



# Sports Force Softball Tournament Rules

**Sports Force Parks reserves the right to adjust these rules prior to the start of a tournament**

*The Tournament Director will only address questions and concerns from a Manager or Coach*

## **TEAM AND PLAYER ELIGIBILITY**

- 10-Under Age Classification.** A player whose 11th birthday is prior to September 1, 2023, is INELIGIBLE.
- **12-Under Age Classification.** A player whose 13th birthday is prior to September 1, 2023, is INELIGIBLE.
- **14-Under Age Classification.** A player whose 15th birthday is prior to September 1, 2023, is INELIGIBLE.
- **16-Under Age Classification.** A player whose 17th birthday is prior to September 1, 2023, is INELIGIBLE.
- **18-Under Age Classification.** A player whose 19th birthday is prior to September 1, 2023, is INELIGIBLE.

## **ONLINE CHECK-IN**

All teams are REQUIRED to complete the online check-in via our website **30 days** prior to the tournament start date. Teams must provide:

- Roster
- Parental Waiver, Release of Liability and Indemnification Agreement
- Certificate of Insurance

## **TOURNAMENT CHECK-IN**

Coaches must check-in onsite at least **1 HOUR** prior to their first scheduled game. Rosters are LOCKED after check-in. Only a coach or manager will be needed for check-in.

## **LINEUPS**

All Age groups will use a 9-batter format in which all nine position players must be in the batting lineup. Teams also have the option to bat more than 9.

Example: If a team has 12 players on their roster, they have the ability to bat 9, 10, 11 or their entire lineup. A team in this situation could bat 9 with 3 substitutes; bat 10 with 2 substitutes; bat 11 with 1 substitute; or bat all 12 players with no substitutes. All players starting in the lineup, BUT NOT in the field are extra hitters (EH), which are considered defensive starters for substitution purposes.

\*There will be NO DP/Flex or bandit runners allowed\*

When a team chooses to bat the entire lineup, each player is considered a starter and the team has free defensive substitutions for that game. Furthermore, if a player is injured during the game in which a team is batting the entire lineup, their spot in the lineup is skipped with no penalty. Once the spot in the lineup is skipped, that player is not eligible to return to the game in any capacity.



## **INJURIES / SUBSTITUTIONS**

If a player is injured and no substitute is available, that spot in the lineup will be skipped with no penalty. If an injury occurs during an at-bat and the player can't continue the at-bat, the next batter in the lineup will take over that at-bat and assume the count. If an injury occurs while on the base paths and there are no substitutes available, the player that made the last recorded out will take the place of the injured player on the bases.

## **RE-ENTRY**

If a team does not bat the entire lineup and substitutes are available, starters may be re-entered ONCE, as long as the player occupies the same position in the batting order. If you are not batting the entire lineup, your substitutes may also re-enter only if they occupy the same spot in the batting order. Once a player cannot continue on the offensive side (at bat or on the bases) that player is not eligible to return to the game

## **PITCHER RE-ENTRY**

If a pitcher is removed after throwing a pitch and goes to another defensive position, they may not return as a pitcher in that game. For example, as soon as another pitcher throws a warm-up pitch (becoming the new 'pitcher of record'), the previous pitcher is no longer able to pitch in that game. If a team substitutes for the pitcher when on offense, but then re-enters the pitcher before going out on defense, that pitcher is still the 'pitcher of record' and can continue to pitch in the game.

## **PITCHER OF RECORD**

Once a pitcher throws a warm-up pitch, they must face at least one batter. If the pitcher is hurt during their warm-up pitches, another player may come in to pitch. The previous pitcher of record will not be allowed to re-enter after a pitcher has thrown a warm-up pitch. **It is the responsibility of the opposing team to verify the accuracy of the other team's lineup prior to the start of each game.**

Managers must bring any issues to the attention of a Sports Force Parks Tournament Official before the game. If a lineup issue is discovered during the game, the ruling will be that the lineup is corrected at that point for the rest of the game. If it is brought to our staff's attention after the game – there will be no penalty. There will not be a forfeit in this situation since the opposing team is responsible for verifying the other team's lineup prior to the start of the game.

## **DUGOUTS & HOME / VISITING TEAM**

All dugouts at Sports Force Parks are first come, first serve. Home and visiting team will be determined by a coin flip during pool play. During the elimination rounds, the home team will be the higher seeded team. A coin flip will determine the home team if both teams are the same seed in the playoff round. If a team plays back-to-back on the same field, that team can stay in the same dugout for both games. ONLY coaches and players are permitted in a dugout or on the field.



## **PITCHER/FIELDER'S EQUIPMENT**

Pitchers and fielders are allowed to wear protective head gear. The helmet/head gear can't be glossy nor have anything else on it that can be deemed distracting to the batter (umpire's discretion). It is the umpire and tournament director's discretion to determine whether any other equipment or clothing that the pitcher is wearing is distracting to the opposing batter. This includes, but is not limited to: Batting gloves, sunglasses, long sleeves, compression sleeves, athletic tape on wrist/arm, and two-toned fielder gloves.

## **AVOID CONTACT RULE**

Players must attempt to avoid contact with other players in tag-out situations. If, in an umpire's judgment, there is intentional contact, that umpire may call the runner out on that play. If the contact is judged as intentional and malicious, that umpire may also eject the player from the game. If a player is ejected for this reason, they may face suspension for their team's next game with the possibility of further sanctions as well. The Tournament Director will make the final ruling on any possible discipline.

Regarding force out situations, if the runner slides, they must slide directly into the base. A slide that is not directly into the base is grounds for an interference call (umpire's judgment) and the runner could be declared out. In this instance, the batter/runner could also be declared out if the fielder was attempting to make a play on that batter/runner. It is important to note that if the runner makes a legal slide directly into the base and contact is made with the fielder, interference will not be called.

Jumping, hurdling, and leaping are all legal attempts to avoid a fielder as long as the fielder is lying on the ground. If the fielder is not laying on the ground, any jump/hurdle/leap by the base runner over the torso of the fielder will result in the base runner being called out. The base runner will not be ejected unless the jump/hurdle/leap is deemed malicious.

## **TIME LIMIT**

All games at Sports Force Parks are 6 inning games. The standard time limit for all age groups is 1 hour and 30 minutes from the completion of the plate meeting to the last out of an inning. Games can go into extra innings as long as the time limit has not expired. Pool play games can end in a tie. If the time limit is reached during an inning, that inning will be the last one of the game. If the home team is winning after the top half of that last inning, they will be declared the winner of the game and will not hit in the bottom half. If the home team is trailing and must hit in the bottom half of the last inning, the game will end at the moment the home team scores the winning run or at the moment of their third out. If the time limit is reached during the bottom half of an inning and the home team is winning at that moment, we will let the current batter complete the at-bat and then the game will end.

## **TIME IN BETWEEN INNINGS:**

Our expectation is that teams will take 1 minute in between innings. Pitchers are permitted to throw 6 warm-up pitches in their first inning of work and 4 warm-up pitches every other half inning. If a catcher is still getting dressed, a coach should be ready to warm-up the pitcher.



## **INTENTIONAL DELAYS**

Intentionally delaying a game to achieve a victory through the time limit is considered unsportsmanlike conduct and will not be tolerated at a Sports Force Parks Tournament. The umpires and/or tournament officials at the game reserve the right to eject a coach or player for intentionally delaying a game and possibly declare a forfeit to that team.

## **TIE GAMES IN POOL PLAY**

Pool play games can end in a tie. A tie game in pool play equals 1/2 of a win and 1/2 of a loss for both teams toward their overall record and/or winning percentage.

## **TIE BREAKER SYSTEM**

When 2 teams are tied, follow the list below until the tie is broken:

- Head-to-head results (if applicable)
- Fewest runs allowed
- Run differential
- Most runs scored
- Coin flip

**If 3 (or more) teams are tied, with the same record or winning %, use the following system to break the tie:**

- Head-to-head results (only applicable if all of the tied teams played each other)
  - If one team beat all of the other tied teams, they will be the highest seed of the tied teams.
  - Continue to use head to head results to seed the rest of the teams.
  - If one team has been beaten by all of the other tied teams, they will be the lowest seed of the tied teams.
  - If all tied teams have the same record against each other, then they are tied at head-to-head and you move to the next item on the list (fewest runs allowed)
  - Continue down the 2-Team Tie Breaker list as stated above.

**\*When 2 teams are tied at any one of the criteria, we revert back to the beginning of the 2-Team Tie Breaker system (head-to-head)\***

## **WINNING %**

If teams play an uneven number of games during pool play, winning percentage will be the first tie breaker used to determine the final seeds. For example, Team A goes 5-1 in pool play and finishes with a winning % of .800 and Team B goes 3-1 in pool play and finishes with a winning % of .750. Therefore, Team A will be seeded higher than Team B due to having a higher winning %.

## **MERCY RULE**

For all games and age groups – 12 runs after 4 innings or 10 runs after 5 innings.

## **COURTESY RUNNERS**

A courtesy runner may be used for the pitcher or catcher. Legal substitutes must be used first. The same substitute may not courtesy run for both the pitcher and catcher. If there are no substitutes available, the last batted out may courtesy run (the last batted out cannot be the pitcher or catcher). If the game is in the first inning and no outs have been recorded, the last batter in the lineup may courtesy run or the first runner to score, whichever is furthest away from batting.



## **LINE-UP CARDS**

Teams must provide their own line-up cards. A copy should be given to opposing team prior to each game. A copy must also be given to a tournament official.

## **ON-DECK BATTER**

All on-deck batters must stay near their team's dugout on the warning track with a helmet on. Games on Fields 7A/7B, 8A/8B, 9A/9B can warm up on same side as hitter for safety reasons due to close proximity.

## **OFFICIAL SCOREBOOK**

The home team will keep the official scorebook.

## **# OF PLAYERS**

Teams are permitted to start and/or end a game with at least 7 players. Anything less than 7 available players at any time during a game will result in a forfeit for that team.

## **JEWELRY**

In general, jewelry is not permitted during game play. Breakaway nylon necklaces are allowed (must be breakaway). Rubber bracelets that are not a distraction are also permitted. Jewelry worn for medical or religious reasons is also allowed, but must be taped to the body. Any item that is deemed unsafe or distracting (Umpire's judgment) will not be allowed. The team will receive a warning if a player wears improper jewelry during the game and any players found wearing improper jewelry after the team warning will be ejected for the remainder of the game.

## **CELL PHONES / ELECTRONIC DEVICES**

Cell phones, iPads, and other electronic devices are permitted in the dugout only during the game. A coach, manager, or scorekeeper is not permitted to have them on the field during the game. Sports Force Parks Tournament Officials reserve the right to remove any electronic devices from the dugout that may be deemed a distraction during a game. Electronic Pitch Calling Devices will follow NFHS rules.

## **ILLEGAL PITCHES**

Sports Force Parks follows the ASA rules pertaining to illegal pitches. For the 12u and under age groups, there will be one warning per pitcher issued for an illegal pitch. There will be no warnings issued for 14u and older age groups. Once an illegal pitch is called, it is an immediate dead ball for all age groups.

\*Penalty for Illegal pitches will be one ball to the batter and runners will advance one base\*

## **MOUND VISITS**

The pitcher must be removed on the second mound visit in the same inning for all age groups.



## **FORFEITS**

If a team chooses to forfeit a pool play game, they are not eligible for the championship round and face suspension in future Sports Force Parks Tournaments. The final score of the forfeited game will be based on the team giving up a run per inning for a complete game. For example, a 6-inning game would be 6-0.

If a team chooses to forfeit a consolation or elimination game, they face suspension in future Sports Force Parks Tournaments.

If a team chooses to forfeit a championship game, they are not eligible for tournament awards. Sports Force officials will attempt to replace a forfeited team in an elimination game if possible. If a game becomes a forfeit after it has started due to a team having less than the required 7 available players, the official score of that game still follows the guidelines above no matter what the score was at the time of the forfeit.

## **AGE PROTESTS**

Every coach is responsible for providing and carrying documentation of birth for all players on their roster for the duration of the tournament. Acceptable forms of identification include:

- Birth Certificate
- Passport
- State ID
- Any other government issued document

Only coaches may lodge an age protest before or during a game. There is a protest fee of \$150 per protest. If your protest is upheld, your fee will be returned. Sports Force Parks tournament officials may request age documentation at any time. If a coach cannot provide necessary documentation, the player(s) in question will be ruled ineligible. A game should never be stopped for umpire judgment calls as those cannot be protested. Our staff will do everything possible to resolve issues as they occur.

## **EXPECTED BEHAVIOR**

Negative behavior/bad sportsmanship at youth sporting events has become a major issue. Sports Force Parks Tournaments are not immune as we still see coaches and parents that choose to act in a negative manner toward the opposing team or an umpire from time to time. Please remember that the games are for the kids, not the adults, and we expect each adult to set a positive example for the players through their words and actions.

Everyone that attends a tournament is expected to act in a positive manner, no matter the outcome of a play, call by an umpire, or the game itself. We simply ask the following:

- Let the players play
- Let the coaches coach
- Let the umpires umpire

Moreover, even when you're not at the Sports Force Parks facility, your personal behavior is a reflection on your team and Sports Force Parks. We expect players, parents, coaches and family members to act in a positive manner at all times – with respect for people and property throughout our local community.



## **PROPER CHEERING / NOISE MAKERS**

All individuals (players, coaches, parents, and fans) are expected to cheer in a positive manner for their own team and never in a negative manner toward the opposing team. Noise makers are not permitted in the dugouts and if they are used by parents/fans, they must not cause any sort of distraction to the opposing team. Because the term "distraction" can be subjective, if an issue arises at a field involving noise makers/cheering, then Sports Force Parks staff will assess the situation and make a decision. If that stipulation is not followed, the noise makers would be prohibited all together for that team for the remainder of the tournament.

## **GENERAL FAIR PLAY/SPORTSMANSHIP**

Intentional disregard for the stated rules (or the spirit in which those rules exist) as well as obvious unsportsmanlike behavior will not be tolerated and will place the individuals and/or teams involved at risk for a possible forfeit or banishment from any future Sports Force Parks tournaments. We do hold the right to alter tournament seeds for teams failing to abide by our general fair play and sportsmanship

## **PRE-GAME WARM-UP**

- Respect all tournament facilities (clean up all trash and equipment)
- Teams must warm-up/practice in designated areas only
- No infield/outfield is permitted on the game fields at any location
- Each team must make sure that the starting pitcher is ready by game time
- Teams that do not follow these guidelines can be banned from practice areas
- Teams playing doubleheaders will not be given extra time between scheduled games
- All teams must be ready for play 15 minutes prior to the start of the scheduled game in order to maintain a timely game schedule

## **BAT RESTRICTIONS**

Coaches are responsible for checking all of their player's bats before playing in the tournament. Please make sure your team's bats meet ASA requirements, meaning that the bat must have the ASA stamp on the bat.

## **PENALTY FOR USE OF AN ILLEGAL BAT**

If the umpire discovers that a batter enters the batter's box with an illegal bat, the batter will be called out (even if a pitch has not been thrown). If the illegal bat is discovered after the ball is put into play (but before the next pitch is thrown to the next batter), the defensive team will have the choice of the result of play or the batter being called out and all runners returning to the base occupied before the pitch. An appeal on the legality of the bat must be made prior to the next pitch thrown to the next batter or the result of the previous at-bat will stand.

## **ALTERED BATS**

Altered bats (shaved, rolled, or in any other way altered to increase performance) are not permitted in any way. Any player using an altered bat will be ejected from the game and their at bat will be recorded as an out. All runners will go back to the base they occupied when the batter puts the ball in play. The player with the altered bat may face further suspension.



## ***EJECTION / SUSPENSION POLICY***

- **Managers / Coaches:** Managers or coaches (or scorekeepers or anyone else that is in the dugout or on the field during a game) that are ejected from a game (either by an umpire or by an SFP Official) must leave the facility immediately and will automatically be suspended for 1 additional game. The Tournament Director may also lengthen the suspension to more games or expulsion from the facility for a period of time. If a manager or coach is ejected from a game twice during the same tournament, they will be suspended for the remainder of the tournament.
- **Players:** If a player is ejected from a game they may face further suspension.
- **Parents / Fans:** If a fan or parent is ejected from a game (either by an umpire or an SFP Official), they must leave the facility immediately and will be suspended for the remainder of the event. An SFP official will determine length of based on the severity of the issue.

## ***CONFINEMENT TO THE BENCH***

Sports Force Parks tournament officials, as well as the Umpires working a game, have the ability to confine a manager, coach, or player to the bench. If this step is taken, that individual will not be able to leave the bench/dugout. The only exception that will be allowed is for a manager/coach to attend to an injured player on the field. If an individual that is confined to the bench violates this stipulation, they will be ejected from that game and will face further suspension as well.

## ***INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY***

- Sports Force Parks is equipped with all-turf fields which allows us to continue gameplay during and/or immediately after inclement weather.
- Gameplay will continue during precipitation; however, heavy precipitation that is deemed dangerous for athletes and lightning present in the immediate area will result in game stoppage.

### **Heavy Precipitation**

- Games will be paused if precipitation is negatively affecting gameplay and/or is considered an injury risk for players (Discretion of a Tournament Director)
- Gameplay will resume when conditions are deemed playable by a Tournament Director
- Players and Coaches are expected to stay in their dugouts during precipitation delays

### **Lightning in the Area**

- If lightning is present within 10 miles of the park, games will be paused, and the park must be evacuated
- **Park Evacuation: All guests are required to leave the park and go to their cars during lightning delays. Guests cannot remain in the park during lightning delays.**
- Lightning delays will continue 30-minutes after the last lightning strike in the area
- Teams are expected to wait for further communication from a Tournament Director during lightning delays
  - Tournament Directors will communicate with Head Coaches only
  - Communication will be sent out as soon as a decision is made
- Teams are expected to resume games 30-minutes after we allow guests back in the park

**Tournament Directors reserve the right to adjust tournament format, seeding, and time limits based on inclement weather**