

# Sports Force Softball Tournament Rules

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

## 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 **1 week** prior to the tournament start date. Teams must provide:

- Parental Waiver, Release of Liability and Indemnification Agreement
- Coaches Code of Conduct (Weeklong Tournaments Only)
- Hotel Accommodations Form
- Certificate of Insurance

## TOURNAMENT CHECK-IN

Coaches must check-in onsite at least 1 HOUR prior to their first scheduled games.

## 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 or ejected 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**

The home team will be listed first on the schedule. All dugouts are labeled "Home" or "Visitor." If playing on a field that does not have labeled dugouts, the home team will occupy the first base side. 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. For summer weeklong tournaments – ONLY paid 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:**

No new inning may start after the time limit elapses. The standard time limit for all age groups is 1 hour and 45 minutes from the time of the first pitch of the game 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 (average per games played)
- Lowest single game runs allowed
- Each subsequent lowest single game runs allowed (2<sup>nd</sup> lowest for each team, 3<sup>rd</sup> lowest, etc.)
- High average run differential per games played
- Highest single game run differential
- Each subsequent high single game run differential (2<sup>nd</sup> highest for each team, 3<sup>rd</sup> highest, etc.)
- 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. (Even if all tied teams have not played each other)
  - 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. (Even if all tied teams have not played each other)
  - 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 (least 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 – 15 runs after 4 innings or 10 runs after 5 innings.

**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.

**OFFICIAL SCOREBOOK**

The home team will keep the official scorebook and will be responsible for operating the scoreboard.

**# 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 (Tournament Director'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.

**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; for a 7-inning game the score would be 7-0.

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.

**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 \$100 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:**

Bad sportsmanship and poor behavior from players, coaches, parents and other visitors **will not be tolerated** at Sports Force Parks tournaments. All guests are expected to be respectful of each other, as well as the umpires/referees and tournament officials. Sports Force Parks has the right to remove visitors at anytime if they are deemed to be in violation.

**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, as deemed by the Tournament Director.

**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 and 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 a Sports Force Parks Official) must leave the facility immediately and will automatically be suspended for the team's next game. The Tournament Director may also lengthen the suspension to more games or even 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.

If a player is ejected from a game they may face further suspension.

If a fan or parent is ejected from a game (either by an umpire or a Sports Force Parks Official), they must leave the facility immediately or risk being suspended for the remainder of the event.

**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.