of the running line when trying to avoid being tagged by the opponent
- The runner fails to return to the base they occupied when a catch was taken on the fly by any fielder.
- The runner fails to reach the base on a force play before the fielder takes the ball on that base. **A force runner occurs when a runner is forced to advance e.g. a runner on 1st base must go to 2nd when the next batter hits a fair ball and is running to 1st.**
- The baserunner interferes with fielders attempting to field a ball. If they do, they are out.
- A batted ball hits them, unless the ball has passed an infielder other than the pitcher

Baserunners leaving the base early:

- A baserunner can advance to the next base as soon as the pitched ball is released from the Pitcher's hand.
- If a base runner leaves early and makes it safely to the next base the umpire calls time, sends the runner back and warns the player
- If the base runner leaves early and gets tagged out the runner is out
- If the base runner leaves early and a safe hit is made. Time is called the runner and batter are sent back, with no additional ball or strike added to the batter.
- **If the base runner leaves early (after being warned or the team being warned) and the ball is hit which results in the batter getting out. The base runner which left early is also out.**
- **If the runner/ or team has been warned and runners continue to leave early the base runner is out.**

ADDITIONAL RULES FOR BASERUNNERS

- On a foul ball all base runners must return to the bases they occupied when the hit was made
- A baserunner may advance one base on an overthrow in dead ball territory or a wild pitch.
- The runner may advance as many bases as possible on a throw in fair territory.
- **When the ball and the baserunner reach the base at the same time the baserunner is SAFE.**
- Baserunners must return to the base they were on when a ball is caught (ie. TAG UP) Once they touch that base they may continue to run (after the catch) at risk of being tagged out!

RULES WHEN FIELDING:

THE PITCHER

- Five practice pitches at the beginning of each innings (optional)
- Pitchers must have both feet in contact with the plate before delivering the ball (The dead ball line runs parallel to the foul ball line at least 3m wide.)

Illegal pitch

- An illegal pitch occurs when:

1. The pitcher doesn't start with two feet TOUCHING the plate.
 2. The pitcher does not come to a complete stop when they first put two feet on the pitcher's plate. This stops quick pitches and allows the batter to get set.
 3. Once the pitcher starts their pitching motion they must complete the pitch. The pitcher is not allowed stop start or pause once pitching motion has started.
- In the case of an illegal pitch DEEMED BY THE UMPIRE to be continually deliberate after being warned the penalty is: 1 extra ball added to the batter. If it is the batters 4th ball they get 1st base and all runners on base if any get an extra base.

Fielders

- Fielders who are on base 2 or 3 are not allowed to stand on the base without the ball (interference with the baserunner).

SAFETY BASE

- This is an extra base (orange) that is on the outside of the running line at 1st base which allows the baserunner a clear path to run through the base without colliding with the 1st base fielder who should stand on the inside of the base.
- This encourages the batter-baserunner to run to the right side of the 1st base, thereby reducing collision, foot and ankle injuries and other accidents. The white 1st base is in fair territory and the orange safety base is in foul territory. The baserunner must run through the orange base, but may use the white base if the ball travels to the outfield and runner goes straight to 2nd base. When the runner returns to 1st base after running through, they must then use the first (white) base. The first base fielder should not place any part of their body on the safety base, otherwise the batter baserunner can claim interference and be awarded the base.
- **If the first base fielder puts their foot on the orange part of the base when catching the ball the batter runner is SAFE.**
- Batter-baserunner should run across the orange safety-base and turn to the left of the field. If the batter-baserunner turns to the right after crossing the orange safety-base then they can be tag out as they could be interpreted as running to second base. (umpires discretion)

THIRD OUT

No run can be scored if the THIRD OUT of an innings is the result of:

- The batter is out at first base
- The baserunner is out on a forced play
- Baserunner is out for leaving the base before the pitch is made
- **The third out is made before the runner coming home touches home plate (umpires discretion)**

TAGGING

Unforced runners must be tagged out.

- A runner must be tagged out with the ball or the glove containing the ball.
- The fielder must have control of the ball throughout the tag, if they drop the ball the runner is SAFE
- If unsure whether a successful tag was made, the runner is safe.