



## 2019 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:

- All divisions will play one hour and 10 minutes or seven innings (T-Ball is one hour or six innings).
- **Unified Divisions, Traditional Division 1 and Traditional Division 2 will have a 7 run rule per inning except for the last inning. All other divisions including T-Ball will be a 5 run-rule per inning except for the last inning.**
- Games will end any time after 5 complete innings if one of the teams is up by 10 or more runs. This is considered a run-shortened game.
- Infield fly rule is in effect for all levels of play.

### 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 Divisions 1 and Traditional Divisions 2 will pitch from a distance of 50 ft.
- All other divisions (besides T-Ball) will have an option of pitching from 40ft or 50ft.
- T-Ball will pitch from a minimum distance of 45ft.
- **All pitchers are required to wear a “Softball Protection Mask” this year 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. 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.
  - If you choose to bat all athletes on your roster in a row, if at any time during that particular game any of the athletes should get hurt and cannot bat in order, an automatic out will be declared. The batting order should be how it is listed on the lineup card.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. Coaches
- Coaches are required to stay in the boundaries of the coaches 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.
8. Runners
- A pinch runner may not enter the game until the batter has reached 1<sup>st</sup> base and there is a stoppage of play.
  - For athletes unable to run due to health concerns (blind, obese, etc.) a replacement runner may be used. The replacement runner must be the athlete that made the team's last out in the previous inning.
  - In T-Ball, the batter cannot advance any farther than second base. All other runners may advance as far as possible.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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.