



MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

Intramural Sports

5 v 5 v 5 Softball Rules

TABLE OF CONTENTS

General	2
Rule 1: The Playing Field	2
Rule 2: Definitions	3
Rule 3: Equipment	5
Rule 4: Players and Substitutes	5
Rule 5: The Game	6
Rule 6: Pitching Regulations	7
Rule 7: Batting	7
Rule 8: Batter-Runner and Runner	8
Baserunning Awards Table	10

Games will be played according to Amateur Softball Association (ASA) rules except for the changes mentioned in this document.

GENERAL

COVID Protocols.

1. Members of the “batting team” are required to wear masks at all times. However, while participating as the “outfield team” or “infield team, participants will not be required to wear a mask. EXCEPTION: The catcher will be required to wear a mask at all times.
2. Substitutes and fans present at the game site will be required to wear a mask at all times unless they can keep a safe distance of at least 6 feet from each other.
3. These protocols will be enforced by Intramural Sports and Campus Recreation staff.

Forfeits. Forfeit time has been established as game time. Teams should report to the Intramural Sports Staff a minimum of 15 minutes before the scheduled starting time of the game. If a team fails to appear at the appointed time, the Intramural Staff will declare the contest a forfeit. The team captain for the team who is ready to play may choose to give the opponent ten (10) minutes to obtain the necessary number of players. If the team is not able to play at the end of ten (10) minutes a forfeit will be declared. If neither team appears at game time, a ten (10) minute grace period will automatically be given. The game time is reduced by whatever portion of the ten (10) minutes was used to avoid a forfeit.

Leagues. Men’s, Women’s, and Co-Rec Open leagues will be available. Co-Rec Open leagues will require that each team has at least 1 member of each gender participating at all times. An unlimited number of each gender may be on the roster as long as the above criteria is met. The roster max is still set at 10.

Lineups. Before each game, each team will submit a lineup to the umpires. Lineups will be final at the captain’s meeting before each game. Any changes to lineups after that will need to follow substitution rules.

Umpires. Campus Recreation will furnish one or two umpires per game as available. He/she will enforce rules and conduct the game.

RULE 1: THE PLAYING FIELD

Ground Rules. Umpires will establish ground rules prior to the game regarding out of play areas, permanent obstacles in the field of play, etc.

Bases. Bases will be 65 feet apart in the men's, women's, and co-rec competition. When the double base is used (only at 1st base), the following rules will apply:

1. A batted ball hitting the white portion is fair and a batted ball hitting the colored portion is foul.
2. Whenever a play is being made on the batter-runner, the defense must use the white portion and the batter-runner must touch the colored portion. EXCEPTION: If a play is being made a first base but the ball is overthrown or the fielder is pulled off the base by an errant or missed throw, the batter-runner is allowed to use the white base.
3. On a play attempt on the batter-runner from the foul side of first base, or by an errant throw pulling the fielder off the base into foul ground, the batter-runner and the fielder can use either the white or colored portions of the base.

Pitching Distance. The pitching plate (rubber) shall be positioned 50 feet from home plate. Pitchers are required to pitch from the pitching plate (rubber) in all leagues.

Batter's Boxes. The batter's box, one on each side of home plate, shall measure 3 feet by 7 feet. The inside lines of the batter's box shall be 6 inches from home plate. The front line of the box shall be four feet in front of a line drawn through the center of home plate. The lines are considered part of the batter's box.

Foul Lines and Poles. A batted ball that contacts a foul line or foul pole is considered fair and in play.

Rule 2: Definitions

Appeal Play. An appeal play is a play on which an umpire may not make a decision until requested by a captain or player. Examples are:

1. A base runner missing a base
2. A base runner leaving a base before a caught fly is touched
3. Overrunning first base and attempting to run to second
4. Etc.

The appeal may not be made after any one of the following has occurred:

1. A legal or illegal pitch,
2. The pitcher and all infielders have left fair territory,
3. The umpires have left the field of play.

Only dead ball appeals are allowed. To initiate a dead ball appeal, follow the following steps:

1. Make sure time has been called
2. Inform the umpire(s) that you wish to appeal
3. After acknowledging the appeal by the umpire(s), state the specifics of your appeal

Base on Balls. A base on balls permits a batter to gain first base without liability to be put out and is awarded to a batter by the umpire when four pitches are judged to be out of the strike zone.

Base Line. An imaginary direct line between the bases.

Base Path. A direct line between a base and the runner's position at the time a defensive player is attempting to tag a runner.

Batted Ball. A batted ball is any ball that hits the bat or his hit by the bat and lands either in fair or foul territory. No intent to hit the ball is necessary.

Batter's Box. The batter's box is the area in which the batter is positioned while at bat. The lines are considered as being within the batter's box.

Batter Runner. A player who has finished a turn at bat but has not yet been put out or touched first base.

Batting Order. The batting order is the official listing of offensive players, in the order in which members of that team must come to bat.

Bunt. A bunt is a ball that is intentionally tapped with the bat, slowly, within the infield. A bunt is never considered an infield fly.

Catch. A catch is the act of a fielder in getting secure possession in his/her hand or glove of a live ball in flight and firmly holding it, provided he/she does not use his/her cap, protector, mask, pocket or other part of his/her uniform to trap the ball. The catch of a fly ball by a fielder is not completed until the continuing action of the catch is completed. A fielder who catches a ball and then runs into a wall or another player and drops the ball has not made a catch. A fielder, at full speed, who catches a ball and whose initial momentum carries him/her several more yards after which the ball drops from his glove has not made a catch. When the fielder, by his/her action of stopping, removing the ball from his/her glove, etc., signifies the initial action is completed and then drops the ball, will be judged to have made the catch. The same definition of a catch would apply when making a double play. It is considered a catch if a fielder catches a fair or foul ball and then steps or falls into a bench, dugout, stand, bleacher or over any boundary or barrier, such as a fence, rope, chalk line, or a pregame determined imaginary boundary line from the field of play. It is not a catch when a fielder touches a batted ball in flight which then contacts a member of the offensive team or an umpire and is then caught by a defensive player.

Fair Ball. A fair ball is a batted ball which:

1. Settles on fair territory between home and third base or between home and first base; or
2. Contacts fair ground on or beyond an imaginary line between first and third base; or
3. Is on or over fair ground when bounding to the outfield past first or third base; or
4. First falls on fair ground on or beyond first or third base; or
5. Touches first, second or third base; or
6. While on or over fair territory, touches the person of an umpire or player, their clothing or equipment; or
7. While over fair ground passes out of the playing field in flight.
 - a. A fly ball or line drive, which passes over or inside first or third base in flight and curves to foul ground beyond such base, is not a fair hit; but a hit which goes over or through the fence is a fair hit if it is over fair ground when it leaves the field.

Foul Ball. A foul is a batted ball:

1. Which settles on foul territory between home and first base or between home and third base; or
2. That bounds past first or third base on or over foul territory; or
3. That first falls on foul territory beyond first or third base; or
4. That, while on or over foul territory, touches the person of an umpire or a player or any object foreign to the natural ground; or
5. That touches the ground after inadvertently being declared foul by an umpire.
6. That hits the batter in the batter's box; or
7. That hits the ground or home plate and then hits the batter or the bat which is held by the batter, while he/she is in the batter's box.

Overrunning. Overrunning or oversliding is the act of a runner who, after touching the base to which he is advancing, allows his momentum to carry him past the base so that he loses contact with it. First base is the only base to which a batter/runner may overrun without liability of being put out.

Strike Zone. The strike zone is that space over home plate, the top of which is halfway between the batter's shoulders and the waistline, and the bottom being the knees, when he/she assumes their natural batting stance. The height of the strike zone is determined by the batter's normal batting stance. If he/she crouches or leans over to make the shoulder line lower, the umpire determines height by what would be the batter's normal stance.

Substitutions. A substitute is a player who is eligible to replace another player already in the lineup. An illegal substitute is:

1. A player who enters or re-enters the game without eligibility to do so, or
2. A player who re-enters the game in the wrong position in the batting order, or
3. A player who violates the courtesy runner rule

RULE 3: EQUIPMENT

Checking Out Equipment. Bats, gloves, helmets, and balls may be checked out from the Intramural Sports staff with a current MTSU photo I.D. A limited supply of bats and balls are available at the playing site.

Jewelry. Participants are expected to remove all jewelry prior to the start of all Intramural events. This includes but is not limited to necklaces, earrings, gauges, finger rings (including wedding bands and rings), and bracelets. Participants who are required to wear medical bracelets, medals, or medical monitors may do so but the metal piece must be taped to the body with the medical information clearly showing and the staff must be made aware of the condition prior to play. Religious accessories and military tags are examples of jewelry which may be allowed.

Shoes. Shoes are required. Rubber training shoes and single molded plastic/rubber soccer-type cleats are permitted. Metal cleats or spikes of any type are not allowed.

Bats. In order for a bat to be deemed legal it must be an official A.S.A. approved softball bat with the approved stamp. It must have a safety grip (no smooth tape) and must be free of rough or sharp edges. Baseball bats and fungo bats are illegal.

Balls. Game softballs will be provided by the Intramural Sports staff. Teams must use the ball provided for all games.

RULE 4: PLAYERS AND SUBSTITUTES

Varsity Players. Varsity baseball and softball players are ineligible to play intramural softball. Teams are responsible for checking the eligibility of their players.

Minimum Players. A team must have 5 players present to start the game. All substitutes must report to the plate umpire before batting.

Blood Rule. A player who is bleeding, has an open wound, or has blood on the uniform shall be considered an injured player. Such players may not return to the game until the bleeding has stopped and the wound properly covered, and soiled clothing has been treated or removed. The Intramural staff shall determine a reasonable amount of time to get the wound covered and the bleeding stopped so that the player does not have to substitute out of the game.

Shorthanded Rule. If a player must leave the game and there is no substitute available, when it is that player's turn to bat an out is declared. If a runner must leave the game and there is no substitute available, the runner will be declared out. When it is that team's turn to be the "infield team" they may ask the "outfield team" to supply a catcher. If the "outfield team" cannot supply a catcher, the "infield team" will need to supply one.

Re-Entry Rule. A starter may be withdrawn from the game and re-entered in the same spot in the batting order once. Players may not re-enter a second time, and the starter and the substitute may not be in the game at the same time. To bat an Extra Hitter (EH), a team must have 6 players present at the start of the game.

RULE 5: THE GAME

Game Length. The game will consist of 5 innings or 50 minutes, whichever occurs first. In the event of rain or darkness, 5 innings, or 4 2/3 if the last team to bat is ahead, will constitute a game. No new inning may be started, unless the score is tied in the playoffs, after 50 minutes have elapsed from when the game began. The umpire and/or Assistant will keep the official game time.

Mercy Rule/Run Limit: There is no mercy rule. However, there is a limit of 20 runs per inning per team.

Game Format.

1. Each game consists of 3 teams competing against each other.
2. Each inning has a Top, Middle, and Bottom where each team bats.
3. Each team will bat 5 times and play defense for 2/3 of each inning.
4. An "infield team" and an "outfield team" will play defense while the "batting team" takes their turn at the plate. The "infield team" will supply a catcher.
5. All three teams rotate positions for one cycle (9 outs) to complete one inning. The rotation is as follows:
 - a. "Batting team" will move to become the "outfield team"
 - b. "Outfield team" will move to become the "infield team"
 - c. "Infield team" will move to become the "batting team"
6. Teams will pitch to themselves. (See Rule 6 for more about pitching).
7. At the end of the game, the team with the most runs will be awarded 3 points, the team with the second most runs will be awarded 2 points, and the team with the fewest runs will be awarded 1 point. Results if teams tie:
 - a. If all three teams tie, each team will be awarded 2 points.
 - b. If the 1st place team scores the most runs and the other two teams tie, the 1st place team is awarded 3 points and the other teams are awarded 1.5 points.
 - c. If the 1st and 2nd place teams tie they are awarded 2 points each and the 3rd place team is awarded 1 point.

Team Batting Order. The teams will bat in the order listed on the schedule and the scoresheets. The first team listed will start the game as the "batting team", the second team listed will start the game as the "outfield team", and the third team listed will start the game as the "infield team."

Dead Ball. The ball is dead and not in play when:

1. No pitch is declared.
2. A foul ball is not caught.
3. A runner is called out for leaving a base too soon (leading off).
4. Offensive interference occurs.

5. A defensive player carries the ball out of play.

Live Ball. The ball is in play when:

1. The infield fly rule is enforced.
2. Thrown ball remains in playable territory.
3. A base is dislodged while base runners are progressing around the bases.
4. A thrown ball strikes an offensive player.
5. A thrown ball or fair batted ball strikes an umpire.
6. A thrown ball strikes a non-player in the field of play.

The ball remains alive until the umpire declares time.

RULE 6: PITCHING

Pitching Basics.

1. Teams will pitch to themselves. As many pitchers may pitch in one 1/3 of an inning as deemed necessary by the flow of the game.
2. Each batter will get a maximum of 3 pitches per at-bat. If they do not put the ball in play within 3 pitches, they will be declared out.
3. There are no base-on-balls (walks). Each batter must put the ball in play or be declared out.

Warm-Up Pitches. At the beginning of each half-inning or when a pitcher relieves another, not more than one minute may be used to deliver not more than two warm up pitches to the catcher or other teammate.

Pitch Requirements and Illegal Pitch. The pitch must have a minimum arc of 6 ft. from the ground. There is no maximum allowable arc. If the pitch does not meet this requirement, an illegal pitch shall be called. Upon an illegal pitch, the ball is dead immediately, it counts as one pitch to the batter, and all runners return to the bases occupied at the time of the pitch.

Pitching Requirements.

1. The pitcher must pause with at least one foot contacting the pitching plate (rubber) prior to pitching the ball. The pitcher's foot must remain in contact with the pitching plate throughout the delivery.
2. If a step is taken it may be forward, backward, or to the side provided the foot stays in contact with the pitching plate and the step is taken simultaneously with the pitch.
3. The pitcher must deliver the ball in a continuous, underhand motion on the first forward swing of the pitching arm past the hip.

RULE 7: BATTING

The batter is out when:

1. A batter appears in the batter's box with, or is discovered using, an altered or illegal bat. Baseball and fungo bats are illegal.
2. A batter does not put the ball in play within 3 pitches.
3. The umpire declares a fair infield fly with base runners on first and second or on first, second, and third with less than two outs. The ball remains live and runners may advance at their own risk.

4. A fielder intentionally drops a fair fly ball that can be caught by an infielder, with first and second or first, second, and third bases occupied with less than 2 outs. The ball is dead and all runners return to the base they occupied at the time of the pitch.
5. The batter bunts or chops the ball downward. The ball is dead and all runners return to the base they occupied at the time of the pitch.
6. When any foot touches the ground completely outside the batter's box or if any part of the foot touches the plate and the ball is hit fair or foul.

RULE 8: RUNNER AND BATTER-RUNNER

Sliding. Sliding is allowed. When sliding, runners must always slide for the base. If considered flagrant, the runner may be ejected.

Base Stealing. Base stealing is not allowed. Each base runner may leave his/her base when a pitched ball is batted or reaches home plate but must return to that base immediately after each pitch not hit by the batter.

Runner Returning. When a base runner is forced to return while the ball is in play, he/she must touch the bases in reverse order. No runner may return to touch a missed base or one he/she had left illegally after a following runner has scored. The defense must appeal for the out to be granted.

Base Path. The base path is determined by a direct line between a base and the runner's position at the time a defensive player is attempting to tag a runner. When a defensive player is in possession of the ball a runner may not contact the defender. Baserunners must go around fielders when they are making a play on the ball.

Runners.

1. Base runners are entitled to advance but accept the liability to be put out under the following circumstances:
 - a. When the ball is overthrown into fair or foul territory and remains in play.
 - b. When the ball is batted into fair territory.
 - c. When a legally caught fly ball is first touched.
2. Base runners are entitled to advance without liability to be put out under the following circumstances:
 - a. When a fielder obstructs the base runner from making a base, unless the fielder is trying to field the batted ball or has the ball ready to touch the base runner.
 - b. When the ball is in play and is overthrown and goes out of play, all runners advance two bases from where they were when the ball left the thrower's hand.
 - c. Obstruction is the act of:
 - i. A defensive player or team member which hinders or prevents a batter from striking or hitting a pitched ball.
 - ii. A fielder which impedes the progress of a base runner who is legally running the bases.
EXCEPTION: A fielder that is making a play on a ball that is almost upon them and runs into the baseline does not commit obstruction. This is the responsibility of the runner to avoid contact.
 - iii. PENALTY: A delayed dead ball is called by the umpires for obstruction. In (a), the batter may take the result of the play or first base. All runners will move up one base if they are forced. In (b), at the end of playing action, umpires will award bases to baserunners to the extent of where the runners would have gotten had the obstruction not occurred.

- d. Interference is the act of an offensive player or team member, umpire, or spectator that impedes, hinders, or confuses a defensive player attempting to execute a play. Contact is not necessary for interference to be called. PENALTY: A dead ball will be called immediately by the umpires for interference. The player committing interference is out and all runners return to the last base they legally obtained.

Runner is Out. The base runner is out when:

- 1. In running to any base he/she runs more than three feet from a direct line between a base and the next base when a defensive player is attempting to tag the runner.
- 2. The base runner passes a preceding base runner before that runner has been put out.
- 3. The base runner legally overruns first base and makes an attempt to advance to second base and is legally touched while off base.
- 4. The base runner interferes with a fielder attempting to field a batted ball or intentionally interferes with a thrown ball. If this interference, in the umpire's judgment, is an obvious attempt to prevent a double play (including shouting or waving the arms to distract the defense), the immediate succeeding runner shall also be called out.
- 5. The base runner is struck with a fair batted ball while off base and before it passes an infielder who could have otherwise made a play.
- 6. With a base runner on third, the batter or any offensive player interferes with a play being made at home base.
- 7. In the umpire's judgment, the base coach at first or third base touches or holds the runner physically to assist a runner in returning to or advancing from the base when a play is being made on him/her.
- 8. A runner, after being declared out or after scoring, interferes with a defensive player's opportunity to make a play on another runner, the runner closest to home plate at the time of the interference shall be declared out.

Runner is Not Out. Base runners are not out under the following circumstances:

- 1. When a base runner runs around the fielder and outside the baseline in order to avoid interfering with a fielder attempting to field the ball in the base path.
- 2. When a base runner is hit with a fair batted ball that has passed through an infielder, excluding the pitcher, and in the umpire's judgment no other infielder had a chance to play the ball. The ball remains "live" under this condition.
- 3. When a base runner is hit by a fair batted ball after it is touched or touches any fielder.
- 4. When a base runner is hit by a fair batted ball while in contact with a base.

Injured Runner. If an accident to a batter-runner or base runner prevents him/her from proceeding in the game, a substitute runner will be permitted. If no substitutes are available, the runner will be declared out.

Baserunning Awards Table

BASES AWARDED	BASE OCCUPIED TIME OF
ONE BASE (runners)	
1. Unintentional catch and carry	Pitch
2. Catcher obstruction (if attempting to advance)	Pitch
3. Forced (because batter is awarded 1st base)	Pitch
4. Any throw by an outfielder and ball goes out of play or lodges in or under fence.	Throw
ONE BASE (batter)	
1. Batter is obstructed	Pitch
2. Runner interference (unintentional)	Pitch
3. Umpire interference (hit by batted ball)	Pitch
TWO BASES (batter and runners)	
1. Fair batted ball bounces over, through, goes under, lodges in or under fence	Pitch
2. First throw by infielder and ball goes out of play or lodged in or under fence	Throw
3. Intentional catch and carry (runners only)	Pitch
FOUR BASES (batter and runners)	
1. Fair batted ball over fence in flight	Pitch
2. Fair batted ball hits foul pole above fence in flight	Pitch
UMPIRE JUDGMENT	
1. Spectator interference	Infraction
2. Runner(s) obstruction (minimum of one base)	Infraction
3. Defensive malicious contact	Infraction