



MSCR SOFTBALL - LOCAL RULES AND PROCEDURES - (2025)

Refer to the Points of Emphasis document for additional program rules.

NOTE: The current edition of the USA Official Rules of Softball will be the official rulebook for this program. Local rules and adaptations will supersede where applicable. Two competing teams or managers may **not** agree to alter any rules.

I. Facility policies - Facilities are owned and managed by City of Madison Parks Division

- A. Umpires assigned by MSCR are responsible for all facilities.
- B. Possession or consumption of alcoholic beverages while in city parks after 10:00 pm is strictly prohibited.
 - 1. Participants may not consume alcoholic beverages at any time during their game. This includes walking behind the bleachers, bench or backstop to consume.
 - 2. If participants violate Policy 1-B, they are suspended from participating in that game and the next two (2) games played by their team as well as being reported to the Softball Commission.
- C. No game will begin after 10:00 pm. No new inning will begin after 11:00 pm - City Ordinance

II. Equipment

- A. **Uniforms:**
 - 1. Any type of cloth hat, headband, scarf or visor is permissible but hats are not required. Plastic visors are not allowed.
 - 2. Shorts are legal uniforms.
 - 3. Shirts must be worn by all participants whether playing or not. Sports bras are not considered a shirt.
 - 4. Shoes must be worn by all players and coaches. **Metal spikes are not allowed in MSCR slow pitch play.** (Penalty: player must remove to continue participation, refusal to do so results in disqualification from the game.) ***Note: Metal spikes are allowed in MSCR Fast Pitch play only.***
 - 5. Masks with throat protectors must be worn by catchers in FP.
- B. **Bats:** Only official softball bats as outlined by USA Rule 3, Section 1 will be allowed. A list of approved bats can be viewed at www.teamusa.org/USA-Softball/Certified-Equipment and a copy is placed in all base boxes. Bats must bear the appropriate certification mark and must not be listed on the USA Softball Non-Approved Bat List with Certification Marks.
- C. **Balls:** The umpire will give the home team a new ball to start the game. Balls are kept at the diamond. ***Optic yellow balls will be used in all MSCR play.*** All Gender, Men's SP and Women's FP use a 12" ball. Women's SP uses an 11" ball.
- D. **Bases:** Will be supplied by MSCR. **A "double 1st base" will be used at all levels of play.**
- E. **Jewelry:** Exposed jewelry which is judged by the umpire to be dangerous must be removed and may not be worn during the game. Activity trackers are not considered jewelry for softball purposes only. *(Penalty: Player must remove or tape to continue participation; inability or refusal to do so will result in disqualification from the game.)*
- F. **Helmets (FP only):** Must be worn by all defensive players - the batter, baserunners and on-deck hitter.

III. Players and Substitutes

- A. MSCR Softball is a "rostered" league. All players that participate must be registered to play in the program and must be enrolled/registered on the team they are participating in. As long as a player has signed the MSCR Substitute Player Agreement card, they are eligible to play - this can be done at the field.
- B. **Batting Orders:**
 - 1. **Fast Pitch:** Teams may begin, and play a game with only eight (8) players.
 - a. The eight players must occupy the first eight spots in the batting order.
 - b. If a ninth player arrives late, they must bat in the ninth position.
 - c. If 10 or more able players are present at the start time, a team must list a minimum of 9 in the batting order.

2. **Slow Pitch:** Teams may begin, and play a game with only eight (8) players.
 - a. The eight players must occupy the first eight spots in the batting order.
 - b. If the ninth and tenth players arrive late, they must bat in the ninth and tenth positions.
 - c. If 10 or more able players are present at the start time, the team must list a minimum of 10 in the batting order.
 - d. For All Gender Leagues, there must be a minimum of 4 women in the batting order. There is no maximum to the number of women that can be in the batting order. Additionally, no woman will sit out to allow a man to play (See All Gender Rules for more clarifications)
3. There is no maximum limit on the number of players that may be included in a teams' batting order provided all players listed are present at the start of the game. The USA designated hitter-rule cannot be used.
 - a. Once the lineup is listed on the scorecard and the game begins, no further **additions** to the starting lineup may be made. Exceptions: III-B-1-b, III-B-2-b.
 - b. Once a player is listed in the batting order, they remain in that position in the order for the entire game unless substituted for.
 - c. If a player is listed on a team's batting order & is not present for his/her first plate appearance an out shall be declared, the player's name will be struck from the lineup & the player is no longer eligible to participate in that game.
 - d. If a player, other than a base runner, is injured or must leave for a valid reason with no eligible substitute available, their position in the batting order is left vacant and **no penalty is assessed**. The player may not return to the game.
 - e. **A courtesy runner may be used** to replace an injured player who has reached base safely and is unable to run the bases. The injured player may remain in the game defensively and have a courtesy runner each time they reach base. In All Gender play, the courtesy runner will be of the same gender as the injured runner.

i.) **Prior to each game, in the presence of the umpire, teams must indicate on the scorecard, all players with a prior injury that require a courtesy runner for that game. The courtesy runner must be used each time they reach base safely.**

ii.) **A player who is injured during the game may also have a courtesy runner for the remainder of the game. If the injured player chooses to leave the game, their position in the batting order is left vacant and no penalty is assessed.**

Note: A courtesy runner may be used at any time for a Fast Pitch pitcher.

- The courtesy runner **must** be in the batting order and will be the player who made the last out.
- If the injured player chooses to leave the game, their position in the batting order is left vacant and no penalty will be assessed.
- *If a courtesy runner situation arises in the first inning and no outs have been recorded, the courtesy runner will be the last batter listed in the batting order.*

f. **If a player is ejected or disqualified with no substitute to replace that player, an out will be assessed each time that player was to bat after the ejection or disqualification.**

4. If a team playing with 8 players has a player ejected or disqualified from the game, or if a player leaves the game for any reason other than an injury, that team will forfeit the game. The only time a team may continue with less than the minimum number of players required is if a player is injured and removed from the game. No penalty is assessed.

C. **Substitutions:** The following supersedes the USA substitution/re-entry rule.

1. A starter is defined as anyone listed in the original batting order at the start of the game.
2. If all players available are not listed in the batting order, a starter who is listed in the batting order, may be replaced by a substitute.
3. **Any player** may be substituted and re-entered once, but players must occupy the same spot in the batting order whenever in the lineup.
4. If a player has re-entered once, that player may be substituted for again but cannot re-enter a second time. The starting player and their substitute may not be in the lineup at the same time.

5. All substitutions should be reported to the official scorer and the plate umpire to be announced.
However, whether announced or unannounced, any play made by or on the substitute player is legal.

D. Fielding Positions:

1. There will be total free substitution of players in the field on defense. However, there can never be more than nine players in fast pitch or ten players in slow pitch, playing the field at any one time.
2. This rule only applies to those players who are listed in the batting order.
3. Players not listed in the batting order must follow the substitution procedures as outlined in III-B.
4. For All Gender Leagues, there must be a minimum of 4 women playing defense in the field. If more than four women are in the batting order all must play defense. There can never be 6 men in the field and women sitting out.

E. Conduct:

1. Any player, manager or coach ejected from a game under any circumstances, is automatically suspended from the next two games played by their team.
2. Umpires do not have the authority to waive this suspension in any case.
3. It is the manager's responsibility to control this suspension and upon proven violation, both manager and player are subject to commission action.

IV. The Game

A. General:

1. Weather/Rain Outs: A weather message is recorded daily at 4:15 pm at www.msccr.org.
 - a. All managers, players and umpires are encouraged to use the **MSCR weather website for the daily weather message: Go to www.msccr.org**, select the WEATHER IMPACT link or go to www.msccrsportsleagues.org and select Weather Impact. **On nights when the weather decision is "Umpires Decision", MSCR will make every effort to update the weather website until 8:00 pm.**
2. Games will begin at the scheduled starting time. NO GRACE PERIOD!
 - a. The diamond will be cleared by all participants 5 minutes before the first scheduled game time.
 - b. There will be no infield practice after the first game of the evening. The only time allowed between games will be for the umpires to prepare for the next game.
 - c. If a game is completed more than 5 minutes before the time limit, the next game may begin before the scheduled starting time only if both managers agree.
 - d. If the preceding game runs past the scheduled starting time of the next game, forfeit time will be the completion time of the preceding game.
3. Two umpires are assigned to men's and women's games. If only one reports the game must be played. If no umpires report, teams can agree to play or the game will be rescheduled.
4. Team listed first on the schedule is the home team and will occupy the first base bench and furnish a scorekeeper.
 - a. Only players, managers, coaches, bat persons & scorekeepers are to be seated on the bench.
 - b. Exception: In women's leagues, only one adult male per team, acting in any capacity (coach, manager, scorekeeper, bat person), will be allowed in the team bench area. That person's name must be listed on the scorecard and they may coach from one of the coaching boxes when their team is at bat. In men's leagues, the same restrictions apply to an adult female.
5. Scorecards: The winning team is responsible for delivering the scorecards to the publicity boxes by 11:30 pm the night of the game. Boxes are located at Goodman #1, Elver (island near the diamonds), Olbrich #1 and Warner #1.

B. Slow Pitch:

1. Games will be 7 innings or 55 minutes. No new inning shall be started after the time limit expires unless the game is tied.
 - a. A new inning begins immediately after the third out of the previous inning has been made.
 - b. If the home team is batting and leading in score when the time expires, the game is over.
 - c. If the visiting team is batting when the time limit expires, they must finish the half inning. If the visitors are then leading, the home team must bat.

2. Run Limits will be as follows: **Before the time limit expires**, a game will be over after 5 innings (4 ½ if home team leads), if either team leads by 15 runs. Note: If the visiting team leads by 15 runs after 5 ½ or 6 ½ innings, the home team will be allowed to begin its at bat. **After the time limit expires**, the game is over immediately if either team is leading by 15 runs; the ½ inning is not completed.
3. Over the fence home run limits. Each team is limited to 1 over the fence home run per inning. Any additional over the fence hits will be counted as an out.
4. There is no stealing in slow pitch. ASA Rule 8-4-F. #3 & 4 do not apply.
5. **TIE BREAKER (SP) - any time the score is tied and the time limit has expired**, the net inning will begin using the tie breaker rule See procedure in FP, C.4.a-d.
6. Three balls will constitute a walk. A strike-out will consist of any combination of two strikes:
 - a. Two called
 - b. One called - one swing and miss
 - c. One called - one fouled
 - d. Two fouled balls
 - e. One swing and miss & one foul ball
 - f. Two swinging misses
7. Home plate and the mat will be used in determining balls and strikes. If any part of the pitched ball lands on any part of the plate, including the black perimeter, and/or mat, it shall be a strike.
8. **MSCR local rule - Slow Pitch Pitching Rule** - Arc limits will be a minimum of 6 feet and a maximum of **12 feet** from the ground.
9. **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.*

C. Fast Pitch

1. Games will be 7 innings or 1 hour and 15 minutes time limit. No new inning will begin after the time limit expires unless the game is tied.
2. **Run Limits** will be as follows: **Before the time limit expires**, a game will be over after 5 innings (4 ½ if home team leads), if either team leads by 15 runs. Note: If the visiting team leads by 15 runs after 5 ½ or 6 ½ innings, the home team will be allowed to begin its' at bat. **After the time limit expires**, the game is over immediately if either team is leading by 15 runs; the ½ inning is not completed.
3. **Tie Breaker Rule (FP)**
 - a. If a score is tied after 7 complete innings, the 8th inning will begin using the tie-breaker.
 - b. If a score is tied and the time limit has expired before 7 complete innings have been played, the tie breaker rule will be used to begin the next inning.
4. **Tie Breaker (Procedure - same for both SP and FP)**
 - a. The visiting team will place a runner (the **last batter** from the previous inning) on second base. If available a legal substitute may be used.
 - b. The visiting team has 3 outs with which to score as many runs as possible.
 - c. After 3 outs are made, the home team will follow the same procedure as outlined in a. & b.
 - d. The team that scores the most runs is declared the winner. If the score is still tied at the completion of each additional inning, the procedure will be repeated from Step a.

D. Protest: Rule Interpretation Only

1. Protest must be marked on the scorecard by the protesting manager at the time the protestable matter arose and before the next pitch whether legal or illegal. Circle the play in question.
2. The umpire and both managers must sign the card acknowledging the protest.
3. The protesting team must report to MSCR to fill out a proper form and file the \$20 protest fee by noon on the first working day of MSCR following the game.

4. All players must be registered with MSCR to be eligible. In all instances, when a manager questions the eligibility of an opponent, the umpire will request the player in question to sign the scorecard. The game will continue and be handled as any other protested game. If the player refuses to sign the scorecard, they are no longer eligible to participate in the game. The protesting manager must inform the umpire before the last out of the game is made.
- E. Any substantial time lost due to injury, or administration of a protest, will be added to the time limit.

V. **Local Rules**

A. **Pitching & Base Length**

1. Distances:
 - a. Slow Pitch = 50 foot pitch; 65 foot bases.
(*USA rule 2-1, re: 70' base lengths for Men's Slow Pitch has not been adapted.*)
 - b. Women's Fast Pitch = 43 foot pitch; 60 foot bases
2. Warm-ups:
 - a. Beginning a game, or when a pitcher relieves another, not more than one minute may be used to deliver not more than 5 pitches in FP, 3 pitches in SP.
 - b. At the start of each half inning, the pitcher will be limited to 3 warm up pitches in not more than one minute.
 - c. For excessive warm-up pitches, a pitcher shall be penalized by awarding a ball to the batter for each pitch in excess of the limits.

B. **Batting:**

1. Players are reminded not to swing bats outside the protective fences. Each team will be allowed one warning. Violation, after a warning, will result in disqualification from the game.
2. Throwing the bat as part of the completion of a swing will result in one warning for each team/game. The second violation by a team will result in the batter being called out and the ball being declared dead at the time of the pitch.

C. **Forfeits:**

Two forfeits by a team during a season may result in the team being dropped from the program.

VI. **Umpires**

A. Umpires are representatives of MSCR and are officially in charge of each game.

B. Umpires will discuss rule interpretations only with managers of the two teams.

1. Umpires are empowered to eject players and managers from games for violations of official rules and regulations or unsporting conduct.

VII. **Any circumstances arising that are not covered by the rule book or local rules will be left to the discretion of the MSCR Adult Sports Administrative Team.**