



2021 Durham Softball League Rule Book

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LEAGUE PHILOSOPHY

The Durham Softball League is a co-ed, recreational, adult, slow-pitch softball league. Participants should play to have fun, make friends, get exercise, and help local charities. Players must temper their competitive spirit with good sportsmanship and always attempt to avoid injury, both for themselves and others. Individuals who cannot translate these goals into attitudes and actions on the field should not play in this league.

Participants in Durham Softball must recognize that, as in any sport, there is a potential for significant injury. Players should also recognize that some of their teammates and opponents might have little or no experience playing softball, which makes injuries more likely. For their own safety, all players should learn proper techniques of batting, fielding and base running, and instruct less skilled players in the proper techniques.

ALL PLAYERS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR PLAYING THE GAME AS SAFELY AS POSSIBLE.

It is the responsibility of the team captains and umpires to monitor the conduct of the players and to take appropriate actions to correct objectionable behavior. Teammates of the offending players should exert pressure to stop offensive behavior. Peer pressure is our most effective means of enforcement. Umpires are charged with ejecting players if, in their opinion, the situation warrants it.

Permission to use the playing fields is contingent upon our respect for the facility and our behavior. You are expected to remove all trash from the field when you leave.

CODE OF CONDUCT

- The base runner and the fielders have a shared responsibility to avoid collisions. See the Playing Rules section for further details.
- Abusive language and/or profanity and vulgar behavior will not be tolerated and can result in player and/or coaches being suspended.
- Individuals will not insult opposing players or umpires.
- Players should park only in the designated parking lots. This includes motorcycles and vans. Do not park on the grass.
- Do not broadcast loud music. Audio equipment is not allowed on the field.
- Fighting constitutes automatic suspension for one calendar year.
- No smoking or unused equipment is allowed in the playing area.
- No alcoholic beverages or grills are allowed at the field.



LEAGUE PROCEDURES

All official correspondence with the league should be sent through e-mail to the Ryan Mentock (Commissioner) at play@durhamssoftball.com.

- Rules regarding team rosters and game day lineups:
- Rosters will be limited to a maximum of 20 players and a minimum of 13 players.
- Players are only allowed to play on only one team in the league.
- Players may be added or deleted from rosters with the Commissioner's permission.
- Waivers are mandatory, with no exceptions, and need to be received before any player participates in their first game of the season.
- Any player that participates in a game who is not on that team's roster or has not signed a waiver will cause their team to forfeit the game. Contact your commissioner via e-mail if there is any doubt.

The umpire will keep the official score, but both teams are encouraged to also keep track of their runs scored to help verify outcomes. After the game, the captains should confirm the final score with the umpire before leaving the field. The umpire will then update the official standings.

PLAYER SAFETY

Safety Regulations

- It is the base runner's responsibility to run around fielders to avoid collisions. Umpires will not call such a diversion by a runner an out for running out of the base path. The runner may be called out for running out of the base path if, in the judgment of the umpire, he/she was doing so only to avoid the tag.
- A runner should make every attempt to avoid a collision with a fielder in possession of or making a play on the ball. If a collision does occur, the runner will be called out if he/she could have avoided the collision. The runner is out even if the fielder loses control of the ball. This rule especially applies to plays at home plate. If collision occurs and is called so by the umpire the ball is dead and no other runners can advance.
- If a runner deliberately and forcefully runs into a fielder, the runner is called out and will be ejected immediately.
- Some collisions are inevitable. When a runner sees that a collision is inevitable, he should slide or slow down. A runner can be called out, but not ejected, if he/she did not slide or otherwise try to reduce the impact of an inevitable collision. If the runner slides, he might be tagged out, but will not be called out because of this rule.



- A runner must try to avoid a collision or reduce the force of an inevitable collision. A runner may be called out because of the no-collision rule. This rule will be enforced at the umpire's discretion.
- The fielder also has a responsibility to avoid collision whenever possible. If the fielder appears to purposefully contact a runner, according to the umpire, that runner will be awarded an extra base and the fielder may be ejected.
- These rules are not meant to apply to incidental contact, according to the umpire.

Player Injuries

- If a player is injured and cannot continue to play a team may replace that player with a substitute player from the roster without penalty. The injured player may no longer participate in play once replaced. If the injury results in a team only having only 7 remaining participating players that team will forfeit the game.

Jewelry

- For safety, no jewelry is allowed, including watches, earrings, or bracelets. There is an exception for wedding bands and necklaces that can be kept under the shirt collar, which are allowed. Failure to comply will result in an out or ejection.

Thrown Bats

- The first player to throw a bat during a game will be issued a warning that will apply to their entire team. Any additional thrown bat by that team during the game will result in an automatic dead ball out for the batter. A thrown bat will be defined as any situation where the batter endangers the catcher, umpire, or on-deck batter with their bat after a swing.

Restricted Fielding Area

- Infielders may not be inside the base lines prior to the batter contacting the ball.
- Outfielders may not be on the infield dirt prior to the batter contacting the ball.
- A player's status as an "Infielder" or "Outfielder" is determined based on where the player was placed during the previous batter.
- If a fielder enters this area prior to the batter's contact, the ball will be declared dead and the batter will be awarded 1st Base automatically.

Pitcher's Safety

- After releasing the pitch, the Pitcher will create a safety zone:
 - The center of the zone will be a line from home plate to 2nd base.
 - The width of the zone will be the pitcher's horizontal reach with both arms.
 - The height of the zone will be the pitcher's reach, above their head.



- The Safety Zone will be determined as the Pitcher releases the pitch.
- Any batted ball that hits the Safety Zone in the air, is an OUT.
- The ball does not have to be caught; it only needs to enter the zone in the air.
- The pitcher can defend themselves in any way.
- If the ball hits the ground prior to reaching the pitcher, the hit is legal and the ball is live.
- The Umpire will make a judgement call to determine if the ball entered the zone.
- After ruling that the batter is out because they hit the ball through the Safety Zone, the play will be called dead and runners will return to their base.
- If the Pitcher abandons the Safety Zone prior to the Batter contacting the Pitch, the Safety Zone shall not be enforced.
 - eg. If the Pitcher throws the pitch, then leaves the zone, the zone is void and the Batter can hit the ball through the middle.

GAME RULES

Valid Game Conditions

- A game is official if a team has 8 or more players, with at least 2 women players.
- If a team only has 8 players, the opposing team may volunteer to supply a catcher whose only duty is to return pitched balls.

Valid Starting Rosters

- There must be a minimum of 8 players to start a game, with no maximum.
- If the team only has 1 woman, the game is Forfeited.
 - The two Teams may still scrimmage, but the game's outcome will be a 7 to 0 victory for the winning Team.
- Valid starting rosters vary depending on how many players arrive for the game.
- If the team only has 2 women, the game can continue under these conditions:
 - **Defensive Lineup:** 6+ Males, 2 Women, Any player as Catcher
 - **Offensive Lineup:** e.g. M-M-M-M-M-F-M-M-M-M-M-F
 - Team takes an automatic out at the start of every inning.
 - If a 3rd woman arrives mid-game, they may be inserted into the lineup at the end of the current half inning. This would end the automatic out and the game would proceed, as normal.
- If the team has 3+ women, the game can be played, as normal.
 - **Defensive Lineup:** 7+ Males, 3+ Women
 - **Offensive Lineup:** e.g. M-M-M-M-F-M-M-M-M-F-M-M-M-M-F
- A maximum of 10 defensive players are permitted on the field at any time.



Lineup Order

- There can be no more than 4 men batting in a row, including from the bottom to the top of the order.
- For example, if a team has 12 men and 4 women and is batting the whole team, the order cannot be as follows:
 - WRONG: MMW₁MMW₂MMM₃MMW₄MMM
 - This is disallowed because there would be 5 men batting in a row (bottom to top of lineup).
 - RIGHT: MMW₁MMW₂MMM₃MMM₄MMW₅MMW₆MMW₇MMW₈MMW₉MMW₁₀MMW₁₁MMW₁₂
 - In this case the woman's place must be moved back to prevent 5 men from ever batting in a row.

Batting Count

- 3 strikes are an out, 4 balls is a walk.
- There is a courtesy foul in effect. After the second strike, a batter gets one free foul ball.
- If the batter hits a 2nd foul ball with two strikes, the batter is out.
- In all games, each batter will begin his or her at-bat with a 1-1 count.

Pitching Arc

- This is a slow pitch softball league.
- The ball must be pitched to meet each of the following conditions:
 - Moderate speed
 - Tossed from below the hip
 - Reach above a peak arc between a minimum of 6' from the ground
 - Stay below a peak arc of 12' feet from the ground.
- A pitch that does not meet all four of these criteria will be declared an illegal pitch and called a Ball.

Strike Zone

- The strike zone is defined by an extended home plate "Strike Zone Mat," whose width is the normal plate width and depth extending approximately 2.5' behind the front of the plate. Any pitch landing partially or wholly in this area is a strike.
- A pitched ball that lands on any part of the plate, or the Strike Zone mat, including the black border, is a STRIKE.

Bunting

- Bunting, or chopping, is not allowed. Attempts to bunt or chop will be an automatic out; a dead ball will be declared, and runners will return to their bases.



Stealing

- Base stealing is not allowed.
- Leading-off from the base is not allowed.
- Pickoff plays are also not allowed.
- If a runner leaves the bag prior to the ball crossing the plate, the runner will be called out.

Double First Base

- The intent of the double first base is to reduce the chance of a collision between the first baseman and the runner during the initial force out attempt by giving them separate targets, the white part for the first baseman, and the orange part for the runner. Every runner must try to avoid a collision at any base, including both the orange and white parts of the double first base, as described in the section of the Playing Rules regarding collisions.
- A batted ball hitting or bounding over the white portion is declared fair and a batted ball hitting or bounding over the orange portion is declared foul.
- On any force out attempt from the fair side of first base, the defense must use the white portion and the batter/runner the orange portion. The batter/runner is out when there is a play being made at first base and the batter/runner touches only the white portion.
- On any force out attempt from the foul side of first base, or an errant throw pulling the defense off the base into foul ground, the defense and the batter/runner can either use the white or orange portion.
- On extra base hits or balls hit to the outfield, the batter/runner may touch the white or orange portion.
- After the batter/runner passes first base, whether overrunning or toward second base, the color no longer has significance, and the batter/runner can return to either part of the double base.

"Walked Man" Rule

- If a man is walked (intentionally or not) with less than 2 outs and the next batter is a woman, the male batter automatically advances to second base and the woman batter is up to bat.
- If a man is walked (intentionally or not) with 2 outs, the woman batter has the option to bat or to take a walk.

Ground Rule Double

- If a batted ball rolls under the outfield fence it will be ruled a double; the fielder should raise his hand indicating to the umpire this has occurred.
- All runners on base before the hit will be awarded two bases.



Courtesy / Pinch Runners

- Each team is allowed 1 pinch runner per inning, for any reason.
- If a 2nd pinch runner is required, the team must take an automatic out.
- Another male must pinch run for any male. Another woman must pinch run for a woman.
- The pinch runner can be anyone on the team of the same gender, but the team incurs an automatic out if the pinch runner is still on base when their turn to bat comes up.

Obstruction

- The runner is awarded an extra base if obstructed by a fielder in the base path, unless the fielder is trying to defensively field the ball or has the ball in his possession ready to tag the runner.

Infield Fly Rule

- The infield fly rule is in effect. The infield fly rule is described as when there are fewer than two outs and there is a force play at third base (i.e., when there are runners at first AND second base, or the bases are loaded), the batter will be called out immediately.

Home Run Rule

- There is a limit of 4 over-the-fence home runs per team.
- Any over-the-fence hits after that will result in an out.
- Inside-the-park home runs do not count against the 4 HR limit.

Mercy Rule

- Games will be considered over due to the Mercy Rule under the following conditions:
 - One team is winning by 20 or more runs after 3 full innings.
 - One team is winning by 15 or more runs after 4 full innings.
 - One team is winning by 10 or more runs after 5 full innings.

Additional Hitters

- If a team starts with a full lineup (10 players in the field with at least 3 women), it can choose to have a 10-position batting order or to have a longer batting order including any number of Additional Hitters so long as this rule is fulfilled.
- Any numbers of Additional Hitters are allowed, if they maintain the MMMW format.



- All players that are in the batting order must play at least two innings on defense.

Defensive Players

- All players that play on defense must be in the batting order.
- There is no “designated hitter” rule like there is in Major League Baseball.

Adding Players During Game

- Additional players can be added to the end of a batting lineup after the game begins if a player shows up late to the game.
- Substitutions and late entry on offense are done immediately. Once the new player shows up to the field, they can enter the game on defense after the current batter.

Playing Time Requirements

- All players that are eligible, able, and willing to play are required to have a spot in the batting lineup for every game.
- All players are required to play at least two innings in the field.
- Any player may go in and out of the defensive lineup an unlimited number of times, provided the player still occupies the same batting position whenever he or she is in the lineup.

LEAGUE RULES

Field Details

- Distance from back apex of home plate to the front of the pitching rubber is 50 feet.
- Distance from home plate apex to base outside corner is 70 feet.
- The black border that outlines the plate is considered part of Home Plate.
- Home team occupies the dugout on the first base sideline.

Equipment

- All players must wear close toed shoes, no sandals, boots or bare feet.
- Only official softball equipment may be used.
- All Bats must be ASA certified.
- Bats will be inspected by the umpires to insure they meet specifications set forth by ASA.



- Any player that is caught using a banned bat in competition will be an automatic out, ejected from the game, and suspended 1 more game. The coach will receive the same suspension as their player.
- Metal spikes are NOT allowed; failure to comply will result in ejection.

Game Balls

- All Game Balls must follow these specification:
 - 12", Synthetic, Max .52 COR, Max 300 lbs. Compression.
- Game Balls will be distributed by the umpire each game.

Tournament / Playoff Format

- The playoff brackets for each league will be determined based on the number of teams in each league.
- In a 12-team league:
 - The Top 8 teams advance to a single elimination tournament to decide the Champion.
 - The Bottom 4 teams advance to a Consolation Tournament.
- In a 14-team league:
 - With only 1-week for playoffs in Summer 2021, we're playing a modified schedule from a standard 2-week playoff format.
 - The **1, 2, 3, and 4** teams advance to a single elimination tournament to decide the Champion.
 - The **5, 6, 7, and 8** teams advance to a single elimination tournament to decide the First Consolation.
 - The **9, 10, 11, and 12** teams advance to a single elimination tournament to decide the Second Consolation.
 - The **13 and 14** teams advance to a single elimination tournament to decide the Third Consolation.

Tie-Breakers

- If two or more teams are tied at the end of the season, the following tie breaker(s) will be used to determine the regular season champion and seeding for the tournament:
 - The team with the best record in head-to head competition.
 - The team with the most runs scored in head-to-head competition.
 - The team with the best run differential, overall.
 - The team with the most runs scored, overall.



GAME TIMES & SCHEDULING

Game Starting Times

- For Summer 2021, official starting times for all games will be:
 - 10:00am, 11:10am, 12:20pm; 1:30pm; 2:40pm; 3:50pm; 5:00pm
- The Home team will take the field two minutes before the start of the game.
 - If a team does not have enough players to start the game on time, they are allowed up to a 5-minute grace period to field a full roster.
 - If a team cannot field a valid starting lineup after 5 minutes, the team will forfeit the game. The teams can then play a scrimmage game for fun.
- Regardless of when the game starts, no full inning shall begin more than 60 minutes from the game's original starting time.
- A single game will have an expected duration of 1 hour.
- The umpire will give a 10-minute warning for the end of game time.

Rainouts

- Before 9:00am on game day, in the event of unplayable field conditions, the head umpire and Commissioner will declare a rainout by sending an email to the league. If the umpire rules the field unplayable at game time, the game will be declared a rainout and rescheduled.
- If the game is in progress, the umpire has the right to suspend play due to rain, lightning, darkness, or unplayable field conditions.
- If a game is stopped after 3 complete innings, or 2 ½ if the home team is winning, then the game is official. If a game is stopped before 3 innings, the game may be resumed where it left off.
- Games that are suspended due to rain or darkness are resumed at the point they were suspended. A separate set of players may play in the resumed game, but the male-woman sequence in the original batting order should be maintained in the resumed game, or as close as practical, through the first eight positions of the batting order.
- The league commissioners will reschedule all cancelled or suspended games. The league will notify the teams involved through the web site. If a rained-out game cannot be played before the end of the season, then each team is awarded +0.5 points in the league standings.

Forfeits

- If a team must cancel a game for any reason, they must inform commissioner and the other team at least 1 week before the game via e-mail. Any later notice will result in a forfeit.



- The team responsible for calling a forfeit prior to the scheduled game time, must inform the league commissioner, the team effected and the head umpire of the decision in the event prior to game time.
- Forfeits will result in a 7-0 score in favor of the wining team.

UMPIRING & ARGUMENTS

Umpires

- Umpires will be supplied by Durham Softball.
- Umpires will discuss ground rules before the game starts.
- Email is the preferred method of contact.

Arguments

- Judgment calls cannot be argued.
- All decisions of the umpires are FINAL.
- Rules interpretations may be challenged, but only by team captains. Players are not allowed to discuss matters with umpires.
- There is a protest rule. A coach may protest a game if and only if one of the two following circumstances occurs:
 - An opposing team has players on the field that are found not to be on the roster.
 - An opposing team uses illegal equipment.
- All formal protests need to be emailed to the commissioners no later than 24 hours after the completion of the game. The email must contain the reason for the protest and the circumstances of the situation. The protest will be reviewed by the commissioners.
 - If the protest is found to be upheld, the protesting team will be rewarded a victory and the team that was found to be in violation will be given a loss.
- If an umpire incorrectly interprets the rules, the commissioners should be notified in writing via email.
 - The outcome of the game cannot be changed but the league will try to clarify the rule, especially to the umpire who incorrectly applied it.

Ejections

- The umpires and commissioners have the right to eject any person from a recreational facility within their jurisdiction.
- Umpires should report ejections to the commissioner.
- Any player or coach ejected from a game will not be eligible to play in their team's next game.



- Any player ejected from two games will be suspended for the remainder of the season, including tournaments.
- Any ejected player or participant who does not leave the field within two minutes or who continues to harass other participants shall cause the game to be forfeited by his/her team.
- Minor violations may result in a warning, one time only, from the umpire.

Tiered Warning System

One of the best things about our league is the high-level of sportsmanship that all our teams show. Our players understand the purpose and spirit of the league, and it shows on the field. Still, we must account for the possibility that discipline will be required.

- **Strike 1: In-Game Warning**
 - If your actions are disrespectful or unsportsmanlike enough to cause an escalated action by the umpire, you will receive your first strike. You may remain in the game and continue playing in the league, on a one-year probation.
- **Strike 2: Ejected From Game**
 - If you commit a second act of unsportsmanlike conduct in a one-year period, you will be removed from the current game, but will be allowed to play in your team's next game.
- **Strike 3: Ejected From League**
 - If you commit a third act of unsportsmanlike conduct in a two-year period, you will be removed from the current game and be forced to leave the league. You will not be allowed to register for future seasons.

LEAGUE CONTACT

- Ryan Mentock, Commissioner
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