

# 2026 Softball Rules Summary

31-Jul-25

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## Uniform

- All players on a team must wear matching jerseys.
  - Players **are not allowed** to wear other jerseys that were provided for another sport.
- At minimum, any participants shorts must be loose-fitting and able to reach the top of the kneecap while they are idle or standing.
  - Shorts **are not allowed** to be modified by having the band rolled up or legs tucked in.
- If a jersey or shorts given by the Collegian Sports department cannot be worn due to not meeting the dress code outlined by the [Student Handbook](#), the player can wear their own shirt or shorts that meet the dress code and that matches the team's uniforms as much as possible.

## Equipment

- All game bats and game balls will be provided by the Collegian Sports Department.
  - Bats checked out from a collegian's inventory are considered practice bats and may **not** be used as a game bat. Players may **not** use their own bats as a game bat.
  - **Penalty (per team per game):**
    - 1<sup>st</sup> offense = batter is ejected from the game
    - 2<sup>nd</sup> offense = team forfeits that game
- Each player will provide their own glove and must wear the glove while on defense in the field.
- Equipment representing possible hazards to participants will not be permitted.
  - NO jewelry, exposed metal or hard unyielding plastic on braces, casts, etc. will be allowed. Only medical alert bracelets are permitted and must be taped to the wrist.
  - For piercings that cannot be easily removed, a clear, pliable, narrow plastic stem may be used to keep the hole from closing. However, this must be approved by the referee and deemed not dangerous to other players.
- Players must wear athletic-type shoes with non-marking soles that cover the foot completely. Sandals, boots, and open-toe shoes are not allowed.
  - The officials and supervisors on duty have the authority to disallow any shoe that they believe could endanger the person wearing the shoe or his opponents.

## Team Composition

- Games are 10-vs-10 and must have a minimum of 9 players to start a game. Game time is forfeit time.
- The addition of an 11th batter or extra hitter (EH) will be allowed but will not be permitted once the game has started.
- After starting a game with the minimum number of players required and during the course of a game a player is ejected, injured, or unable to continue, that team must take the loss. Teams must finish the game with a minimum of 9 players.

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- Team rosters may include a minimum of 13 players and a maximum of 16. A player must be added to both electronic and paper team rosters before they are eligible to participate. Collegian athletic directors are responsible for keeping their collegian's electronic and paper team rosters current.

## Safety

- To protect the pitchers from being hit by a batted ball, pitchers protection screens will be provided and must be used.
- Any player who is visibly bleeding must leave the field and may return with the official's permission after the wound is cleaned and bandaged; clothing must be changed before a player may reenter the match if blood is visible and/or present.
- If in the opinion of the official, a player is exhibiting symptoms/signs or behavior consistent with an "apparent concussion," that player will be removed to seek medical attention and may not return to play until cleared by an appropriate healthcare professional.
  - A written medical clearance must be submitted to the Student Activities Office **before** the participant may resume participation in any Collegian Sports competition.

## Game Format

- Games consist of a 50-minute or 7-inning limit. Any inning that is started before the 50-minute time limit will be completed. An inning begins when the last out is made in the bottom half of the preceding inning. No inning will begin after 50 minutes. Regular season games may end in a tie. Extra innings will be played only if they start before the 50-minute time limit. All playoff games will continue until a winner is determined.
- Unlimited homeruns
- At the end of each half inning, each team must verify with the plate umpire the runs scored.
- **Mercy rule:** The mercy rule will take effect if the run differential is:
  - 20+ runs after 3 complete innings (2½ if the home team is ahead)
  - 15+ runs after 4 complete innings (3½ if the home team is ahead)
  - 10+ runs after 5 complete innings (4½ if the home team is ahead)
- The Championship Games will play 7 innings without a time limit. However, the mercy rule still applies.

## Game Procedures

### Pre-Game

- Each team must complete a line-up card and submit it to the plate umpire prior to each game. Line-up cards indicate batting order which includes each player's name, jersey number, and position. Failure to complete and submit a line-up card will result in the game being forfeited.
- If a team starts a game with 9 players and the team has not completely batted through their line-up, they may add a 10th player (batting or on the field) during the game after notifying the plate umpire. Each additional player must be added to the bottom of the line-up.

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## Substitutions

- Each player is permitted one re-entry per game (starters and substitutes)
  - Must re-enter into his original spot in the batting order
  - Must be reported to the plate umpire
- A courtesy runner may be used once per inning provided the runner is the player who made the last out. Any player who is injured while in the field requires normal substitution procedures.
- An automatic out will be awarded if:
  - A player who is listed in the batting order is unable to bat (substitute not available)
  - A player has been ejected from the game and it is his turn "at bat." No substitute will be permitted to take an ejected batter's place.

## Pitching

- Prior to pitching, the pitcher will:
  - Be positioned behind the pitcher's protection screen
  - Come to a full and complete stop with both feet firmly on the ground and with one or both feet in contact with the pitching rubber
  - Hold the ball in the pitching hand or both hands in front of the body. This position must be maintained for at least 1 second, but not more than 10 seconds, before starting the delivery.
  - Deliver the pitch within 10 seconds of the umpire's signal to "play ball"
- In the act of delivering the pitch, the pitcher's pivot foot must remain in contact with the pitching rubber until the pitch leaves his hand.
- A legal pitch consists of:
  - Delivering the ball with an underhand motion (commonly known as *slow pitch*)
  - A pitching arc of at least 6 feet from the ground and a maximum of 10 feet.  
**Penalty: Illegal Pitch.** *The batter has the option to swing at an illegal pitch.*
- Pitcher's plate is 50 feet from home plate.
- Pitcher will receive 5 warm-up pitches in the 1<sup>st</sup> inning. In the 2<sup>nd</sup>+ innings, no warm-up pitches are allowed. For relief pitchers, they are allowed a maximum of 3 warm-up pitches which are not to exceed 1 minute in length.
- A ball which slips from the pitcher's hand during the back swing is dead, and a "no pitch" is declared. All subsequent action on that pitch is cancelled.

## Catcher

- Must **not** catch the pitched ball. He must allow it to contact the ground, strike mat, or home plate.  
**Penalty:** *pitch ruled a "ball"*

## Batting

- Begins with a count of one ball and one strike (1-1)

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- **Strike Mat** is used to determine balls and strikes. If the softball touches any part of the strike mat or home plate on a legal pitch (6'-10' arc), it is a strike.
- Chopping and bunting are **not** allowed. The batter must take a full swing.  
**Penalty:** batter is called out and base runners must return to their original base
- The batter has 10 seconds to enter the batter's box. If the batter does not enter the box, the umpire will call a strike on the batter.
- Once the batter has 2 strikes, he is declared out if he hits a foul ball. *No courtesy fouls allowed.*
- If an extra hitter is used, the position cannot be terminated during the game. An extra hitter may substitute in the field; however, he must maintain the same position in the batting order.
- Homeruns must be "in the air past the line" or "hits the concrete."
- After hitting a homerun, the batter and any runners on base do not have to run the bases.
- At the umpire's discretion, a player may be called out or ejected from the game for swinging or throwing the bat in a dangerous manner. All runners must return to their original base.

## Base Running

- Distance between bases = 65 feet
- **No** stealing. Runners may leave the base when the pitch is contacted by the bat. If the runner is off the base before the batter contacts the ball, the umpire will declare a "no pitch" on the batter and an "out" on the runner.
- Players are **not** required to slide but may do so at their own risk.
- In the case of a possible double play, the base runner must get out of the way of the thrown ball, or both he and the batter/base runner may be called out.
- A runner who leaves the base path to avoid a tag will be called "out."
- An immediate dead ball will be called when a batted ball that has not passed a defensive player other than the pitcher strikes any runner who is not in contact with a base and who is in fair territory. The runner contacted by the batted ball while not in contact with a base is out and the batter is awarded 1<sup>st</sup> base.
- Any runner who is physically assisted by a coach or anyone except another base runner will be declared out. The ball is dead, and runners must return to the last base they touched.
- **Commitment Line**
  - Two lines come off 3<sup>rd</sup> base. One is the foul line, and the other is the commitment line.
    - Foul Line = used to determine foul balls.
    - Commitment Line = angled from 3<sup>rd</sup> base to the safety home plate.
  - Once a player steps on or crosses the commitment line between 3<sup>rd</sup> base and home plate. 20 feet from 3<sup>rd</sup> base), he must:
    - Continue to the safety home plate.
    - Not return to 3<sup>rd</sup> base. If he returns and touches 3<sup>rd</sup> base, he is out.  
**Exception:** required tag-up on a caught fly ball.
    - Use the safety home plate.
  - All plays at home plate are forced outs. On a play at home plate, a runner will be called out if he:

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- Touches or crosses the commitment line after the catcher has possession of the ball and the catcher is in contact with home plate (i.e.: force play).
- Touches home plate (location for batting) or makes intentional contact with the catcher.
- o Once the runner touches the commitment line, no play is allowed on the runner by way of tagging the runner or touching the safety base. All plays are made at the regular home plate by the catcher or other defensive player.

## Ground Rule Double

- If a batted ball rolls past the homerun line (any field), it is a ground rule double.
  - o Batter gets 2<sup>nd</sup> base.
  - o Runner on 1<sup>st</sup> base gets 3<sup>rd</sup> base.
  - o Runners on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> base gets home.

## Foul Ball

- A batted ball which first strikes any person, object, fence, bench, protection screen, bat or other equipment, or which goes into pre-determined out-of-play area in foul territory, remains a foul ball regardless of where it may go.
  - o All foul balls are considered a strike.
  - o A foul fly may be caught.
  - o A foul ball not caught is a dead ball, and the runners must return to their bases.
  - o A foul tip becomes a DEAD ball immediately and no runner may advance a base.

## Ball Out-of-Play

- When the ball is thrown over the out-of-play line, all runners are awarded two bases.
- The award is governed by the position of the runners when the ball was thrown.
- If two runners are between the same bases, the award is based on the position of the lead runner.
- The base to which the runner is running has no effect on the award.

## Infield Fly

- Occurs when all of the following conditions are met:
  - o A fair fly ball (not including a line drive) that can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort
  - o Less than 2 outs
  - o Runners on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> or runners on 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup>
- When **all three** conditions are met, the umpire will declare an “infield fly” and rule the batter out immediately, whether or not the fly ball is caught.
- Base runners:
  - o Must tag up if the fly ball is caught
  - o May advance if the fly ball is dropped but are not required to run and may not be forced out at the next base

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## Appeal Rule

- An appeal play is a play in which an umpire cannot make a decision until requested by a coach or player.
- Types of appeal plays:
  - Missing a base
  - Leaving a base on a caught fly ball before the ball is first touched
  - Batting out of order
- Once a dead ball has been called, any infielder (including the pitcher and catcher) with or without possession of the ball, may make a verbal appeal.
  - The plate umpire will acknowledge the appeal, and the administering umpire will make a decision on the play.
  - Base runners cannot leave their base during the appeal.
- Appeals must be made:
  - Before the next pitch (legal or illegal)
  - Before the defensive team leaves the field (fair territory)

## Obstruction

- A defensive player cannot stand in the base path or obstruct the base runner unless he is making a play on the ball. In the event of obstruction, the umpire will award the obstructed runner and each runner affected by the obstruction the bases they would have, in his opinion, reached had there been no obstruction.

## Game Cancellations

- A game may be canceled at any point due to inclement weather.
- If a game is canceled and has completed at least 3½ innings (home team winning) or 4 innings (visiting team winning), it is considered a complete game. The score will stand as it was in the last complete inning.
  - *Example: If it rains in the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> inning, the score reverts to the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> inning.*
- If a game is stopped (excluding forfeits) and at least 3½ innings (home team winning) or 4 innings (visiting team winning) is *not* complete, the game will be rescheduled. The rescheduled game will begin when the game stopped (i.e., time remaining, score, at bat, etc.) Example: If a game is stopped at with 15:00 minutes remaining, in the bottom of the 2<sup>nd</sup> inning with the score of 3 – 5 in Team A's favor, and Team A was batting with Player 5 at bat, the game will resume at the rescheduled date with the score of 3 – 5, with 15:00 minutes remaining, with Player 5 at bat as it was when the game was stopped.

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- Games that are cancelled prior to being played due to weather will be rescheduled. Please check [Eagles Nest](#) for exact game times, dates, and locations.

## Field Specific Rules

### East Field

- **Ground Rule Double:** when the batted ball rolls onto the basketball courts, into the sandpits, or past the cones.
- **Homerun:** when the batted ball lands on the basketball courts, into the sandpits, or past the cones “in the air.”
- Any player may stand on the ground rule double/homerun line to make a play on the batted ball. If the batted ball is not caught and continues into “homerun territory” *without* contacting the ground before crossing the homerun line, it will be considered a homerun.
- On the 1<sup>st</sup> base side, if a batted ball hits the oak tree in fair territory, it is a homerun.
- On the 3<sup>rd</sup> base side, if a batted ball hits the billboard (no matter foul or fair), it is ruled a foul ball even though the billboard only enters fair territory a few feet.

### Eagle Field

- **Ground Rule Double:** when the batted ball rolls onto the track.
- **Homerun:** when the batted ball lands on or past the track “in the air.”
- Any player may stand on the infield (grass) side of the track to make a play on the batted ball. If the batted ball is not caught and continues into “homerun territory” *without* contacting the ground before crossing the homerun line, it will be considered a homerun.
- Men will play one game at a time on Eagle Field
- The track is the ground rule double/homerun line

### First Street Field

- **Ground Rule Double:** when the batted ball rolls past the cones or onto the concrete.
- **Homerun:** when the batted ball lands past the cones or onto the concrete “in the air.”
- Any player may stand on the infield (grass) side of the ground rule double/homerun line to make a play on the batted ball. If the batted ball is not caught and continues into “homerun territory” *without* contacting the ground before crossing the homerun line, it will be considered a homerun.

**Teams will meet for prayer on the field 1 minute before the start of each game. The captain of the *home* team prays.**

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