

# Official ITS Softball Rules

*All general rules of softball apply as governed by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), unless otherwise noted below.*

Adopted 5-16-2007  
Amended 10-21-2025

## 1. PLAYING FIELD AND EQUIPMENT

- 1.1. Facilities: Coaches, players and fans are expected to demonstrate appropriate respect for the various game locations by following the rules displayed at each site.
- 1.2. Base Path Distances: The base path distances shall vary based on each division (See Appendix A)
  - 1.2.1. *A, B, C League*: The distances between bases will be 60 feet.
  - 1.2.2. *D League*: The distances between bases will be 50 feet.
- 1.3. Game Ball: The game ball will be provided by Inter Tribal Sports. If an official game ball is not available, a game ball should be agreed upon by both teams and approved by referee prior to the start of each game based on the following sizing criteria:
  - 1.3.1. *A & B League*: 12" Clincher Softball white or similar ball.
  - 1.3.2. *C & D League*: 11" soft compression yellow or similar ball.
- 1.4. Helmets: Batting helmets are required for all age divisions.
- 1.5. Catchers Gear: A catcher's mask and helmet are required for all age divisions. Chest protector and shin guards are considered optional but recommended equipment.
- 1.6. Batting Tee: A batting tee shall be provided by host site or Inter tribal Sports for use in the D-League.
- 1.7. Bats: ITS will provide game used bats. Only ITS bats are allowed to be used during all ITS games.

## 2. PLAYERS AND TEAMS

- 2.1. Divisions: Teams will be divided into coed age appropriate divisions as defined as follows. Inter Tribal Sports reserves the right to adjust or combine divisions as participation dictates.
  - 2.1.1. *A-League*: 18 years and younger
  - 2.1.2. *B-League*: 14 years and younger
  - 2.1.3. *C-League*: 11 years and younger
  - 2.1.4. *D-League*: ~~7~~ 8 years and younger (5 years and under with permission of the parent & tribe)
- 2.2. Eligibility: All players must be of the appropriate age on the day of the first official game of the season. If a player's birthdate falls on opening day, they are considered the older age for that

day. Those turning older during the season will be eligible to continue playing for the team with which they began the season. Players may not play down to lower age divisions but may play up with parental consent.

2.2.1. *18-Year-Old Participation:* All 18-year-olds are required to have a background check in order to participate as a player.

2.2.2. *A & B League Eligibility:* The Softball program is open to all communities of each participating tribe/tribal organization. However, some restrictions have been placed on individuals that play in the A & B League. The following summarizes those restrictions as outlined in 100.1 Eligibility Policy (see policy for more details):

Participants must self-identify as Native American or

2.2.2.1. Be an immediate family member of a tribal member (child, stepchild, foster child, sibling, stepsibling, half-sibling, etc.) or

2.2.2.2. Live on the reservation or

2.2.2.3. Attends a school on a reservation. NOTE: In order to participate in the A & B-League under the on-reservation school student provision, any non-native youth must have previously participated in at least one sport in two different calendar years.

Teams may lodge a protest of ineligible players with the site supervisor and then must complete a formal protest form within 24-hours of the game. Teams found in violation of the eligibility rule will be subject to forfeiture of games and non-credit for all other eligible players for each game in which the infraction occurred.

2.3. Rosters: Team rosters and player paperwork must be submitted to the ITS office by the published due date. Player additions and deletions can be made throughout the season, but all appropriate paperwork must be submitted in order for a new player to be eligible to participate in games. (see 100.2 Registration Policy for more details)

2.4. Players: A team consists of ten (10) players. Teams must participate with a minimum of five (5) players on the field at all times. No changes or adjustments will be made to the rules to accommodate the decreased number of players.

2.5. Player Equipment: Players may choose to wear items such as rubber cleats, a hat/visor or hair ties during game play without penalty.

2.5.1. *Eyeglasses:* Players that wear eyeglasses must secure them with a safety strap.

2.5.2. *Hats:* Players can wear any hat as long as there's no inappropriate words or images at officials' discretion.

2.6. Illegal Player Equipment: Players will not be permitted to wear any item that may cause a safety concern. This includes but is not limited to jewelry such as rings, bracelets, necklaces, earrings or other body jewelry; open toe shoes; and hard splints or casts. The player must remove the illegal items prior to the start of game play or when requested by league officials.

2.6.1. *Metal Cleats*: Due to extreme safety concerns, metal cleats are prohibited for use at all times.

2.7. Uniforms: Players must wear an ITS issued uniform in order to be eligible to play which includes the jersey and shorts or pants (black or grey). Hats/visors are optional and not required. If a uniform issue is noticed during the game, the player shall be permanently removed from the game or given the opportunity to comply with the 100.4 League Uniform Policy. Failure to do so will result in a forfeit. All uniform issues must be resolved before the end of the game, disputes will not be permitted after the game has ended.

### **3. GAME PRELIMINARIES**

3.1. Duration of Games: Games are limited to seven (7) innings or one (1) hour in length, whichever comes first. However, once a new inning begins that inning must be completed, with both teams having an opportunity to bat if necessary. A new inning will not start if time exceeds the fifty (50) minute mark. The decision on whether or not to start a new inning is solely the responsibility of the umpire. The umpire should use his or her best judgment and consider factors such as current time elapsed, score, pace of the game, and field availability when making this determination.

3.2. Multiple Division Rule: Players cannot move from 1 team to another during games scheduled to start at the same time, even if the first game has ended.

3.3. Game Times: Clock starts at scheduled game time unless field is not yet available due to the length of the preceding game. There is no grace period for teams that are not ready to play at game time (see rule 3.4). The teams may agree to scrimmage in the event of a forfeit but may not exceed the one-hour time limit or the start time of the next scheduled game.

3.4. Late Arriving Teams: *The following is a summary of the 600.5 Late Arriving Teams Policy, see the complete policy for additional details.* If a team that has not arrived or is not ready to play at the scheduled game time, the late-arriving team policy may be enacted by the game official. As stated in the policy, the game clock will start, and two runs will be awarded every 5 minutes until the game begins. The game clock and the awarding of runs shall be monitored by the game official and/or ITS staff. If the game has not begun after 30 minutes, at which point the score

would be 12-0, the game will officially be considered a forfeit and the final score shall be recorded as 12-0.

3.5. Adverse Weather: *The following is a summary of the 600.2 Weather Condition Policy, see the complete policy for additional details.* ITS staff shall monitor the weather conditions no later than three (3) days in advance of games. ITS shall utilize the National Weather Service ([www.weather.gov](http://www.weather.gov)) to monitor and make game change determinations using the zip codes of the game sites. A final decision shall be made no later than 1:00 p.m. the day before scheduled games based on temperature, rain, wind, thunderstorms, and other weather-related phenomenon. ITS shall make phone calls to notify coaches and board members of the changes to the schedule by no later than 2:00 p.m. the day before the scheduled games. Emails notifications may also be sent as a reminder but should not be the primary form of contact.

3.5.1. Adjustments to site location or times must be made based on the following weather criteria:

- Temperature: below 55° F or above 102° F
- Rain: 30% chance of rain or greater
- Wind: moderate, strong, or sustained and/or gusting at 20 MPH or greater
- Thunderstorms/Lightening: chance of thunderstorms and lightening indicated
- Other Weather: any weather pattern which may present a moderate to extreme safety concern
- Softball may not play in the rain.

3.6. Protests: Game protests are only permitted for ineligible players (see Rule 2.2.2.).

## 4. SCORING

4.1. D-League Scoring: Score of the D-League games will not be kept. Therefore, league standings will not be tracked.

4.2. Run Rule: Each team is allowed to score seven runs per inning. If a team is behind, this rule does not take effect until they have tied the game. For example, the batting team is behind 7-13 at the beginning of the inning. They may score 6 runs to tie the game, then 7 more runs to take a 20-13 lead. The half-inning is over the moment the last allowable run crosses home plate no matter how many outs or runners are on base.

4.3. Tie Games: In the event that a game is tied after 7 innings or at the end of the time limit, the game will be considered a tie for all regular season games. Play-off or tournament games that are tied will continue until a winner has been determined.

4.3.1. *Playoff Tie Breaker Rule*: In extra innings, beginning with the visiting team in the top half of the inning, the team at bat will put the player who was the last batted out in

the previous inning at second base as a base runner at the start of the inning. There will not be any other adjustments to the rules of the game. Both teams will continue to use this process until a winner has been determined. Tie breakers are not “sudden death” and the “home” team will always get their at-bat if they are trailing.

4.4 Forfeit Score: In the event of a forfeit game, the forfeiting team will take a loss and the game will be recorded as 0-7 (1 run per inning).

## 5. OFFENSIVE PLAY (BATTING/RUNNING)

5.1. Coaches: The batting team may provide coaches to occupy the coach’s boxes to assist the base runners. Additional coaches may include one that is pitching (B & C League) or preparing the tee (D-League).

5.2. Batting Order: A written batting order must be presented to the official scorekeeper and opposing coach prior to the game. There is no limit to the number of players in the batting order. The opposing coach should be notified of any substitutions. A player caught batting out of order during an at-bat will be called out. If the error is discovered after the incorrect batter has completed a turn at bat and before a legal or illegal pitch has been made to the following batter, the player who should have batted is out and any advance or score made as a result of the improper batter becoming a batter to runner shall be nullified. Any out that is made prior to discovering this infraction, remains an out at which point the batting order will be reset according to the lineup in the official scorebook.

5.2.1. *D-League*: Regardless of outs, a minimum of 10 players may bat. However, a maximum of no more than the least number of players on one of the team’s lineups is permitted. Example 1: Team-A has 7 players and Team-B has 13 players, therefore only 10 batters are allowed to hit. Example 2: Team-A has 12 players and Team-B has 15 players, therefore only 12 players are allowed to hit. The last batter in the lineup to hit will continue to run the bases until tagged out or when a defensive player steps on home plate with the ball.

5.2.2. *Late Players*: On occasion, players are late to the game. Therefore, players may be added to the roster at any time provided they are eligible to participate as defined by Rule 2.1 & 2.2. In such cases, the players must be added to the end of the lineup regardless of inning or current batter.

5.3. Tee Ball: D-League player will hit from a tee provided by ITS or host site. Batters will be limited to three (3) swings consistent with “three pitch” rule. More experienced players may opt to

have the coach pitch using the “Three Pitch” rule (see rule 6.3). Players may choose one form of batting, or a combination of pitching and using the tee.

- 5.4. Pitcher Box: ITS will be using a pitcher’s box during A-League (for dimensions go to Appendix A). Line drives through the pitcher’s box is an automatic out, ground ball’s that go through the pitcher’s box will be determined at the umpire’s discretion.
- 5.5. Bunting: Bunting is not allowed. Hitters must show the intent of taking a full swing. Short hits that are unintentional are allowed as long as the batter takes a full swing. In such case, the ball is not required to go a certain distance to be a legal hit.
- 5.6. Pinch Running: Pinch runners are allowed only in the case of an injury during the game. If a pinch runner is used (in the case of an injury), the last available batted out (regardless of gender) will be the pinch runner. Pre-existing injuries and slow runners are not valid reasons to use a pinch runner.
- 5.7. Leading Off: Base runners are not allowed to lead off in any age division. Runners may not leave the base until the bat makes contact with the ball. The runner will be ruled out if he or she leaves the base prior to the bat making contact with the ball.
- 5.8. Sliding: Sliding is allowed at all bases. In attempting to slide the runner may be either head first or foot first. The runner must be able to reach the base with either a hand or a foot. Any runner is out when the runner does not slide or attempt to get around the fielder who has the ball and is waiting to make the tag, without going out of the baseline.
- 5.9. Safety Base: Safety base at home plate must be always used, except if there is an out of park homerun. If you do not use the safety base at home plate in all other situations, you will be called out at the umpire's discretion. The safety of the players is the main priority. **After a runner passes the commit line, there will be no tagging of the runner at the home plate. The play at home plate is a force out.**
- 5.10. Commit Line: A line shall be drawn halfway up the 3rd base line (from home plate) and perpendicular to the 3rd base line. This line shall be the runner's “Commit Line.” Once a runner has crossed or touched the commit line, the runner must continue to the “Safety Home Plate.” **After a runner passes the commit line, there will be no tagging of the runner at the home plate. The play at home plate is a force out.**
- 5.11. Bat Throwing: Any player that throws the bat beyond the batter’s box area after swinging or hitting the ball will be issued one warning, which shall be marked in the scorebook. On any subsequent bat throwing incidents, the batter will be called out.

5.12. Batters Helmet: All players are required to wear a batters' helmet while the ball is live and in live-ball territory. A violation will result in a warning to the coach and player of the team. A subsequent violation shall result in an out.

5.12.1. *Base Running Coach*: All player/non-adult base running coaches are required to wear a batters' helmet while the ball is live and in live-ball territory until the ball enters dead-ball territory. A violation will result in a warning to the head coach of the team. A subsequent violation shall result in the player/non-adult coach being removed from the responsibility.

## 6. DEFENSIVE PLAY (FIELDING/PITCHING)

6.1. D-League Coaches: The D-League is considered a non-competitive introduction to the sport. In order to keep the focus on teaching the fundamentals of the game one coach will be permitted in the outfield for the defensive team. Coaches must not interfere with game play. In the event coach's interference occurs, the ball will be ruled dead, the batter returns to the plate to hit again and all runners return to their bases before play resumes.

6.2. Fielders: Teams may have up to 10 defensive players on the field at any given time, with no more than four outfielders and no more than five players in the infield, excluding the catcher.

6.2.1. A & B-League: The pitcher must have at least one-foot contacting the rubber at the point of release.

6.2.2. C-League: The pitcher position must play within a 6-foot radius to the left, right or behind the pitcher rubber, but must avoid interfering with the pitcher and/or his or her delivery of the ball. It is not necessary to notify the opposing coach of defensive substitutions.

6.3. Pitching: ITS uses pitching to opposing team for A-League, B-League, and Three Pitch rule for C-League. More experience D-league players have the option of using the Three Pitch rule.

6.3.1. Pitching to Opposing Teams: ITS uses pitching to opposing team in A-League & B-League. Players start with a one strike count and one ball count when at bat. A foul third strike is an out. No courtesy fouls shall be given. A foul ball must reach a height of six feet or more to be legally caught for an out, except third strike in which case any foul is an out. In the absence of a pitching rubber and/or the 6-foot radius marked on the field, the umpire will determine the appropriate distance.

6.3.1.1. *A & B League*: Pitcher must have a minimum arc of 6 ft and maximum 12 ft from the ground or it will be considered an illegal pitch. The batter has

the option of taking the pitch for an automatic ball or swinging at the pitch. If the pitch is swung at, the illegal pitch is ignored.

6.3.2. Three Pitches: ITS uses “Three Pitch” in C-League and optional in D-League. Each team pitches to their own players. Each batter receives no more than three pitches, no matter where the pitches are. Illegal pitches are considered a pitch. Balls hit on an illegal pitch are considered dead balls. The player will either continue their at-bat or will be out if they are on the third pitch. There are no balls and strikes. Even a foul ball on the third pitch is considered an out. Pitcher must be within a 6-foot radius of the pitching rubber at the time of release, except in C League, where coaches can move up at the umpire’s discretion. In the absence of a pitching rubber and/or the 6-foot radius marked on the field, the umpire will determine the appropriate distance.

6.3.2.1. *C-League*: Coaches must pitch to their players. Pitch arc must at least reach height of batter (no flat pitches).

6.3.2.2. *D-League*: Players will hit off a tee. However, more experienced players may opt to have the coach pitch using the “Three Pitch” rule.

6.4. Pitchers Interference: C -League pitchers should make every attempt to avoid contact with the ball. In the event of a batted or thrown ball hitting the pitcher on any part their body, clothing, or equipment, the play should be ruled a dead ball, with the batter returning to home plate and all base runners returning to their original base. The pitch does not count against the batter’s limit of three pitches.

6.5. Catching: Catchers may not block home plate. Sliding is allowed. Catchers should be instructed to receive a thrown ball from in front of the plate. To avoid collision or injury to players, catcher is not to receive a thrown ball from behind the plate. Intentional blocking will result in automatic safe at the referee’s discretion.

## 7. CHAMPIONSHIPS

7.1. Championship Eligibility: In order to be eligible for play-offs or tournament play, players must play in at least 50% of the regular season scheduled games. Game forfeiture credit, game day credit given to ineligible players that participate in a game, may not exceed 30% of the scheduled games per season. Any team found to be playing with ineligible players will forfeit all games in which the ineligible player participated. A registered player can receive one game day credit for every missed regular season game they are scheduled to play due to participation in ITS sanctioned events. The ITS office must be informed of any

players no later than one week after games have been played.

7.1.1. *Multiple Division Rule*: Players will be permitted to participate in multiple divisions during championship play provided they qualify under Rule 7.1 & Rule 2.1.

Adjustments to game schedules will not be made to accommodate such players.

Players cannot move from 1 team to another during games scheduled to start at the same time, even if the first game has ended.

7.1.2. *Multiple Team Rule*: Players are permitted to play for multiple teams for the same tribe within the same division during the regular season. For the purpose of championships, players may only participate on the original team they were registered.

7.2. Championship Seeding: Teams will be seeded in the championship tournament based on the regular season standings win percentage ([www.intertribalsports.org](http://www.intertribalsports.org)). In the event of a tie, head to head record will serve as the primary tie breaker. If a tie still remains the tie breaker will be determined by fewest average points allowed per game during the regular season. In the event that more than 2 teams are tied, the tie breaker will be determined by the fewest average runs allowed per game during the regular season. In the unlikely event a tie remains, a coin toss will be the final tie breaker.

## 8. OFFICIATING

8.1. Umpires: Inter Tribal Sports will hire umpires for regular season and championship games for A, B & C Leagues. In the event that hired umpires are not present, ITS staff and/or community volunteers will umpire. Calls should not be disputed by coaches or players. ITS staff, coaches or volunteers will umpire for D-League games.

8.2. Scorekeepers: An ITS staff member or official volunteer will be responsible for keeping score during all regular season and championship games for A, B and C Divisions. However, if an umpire is not available and the ITS staff member is required to officiate, the home team will be responsible for the official scorekeeping duties. Based on this provision, if a volunteer is not available at the scheduled start time, late arrival procedures will be followed until a volunteer is present. In the event of a dispute, the site supervisor and/or umpire will make the final determination. Volunteers 18 years or older are required to have a background check. Please see policy 300.1 Background Check for further information.

## 9. CONDUCT AND SPORTSMANSHIP

9.1. Sportsmanship: Prior to and following each game, players will move to the center of the court and shake hands with their opponents.

9.2. Coach Conduct: Coaches are required to sign and adhere to the Coaches' Conduct Agreement.

9.2.1. Coaches' Online Certification: Coaches are required to complete the online coach's certification form.

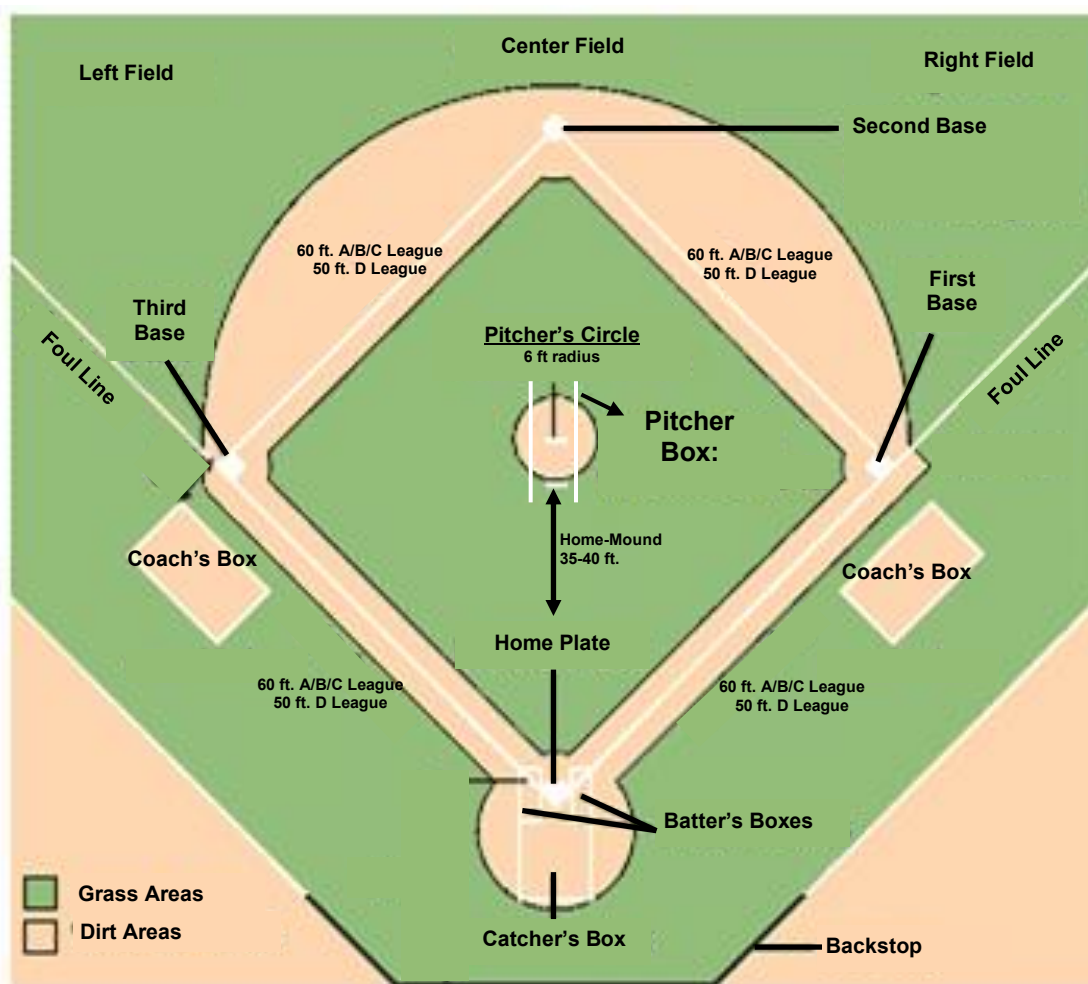
9.2.2. Coach Certification: *The following is a summary of the 200.2 Coach Certification Policy. Please see the complete policy for additional details.* In order to be eligible to coach, head and assistant coaches must be in good standing and submit all required forms to be certified. Eligibility requirements include but not limited to: background check, Coaches Online Certification, register online as a coach, agree to and abide by the 200.3 Coaches Conduct and Ethics Policy, and attend pre-season meeting/coaches clinic, if any. Coaches that complete the certification process shall receive an ID badge as specified by the 200.4 Identification Badge Policy. The ID badge must be clearly displayed at all times during league games. Coaches without ID badges will not be allowed to coach or be present in the immediate area of the playing surface or field (i.e. bench, dugout, or sideline).

9.3. Player Conduct: Players are expected to display good sportsmanship at all times. Trash talking, profanity, cheap shots, and fighting will not be tolerated. Please see policy 100.5 Player Conduct for further information.

9.4. Fan Conduct: Coaches and/or Board representatives are responsible for the behavior of their team's fans. Unruly or unsportsmanlike conduct by fans will not be tolerated and will result in a technical foul against the fans' team. In addition, fans may be subject to ejection from the facility. This may further result in forfeiture of the game or expulsion of team from the league.

9.5. Board Review: The Board Disciplinary Committee will review cases of poor sportsmanship and conduct issues and has the authority to issue penalties against players and coaches at their discretion.

## Appendix A: Field Dimensions



### **Field Dimensions**

Base Paths = 60ft (A/B/C League)

50ft (D League)

Home Plate to Pitchers Mound = 35-40ft

Pitcher's Circle Radius = 6ft

Pitcher Box = 2ft wide and 6ft long

*\*based on standard softball diamond dimensions*

## Appendix B Player Positions (scorekeeping numbers)

