

USA SOFTBALL OF CENTRAL CAL – DISTRICT V – RECREATIONAL RULES OF PLAY

All Leagues in District V will play by USA SOFTBALL Rules for the recreational season, with the following clarifications and exceptions. See 2023 USA SOFTBALL Rule Book for more information on rules enforced but not listed below.

Rules updated February 6, 2026 by Mel Johnson

General Rules of Play – All Divisions:

1. This is a recreational program designed to teach players of all ages and abilities the fundamentals of the game at an age-appropriate level and develop love of the sport. Kids play sports for fun, exercise, and friends!
2. We are teaching more than softball to the children on our fields. Adults are expected to behave accordingly.
3. **Coaches are responsible for the behavior of their players, parents, spectators, and assistant coaches on the team**, who will be removed from the game by the umpire or another league official for unsportsmanlike conduct.
4. **Cheering** is allowed from the dugout for your own team only. Positive cheering for the other team is allowed. (i.e.: Great job, nice catch, good pitch, etc.). The umpire has the final say on what is appropriate or not. Coaches need to ensure that the cheering stays positive.
5. **7 players** are required for a legal game. Failure to field the required number of players within 10-minutes of the scheduled game start time will result in forfeiture of the game for record keeping purposes.
 - a. Teams may choose to play a scrimmage if the required number of players are not present.
6. **The batting order** shall include all players attending the game. (Exception: Injured or suspended players).
 - a. Players arriving late to the game will be placed on the end of the batting order. Once the full roster has batted, players cannot be added to the lineup.
 - b. If a batter leaves the game early for any reason (injury, etc.), there will be no consequence or out called for their at-bat. An injured player may return to the game if deemed safe/appropriate by the coach and league official and ONLY with the umpire's approval.
 - c. The intent of this rule is to avoid punishment for reasonable situations that come up in the course of a recreational game for children. If a coach abuses this rule to gain a competitive advantage, the team will automatically forfeit the game and the coach, or coaches, will face an additional one game suspension.
7. **All players on the official batting card must be in the game defensively by the start of the second inning.** No defensive player shall sit out a second inning in a game until all other players have sat out one inning.
 - a. 14U/16U Exception for pitcher and catcher. If a second pitcher or catcher comes into play, previous players shall be available to sit out.
 - b. Coaches, not umpires, shall be responsible for monitoring play time.
 - c. Failure to follow this rule may result in a game forfeit.
 - d. Each league will address this rule with their coaches and umpires, with the understanding that the "host league" of the game will notify all league presidents regarding any infractions.
8. **The USA SOFTBALL Mercy rule** is in effect. The game is called if a team is ahead by 15 or more runs after the end of the 3rd inning, 12 or more runs after the end of the 4th inning, or 8 runs after the 5th inning.
9. **Pitching Rule for ALL DIVISIONS** – If a pitcher hits by pitch 3 batters **in a single inning**, she shall be removed from the pitching position. She may play another defensive position on the field, and she may re-enter as a pitcher in subsequent innings. This rule will be enforced by coaches and scorekeepers, who must notify the umpire of the situation.
10. **Metal cleats** are not allowed on any field, in any division.
11. **Base Distance** for all divisions will be 60-feet. Exception for 6 & under, which will be 45-feet.
12. Each team, except 6 & under, shall appoint a **Scorekeeper**. The home team will keep the official score.
 - a. Scorekeepers from each team will meet at the completion of each half-inning to agree on the score.

- If there is a discrepancy that cannot be decided upon by scorekeepers, the umpire will determine the score.
- b. The winning team will report the final score of the game to their league president or recreation department.
 - c. Scores are kept for tracking purposes only. There are no awards for team standings.
13. **Home Team** will be listed 2nd on the game schedules and will occupy the 3rd base dugout.
- a. Please note, it is possible to be the “Home Team” at a game played outside of your “Home League”.
14. **Visiting Team** will be listed 1st on game schedules and will occupy the 1st base dugout.
- a. Please note, it is possible to be the “Visiting Team” at a game played in your “Home League”.
15. **Coin Toss** – There will be a coin toss prior to each game to determine which team gets first/last ups.
16. **Umpires** are in charge of the game and all matters regarding the safety of players on the field. They will be treated with respect, even if there is disagreement with a call.
- a. A coach may only protest perceived rule violations. No protests on judgment calls.
 - b. An official protest must be made to the home umpire of the game and noted in the official score book at the time of the alleged offense. The protesting coach must submit a ***non-refundable \$40 protest fee*** to the umpire at the time of the protest.
 - c. The coach logging the protest must submit, in writing, official notice of this protest to their “Home League”, as well as to the “Host League” of the game, within 48-Hours of the protest.
 - d. Both the home league and the host league representatives will discuss the protest and issue a final ruling within 48 hours of receiving the official protest. All rulings are final. Home league and Host league will split the \$40 protest deposit evenly. Protest money will be earmarked for use in umpire fees only.
 - e. All protests must adhere to USA SOFTBALL rules.
17. **Player Disciplinary Action** – We do not reward negative behaviors of children on our teams. If a player requires disciplinary action, a coach may choose to sit the player more than the minimum play time amount, provided the following steps are followed prior to the game:
- a. Notification of the player’s parents
 - b. Notification of the team’s Home League
 - c. Notification of the host league of the game
 - d. Notification of the umpire and opposing team
18. **Uniforms/Equipment/Safety Rules:**
- a. Players will wear the league-issued uniform during games. Jerseys must be tucked in for games.
 - b. Plastic visors are not allowed during games.
 - c. Long hair must be worn up and out of the way. Long ribbons, hard headbands, or other hard items used for keeping hair back may not be worn.
 - d. All jewelry and piercings must be removed. Taping over is not acceptable.
 - i. *EXCEPTION: Medical ID bracelets are allowed but must be taped to the player’s wrist with the with alert tags still visible.*
 - e. Jackets and sweaters may be worn under the jersey during adverse weather and cannot create a safety hazard.
 - f. Pitchers may not wear yellow, long sleeves under or over their uniforms.
 - g. The batter, base runners, players who base coach, and the on-deck batter must wear batting helmets at all times.
 - i. Batting helmets must have face masks properly attached. Chin straps are not required.
 - h. Catchers will wear all protective gear, including mask with helmet, knee guards, and chest guards when catching and warming up a pitcher in both games and practices.
19. **Field Prep for games** is the responsibility of the host league, where the game is being played. Coaches, or a team representative, are expected to be helpful with regards to field prep, regardless of where the game is

being played.

20. **Game Balls** will be provided by the host league (where the game is being played).

21. **End of Season Tournament** will include all teams (unless the team chooses not to play) and will be seeded based on overall standings during the regular season.

- a. A tie in the standings will result in a coin toss for the purposes of tournament seeding. There is no benefit to running up the score in a recreational game for children.

Local Field Rules by Region:

Barney Schwartz Park in Paso Robles – Any ball caught or stuck in the drains on the field by the backstops are out of play and will be declared dead ball. If the ball goes into the drain and then back out, it will remain a live ball.

Evers Sports Park in Templeton – A batted ball that bounces over the outfield fencing, preventing fielders from making a play, will be declared a ground rule double.

Additional/Supplemental Rules by Division:

6 & Under Rules:

1. Emphasis – FUNdamentals of the game and creating an experience players want to return for.
2. Ball – 10” Softy (Incrediball or equivalent).
3. Game Length - 1 hour or 5 innings, whichever occurs first.
4. Pitching Distance - 30-Feet.
 - a. Coach Pitch and/or swings on the T only. No player pitch.
5. Base Distance - 45-Feet.
6. No Score Kept – Game is instructional only.
7. No Bunting, No Stealing, No Sliding.
8. Fielding Rules:
 - a. 10 Players in the outfield.
 - b. Each Player must play at least 1 of the first 2 innings on the infield.
9. Batting Rules:
 - a. Everyone bats.
 - b. Each inning ends after 3 outs OR after all players on the roster have had a turn at-bat, whichever happens first.
 - c. Batter will receive 3 pitches from the coach, and if needed, 3 swings off the tee. If they have not put the ball into play, they are out.
 - d. Runners may only advance 1 base on any play (station to station). No advancing on overthrows or errant throws.
 - e. Batter or Runner will be called out on a successful defensive play and removed from base.

8 & Under Rules:

1. Emphasis – Fundamentals, skill building, transitional level of play. FUN!
2. Ball - 10” RIF Softball

3. 7 players are required to start an official game.
4. Game Length - No new inning after 1 hour 15 minutes or 6 full innings. Drop dead at 1 Hour, 30 Minutes and score reverts back to last completed inning.
 - a. No game delay shenanigans. Keep the game moving quickly.
5. No more than 5 runs per inning per team. No continuation.
6. Runners may steal one base per pitch, even on an overthrow or errant throw. No Stealing Home.
 - a. No base stealing when coach is pitching.
7. **Fielding/Throws/Overthrows/Errant Throws/Passed Balls:**
 - a. Throw to 1st Base on Player Pitch - On any thrown ball to first base, whether or not it is overthrown or errant, the batter/runner may not advance past first base. All other runners may only advance two bases from the base that they were at from the time of the pitch with the liability of being put out if the ball stays in live ball territory.
 - i. This rule remains in effect even if the ball is thrown to 1st base AFTER the batter/runner tags the base.
 - ii. This rule is intended to prevent a single from turning into a double due to bad throws.
 - iii. This rule is NOT in effect if a batter/runner is already on 2nd or 3rd base before the fielder throws the ball to 1st. Example: If the batter/runner hits the ball to the outfield and fairly makes it to 2nd base, she can stay at 2nd base even if the fielder throws the ball to 1st base.
 - b. On a throw to any other base or position - If on a throw to any other base and the ball is not caught, all runners and batter/runner may advance two bases from the base they were at from time of the pitch with liability of being put out.
 - c. The umpire will only award a base to the runners if the ball has been thrown out of play. No bases will be awarded on errant throws when the ball stays in play.
 - d. Runner and batter/runner may be put out if they advance beyond the two bases allowed. If the batter/runner attempt to go beyond the two bases, at the end of the play the umpire will return all runners to the base they are entitled to if they have not been put out.
8. **Fielding Rules:**
 - a. 10 players may be allowed on defense in the field at any one time, four of which are outfielders.
 - b. Outfielders must position themselves at least 10 feet behind the baseline.
 - c. No Infield Fly Rule.
9. **Batting Rules:**
 - a. Everyone bats.
 - b. Free defensive substitutions.
 - c. No dropped 3rd strike.
 - d. Bunting is allowed. *Exception: No bunting off coach/pitch.*
10. **Pitching Rules:**
 - a. Pitching distance - Player and Coach 30 feet.

- b. **In SLO & Morro Bay** - Players will pitch to the opposing team based on a progressive timeline that includes coach pitch as well. See attached rules supplement for more information.
- c. **In North County (Paso, Templeton, Atascadero)** – Rules are as outlined below.
- d. 2 Inning maximum for player pitcher. One pitch thrown constitutes a full inning pitched.
- e. A maximum of 2 (two) player/pitcher walks will be allowed per half inning. No walks on balls will be allowed with bases loaded. Batter runner may not advance to 2nd base when walked.
 - i. A batter hit by player pitch will be awarded 1st base regardless of how many runners are on base, even if it means a run is scored by a base runner “walked in”. This is an award of a base, not a walk on balls.
- f. After 2 allowed player/pitcher walks have been exhausted, a coach/pitcher will enter the circle when 4 balls have been called by the umpire. Coach Pitch Rules:
 - i. When the 4th ball is called by the umpire, requiring the coach pitcher to enter the field, the play is dead. Runners may not advance. The catcher may throw the ball to the Coach Pitcher or to the Player Pitcher without risk.
 - ii. The coach/pitcher will resume the player/pitcher strike count and will throw no more than two (2) pitches.
 - iii. ALL coach/pitches are considered strikes.
 - iv. If the pitch is not put into play by the last pitch, the batter is out. Exception: If the last pitch is a foul ball, pitching continues until the ball is hit and put in play or the batter is called out.
 - v. On a batted ball off a coach pitcher, play becomes station to station. The batter-runner may only advance to 1st base regardless of where the ball is hit, no exceptions. All other runners on base at the time of the batted ball can only advance to the next base, no exceptions. All runners are at risk of being put out. Runners advancing beyond the one base allowed remain at risk of being put out but will be sent back to the allowed base when the play is dead if they were not called out.
 - vi. Batter will **NOT** be awarded a base on a Hit by Pitch from the Coach/Pitcher.
 - vii. If a batted ball hits the Coach/Pitcher the ball is dead, and the batter is out. At no time shall the Coach/Pitcher obstruct play.
 - viii. Player/Pitcher must have one foot in the circle at the time of Coach/Pitcher is pitching.
 - ix. Coach/Pitcher must stay in the circle during play and **MAY NOT** provide Coaching assistance.

10 & Under Rules

(USA SOFTBALL Rules in effect with the following exceptions and clarifications):

1. Ball – 11” Regulation Ball

2. Game Length – No new inning after 1 Hour, 30 Minutes. Drop dead at 1 Hour, 45 Minutes and score reverts back to last completed inning.
 - a. No game delay shenanigans. Keep the games moving quickly.
3. 7 players are required to start an official game.
4. Teams are limited to 5-runs per half-inning (not continuous) with the following modifications:
 - a. If a team is behind by 5 or more runs, they are allowed to score as many runs as it takes to tie, plus one more, in the same half-inning.
 - b. EXCEPTION: Over the fence home run will allow all runners on base and batter/runner to score, regardless of game score.
5. **Fielding Rules**
 - a. Encourage 9 players on the field. However, a coach may choose to play with either 9 or 10 on the field, which translates to 3 or 4 **outfielders**. If playing 10, the outfield format must be Left Field, Left Center, Right Center, Right Field.
6. **Batting Rules (Also see rules 6 & 7 of General Rules)**
 - a. Dropped 3rd Strike rule is in effect.
 - b. Infield Fly rule is in effect & can only be called by the Umpire.
7. **Pitching Rules**
 - a. Pitching Distance – 35 ft.
 - b. 3 Inning pitching limit for each player. One pitch thrown constitutes a full inning pitched.

12 & Under Rules

(USA SOFTBALL Rules in effect with the following exceptions and clarifications):

1. Ball – 12” Regulation Ball
2. Game Length – No new inning after 1 Hour, 30 Minutes. Drop dead at 1 Hour, 45 Minutes and score reverts back to last completed inning.
 - a. No game delay shenanigans. Keep the games moving quickly.
3. 7 players are required to start an official game.
4. Teams are limited to 5-runs per half-inning (not continuous) with the following modifications:
 - a. If a team is behind by 5 or more runs, they are allowed to score as many runs as it takes to tie, plus one more, in the same half-inning.
 - b. EXCEPTION: Over the fence home run will allow all runners on base and batter/runner to score, regardless of game score.
5. **Fielding Rules**
 - a. Encourage 9 players on the field. However, a coach may choose to play with either 9 or 10 on the field, which translates to 3 or 4 **outfielders**. If playing 10, the outfield format must be Left Field, Left Center, Right Center, Right Field.
6. **Batting Rules (Also see rules 6 & 7 of General Rules)**
 - a. Dropped 3rd Strike rule is in effect.
 - b. Infield Fly rule is in effect & can only be called by the Umpire.

7. **Pitching Rules**

- a. Pitching Distance – 40 ft.
- b. 4 Inning pitching limit for each player. One pitch thrown constitutes a full inning pitched.

14/16 & Under Rules

(USA SOFTBALL Rules in effect with the following exceptions and clarifications):

1. Ball – 12” Regulation Ball
2. Game Length – No new inning after 1 Hour, 30 Minutes. Drop dead at 1 Hour, 45 Minutes and score reverts back to last completed inning.
 - a. No game delay shenanigans. Keep the games moving quickly.
3. 7 players are required to start an official game.
4. Teams are limited to 5-runs per half-inning (not continuous) with the following modifications:
 - a. If a team is behind by 5 or more runs, they are allowed to score as many runs as it takes to tie, plus one more, in the same half-inning.
 - b. EXCEPTION: Over the fence home run will allow all runners on base and batter/runner to score, regardless of game score.
5. **Fielding Rules:**
 - a. 9 players on the field.
6. **Batting Rules (Also see rules 6 & 7 of General Rules)**
 - a. Dropped 3rd Strike rule is in effect.
 - b. Infield Fly rule is in effect. Can only be called by Umpire.
7. **Pitching Rules**
 - a. Pitching Distance – 43 ft.
 - b. No pitching limit.

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