



## 2017 Rules – HARD Senior Softball

### **I. GENERAL RULES**

1. The current edition of the SSUSA Rulebook will be used, except as supplemented or changed by the following rules. All rules apply to all leagues, unless otherwise stated.
2. Team managers are responsible for the conduct of their team's players.
3. Only the team manager, assistant manager, or a designated manager in their absences may discuss disputed calls with the umpires. Any player who persists in complaining about an umpire's decision after one warning from his manager shall be referred to the Discipline Committee.
4. Team members who are not playing defense, batting, running bases, coaching, on deck, or umpiring, must remain either in the dugout or behind the fences bordering the infield.
5. All games shall start at 9:30 AM. Forfeit time will be 9:40 AM.
6. Managers will meet before the game, to exchange lineup cards and to discuss courtesy runners, late arriving and early departing players, and special ground rules based on field conditions.

### **II. TEAMS**

#### **1. Number of Defensive Players**

- a. In the Over 50 (50+) and Over 60 (60+) Leagues, a maximum of 11 defensive players are allowed, including a Rover.
  - b. In the Over 70 (70+) League, an additional Rover is allowed, for a maximum of 12 defensive players.
2. **10 Players:** A team that has only 10 players present at game time will play with 10 defensive players, and the other team will not supply a catcher.

- a. Teams with 10 players must have 4 outfielders behind the cones, 4 infielders, a pitcher, and a catcher.
- 3. **9 Players:** A team with 9 players present at game time will have 4 outfielders, 4 infielders, and a pitcher. The other team will supply a catcher for the game, or until another player arrives.
  - a. A catcher supplied by the other team is expected to make a normal effort to play defense.
- 4. **8 Players:** A team with 8 players will have 3 or 4 outfielders and 3 or 4 infielders, manager's choice, and a pitcher. The other team will supply a catcher.
- 5. **7 Players or Less:** A forfeit will occur if one or both teams have 7 or fewer players present at game time. If only one team has 7 or less, that team will be charged with a loss, and the opposing team will be given a win. If both teams have 7 or less, each team will be given a ½ win and a ½ loss. The game will be counted the same as a tie game.
- 6. **Late Arriving Players:** If a player shows up late, he or she will be added to the batting order in the last spot.
- 7. **Player Qualifications:** Leagues require that men reach the minimum age for that league (50, 60, or 70) in the calendar year for that season, January 1 through December 31. Women must reach a 45 year-old minimum in the calendar year for that season, to qualify for that season in any league.

### III. THE FIELD

- 1. **Length of Base Paths:** Because it is necessary to accept the existing specifications for the fields allocated to our leagues, both 60 and 65 foot base paths are approved.
- 2. **Point of No Return Line:** A “point of no return” line shall be placed 20 feet from home plate, perpendicular to the line between home plate and 3<sup>rd</sup> base, in foul territory.
- 3. **Scoring Line:** A 10 foot long scoring line shall be placed in foul territory, starting 4 feet away from the front left corner of home plate and even with the front edge of home plate, perpendicular to the 3<sup>rd</sup> base foul line.
- 4. **Base “Safe” Lines**
  - a. A “safe” line shall be placed, beginning 3 feet outside the right front corner of 1<sup>st</sup> base, even with the front edge of the base (closest to home plate), extending 3 feet into foul territory, perpendicular to the 1<sup>st</sup> base (right field) foul line.
  - b. Safe lines shall also be placed at 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> bases. These lines shall be on both the left and right sides of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> bases, beginning 3 feet from the side of

the base and extending another 3 feet from the base, even with the front edge (closest to the approaching base runner) of each base. The safe lines for 2<sup>nd</sup> base will be perpendicular to the baseline between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> bases, and the safe lines for 3<sup>rd</sup> base will be parallel to the 3<sup>rd</sup> base (left field) foul line.

5. **Restraining Line:** There shall be 10 to 12 cones placed in an arc, 150 feet from home plate. The corner cones shall be placed on the foul lines, even with the painted marks on the fences. The center cone shall be placed 60 feet behind second base, in line with 2<sup>nd</sup> base and home plate. In order to make the cone placement more accurate, teams are requested to provide a tape measure or a 60 foot section of rope.
  - a. Outfielders must stay behind the restraining line, until the ball is hit.

#### IV. PITCHING REGULATIONS

1. **Strike Zone Mat:** A strike mat will be used in lieu of home plate. The currently approved mat measures 19 inches wide by 34 ½ inches long. A pitched ball striking any part of the mat is a strike, as long as it is within the required range of arc.
2. **Arc of Pitch:** The arc of a pitched ball must attain a maximum height of between 6 feet and 12 feet from the ground. Umpires must call an illegal pitch before it lands, if in their judgment, the pitch is not within the required range of arc.
  - a. An illegal pitch is a ball, if the batter does not swing at it. However, if the batter swings at an illegal pitch, the result will be the same as if the pitch had not been called illegal (a swing and miss, a foul ball, or the ball put into play).
3. **Pitching Rubber Distance:** The pitching rubber shall be 50 feet from home plate.
4. **Pitching Screen Placement:** The screen must be placed 6 feet in front of the pitching rubber, parallel to the rubber, with one side of the screen touching the (visual) line from the midpoint of the rubber to the midpoint of the strike mat.
  - a. The pitcher's front foot must be behind the screen when the ball is released. Otherwise, the pitch is an illegal pitch and will be called a ball.
  - b. The pitcher's box is an area the width of the rubber and extending 10 feet behind the rubber. Both of the pitcher's feet must be in the pitcher's box when the pitcher starts the delivery.

#### V. THE GAME

1. **Balls and Bats:** The Amateur Softball Association (ASA) approved 12-inch, 375 COMP .44 COR poly-core center restricted-flight ball (optic yellow preferred) will be used for all games. The home team will provide the balls. Any softball bat rated at 1.21 BPF or lower, SSUSA approved, or having an ASA stamp, is acceptable.

2. **Warm-Up Pitches:** In the first inning, each pitcher may have 6 warm-up pitches. Each relief pitcher may also start with 6 warm-up pitches. In subsequent innings, not more than one minute will be used for the pitcher to deliver not more than 3 warm-up pitches. **The umpire has the authority to keep the game moving by preventing excessive delays.**
  - a. Fielders must finish throwing the ball around when the pitcher finishes the warm-up pitches.
3. **Innings:** All games will normally be 9 innings. If the game is tied after 9 innings, extra innings will be played, unless one team concedes defeat or the managers agree to a tie.
  - a. In innings 1 through 8, each team can score a maximum of 5 runs, before 3 outs are recorded.
  - b. The 9<sup>th</sup> inning in all leagues is an open inning, with no scoring limit, until 3 outs are recorded or a win is obtained.
  - c. Extra innings are open innings, with no scoring limit.
  - d. In all leagues, the “Flip Flop” rule will be in effect if the home team is trailing by 10 or more runs after the 8<sup>th</sup> inning. The home team will bat first in the 9<sup>th</sup> inning. The visiting team will bat second, if the home team ties the score or leads after batting.
  - e. In the Over 70 League, each team will bat for 2 consecutive innings (6 outs) before switching from offense to defense, in innings 1 through 8. Bases are to be cleared after 3 outs or 5 runs are obtained,
4. **Balls and Strikes:** A 4-ball, 3-strike count will be used, starting with a 0-0 count. After being walked once in a game, any player will have the option of refusing a subsequent walk in that game, until striking out, fouling out, or putting the ball in play.
5. **Positioning of Infielders:** In deference to weaker hitters, no defensive player, except the pitcher, may play in front of the base lines between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> bases or between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> bases, until the ball is hit. If this rule is violated, the batter and all runners will be called safe.
  - a. All 4 infielders must have both feet entirely on the infield dirt, until the ball is hit. If there are hazardous conditions in the infield, the managers may agree to make exceptions to this rule, before the game begins.
6. The batter or courtesy runner, while running to first base, cannot be thrown out by any of the outfielders after the ball touches the grass. A minimum of a single is assured.

- a. No ball thrown by an outfielder to an infielder can result in a batter or courtesy runner being called out while running to 1<sup>st</sup> base. However, if the batter (in the judgement of the umpire) attempts to advance to 2<sup>nd</sup> base and gets tagged out while attempting to return to 1<sup>st</sup> base, the batter will be out.
  - b. A courtesy runner cannot be tagged out while returning to 1<sup>st</sup> base, because a courtesy runner is not allowed to advance to 2<sup>nd</sup> base.
7. **The “Rover”:** As long as a team has 4 infielders on the dirt infield and 4 outfielders (beyond the cones, approximately 150 feet from home plate), the Rover can play in either the infield or the outfield (in front of or behind the cones). The Rover is allowed to throw out the batter or courtesy runner at 1<sup>st</sup> base.
- a. Any fielder may be designated as the Rover and can set up and play either on the infield dirt or the outfield grass, as long as there are still 4 outfielders behind the cones and 4 infielders on the dirt.
8. **Protests:** Protests will be resolved using HARD Senior Softball rules, in conjunction with SSUSA rules. A protest must be declared by a manager before the next pitch. In the event of a protest, the two managers will confer with the umpire, but only with a paid umpire (not an umpire supplied by one of the teams), to resolve the issue. If there is no resolution, a league commissioner will decide the outcome of the protest, before the game proceeds. If no league commissioner is present at the time, the protest will be declined, and the game will proceed.

## VI. BATTING

1. **Bunting/Chopping:** The batter will be called out for deliberately (in the judgement of the umpire) bunting or chopping the ball downward, in either fair or foul territory.
2. **Foul Balls:** After a batter has 2 strikes and then hits 2 foul balls, the batter is out. Any foul ball, regardless of height, is an out if it is caught by the catcher, unless the ball hits a screen first.
3. **Batter’s Box:** Some part of both of the batter’s feet must be in the batter’s box when the ball is pitched and hit. The batter is out if he or she touches the strike mat while swinging, before making contact with the ball.
4. **Pitching Screen:** A batted ball hitting the pitching screen is a foul ball, if the ball is not touched first by a defensive player. A batter hitting the ball into the screen 3 times in one “at bat” will be out. A batter hitting the ball into the screen with 2 ½ strikes (2 strikes of any kind followed by a foul ball) will also be out (as with any other foul ball with 2 ½ strikes).
  - a. After a ball has been put into play in fair territory, a throw that hits the screen or screen frame will be in play.

## **VII. BASE RUNNING and AVOIDING COLLISIONS**

- 1. First Base:** A runner from home plate must not touch the white base (the inner base of a double base) when there is a possible play at 1<sup>st</sup> base. The runner can either touch the orange base (the outer base of a double base), run across the safe line, or run between the orange base and the safe line.
  - a. The runner may run around the outside of 1<sup>st</sup> base and does not have to touch 1<sup>st</sup> base, to advance toward 2<sup>nd</sup> base. The runner may also touch the white base, if there is no throw going to 1<sup>st</sup> base, the 1<sup>st</sup> baseman is standing clear, and there is a possibility of advancing to 2<sup>nd</sup> base.
  - b. The 1<sup>st</sup> baseman must touch the white base or tag the runner to record an out.
  - c. Runners are encouraged to run across the safe line when a throw is expected to go to the 1<sup>st</sup> baseman, in case the 1<sup>st</sup> baseman backs into foul territory to catch the throw.
  
- 2. Second and Third Bases, Avoiding a Collision**
  - a. When there is a play expected at 2<sup>nd</sup> base or 3<sup>rd</sup> base, the runner must run across the safe line, on either side of the base.
  - b. A base runner must touch 2<sup>nd</sup> base before attempting to advance to 3<sup>rd</sup> base, and must touch 3<sup>rd</sup> base before attempting to score. If the runner runs wide (on the outside or inside) of 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> base, the runner must go back and touch the base before advancing to the next base.
  
- 3. All Bases**
  - a. The runner's foot must be down on or beyond the safe line for the runner to be ruled safe.
  - b. The runner may overrun any base as needed to avoid injury.
  - c. When a runner is advancing to any base, all plays are force plays. The fielder does not need to tag a runner who is attempting to advance an extra base.
  - d. The base runner will be called out if he or she collides with a defensive player who is on the base while attempting to make a putout.
  - e. The hitter and the runner will both be called out if a runner interferes with a defensive player's ability to complete a double play.
  - f. After a runner has been called safe at 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, or 3<sup>rd</sup> base, that runner cannot be tagged out, unless the runner (in the umpire's judgement) made an attempt to advance to the next base and was then tagged out while attempting to return to the base.

- g. A courtesy runner from home plate cannot be tagged out after being called safe at 1<sup>st</sup> base, because that runner is not allowed to advance to 2<sup>nd</sup> base.
4. **Obstruction:** If a defensive player without possession of the ball impedes a runner's progress while the runner is in the base path, the runner will be awarded the base.
    - a. **If there is no play at a base, the fielder must allow the runner to have clear access to the base.**
  5. **Judgement Call Disputes - Do the Right Thing:** When teams provide their own umpires, managers **MUST** get together to discuss judgement calls questioned by either manager, and if an agreement is reached, an umpire's call can be changed. If the managers can't agree, the umpire's call will stand.
  6. **Plays at Home Plate**
    - a. **"Point of No Return" Line:** A base runner whose foot lands on or beyond the "point of no return" line will be called out if he or she retreats toward 3<sup>rd</sup> base.
    - b. A runner will be called out for touching the strike mat or running through the batter's box when attempting to score. Instead, the runner must cross the scoring line, to avoid colliding with the catcher.
    - c. A runner from 3<sup>rd</sup> base is out if his or her foot does not land on or beyond the scoring line before the catcher has the ball (under control), while standing on the strike mat.
    - d. If the catcher is not on the strike mat, he or she cannot tag the runner out.
    - e. Any defensive player standing on the strike mat is considered to be the catcher.
  7. **Other Base Running Rules**
    - a. A thrown ball that strikes a runner is still in play.
    - b. If a batted ball hits a base runner in fair territory, that runner is out, and the ball is dead.
    - c. If a runner abandons a base and steps into a dugout, that runner is out.
    - d. A runner may stand in foul territory, clear of 1<sup>st</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> base, to avoid being struck by a ball that is hit toward either base. The runner must re-tag the base before advancing. A runner standing clear of either base cannot be doubled up on a line drive that is caught by an infielder.

- 8. Courtesy Runner:** A courtesy runner runs from home plate for a batter. Before each game, the managers must identify the players who will need a courtesy runner. Those players must have a courtesy runner in every “at bat” of that game.
- a. A courtesy runner must start at the middle of the backstop, directly behind home plate. A courtesy runner cannot start running toward 1<sup>st</sup> base until the batter hits the ball.
  - b. A player injured during the game may be provided with a courtesy runner after the injury, if the managers agree. If the managers don’t agree, the injured player will either run from home plate or will be removed from the game.
  - c. A courtesy runner cannot advance beyond 1<sup>st</sup> base.
  - d. A courtesy runner becomes a pinch runner if he or she reaches first base safely. That runner cannot be replaced by another pinch runner in that inning.
  - e. In any league, a courtesy runner who does not reach 1<sup>st</sup> base safely may run again as a courtesy runner in that inning.
- 9. Pinch Runner:** A pinch runner is a player who runs for another player who has reached 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, or 3<sup>rd</sup> base. Once a player steps on a base as a pinch runner, that player is committed to being the pinch runner and cannot be replaced by another pinch runner. If a pinch runner is on base when he or she is due to bat, he or she is out as a batter, but can continue as a pinch runner.
- a. In the Over 50 and Over 60 Leagues, no player may pinch run more than 3 times in a 9-inning game. A pinch runner who runs a 4<sup>th</sup> time in a 9-inning game or twice in the same inning will be called out. Players can pinch run one additional time in an extra inning game.
  - b. In the Over 70 League, a player may be a pinch runner once every inning.
- 10. Play Suspended – “Time-Out”:** Play in the field is suspended, and no runner may advance once the ball is controlled by an infielder, including the pitcher, while on the infield dirt, and after all immediate play has been completed. The umpire shall call “Time,” but a failure to do so will not permit the runners to advance.
- 11. No Stealing:** Base stealing is not permitted.
- 12. No Leadoff:** A base runner may not leave the base until the pitched ball crosses the plate, touches the ground, or is hit by the batter. The umpire may call the runner out for leaving the base too soon.
- 13. Sliding and Diving:** A base runner will be called out for sliding or diving into a base. However, the runner is allowed to slide or dive when attempting to return to a base. A runner returning to a base must be tagged out, before the runner touches the base.



**14. Infield Fly Rule:** When a batter hits a fly ball that can be routinely caught by an infielder, with runners on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> or with bases loaded, and fewer than 2 outs, the umpire shall call the batter out. Base runners can advance at their own risk. If the ball is caught, the runners must tag up first, before advancing.

- a. If a Rover sets up on the infield dirt, the Rover will be considered an infielder.
- b. If the Rover sets up in the shallow outfield and catches a routine fly ball, it will be the umpire's judgment as to whether to invoke the Infield Fly Rule.
- c. Because of the limited mobility of some pitchers and catchers, a short pop-up between the pitcher and catcher is often not considered to be a routine fly ball, and therefore the Infield Fly Rule might not be invoked.
- d. **Only the umpire can call an infield fly, foul ball, safe, out, dead ball, time out, or any other call reserved for the umpire. If players make these types of calls out loud, these expressions can be considered Obstruction, and the base runners can be awarded bases accordingly.**

## **VIII. THE LINE-UP**

1. **Batting the Entire Line-Up:** Each team must bat its entire line-up, that is, all defensive players and all players on the bench. Defensive substitutions may be made at will. However, the batting order must remain in its original order. If any player has to leave the game for any legitimate reason, such as an injury, it will not be an automatic out when that player's turn at bat comes around, providing the opposing team's manager is notified.
2. **Guaranteed Playing Time:**
  - a. In the Over 50 and Over 60 Leagues, all players will be guaranteed a minimum of 3 full innings of defensive play. All players must play a minimum of 3 innings in order to be in the batting rotation. A new player cannot be brought into the game after the 7<sup>th</sup> inning has started.
  - b. In the Over 70 League, a player may bat without playing on defense.

## **IX. DISCIPLINE**

1. Unsportsmanlike conduct will be subject to disciplinary action, to be determined by the Discipline Committee. The Discipline Committee will be made up of the League Commissioners and two volunteers.
2. Disciplinary actions may include suspension for one or more games, or expulsion from the League.
3. Paid umpires will have the authority to eject a player for unsportsmanlike conduct.