



2023 Summer Sports – Softball Highlighted Rules & Addendums

The Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Softball shall govern all Special Olympics competitions. As an international sports program, Special Olympics has created these rules based upon International Softball Federation (ISF) Rules for slow pitch softball found at <http://www.internationalsoftball.com/>. ISF or National Governing Body (NGB) rules shall be employed except when they are in conflict with the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Softball or Article I. In such cases, the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Softball shall apply.

1. Time/Innings/Run Limits:

- The choice of the first or last bat in the inning shall be decided by a toss of a coin.
- A regulation game consists of seven innings. A time limit of One (1) hour shall be in force for all games and divisions.
 - T-Ball Modification: A regulation game consists of six innings.
- **A Run ahead rule must be used as follows** – after a complete inning has been played, unless the team second at bat reaches the required number of runs in the bottom half of the inning, the run ahead rule will be enforced as follows:
 - Fifteen (15) runs after four (4) innings.
 - Twelve (12) runs after five (5) innings.
- A game that is tied at the end of seven innings or has reached the maximum time limit shall be continued by playing additional innings.
 - Starting with the top of the eighth inning or after the time limit has expired, and each half inning thereafter, the offensive team shall begin its turn at bat with the player who is scheduled to bat last in that respective half-inning being placed on second base.

2. Players

- **To start a game:** A game may begin or finish with one less than required to start with an automatic out taken in the sport of the shorthanded player. The vacant position must be listed last in the batting order. An out will be recorded when the vacant position in the batting order is scheduled to bat.
- **Every player on the teams needs to participate in the game in some way. Each player in every game can either hit, field or run the bases. Teams can be disqualified if every athlete does not participate in a full game. Exceptions can be made in a run-shortened games or injuries but that athlete will need to start the next team game.**

3. Pitching

- Unified Divisions, Traditional Group A and Traditional Group B will pitch from a distance of 50 ft.
- **All other Groups (besides T-Ball) will have an option of pitching from 40ft or 55ft.**
- T-Ball will pitch from a minimum distance of 45ft.
- **All pitchers are required to wear a “Softball Protection Mask” at all competitions. SOWA will provide one mask per field that can be shared by teams if they do not purchase their own. T-Ball it is not mandatory to wear a facemask but it is highly recommended.**

4. Home Run (HR) Rule

- **A team is only allowed 2 HR a game this year. The HR must take place on a fenced field and the ball has to go over the fence for it to count towards the HR total. After 2 HR, every HR that goes over the fence from then on is considered an out.**
- If a player hits a ball and it does not go over the fence and results in a HR that does not go against the team HR total and is not an out after 2 HR have already been hit.

5. Line-Ups

- All athletes registered on the line-up (score sheets) must play (*as referenced under rule 2, bullet 2*). Your batting order must be declared at the time that you turn in your score sheets.
- **Continuous Batting Order:** *In non-qualifying years, where teams will not be selected for USA or International Events, Special Olympics Washington creates an exception for limits on the number of players that can bat in a team Lineup. Teams will be allowed an unlimited number of players in their batting lineup. A team beginning a game with more than 10 players in the batting lineup may remove any player(s) from their lineup without penalty of an out as long as at least 10 players remain in the batting lineup.*
 - Any player who has been removed from a game may re-enter the game in the same position in the batting order.
 - When a participant is injured, becomes ill, or must leave the game site after the start of the game, the team will skip over him/her when his/her time at bat comes up.
 - If your lineup remains at 10 players or more after the player has left their spot in the lineup, that batting position will not be called an Out. However, if you have a batting order of 10 players and the now absent player drops your lineup to 9 players, that vacant spot in the lineup would be called an Out each time it is due up.

6. Equipment

- No metal cleats are permitted.
- All batters, on-deck batters, and base runners must wear helmets.
- Catchers must wear masks, chest protectors, helmets and throat protectors. Shin guards are not required but encouraged.

7. Batting

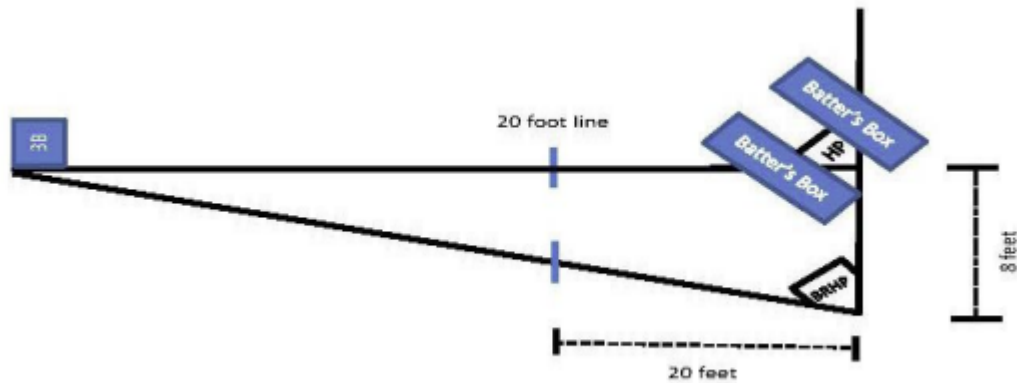
- If a batter has two strikes and fouls off the third pitch, the batter shall be declared out in all divisions.
- In T-Ball, if the batter misses both the tee and the ball, it is a strike. If the batter hits the tee, it is considered a foul ball
- In T-Ball, the batting teams half of the inning shall end when three outs have been made or when the run limit has been reached.
- In Unified play, the batting order must alternate between Special Olympic Athletes to partners. If at any point this order is not able to be followed, only athletes may follow each other in the batting order. Partners cannot follow other partners.

8. Coaches

- Coaches are required to stay in the boundaries of the coaches box while the ball is in play.
- If a coach touches (assists) a runner while the ball is in play, that runner shall be declared out.
- In T-Ball, one coach from the defensive team will be allowed in the field and must remain in the coaches' circle behind second base. He/she must try to avoid all balls thrown or hit towards them.

9. Runners

- A pinch runner may not enter the game until the batter has reached 1st base and there is a stoppage of play. Teams are awarded One (1) pinch runner per inning unless an additional ADA Runner has been approved.
- In T-Ball, the batter cannot advance any farther than second base. All other runners may advance as far as possible.
- Baserunners (Second) Home Plate:
 - The dimensions for the second home plate are the same as the regulation home plate. The specific diagram for placement of the second home plate is below:



10. Protests

- The umpires are empowered to make all decisions on the playing field. If a protest is made, it shall be brought to the Softball Rules Committee on-site. They must be submitted within 30 minutes of the completion of the game.
- No protest will be considered on a judgment call made by an umpire.

11. Neutral Zone – T-Ball

- Any batted ball that does not cross the neutral zone (14m arc from home plate) and is not touched by a defensive player will be designated a foul ball.
- All defensive players must stand behind the neutral zone before the ball is hit. They may come into the neutral zone after the ball is hit to field it. If the defensive player does not touch the ball in the neutral zone and it comes to a stop, it will be called a foul ball.

12. Home Run Rule

- **A team is only allowed 2 HR a game this year. The HR must take place on a fenced field and the ball has to go over the fence for it to count towards the HR total. After 2 HR, every HR that goes over the fence from then on is considered an out.**
- If a player hits a ball and it does not go over the fence and results in a HR that does not go against the team HR total and is not an out after 2 HR have already been hit.