

# SOFTBALL RULES

## HISTORY

Softball is an indoor variation of a baseball game originated by George Hancock of the Farragut Boat Club in Chicago in 1887. The smaller playing area and softer ball became so popular that the game was moved outdoors where it was called playground ball and mush ball.

Softball is a team sport that is popular with both men and women and can be adapted to the skill level of youngsters or adults. Fast-pitch softball, a variation in which pitching dominates, is most often played by highly skilled players. Slow-pitch softball, a variation in which batting dominates, is especially popular with recreational teams.

## RULES

### Definitions

**Base on Balls:** when a batter receives four pitches which are not strikes, the batter is awarded first base

**Base path:** an imaginary line one metre on either side of a direct line between bases.

**Base runner:** a player on the team at bat who has finished his/her turn at bat, has reached base and has not been put out.

**Fair Territory:** The part of the playing field within and including the first and third base foul line from home plate to the outfield fence.

**Infield fly:** A fair fly ball (not a line drive or bunt) which can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort when there is a runner on first, runner on first and second, or the bases are full and there are less than two outs.

**Inning:** Each team receives three outs per inning. Seven complete alternations from offense to defense is a regulation game.

**Strike Zone:** The space over any part of the home plate between the batter's armpits and the top of the knees when the batter assumes a natural batting stance.

**Double Play:** when the defense gets two outs on the same play

**Error:** this is charged to a fielder who misplay a ball

**Force Play:** this occurs when a runner is forced to advance to the next base because the batter becomes a runner. When a batter hits a ground ball with a runner on first, the runner is forced to run to second. If a fielder touches second base with the ball in his possession before the runner reaches second, the runner is "forced out" at second. If a runner is on second when a ground ball is hit, he is not forced to advance, because first base is unoccupied.

**Overrun:** A batter-runner may overrun first base and not be put out, but a runner over-sliding or running second or third base is in jeopardy of being tagged out.

**Foul Ball:** is any ball hit into foul territory.

**Sacrifice Fly:** is credited to a batter whose caught fly ball results in a runner on third base tagging up and scoring.

## **The Playing Field**

Baselines are 60 feet for fast-pitch and slow-pitch for females. For men the distance is 65 feet.

Distance from the pitcher's mound to home plate is 15 metres for both fast-pitch form male and slow pitch. The distance for female's fast-pitch is 13 metres.

## **Players**

A team consists of 9 players for fast-pitch or with a designated hitter 10 players. Slow-pitch teams consist of 10 players.

### **Player's positions**

Fast-pitch: pitcher, catcher, first base, second base, third base, shortstop, left, center and right fielders

Slow-pitch: same as fast pitch with a short fielder (rover)

Players should always back each other up. Outfielders should back up infielders and each other. Infielders and the pitcher should always back up each other on batted and thrown balls.

Each field should know before the ball leaves the pitcher's hand where he or she will throw the ball if it is hit to him/her. Remember these principles of fielding.

1. always try to get the lead base runner out if possible, if impossible get the easiest out.
2. Throw the ball with a purpose. Don't just throw it anywhere.
3. With less than two outs and a runner on third, infielders should lay closer to home plate to give them a greater chance of preventing a run from scoring. Infielders should know whether a certain play will be a tag out or a force play.

If the ball is hit beyond the outfielder position, the shortstop usually runs out toward the outfield and receives the ball from the outfielder. The shortstop then throws the ball to the appropriate base to try to put out the runner. (This is called a relay. If the ball is in left field the shortstop is the cut off or relay person and if the ball is in the right field the second baseman is the cut off person.)

## **The Game**

The winner of the game is the team that scores the most runs in a regulation game. A run is scored each time a base runner legally touches all bases and home plate before the third out of the inning.

## **Pitching**

The pitcher must start with the pivot foot on the pitcher's plate and the non-pivot foot on or behind pitcher's plate. The ball must be delivered to the batter with an underhand motion.

## Batting

The batters must bat in the order written on the scoresheet.

The batter may not hinder the catcher from fielding or throwing the ball.

## Base-running

the base-runners must touch the bases in legal order.

The base-runners may not leave their base until the ball has been released by the pitcher.

The base-runner may not interfere with a fielder attempting to play the ball.

The base-runners must tag their before leaving to advance to the next base after a fair or foul fly ball has been caught.

The base-runners may not leave the baseline in order to avoid being tagged.

## Tagging Runners

The ball must be in the fielder's glove. When tagging a runner who is still standing, the non-glove hand of the fielder should cover the ball in the glove. When tagging a runner who is sliding, the fielder can allow the runner to slide into the ball which is in the glove or the fielder can use a sweeping motion of the glove to tag the runner out.



