



COMMONLY OCCURRING USA SOFTBALL RULES AND POINTS OF EMPHASIS

1. **APPEAL PLAYS**

An appeal play is one in which the umpire may not make a call until a player or manager brings it to the umpire's attention. Examples are: A) a base runner missing a base or touching the white portion only of the double first base when a play is being made on the batter-runner at first base; B) a base runner leaving a base before a caught fly ball is touched; C) overrunning first base and attempting to run to second; and D) batting out of order.

*In **all** games*, once time has been granted, a dead ball appeal may be made. Once the ball has been returned to the infield and time has been called, any fielder (including the pitcher or catcher), with or without possession of the ball, may make a verbal appeal on a runner missing a base or leaving a base too soon. The plate umpire should acknowledge the appeal and the administering umpire should then make the decision on the play. Base runners cannot leave their base during this period as the ball remains dead until the next pitch.

Live ball appeals are also allowed in both FP and SP. Remember, however, that throwing to a base while in contact with the pitcher's plate while the ball is alive constitutes an illegal pitch and an appeal can no longer be made.

2. **BASE PATH**

The base path is three feet on either side of a direct line from one base to the runner. The runner does not need to run in the base path unless a play is being made on the runner. In running the bases, a runner establishes the base path, i.e. A batter-runner rounds first base on the way to second, the base path is an arc. The ball remains in play if a base runner is called out for running outside the base path to avoid a tag.

3. **BAT INFORMATION**

Bats used in the MSCR Adult Softball Program must either bear the Amateur Softball Association (ASA) approved 2000 certification mark, the 2004 certification mark or the new certification mark adopted for 2013 and Beyond for Slow Pitch **and the bat must also appear on the USA Softball approved softball bat list. The approved bat list can be viewed** on the USA website [Equipment Bats - USA Softball](http://www.ussoftball.org/Equipment/Bats-USA-Softball) and is available at each MSCR Softball diamond. This site also can be linked from the MSCR website, www.mschr.org. USA Softball no longer publishes a comprehensive list of "banned bats". A bat manufactured prior to 2000 will be allowed if, in the sole opinion and discretion of the umpire, it would comply with the USA Softball bat performance standards, if tested. The bat shall be marked "Official Softball" by the manufacturer or, in the judgement of the umpire, had the words "Official Softball" on it at one time.

The **OFFICIAL BAT** shall meet the requirements of USA Softball Rule 3. Section 1 - the highlights of the rule are summarized below:

- **The Official Bat** shall be no more than 34 inches long nor exceed 38 ounces in weight. It shall be free of burs, dents, cracks, sharp edges and audible rattles and show no signs of excessive wear. It shall not be more than 2.250 inches in diameter at its largest part. It shall be smooth and round to 0.050 inches in diameter and must bear either the ASA Certification Mark from 2000, 2004 or 2013 and must not be listed on the USA Non-Approved Bat List with 2000 or 2004 Certification Mark.
- **The safety knob** will be permanently attached to the bat and may be covered with grip tape. It shall have a diameter of at least 1.6 inches with no sharp edges.
- **The bat handle** will include a grip. **The handle region of the bat** must have a grip made of cork, grip tape or other synthetic material and must be permanently attached to the bat. No bare metal, wood or composite material may be exposed in the handle region. The grip shall not be less than 6 inches and not more than 15 inches.
- **The End Cap** is a cap placed at the barrel end of the bat. The end cap shall be permanently affixed to the bat to prevent alterations to the interior of the bat.
- **The official bat shall not be an Altered Bat.** An official's bat characteristics shall remain fixed at the time of manufacture and may not be altered in any way other than specifically provided for in (Rule 3, Sec 1) or as specifically approved by the USA. Approved bats shall be considered altered if they are rolled, shaved, repainted, weighted or modified to change their characteristics from that produced by the manufacturer. Identifying the bat by means of laser marking, engraving or painting the name of the player will not make the bat an altered bat.

Umpires will inspect bats from both teams prior to the start of each game and remove all Non-Approved Bats. Umpires will adhere a MSCR sticker after inspecting a bat.

- #### 4. BATTING OUT OF ORDER

5. BATTING OUT OF THE BATTER'S BOX

6. CATCH

7. COLLISIONS - DELIBERATELY CRASHING INTO A FIELDER WITH THE BALL

8. DISTANCES

Base Lengths: **All** Slow Pitch (Men, Women and All Gender) = 65 feet
(ASA rule 2-1, re: 70' base lengths for Men's Slow Pitch has not been adopted)
Fast Pitch = 60 feet

9. DOUBLE FIRST BASE

A double first base is used at all levels of MSCR play.

- A batted ball hitting the white portion is fair and a batted ball hitting the colored (orange) portion is foul.
- Whenever a **play** (ball must be thrown to first base in an attempt to record an out) is being made on the batter/runner, the defense must use the white portion and the batter/runner must touch the colored portion. If a play is made at first base, the ball is overthrown or the fielder is pulled off the base by an errant or missed throw, the batter/runner is allowed to use the white base **if trying to advance to second base.** (Clar-Exception) On a **play attempt** on the batter/runner **from the foul side of first base, or by an errant throw** pulling the fielder off the base into foul ground, the batter/runner and the fielder can use either white or colored portions of the base.
- On extra base hits or balls hit to the outfield when there is **no play** being made at the double base, the batter/runner may touch the white or colored portion. When tagging up on a fly ball, either the white or colored base may be used.
- The batter/runner is allowed to legally return to either color base after he/she has touched or missed first base. After returning to either portion of the base, an appeal cannot be made.

10. FAIR AND FOUL BALL

Home plate and all bases are completely in fair territory.

- A. Fly Ball - in determining fair or foul, the relationship of the ball when touched, to the foul line is the deciding factor. The placement of the fielder's feet (inside/outside the foul line) is not a consideration.
- B. Batted Ball -
 - a. A batted ball that first hits the ground *before* it reaches 1st or 3rd base is fair, if it settles in fair territory, is touched by a player while the ball is on or over fair ground or if the ball passes over 1st or 3rd base, regardless of where the ball hits the ground after going over the base.
 - b. A batted ball that first hits the ground *beyond* 1st or 3rd base is fair or foul based on where it hits the ground that first time.
 - c. A batted ball that hits a player or umpire in fair territory and then goes into foul territory, is a fair ball.
- **(Emphasis) - Foul Ball/Foul Tip - The reference to the "height of the batter's head" as it relates to a foul ball and foul tip no longer applies.** This change allows more opportunity for the catcher to obtain "outs" by catching foul batted balls, the same as the first and third base person.
Umpires need to judge whether the ball moves from the bat "sharply" and "directly" (the definition of a **foul tip which is a strike, and can be an out, if caught by the catcher, on the 2nd strike in SP or the 3rd strike in FP) **versus** a ball that has a perceptible arc and/or if the catcher moves their glove to catch the ball after contact with the bat (this is a **foul ball** and an out, if caught), regardless of the number of strikes on the batter at the time.

11. FAKE TAG

A "fake tag" occurs when a fielder without the ball deceives the runner by impeding their progress (i.e, causing them to slide, slow down or stop running). The umpire will call "obstruction" and give a delayed dead ball signal. After all play is completed, the umpire shall award the obstructed runner and each other runner affected by the obstruction the bases they would have, in his/her opinion, reached had there been no obstruction. A warning should also be given to both teams. The next fake tag, by either team, shall result in the ejection of said player.

12. GLOVES

A glove **or mitt** may be worn by **any** player, but shall not exceed the specifications of USA rule 3-4. Multi colored gloves are acceptable for all players. ***The pitcher's glove may be of one solid color or multicolored as long as the color(s) are not the color of the ball being used in the game being played.***

13. INFIELD FLY

An infield fly is a fair fly ball (not including a line drive or an attempted bunt) which can be caught by an infielder, pitcher or catcher with **ordinary effort** when first and second or first, second and third bases are occupied with less than two outs. The pitcher, catcher or any outfielder who positions themselves in the infield area on the play shall be considered infielders for the purpose of this rule. The general rule of thumb to use in determining "**ordinary effort**" is: "Can the catch be made by a fielder without turning his/her back to the infield?" If the infield fly rule is called by an umpire and the ball is caught while fair or if the ball falls and settles in fair territory -- the batter is out, the ball is alive. Runners may advance at the risk of being caught or may "tag-up" and advance after the ball is touched, the same on any fly ball. If the hit becomes a foul ball, it is treated the same as any foul ball.

14. INELIGIBLE PLAYER

When it is determined that a team uses an ineligible player in the game, except violation of the re-entry rule, the game shall be forfeited to the offended team. Violation of the re-entry rule results in disqualification of the offending player(s) for the remainder of that game.

15. INTENTIONAL WALK (SLOW PITCH)

Any time a pitcher desires to walk a batter intentionally, they may do so by notifying the plate umpire who should award the batter first base. In fast pitch, all pitches must be thrown.

16. INTERFERENCE

Interference is defined as the act of an OFFENSIVE player or team member which impedes, hinders or confuses a defensive player attempting to execute a play. Defensive players must be given the opportunity to field the ball ANYWHERE on the playing field. There are several different types of interference calls (i.e. batter, base runner, on-deck batter and coach). When one of these types of interference occurs, the ball becomes dead, someone must be called out (usually the player interfering or being played on), and all base runners will return to the last base touched at the time of the interference. If the interference is done to prevent a double play, either the immediate succeeding runner or the runner closest to home plate will also be called out.

17. LOOK BACK RULE (FAST PITCH)

Once the pitcher has the ball within an eight-foot radius of the pitcher's plate and the batter/runner has touched first base or is called out, all runners must immediately return to the base left or advance to the next base. If they do not, they are out and the ball is dead. The obligation to return to a base is on the runner, not the pitcher. The pitcher does not need to look, fake or play the runner back. Anytime the ball leaves the eight-foot radius, runners can move off the base. After ball four is called, the ball is alive and the batter/runner may continue to advance past first base (round the base) even though the ball has been returned to the eight-foot circle by the catcher. ***However, after overrunning first base, if the ball is within the 8' circle and the batter/runner commits back to the base, the batter/runner must then return non-stop to first base. (Committing to a base is the act of moving toward that base.***

18. PITCHING (FAST PITCH) -

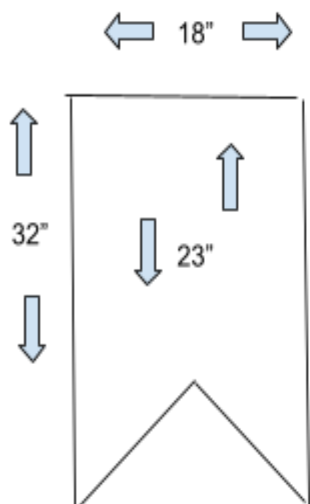
MSCR will use the Men's USA Softball pitching rule for all levels of play.

- A. Contact with the Pitcher's Plate - ***The pivot foot must be on the pitcher's plate and the non-pivot foot may be on or behind the pitcher's plate.*** Both feet must be on the ground and within the 24" length of the pitcher's plate. The pitcher's shoulders must be in line with first and third base.
- B. Signal - The pitcher must take or appear to be taking a signal with the hands clearly separated. It is legal for the pitcher to take a signal while standing behind and not in contact with the pitcher's plate, however, the pitcher must step on the pitching plate with the hands separated and pause before pitching. The ball held in one hand may be held in front or behind the body. It is illegal to toss the ball back and forth between hands while taking the sign.
- C. Preliminary to Wind-Up - The ball, after the signal is taken, must be taken in both hands and may not be held for longer than ten seconds. A stop may be made but is not necessary. The pitcher may immediately, without stopping their hands or body, go into the wind-up after the signal is taken.
- D. Start of Pitch - The pitch begins when the pitcher takes one hand off the ball. ***If the pitcher decides to pitch with the non-pivot foot to the rear and off the pitching plate a backward step may be taken before, simultaneously with or after the hands are brought together.***
- E. Delivery - The delivery is limited to one revolution which is interpreted as not two. One and part of another is legal but two complete revolutions are illegal. The wrist may not be any further from the hip than the elbow. The delivery may not have a step or reversal of the forward motion.
- F. Step and Release - A step (only 1) must be taken and it must be forward, toward the batter. Dragging the foot or pushing off with the pivot foot is legal. ***The pitcher is allowed to "leap", provided the pitcher keeps the toes of his/her pivot foot pointing downward.*** Pushing off from a spot other than the pitcher's plate is considered a Crow Hop and is ILLEGAL. Release of the ball must be simultaneous with the step.

19. PITCHING (SLOW PITCH)

- A. The pivot foot must be on the pitcher's plate and the non-pivot foot may be on, behind, or off to the side of the pitcher's plate. It is not required that the non-pivot foot be within the 24" length of the pitcher's plate. The pitcher must not make any motion to pitch while not in contact with the pitcher's plate.
- B. The pitcher must come to a stop with the ball held in one or both hands, in front of their body for at least one (1) second. After receiving the ball or after the umpire calls "play ball", the pitcher has ten (10) seconds to release the next pitch.
- C. The pitch starts when the pitcher makes any motion with the ball, which is part of the delivery, after the required stop.
- D. There may be no stop or reversal of the forward motion. A windmill delivery may be used. The delivery must be continuous but cannot continue after the ball is released. The ball must be released on the first forward swing of the arm past the hip. **It cannot be released behind the back or through the legs.**
- E. **MSCR Local Rule** - The pitch must have an arc of between six (6) and twelve (12) feet from the ground.
- F. If a step is taken, it may be forward, backward or to the side, provided the pivot foot is in contact with the pitcher's plate and the step is simultaneous with the release of the ball.

20. MSCR MAT SIZE & HOME PLATE RULE (SLOW PITCH)



HOME PLATE RULE

SLOW PITCH ONLY - - At home plate, at all times (whether a play is being made or not) the base runner must touch the **BLACK** mat while the catcher has the **WHITE** home plate. Catching the ball and stepping on the plate before the base runner arrives at the mat is all that is required to record an out. Sliding is allowed (when sliding, base runners should slide toward the black mat). *The runner may be put out at home by the catcher (or defensive player) tagging home plate (a force out) or the runner may be tagged out.*

**** To create a "force situation" in all instances, a chalk line will be placed approximately 20 feet from home plate, across the baseline. Once a base runner has touched or crossed the line, the runner must continue toward home plate and cannot finish the play at third base. NOTE: If the runner who touched or crossed the "commit line" is on 3rd base when all play is completed, they may be called out on an appeal play, by the defensive team to the umpire.**

21. OBSTRUCTION

Obstruction is the act of a fielder, who neither has nor is attempting to field a batted ball, which impedes the progress of a runner. **Blocking a base, when not in possession of the ball, is a form of obstruction.**

Whenever obstruction occurs (including a rundown), the umpire will call "obstruction" & signal delayed dead ball. The ball remains alive. When an obstructed runner is put out prior to reaching the base they would have reached had there not been obstruction, a dead ball is called (at the time of the putout) and all runners are allowed the base they would have gotten if obstruction had not occurred.

When obstruction occurs during a "rundown" a delayed dead ball is called. If the runner is tagged after being obstructed, time is called and the runner is awarded the base they would have made. If the ball is overthrown after the obstruction, the runner can advance and the ball remains alive. If the obstructed runner is put out after passing the base they would have reached had there not been an obstruction, the obstructed runner will be called out.

22. OVERRUNNING A BASE

The batter-runner is not out if they overrun first base and turn either way **unless** they make an attempt to advance to second base and are touched by the ball while off base. All other runners are out if they overrun a base and are tagged with the ball while off base.

23. OVERTHROWS

Runners are always awarded two bases on overthrows that enter dead ball area or are blocked. **All base awards are governed by the position of the runners when the ball leaves the fielder's hand.** Direction of runners has no bearing, i.e., when an overthrow by an outfielder is made on a runner returning to first base and the ball leaves the outfielder's hand before the runner gets back to first, the runner would be awarded third base. (FP only: Pitched balls going out of play are limited to a one base award from the last base occupied at the time of the pitch.)

24. RETURN OF PITCH BY CATCHER DIRECT TO PITCHER

The catcher must return the ball directly to the pitcher after each pitch except after a strikeout or a putout made by the catcher. This also includes a new ball handed to the catcher. The penalty of an additional ball is called by the umpire. (Exception: This does not apply to fast pitch when there are runners on base or where the batter becomes a base runner.) Also, there is no penalty if any fielder fields a batted ball close to the foul line and throws to a base. After a putout or a strikeout, the ball does not have to be thrown directly back to the pitcher.

25. SOFTBALLS - Optic Yellow Balls will be used in all levels and divisions of MSCR play.

MSCR will furnish the game balls at the diamond. A 12" ball is used for all players in All Gender and Men's Slow Pitch as well as Women's Fast Pitch. An 11" ball is used in the Women's Slow Pitch Program.

26. "TIME" (SLOW PITCH)

When the ball is held in the infield after a hit and in the judgement of the umpire, all plays are apparently completed, the umpire shall call TIME. Runners do not have to be on their base nor does the ball have to be within the 8' radius circle around the pitcher's plate. As long as runners are not attempting to advance and no play is being made on them, TIME SHOULD BE CALLED in Slow Pitch Play. **Stealing is not allowed in MSCR slow pitch softball. MSCR has not adopted the USA Softball stealing rule for Slow Pitch (Rule 8-4 F. #3 & #4)** Players must realize however, that while TIME should be called by the umpire, the ball is live until the umpire calls TIME. Any play or advance prior to the umpire granting TIME is legal.

27. THIRD STRIKE RULE (FAST PITCH)

The batter may run if the catcher fails to catch the third strike before the ball touches the ground when there are less than two outs and first base is unoccupied or any time there are two outs.

28. THREE FOOT LINE

A batter-runner must stay within the three-foot line (which is the last half of the distance between home plate and first base and three feet from the foul line) to avoid being called out for interference with a thrown ball. If the runner is outside the line and, in the judgement of the umpire, interferes with the fielder taking the throw at first base, or any part of the runner's body is hit with a thrown ball on the fair side of the foul line, interference will be called. The runner is out, the ball is dead and all other runners must return to the last base touched at the time of the pitch.

29. UMPIRES

An umpire, although they see a play from what they believed was a better vantage point, may not overrule another umpire's decision as long as the play was in the second umpire's jurisdiction. They may discuss it but if a call is to be reversed, it must be done by the umpire who originally called the play. Both umpires may declare an "illegal" pitch or call a runner out for leading off base.