



# **Rules and Procedures**

**2020**

## Introduction

1. Rules governing Williamsburg Senior Softball League (WSSL) play will be in accordance with the USA Softball Association Official Rules of Softball except as revised in this manual to fit WSSL purposes. Where rules in this book are in conflict with USA SOFTBALL rules, the rules in this manual take precedence.

Some rules contained herein are USA SOFTBALL rules, for emphasis, and some are WSSL rules. However, not all USA SOFTBALL rules are in this manual.

2. Senior softball participants are males and females, 50 years or over for men and 40 or older for women, who engage in a recreational endeavor in furtherance of good health, sportsmanship, fellowship and fun. Ages are based on the current calendar year. The minimum age for new players will be decided by a 2/3 majority vote of the Board of Directors prior to the beginning of each season.

3. All references to gender in this publication are in the masculine form for brevity. The participation of women in WSSL is encouraged, appreciated and welcomed; however, USA SOFTBALL Coed Rules are not used.

4. WSSL plays recreational softball in accordance with USA SOFTBALL Official Rules of Softball except as revised in the WSSL Rules and Regulations this manual to fit WSSL purposes. WSSL's play is not defined as Senior Championship Play.

## Rules

### 1. Definitions

1.1. A second home plate, hereafter referred to as the scoring plate, shall be placed eight feet from the back tip of home plate on an extended line from first base. The scoring plate is for use by the offensive team only.

1.2. A strike zone mat will be used. The mat will be seventeen inches wide and twenty-five- and one-half inches long measured from the end of the mat to the tip of each side that abuts against the backside of home plate. The end of the mat that abuts to home plate shall have a "V" shaped notch that will conform to the outline of the back side of the plate.

1.3. A commitment line (no-return line) shall be marked perpendicular to the third base foul line approximately 25 feet from home plate (app 35 feet from third base). (As a rule of thumb this can be the edge of the third base side of the dugout.)

### 2. The Playing Field

2.1 A commitment line, a scoring plate and a strike-zone mat, as set forth above, are definitions that shall be added to the playing field. The playing field shall

have base path distances of approximately 60 - 70 feet and a pitching distance of approximately 40 - 50 feet.

2.2. Ground Rules, when not posted at a diamond or in published form, are based on the mutual understanding of both team managers.

2.3. Normally, the rules that apply to the fields at Williamsburg Parks & Recreation (WPR) fields shall apply to all parks where WSSL may play.

2.4. A double base shall be used at first base. Half of the base shall be white and positioned in fair territory. The other half shall be orange and positioned in foul territory.

2.5. The equipment for each game will be provided by WSSL and will be the responsibility of the managers to bring to the game. At the conclusion of play, all players should secure their own possessions and police the area to assure the field is left uncluttered. The last player to depart the dugout area, usually the manager, should make a cursory check for any equipment and secure the same for his teammates.

### **3. Equipment**

3.1. No shoes with metal cleats or spikes, removable molded or plastic cleats, or hard leather cleats shall be permitted, either in practice or during game play. Official softball shoes or shoes with soft rubber cleats are strongly recommended.

3.2. Any player may wear personally owned regulation shin guards or other protective safety equipment. It is strongly encouraged that pitchers use shin guards and face masks or facemask/helmet combinations. An item of questionable equipment must be okayed/approved on the field by the managers.

3.3. All players shall wear their team shirts or shirts of similar color and are encouraged to wear their league cap.

3.4. Bats must have an ASA or NSA or 1.20bpf certification stamp to be legal. Bats should be inspected and approved by the managers prior to the game. Any batter using an illegal bat after this inspection (i.e., entering the batter's box) shall be declared out and given a warning. A second violation will result in ejection from the game.)

<https://www.teamusa.org/USA-Softball/Certified-Equipment/Equipment-Bats>)

3.5 The official ball for league and tournament play shall be a league supplied, optic (yellow) color, 12", .52 COR softball with a low-compression rating (300 lbs. or less).

3.6 Only WSSL provided softballs will be used during WSSL games and batting practices. The home team for each game shall provide a new ball. Back up game balls shall be of the best quality available.

3.7. Player equipment not currently being used shall be kept in the dugouts. The top of the fence surrounding the playing area is considered part of the playing field; equipment should not be placed on top of the fence.

3.8. Pitching screens are required for use in batting practice the use of a pitching screen during the game will be decided by the mutual consent of the playing managers and both teams shall use the screen if it is used. If used during a game, a ball hit off the pitching screen is considered to be "in play."

#### **4. Players**

4.1. Players are to self-certify their own individual fitness to play the game. If the managers feel that an individual player is not fit to play the game, they may make an appeal to the Commissioner to decide.

#### **4.2. Batting Order, Defensive Innings**

4.2.1. All players arriving to play are to be listed in the scorebook by the manager and shall bat in turn.

4.2.2. Players arriving after the first pitch of a game will be listed at the bottom of the batting order.

4.2.3. A copy of the batting order will be provided, upon request, to the opposing team manager.

4.2.4. Every player on a team's roster who appears for a game on time (first pitch) shall be used as a defensive player for at least three complete innings of a seven-inning game and two complete innings of a five-inning game. Any player who arrives late shall be entered into the game defensively when, in the manager's judgment, that player has warmed-up and is physically prepared to play. Once entered defensively, a player must play at least one half of the game's remaining innings.

4.2.5. While defensive players may be positioned as desired within their usual playing positions, no more than five infielders are allowed at any time during play. The infield dirt area or start of the outfield grass area ordinarily is the dividing line. Since some fields have deep infields, the managers will make this determination during the pre-game ground rules discussion. When umpiring their own game, team managers, through mutual consent, will resolve this issue.

4.2.6. Players may leave the defense and return later to the same or different position. However, all players (except any player injured or unable to continue to play) shall bat in the order established prior to the start of the game. No more than eleven defensive players shall play on the field at any one time.

4.2.7. A player, coach or umpire who is bleeding shall be prohibited from participating further in the game until appropriate treatment can be administered. Once bleeding has stopped that player may reenter the game

4.3. Minimum Players required Managers should know at the end of a game how many players are expected for the next scheduled game. Due to unforeseen circumstances that number may change. A board member will canvass managers before games begin to assess the number of players in attendance and endeavor to move players from one team to another in an effort to balance lineups.

**4.3.1 There will be no forfeits based on lack of players.** Every effort will be made to have sufficient players to field two complete teams for each game. The managers will determine how many players it takes to play a game.

## 5. The Game

5.1 All games will be played under a master schedule provided by the league and posted on the web site. Rain outs will be rescheduled by the league.

5.2 The first team listed on the schedule is the home team. The first game visitors are the home team for the second game the home team for the first game shall occupy the first base dugout. Teams will not change dugouts for the second game.

5.3 Games are scheduled to start at 9:00 a.m., but not later than 9:15 a.m. By mutual consent, managers may agree to start earlier, but not sooner than 8:50 am Batting practice should start 30 minutes prior to the scheduled game start time.

5.4 Double-header games are scheduled as seven-inning games. No new inning may begin after 11:50 a.m. For this purpose, a new inning begins at the time the last out is made in the previous inning. If time for the second game is too short, a five-inning game may be played by agreement of the managers prior to the start of the game.

5.5 If the score is tied at the end of regulation play, an overtime procedure will apply. Starting in the top of the first extra inning (typically the 8<sup>th</sup> inning), and each half inning thereafter until the game is concluded, the offensive team shall begin its turn at bat with the player who batted last in the previous inning being placed on second base. A courtesy runner cannot be used for this player unless/until he makes it safely to third base. There are no run limits in extra innings. Should the score be tied at the end of one extra inning, then the game will end in a tie.

5.6 In the event of a tie game (due to weather or time limits) each team will be credited with a tie in the standings.

5.7 When an unusual or unavoidable circumstance occurs (e.g. excessive heat, poor playing conditions, etc.), a game may be shortened or cancelled (prior to the start of the game) by mutual consent of both opposing team managers. Should there be disagreements, the managers should err on the side of safety. If the game does not constitute a complete game, managers must notify all involved players and the Deputy Commissioner. There shall be no regular season

suspension of games. (Suspension in this case shall mean terminating play with the intent to complete the game at a later date). Rescheduling will be the responsibility of the league.

5.8 The game format will be as follows: All batters will start with a one ball and one strike pitch count. As necessary, one courtesy foul will be allowed on a third strike foul (a foul on the courtesy pitch is an out). The batter will be out on a called third strike or a swing and a miss on the third strike pitch. There will be no additional courtesy pitch.

5.8.1 A foul tip is defined as a batted ball that travels sharply and directly from the bat to the catcher's hand(s) or glove/mitt and is legally caught by the catcher. A batted ball that travels with a visible arc (in the judgement of the umpire) from the bat is not a foul tip and, if legally caught by the catcher, shall be ruled an out."

## 5.9 Inning Run Limits

5.9.1 The maximum number of runs a team may score is five (5) runs per inning. When the 5th run crosses the scoring plate, all play shall cease for that half of the inning. An exception to this rule is stated in 5.9.2.

5.9.2 During the last inning of the game, and any extra innings, either team may score an unlimited number of runs. Both managers, before the start of the last inning, shall come to an agreement as to which inning constitutes the last inning of a game shorter than seven innings (e.g., fourth in a five-inning game). This is particularly important in the last inning of a double header so that play can be completed in a timely fashion.

5.10 A run ahead (mercy) rule is enforced when one team has a lead of 15 or more runs after five innings or four innings of a five-inning game. Complete innings must be played unless the home team scores the run ahead limit while at bat. When the visiting team reaches the limit in the top half of the inning, the home team must have their opportunity to bat in the bottom half of the inning.

### ***To expedite play:***

***Pregame batting practice should end promptly at 8:50AM to enable first games to begin at 9:00 AM. This ten-minute interval between the end of batting practice and the first pitch allows time for the disassembling of pitching screens and for managers to brief their teams before they take the field. Games should be limited to 75 minutes from the first pitch. An inning starting prior to the 75 minute mark may be completed. No inning, include an extra inning, should start after the 75 minute mark. The Home Team Manager is responsible for monitoring the game time.***

***Pitchers should take no more than 1 minute to deliver no more than 3 warm up pitches between innings or when relieving another pitcher.***

***Substitute players should be alerted to the innings and positions they will play.***

***Batters, on deck batters, umpires and base coaches should be in place promptly.***

***Courtesy runners should be ready to enter the game quickly.***

***Teams should be encouraged to go on and off the field promptly between innings.***

***Infield and outfield throws should be eliminated after the third inning. An exception is a player entering a new position in the infield in which case he should be permitted to take only three throws.***

***The break between games should be no more than 10 minutes.***

## **6. Pitching Regulations**

6.1. The pitching area shall be properly designated with a pitching plate. The playing field may not have a pitching mound. The pitcher may stand up to 7 feet behind the pitching plate to pitch.

6.2. Legal pitches striking any portion of the strike mat or home plate (including the black edge) will be strikes. The height of a legal pitch from the playing surface must be between 6 feet and 12 feet.

*If, in the umpire's judgment, the pitched ball is less than 6 feet or more than 12 feet above the playing surface, the umpire shall call "Illegal Pitch" and call a ball, unless the batter swings at that pitch, in which case it is in play.*

6.3. "No Pitch" shall be declared when the pitcher pitches before a base runner has retouched his base after a foul ball is declared and the ball is dead.

6.4. The pitcher shall not bounce the ball or cause any distractions prior to delivering the ball. Each infraction will result in a "called ball."

6.5 **Intentional Walk** A pitcher may intentionally walk a batter by intentionally throwing 3 consecutive balls. If, in the umpire's discretion, it is deemed as an "Intentional Walk," the umpire shall inform the managers that an Intentional Walk has occurred for that batter. On any subsequent at bat for that same batter, if the umpire determines that a second "Intentional Walk" has occurred, then the batter will be awarded 2<sup>nd</sup> base and all batters on base will advance accordingly.

## **7. Batting**

7.1. Players must bat in the order in which their names appear in the scorebook.

7.2. If a player must leave the game for any reason and is not returning to the game, the player is not considered out during subsequent turns at bat. The player

may not later reenter the game, unless departure was due to the “no blood rule” Rule 4.2.7 above.

7.3. If a player/batter is injured during his time at bat, and cannot continue to bat, he shall be called out.

## 8. Base Running

8.1. On any fair batted ball hit over the fence for a home run, the batter and all runners are credited with a run. The batter and any runners on base are not required to run the bases.

8.2. Base-stealing is not permitted. A runner may leave his base when a pitched ball is batted, but he must return to that base immediately after each pitch not hit by the batter.

8.3. Players overrunning second or third base are in play and may be tagged out. Sliding into second or third base is permitted.

8.4. Intentionally sliding or diving into first base or into the scoring plate when scoring, is not permitted. Players doing so shall be declared out. A player may slide or dive into second and/or third base and when returning to any base.

8.5. Courtesy runners may be used for a batter from home and for a runner who has achieved a base. The base runner being substituted for by the courtesy runner may leave the base and the field of play immediately after time is called for a courtesy runner.

8.5.1 Batters with chronic issues or sustaining an injury during a game may be allowed a courtesy runner from home plate. The courtesy runner must start from a position parallel to the scoring plate and may not "run" for any other player during the same inning, whether safe or out at first. The courtesy runner from home MAY NOT start running until the batter hits the ball. If this occurs, the runner will be called out.

For any given game, a coach may designate up to three courtesy runners from home for up to three designated batters prior to the game. The coach should let the opposing coach know who are the designated batters. Any courtesy runner may be use for a designated batter each time he comes to bat. The only exception can be if there is an injury to another player (not a designated batter) during the game. In this case, one of the players who is a designated batter, must now run to first for themselves and a courtesy runner may be used for the new designated batter. A person who serves as a courtesy runner from home may NOT serve as a courtesy runner for any person on base during the inning when they are serving as a courtesy runner from home.

8.6. Once a batter reaches base, a courtesy runners is allowed. There is no substitution allowed when a courtesy runner from home is used

8.6.1. Any player on the line-up sheet may be used as a courtesy runner. Substitute players (from another team) may be allowed to be used as courtesy runners since they are now a temporary part of the team.

8.6.2. A courtesy runner is in the game when he touches the base.

8.6.3. A courtesy runner whose turn at bat comes when he is on base will be out. He will be removed from the base and come to bat. A second courtesy runner cannot be substituted at this time.

8.6.4. Each player may be a courtesy runner only once per inning.

8.6.5. A courtesy runner may not run for an existing courtesy runner except for injury.

8.6.6. A runner who is replaced with a courtesy runner may not be used as a courtesy runner for the remainder of the inning.

8.6.7. A runner who violates rules 8.6.4. through 8.6.6. will be called out and removed from the base.

8.7. A batter-runner must use the orange base and the defending player must use the white base on the initial attempt to reach first base when there is a play on the batter-runner at first. A batter-runner shall be declared out if he initially touches only the white base when there is a play on him at first base. No appeal is necessary. (Exception: see 8.9.) After the base has been initially reached, the base becomes 15" by 30" (i.e., both the white and orange portions) for all subsequent play.

8.8. If there is a force play by an infielder on the batter- runner, who touched only the white portion and collides with the fielder about to catch a thrown ball while on the white, interference is ruled, the ball is dead, the batter-runner is out, and all the other runners are returned to the base last occupied at the time of interference.

8.9. When a defensive player blocks the batter-runner's path to the orange base the batter-runner may touch the white base in order to avoid a collision. However, on any force-out attempt from the foul side of first base, the defense and the batter-runner can use either the white or the orange base.

8.10. Once a runner's foot has touched the ground on or past the commitment line, the runner may not re-cross it in the direction of third base. The runner must continue on toward the scoring plate. Violation shall result in the runner being declared out. The ball remains live and no appeal is necessary.

8.11. To score, a base runner must touch the scoring plate before a defensive player in possession of the ball touches any portion of the home plate. Stepping only on the strike plate by the defensive player does not constitute an out.

8.12. After a base runner has crossed the commitment line, he may be retired at

home plate only by a defensive player in possession of the ball contacting home plate before the runner touches the scoring plate. Once he has crossed the commitment line, a runner tagged by a defensive player in possession of the ball shall not be out.

8.12.1. If the runner touches or crosses over home plate (not the scoring plate), he shall be out and the ball shall remain in play. No appeal is necessary.

8.12.2. If the runner has passed the commitment line, continues to run on the original foul line, and interferes with the fielder taking the throw at, and in contact with the original home plate, a dead ball shall be declared and the runner is out.

8.12.3. If a runner passes the commitment line and is struck in fair territory by a ball thrown by a defensive player, the runner shall be out, the ball shall be dead, and other runners shall return to the last previously touched base. No appeal is necessary.

8.13. The only outfielder who can throw out a runner at first base on a batted ball is the short fielder. If the runner rounds first base in fair territory, then any outfielder may make a throw to first base to attempt to throw out the runner.

8.14. Interference, Obstruction and Infield Fly are discussed in the following three sections to promote a better understanding and help the umpire make the correct call. See the USA SOFTBALL Official Rules of Softball for the complete Rules and Points of Emphasis.

8.14.1. Interference is defined as the act of an offensive player or team member that impedes, hinders, or confuses a defensive player attempting to execute a play. It may be in the form of physical contact, verbal distraction, visual distraction or any type of distraction, which would hinder the fielder in the execution of the play. Defensive players must be given the opportunity to field the ball anywhere on the playing field and throw the ball without being hindered.

A runner going into second or third base during a double play attempt must avoid the throw by veering out of the throw line or sliding. In the umpire's judgment, if a runner interferes with a fielder attempting to throw the ball to prevent a double play, the immediate trailing runner shall also be called out.

8.14.2. Obstruction is the act of the fielder (1) not in possession of the ball or (2) not in the act of fielding a batted ball, which impedes the progress of a batter-runner or runner who is legally running the bases.

A fake tag is a form of obstruction which occurs when a fielder who neither has the ball nor is about to receive the ball deceives the runner, impeding his progress. A fake tag is considered unsportsmanlike and the defensive player is subject to ejection from the game. Bases are awarded as deemed fair by the umpire.

8.14.3. An infield fly is a fair fly ball (not including a line drive), which can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort when first and second bases, or first, second and third bases are occupied before two are out. Any defensive player who takes a position in the infield at the start of the pitch shall be considered an infielder for the

purpose of this rule. The infield fly is ruled when the ball reaches the highest point based on the position of the closest infielder regardless who makes the play. When it seems apparent that a batted ball will be an infield fly, the umpire shall immediately declare: "Infield Fly" and the batter is out. The ball is live and runners may advance at the risk of the ball being caught. The runners can tag up and advance once the batted ball is touched (prior to catching), the same as on any fly ball. If a declared "Infield Fly" becomes a foul ball, it is treated the same as any foul.

8.14.3.1 If an umpire fails to call an obvious infield fly and the ball is not caught (or intentionally dropped), the procedure to correct the situation is to call time after all play has stopped, declare the batter out and return all runners to their bases. This will be done at the discretion of the umpire.

8.15 On an errant throw when the ball goes into foul territory and hits a fence at first, third or home, the maximum any runner may advance is one base. Once an errant throw hits a fence in foul territory, then the ball is dead.

## 9. Dead Ball —Ball In Play

9.1. The first third-strike foul shall be a courtesy foul and the batter will be entitled to another pitch. A second third strike foul is an out. Runners may tag up and advance at their own risk on a caught foul ball.

9.2. A batted ball bounding over or striking any portion of the white base shall be fair, and a batted ball bounding over or striking the orange base shall be called foul. If any portion of the ball is over the white base, the ball is fair.

9.3. If a ball leaves the playing field (such as going under the fence), the defensive player should not touch the ball and should raise both arms as a signal to the umpire. The umpire will then go to the location and decide. Failure to follow this procedure will result in the ball remaining in play.

9.4. On overthrows where the ball goes out of play or becomes blocked, runners shall be awarded two bases from the last base touched at the time the ball left the thrower's hand. The runner's direction has no bearing on the award (i.e., if the runner has rounded a base and is returning to that base when the ball is thrown he is awarded two additional bases). If a runner touches the next base and returns to his original base, he is awarded two bases, from the original base. If two runners are between the same two bases, the two additional bases are governed by the position of the first runner (i.e., two runners between first and second shall be awarded second and third).

When a fielder loses possession of the ball while attempting to tag a runner and the ball rolls into a dead ball area or becomes blocked, runners shall be awarded one base from the last base touched at the time the ball enters the dead ball area or becomes blocked.

## 10. Umpires

Managers shall authorize players from their team to assume umpire duties. The managers shall not umpire, except in unusual circumstances (and agreed upon by the opposing manager), as they may be called on to resolve disputes.

The team managers have the authority to resolve game conflicts except games played under protest. Managers should make every effort to avoid overruling an umpire's judgment calls.

## 11. Protests

Protests will not be considered if they are based solely on a decision involving the judgment of an umpire. Protests that shall be considered are:

Misinterpretation of a playing rule,

Failure of an umpire to apply the correct rule to a given situation, or

Failure of an umpire to impose the correct penalty for a given violation

The notification of intent to protest must be made to the umpire and the opposing manager before the next legal or illegal pitch. The formal written protest should contain the following information: the date, time and location of the game; and all essential facts involved in the matter protested.

The official written protest must be filed within 48 hours to the Commissioner

## 12. Reporting Scores

12.1 The manager of the team scheduled as home team for the first game is responsible to report the game score on the game day, in accordance with the instructions of the Deputy Commissioner

12.2 Managers must report all injuries and their perceived severity to the Deputy Commissioner whenever an injury occurs. Any time a game is stopped to inquire about the health of a player, an injury will have been deemed to have occurred.

## 13. Player Substitutions from Other Teams

Players from other teams may be used as substitutes only when a team does NOT have 12 players for any given game. Under these circumstances, a coach should request from the Substitution Committee (SC) the number of players needed two days before the game when they will be needed. The coach should designate if he needs infielders, outfielders or a pitcher. The SC will assign players from a pool to show up for a given game and the coaches will select players from the pool on an alternating basis decided by a coin flip. If a regular player shows up during the course of the game, then he must be inserted for the substitute and bat in that position. In the event that a team is missing a player from a critical position (pitcher or short stop), then a manager may request a substitute even if 12 players are going to be present for a game.

Substitutes must bat in the lineup after all players on the roster have batted.

During the course of the game, and in the event of an injury, a substitute player may be used who is not in the game and the injured player must leave the game for its remainder.

Players who wish to be eligible for player pool for any given date should submit their names each week to the SC indicating their interest in playing as a substitute on any given date(s).

All substitute players must be from the roster of one of the WSSL teams. At NO TIME may anybody play who is not a registered WSSL player play in a WSSL game or practice. (for liability reasons)

#### **14. Abuses**

Any abuse of the foregoing rules shall be reported immediately to the Commissioner

#### **WSSL Code of Conduct**

Members are required to abide by the WSSL Creed and to comply with all WSSL rules and policies when involved in any WSSL activity or when representing WSSL in any capacity.

No member shall refuse to abide by an umpire's decision or, in the case of disputed rulings, the final decision negotiated by the competing game managers.

No member will be allowed to participate in WSSL play if he has in his possession alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs or appears on the field of play under the obvious influence of such. No member shall engage in using threatening or insulting language or gestures, or any abusive tactics.

No member shall use rough tactics against any person. Similarly, no member shall violently throw or use any object against another individual that might cause physical harm to that individual.

No member shall engage in any physical attack, including shoving or hitting, against another person.

A member is liable for immediate removal from play and temporary suspension from further play by not adhering to this Code of Conduct.

Managers on the field have responsibility for handling violations of the Code of Conduct. Should violations occur, managers may immediately remove such members from the game in progress (and subsequent game scheduled that day, if applicable), and report the incident as soon as possible to the Commissioner.