



SLOWPITCH SOFTBALL

RULES of the GAME (ABRIDGED VERSION)

NOTE: red text throughout this document indicates updates effected November 2025

1. DEFINITIONS

- 1.1 **Absent batter** - an unfilled spot in the Batting Order. An automatic out is awarded for each absent batter.
- 1.2 **Appeal Play** – a play or situation on which an Umpire cannot make a decision unless requested by a Manager or player of the non-offending team.
- 1.3 **Batting Home Plate** – the part of the Strike Zone Mat which is the colour and shape of a Home Plate.
- 1.4 **Bunting** – using the bat to block the ball without following through with the swing. Bunting is prohibited.
- 1.5 **Commitment Lines** – lines marked perpendicular to the baseline, halfway between second and 3rd Base, and 3rd Base and Scoring Home Plate.
- 1.6 **Double Base** – a base which is double the width of a regular base, used at 1st Base to avoid collisions between Fielders and the Runner.
- 1.7 **Fair Ball** – a batted ball that stops, bounds, lands on, or is first touched in Fair Territory.
- 1.8 **Final Batter** – the player who is due to bat last in the Batting Order.
- 1.9 **Foul Ball** – a batted ball that is neither a Fair Ball nor one that is caught.
- 1.10 **Interference** – the illegal action of a Batter or Runner to prevent a Fielder making a play on a batted or thrown ball.
- 1.11 **Momentum Change** – an unnatural change in a Runner's momentum which delays a play that may be ordinarily made by the Defence.
- 1.12 **Obstruction** – the illegal action of a Fielder to prevent or slow down a Runner from advancing or retreating to a base.
- 1.13 **Running Lane Interference** – interference caused by a Batter-Runner who runs in Fair Territory after they have hit the ball and interferes with a play or potential play at 1st Base.
- 1.14 **Slashing** – when a Batter hits a hard groundball after taking less than half a backswing. Slashing is prohibited.
- 1.15 **Sliding** – when a Runner or Runner deliberately leaves their feet in advancing or retreating to a base. Sliding is prohibited.
- 1.16 **Stealing** – an attempt by a Runner to progress to the next base when they leave their base before the Batter has hit the ball; or they round a base, then stop, then recommence running when a Fielder in possession of the ball has both feet grounded within the Pitching Circle. Stealing is prohibited.
- 1.17 **Tagging** – a tag is an attempt to retire the Runner or Runner by touching them with the ball or with a glove or mitt surrounding the ball before they safely reach a base. Tagging is prohibited.
- 1.18 **Tapping** – putting the ball into play with an intentionally shortened follow through so that a batted ball travels less than 30 feet from the Batting Home Plate. Tapping is prohibited.

2. THE PLAYING FIELD

- 2.1 The Playing Field consists of an Infield and an Outfield, plus Foul Territory.

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- 2.2** A Scoring Home Plate shall be placed at the end of the scoring line, which is the line marked perpendicular to the foul line near the Strike Zone Mat. To score a run, a runner must touch the Scoring Home Plate.

3. UNIFORMS AND EQUIPMENT

- 3.1** All players must wear enclosed footwear. Footwear with metal on the soles is not permitted.
Penalty –A player who cannot or will not change their footwear as directed by the Umpire will not be permitted to play.
- 3.2** Fielders must wear a glove.
- 3.3** Protective equipment may be worn by all players.
- 3.4** Only official softball bats may be used.

4. THE GAME

- 4.1** The “Home” team shall be determined by the toss of a coin and shall be the team that fields first.
- 4.2** An inning ends when whichever of the following occurs first:
- a)** 3 Players from the Batting team are declared out: or
 - b)** After the Batter who is named as the Final Batter has completed their turn at bat.
- 4.3** A run shall not be scored if the third out of an inning is the result of:
- a)** the Runner being Put Out before legally touching 1st Base; or
 - b)** A Runner being forced out due to the Batter becoming a Runner; or
 - c)** An Appeal Play at 1st Base.
- 4.4** The winner of the game shall be the team that scores the most runs in a regulation game.

5. PARTICIPANTS

- 5.1** A team shall consist of a minimum of **seven** players or a maximum of ten players. **A team of 10 must have a minimum of four (4) female players at any one time. A team of any number less than 10 must also have a minimum of four (4) female players at any one time.**
- 5.2** The players’ positions are Pitcher, Catcher, 1st Base, 2nd Base, 3rd Base, Shortstop, Left Fielder, Centre Fielder, Right Fielder, and Roving Fielder.
- 5.3** At the start of each pitch, the Fielders may be positioned anywhere in Fair Territory. However, the Catcher must be in the Catcher’s Box; the Pitcher must be in a legal pitching position; all Infielders and the Roving Fielder must be behind an imaginary line that shall be drawn diagonally across the diamond in line with the 40 foot Pitcher’s line; and the Outfielders must be stationed at a distance of at least 90 feet from Home Plate when the Batter hits the ball.
- 5.4** A team shall nominate a Manager to represent them on the diamond.
- 5.5** Only the Manager may approach the Umpire regarding the interpretation of a Rule.

6. PITCHING

- 6.1** Pitchers are required to pitch to a minimum of three consecutive Batters unless any of these 3 Batters is the last out, they make a request to be changed, or they are injured or ejected. All Automatic Outs are counted as Batters for the purposes of this Rule.
- 6.2** A Pitcher may alternate between the two Pitching Lines during the time that they pitch to the Batter.
- 6.3** A Pitcher shall not issue an Intentional Bases on Balls, intentionally roll the ball instead of pitching it, and shall not intentionally pitch or throw at a Batter, Designated Runner, or an Umpire.
- 6.4** A Pitcher must deliver a pitch within 15 seconds if they are directed to do so by the Umpire.
- 6.5** When pitching, the Pitcher must have at least part of one foot in contact with the Pitcher’s line at the time that they release the ball.

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- 6.6 The Pitcher is not required to take a step when delivering the pitch. If a step is taken, it can be forwards, backwards, or sideways, provided that the whole of neither foot is grounded out of the Pitching Circle.
- 6.7 The ball must be pitched in an arc, and during the top of the arc, the ball must reach at least the height of the top of the Batter's head, but no higher than 12ft at the point above the ground where it reaches this height.
- 6.8 The ball must be delivered in an underarm motion and travel at a moderate speed.
- 6.9 The Pitcher must release the ball on the first forward swing of the arm past the hip.

7. BATTING AND BASE RUNNING

7.1 Batter

- 7.1.1 The team shall bat through the order as recorded on the Scoresheet.
- 7.1.2 A ball is called for:
 - a) Each pitched ball not swung at that does not land on any part of the Strike Zone Mat.
 - b) Each pitched ball not swung at that is not the correct height.
 - c) Each pitched ball that hits the Batter when not striking at the pitch.
 - d) The Pitcher failing to pitch the ball within 15 seconds of the Umpire declaring "Play Ball".
- 7.1.3 A strike is called for:
 - a) Each legally pitched ball that hits any part of the Strike Zone Mat.
 - b) Each pitched ball that is swung at and missed; except for Rule 6.3.
 - c) Each foul ball (a Foul Ball hit on two strikes counts as Strike 3).
 - d) The Batter failing to take their position in the Batter's Box within 15 seconds of the Umpire directing them to take their place in the Batter's Box.
- 7.1.4 A Final Batter rule applies.
 - a) The Final Batter receives a base on balls after 10 balls.
 - b) Once the Final Batter has completed their turn at bat, the Batting Team is deemed to have been retired, and all Runners remaining on base score. No remaining Runners will score if the Runner is retired before they safely obtain 1st Base, or the third out occurs elsewhere.
- 7.1.5 A player who substitutes for a Batter who has been ejected or injured during their At Bat shall bat from the count at the time the ejected or injured Batter left the Game.
- 7.1.6 A Batter is out if:
 - a) There is no Batter to fill that place in the Batting Order.
 - b) A different player takes their place in the Batting Order.
 - c) Three strikes are recorded against them.
 - d) *If they make contact with the ball whether or not recorded against them: or the ball is hit fair or foul they have one or both feet completely touching the ground and completely outside any of the lines of the Batter's Box, except for the line closest to the catcher where one backward step is allowed.*
 - *if any part of either foot is touching Batting Home Plate when they make contact with the ball, whether fair or foul.*
 - e) They put the ball into play with a bat that does not meet the definition of a legal bat.
 - f) They bunt, slash, or tap the ball.
 - g) They hit a ball in the air which is then caught within the Playing Field.

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7.2 Runner

7.2.1 A Runner is safe if:

- a) They reach the Double Base, Safety Circle, or the Scoring Home Plate before a fielder touches the base or Batting Home Plate.
- b) They are obstructed from reaching a base.
- c) They are hit by a thrown ball while rounding 1st Base.

7.2.2 A Runner is out if they:

- a) Base Runners must remain in contact with the base until the Batter hits the ball, **except when a batter swings and misses a pitched ball.**
- b) fail to reach the Double Base, Safety Circle, or Scoring Home Plate before a fielder touches the appropriate base.
- c) slide.
- d) attempt to steal a base.
- e) leave the Playing Field before touching the Scoring Home Plate and before the Fielder puts them out.
- f) intentionally interfere with or distract a Fielder who is attempting to catch, field, or throw the ball.
- g) hit a fair ball which bounces and hits their bat while they are carrying it and they have run further than the Right-Hand Batter's Box.
- h) leave a bat in Fair Territory after an Infield hit which then interferes with a Fielder's ability to make a play on the ball.
- i) fail to retreat successfully to and touch their previously obtained base if the ball is caught with less than 3 outs.
- j) are hit by a batted ball while running in front of an Infielder who has not had a chance to field it.
- k) change their momentum so that an Infielder who is in the process of fielding a ball cannot see the ball.
- l) excessively change their momentum between bases. A Runner who exits the Safety Circle or Safety Semi-Circle and takes more than two steps then stops may not hesitate for more than three seconds or change the direction of their momentum more than twice with the intention of confusing the Fielder.
- m) ground their foot on or past the Commitment Line, then attempt to retreat to their previously obtained base.
- o) overtake a preceding runner.
- p) overruns the Safety Circle and fails to safely return before the Fielder makes a play at that base.
- q) attempt to steal a base. If this results in the 3rd Out, the player at Bat will bat first in the next inning.
- r) overrun 1st Base, but do not attempt to immediately return to it. An intentional step towards 2nd Base counts as not immediately attempting to return.
- s) run in Fair Territory within 30 feet of the Double Base or Batting Home Plate to prevent the possibility of a play being made at that base.
- t) run aggressively at a Fielder occupying any Base.
- u) are given out subject to an Appeal Play.

7.2.3 A Designated Runner may only be used if the Batter is injured during the game (or that game's pre-game warm up), or they have prior approval from the League Manager.

- a) **A Designated Runner shall situate themselves in a standing position equal to an invisible extension of the third base foul line, to a point outside the catcher's box.**
- b) A Batter shall be declared out if the Designated Runner leaves this position prior to the ball being hit.

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- c) The Designated Runner shall be of the same gender as the Batter.

8. APPEAL PLAYS

- 8.1** An Appeal Play may occur when a Batter hits a bat with an illegal bat.
- 8.2** An Appeal Play may occur when a Runner:
- a) runs to the Double Base after hitting a fair ball but fails to touch the foul part of the Double Base if they have no intention of attempting to reach 2nd Base.
 - b) reaches 1st Base having batted in an incorrect place in the Batting Order. For the out to be given, the appeal must occur between the time that the incorrect Batter finishes their turn At Bat and the Pitcher pitches to the next Batter.
 - c) leaves their base with less than 3 outs and fails to retouch the base after a catch.
 - d) leaves their base with less than 3 outs and fails to retouch the bases in reverse order if they have advanced more than one base after a catch.
 - e) fails to ground their foot in the Safety Circle or Safety Semi-Circle when rounding the bases.
 - f) crosses but does not touch the Scoring Home Plate when running home.
- 8.3** An Appeal Play may be made on either a live ball or a dead ball and needs to be made before the next pitch but must be made before all members of the Fielder leave the Playing Field.
- 8.4** All Appeal Plays must be made:
- a) anywhere on the Playing Field in the case of Batting Out of Order or an Illegal Bat; or
 - b) at the relevant base that the Runner missed.
- 8.5** An Appeal Play may be made against more than one Runner, provided that the ball is thrown to the relevant base.
- 8.5.1** If the third out is made on an Appeal Play at 2nd or 3rd Base or Scoring Home Plate, the runs scored before the infraction that led to the Appeal was made shall count.
- 8.5.2** If a third out is made on an Appeal Play at 1st Base, the runs scored before the Appeal shall not count.

9. DEAD BALL

The ball is immediately dead after:

- a) the Umpire calls "time".
- b) the Umpire is not in their correct position.
- c) the Pitcher intentionally rolls the ball instead of pitching it, or they pitch or throw the ball at the Batter, Designated Runner, or Umpire.
- d) the Batter bunts, slashes, or taps the ball.
- e) a bat that has been thrown by the Batter hits a Fielder or Umpire after they have hit the ball
- f) it hits an Umpire before the Fielder can make a play on it.
- g) it is hit fair into the Outfield and crosses into Dead Ball Territory.
- h) a thrown ball hits a bat that has been left in Fair Territory after the Batter has hit the ball.
- i) a Fielder makes or attempts to make a tag or fake tag.
- j) it leaves the Playing Field because of having been thrown or kicked by a Fielder.
- k) a player is seriously injured during a play.
- l) a Batter or Runner is obstructed by a Fielder.
- m) a player in an Infield position intentionally drops a ball to make a Double Play with less than 2 outs when a Runner occupies 1st Base.
- n) the Runner slides into any base including Scoring Home Plate.
- o) the Runner interferes with a fielder making an initial attempt to field a batted or thrown ball.
- p) a Runner changes their momentum to affect a play by the Fielder.

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- q) a Runner collides with a Fielder who has a foot in contact with 2nd or 3rd Base and is fielding a batted or thrown ball, provided that the Fielder is not preventing safe access to the Safety Circle.
- r) a Runner collides with a Fielder who is standing on Batting Home Plate.
- s) a Fielder detaches a piece of their equipment or uniform to catch, field, or stop the ball.

10. UMPIRES

- 10.1** The Umpire is responsible for upholding the integrity of the Game of Softball and the safety of the participants.
- 10.2** The Umpire's decision is always final.
- 10.3** The Umpire has the power to suspend a game on account of darkness or inclement weather.
- 10.4** The Umpire has the power to warn a player, issue an immediate ejection, or declare a forfeit.
- 10.5** There are no protests in Slowpitch Softball.

Melbourne Softball Association Inc.

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To be read in conjunction with 1) Slowpitch Bylaws and 2) Fawkner Park Ground Rules