



Empire Softball Rulebook

MODIFIED

Revised 3/8/2018

Where applicable, these rules supersede those in the USSSA rulebook.

Age 18 and over only.

Managers are strongly suggested to maintain a copy of this rulebook at every game in order to settle any field disputes as they occur.

The managers of each team are the only people allowed to communicate with the umpire or scorekeeper regarding a missed call or disputed play – no exceptions. Players that have an issue with an umpire must refer to their manager.

Each manager is required to have at the field, for every game, a basic medical kit which includes ice packs, peroxide and bandages at a minimum.

In leagues or divisions without official scorekeepers, managers are required to maintain accurate scorebooks, submit scores in a timely manner, and be willing to present scorebooks to the league coordinators upon request.

All players must have signed the team roster form in order to be considered an eligible player. Teams must submit completed roster forms to the league by the designated date in order to maintain an official team roster. All players and coaches must adhere to the Empire Softball Code of Conduct at all times.

The League Coordinators maintain the right to interpret, add or modify any information in this rulebook at their discretion, at any point during the season.

Direct any rulebook questions to Empire Softball League Coordinators:

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EQUIPMENT/BATS

- Bats must be approved and official – with the new USSSA stamp.
- All bats may be inspected by the umpire prior to play. If a bat has any dents, cracks, loose or broken end caps then the bat will be restricted from play.
- Empire Softball will refer to the USSSA rulebook for the definition of an altered bat, as well as the policy in effect for a situation in which a player hits a ball with an altered or illegal bat, which includes potential suspension from play and league confiscation of the bat in question.
- **In all modified divisions, at a bare minimum, catchers must wear a mask with throat protector at all times.** Shin guards and chest protectors are strongly encouraged.
- Each team will be given official game balls at the start of the season and must have one at every game. Do not use these balls for practice. It is required that each team bring several game-used balls to every game in the event that game balls are lost during game play.
- It is encouraged, but not required, that all players wear the same color uniform shirt, with each player wearing a different number on the back.
- Metal cleats are **STRICTLY FORBIDDEN**. Players caught wearing metal cleats during game play are subject to automatic ejection and possible further disciplinary action.
- Each team is required to bring a full set of standard softball bases to every game, including a double-bag first base. Bases are available for purchase through Empire Softball upon request. Umpires will not allow games to be played without them.
- It is **STRONGLY ADVISED** that all pitchers wear a mask and other protective gear at every game in order to minimize the risk of significant injury.



PITCHING

- In a pitchers stroke, when bringing the ball back, the height of the ball may not exceed the shoulder height of the pitcher.
- Pitching windup must be straight back and forward – no sidearm pitching at all. Pitching stride – both feet must be placed on or behind the rubber on the pitchers mound, or the line drawn by the umpire at the start of the game, at the start of the windup. One foot must still be at or behind this line at the time the ball is released from the pitchers hand. A pitching stride can continue past the line as long as the ball is released before both feet cross the line. If the pitcher does not abide by these rules, a warning is issued. If it happens subsequently, and the batter does not make contact with the pitch, it is an automatic ball.
- Intentional Walks are allowed. No actual pitches need to be thrown – the pitcher can just announce the intentional walk and the batter takes first base.
- Regardless of the number of outs, if a male batter is walked on a 4-0 count (no strike called or foul ball) they go to 2nd base if the following batter is female. If there are two outs when this occurs, the female batter will have the option of automatically taking first base. In either case, all base-runners will advance as necessary. An intentional walk (no pitches thrown) is the equivalent of a 4-0 count for this purpose.
- Empire refers to the USSSA rulebook for pump-fake and pitching time limits.

BATTING

- A standard three strikes, four balls count will be used (starting 0-0).
- A batter hit by a pitch has the option of being awarded first base as long as they make a reasonable attempt to get out of the way, as determined by the umpire.
- There are no foul outs in modified.
- Standard infield fly rule will be in effect.
- Throwing the bat, aggressive arguing of balls and strikes, and other inappropriate behavior is subject to disciplinary action including warning, ejection, suspension, etc. at the discretion of the umpire and/or league coordinator.
- Batters must wait for an official confirmation from the umpire that time has been called. Simply calling for time is not enough to invalidate a pitch.
- Refer to the USSSA rule book for all other batting rules.

FORFEIT TIME

- All teams have a 10 minute grace period before a game will become a forfeit. For a double-header, the team has additional 10 minutes to get to the field for game two once the first game becomes an official forfeit. Example: 2:00pm start- forfeit first game at 2:11pm, forfeit second game at 2:21pm.

BATTING OUT OF ORDER

- If a batter is skipped in the lineup, it is the responsibility of the opposing coach to call for time and bring this to the attention of the umpire.
- If appealed before the improper batter completes his turn at bat, the correct batter will replace them with the accumulated count.
- If appealed after the incorrect batter finishes his turn at bat, and before a pitch is made to another batter, all action is rescinded and any runners will return to the base they had before the ball was hit. The player who should have batted is called out. Next legal batter is the player who follows the batter who was just called out for failure to bat.
- If appealed after a pitch is made to a next batter, the incorrect batter's action is legalized. All play stands and the next legal batter is the one following the batter who was just legalized.

TIME – LIMITS

- All double headers must be concluded by the time lights are set to turn off or the following games are set to take place. No new inning may start within 10 minutes of the lights turning off, or the scheduled start time of the following double header.
- If games are called early due to this time limit and it is a complete game, the score is final and the game will not be resumed at a later time. (See Weather-Shortened Games for a detailed explanation of what is considered to be a complete game)
- Every effort will be made for playoff games to be completed in a full 7 innings.

LINEUP

- A minimum of 8 and a maximum of 15 players may be in the lineup.
- Empire Modified rules allow for two men to bat in a row, and six males to play the field.
- Under no circumstances is a lineup allowed to include three men in a row, including the last and then the first batter. No more than two men may bat in a row, even during the game after substitutions have been made. If a lineup includes three men in a row, an automatic out will be recorded after the second male player takes their at-bat. For example, if two men bat in a row, an out will be recorded (in the female spot) if the next player in the lineup is also a male.
- Lineups may contain up to 12 players, but never more than 7 males. Once the lineup has been played all the way through, teams may not remove a spot from the lineup, even if it is the 11th or 12th spot, unless it is due to injury or illness.
- The batting order delivered to the opposing team must be followed throughout the entire game, unless a player is replaced by a substitute who must take the batting order spot of the person they are replacing.
- Each team is allowed up to 2 extra hitters, and one designated hitter per game, and they can be anywhere in the lineup.
- Players can be added to the bottom of the lineup at any time during the game to get to a lineup of 10 batters.
- Batters 11 and beyond cannot be added once the lineup has gone through.
- A player is not permitted to switch positions in the batting order for any reason.
- If a player comes out of the game for a substitution, they may reenter at a later time, as long as they stay in their original spot in the lineup. If upon reentry they are substituted out a second time, they may not reenter the game.
- When a new player enters during the game, they will take the spot in the batting order of the person that they are replacing.
- Once a new player takes a defensive position in the field, their spot in the batting order is to be documented immediately and cannot be changed, even if their spot in the order has not come up and have yet to take an at-bat.

HOME RUN LIMITATION

After reaching the home run limit, any subsequent home run is an automatic out.

Home Run Limits are as follows:

- **Womens Modified:** 3
- **Coed Modified:** 4

THE FIELD

- Pitching distance is 50' from the front of the pitching rubber to the back of home plate. Base distance is 70 feet for mens and coed. 65 feet for womens.
- Until the time that the hitter makes contact with the ball, all 4 outfielders must stay a minimum of 60 feet behind the base-path when a female is at bat. (It does not matter where the infielders are playing their position, or where the grass meets the infield) After contact is made they are free to come in to the infield.
- A 5-man infield or shallow outfielder is permitted against male batters during coed games. These positions are not allowed against female batters at any time, as all 4 outfielders must be a minimum of 60 feet away from the nearest baseline.
- A double base must be used at first base with the runner using the outside bag and the fielder using the inside bag.
- Infielders are free to move into the outfield prior to a pitch being thrown. (Example: five outfielders and no second baseman)
- During coed play, when a team is fielding a full 10-man defense, at least 4 must be female. At no time can a modified coed team field more 6 male defensive players.
- If at any time the opposing team, or umpire, discovers that a team has less than the required number of female players in the field, the game is stopped and the situation fixed with the offending team receiving a warning.
- There is no limit to the number of times players may switch defensive positions in the field, or switch between a fielding position and EH, as long as there is no change to the batting order.
- Fake tags are prohibited in all divisions of Empire Softball.

EXTRA HITTERS/DESIGNATED HITTER

- Each team is allowed up to two Extra Hitters and one Designated Hitter.
- Including the extra hitter(s) and DH, a line-up may never include more than seven male players.
- The EH and DH can bat anywhere in the batting order.
- Players can freely switch between a defensive position and extra hitter, as long as their spots in the lineup remain unchanged.
- It must be announced who the DH is hitting for prior to the start of the game.
- Other than the player using a DH, any other defensive player may switch between their fielding position and replace the DH - and have the DH take their place in the field, as long as their spots in the batting order remain unchanged.
- If there is a DH, the player that is fielding and not hitting, may come out of the game and allow the DH to take their place in the field. However, once a DH is established, the fielder that is using a DH may not come into the lineup at any point in the game.

RUNNING THE BASES

- There is no stealing.
- **Leading off**: Players may lead off the bag at any base once the pitcher has **released** the ball. If the batter does not make contact, the catcher can throw back to the base and the runner will be out if the ball beats them back. No tag is necessary.
- If the catcher makes a throw to a base in an attempt to catch a runner leading, the ball is in play and all runners on any base may advance. The runner at the base where the pic-off was attempted must first tag up to the base they are at. Any other base runners can take off without tagging up.
- In the event of a close play at any base other than first, including home plate, the runner should slide to avoid injury or give themselves up by stepping out of the baseline and accepting the out. In a close play, if a player runs into a base standing up and makes significant physical contact (as determined by the umpire) with the fielder, **they are called out regardless of the play.**

COURTESY RUNNERS:

- 2 courtesy runners per inning are permitted.
- Only in the event of an injury during gameplay will a team be able to use an additional courtesy runner beyond the 2 per inning limit.
- Must be the same sex, and must be the last recorded out. If there has yet to be a recorded out, the runner is replaced by the last runner to cross home plate as a run. If there has not been a recorded out or run scored, the runner is replaced by the player that is furthest away in the lineup.
- If a player's spot comes up in the lineup while they are on the bases as a courtesy runner an automatic out is recorded.

MERCY RULE

- 20 after 4 ... 15 after 5 ... 10 after 6
- If after four complete innings, one team is ahead by 20 or more runs, the game is official and ended. (Or 3 ½ innings if the home team is leading)
After five innings the Mercy Rule is 15 runs.
After six innings the Mercy Rule is 10 runs.
- The losing team must bat a minimum of 4 times for any mercy rule to apply.
There is no per-inning mercy rule.

FORFEIT RULE

- All teams are required to maintain a \$110 forfeit bond on file with the league at all times. Teams will not be at risk of losing their forfeit bond as long as they give the league at least 24 hours notice prior to a game that they are unable to attend. If a game is forfeited at the field due to not having enough players or the manager doesn't give the league the minimum required notice of cancellation, the bond is no longer refundable and a new forfeit bond must be paid and in place prior to their next scheduled game. Forfeit bonds can be transferred from one season to the next at the team manager's request. At any time during the season, a manager can request that their bond be automatically refunded at the season's conclusion.
- For recordkeeping, a forfeited game will result in a 10-0 score.

WEATHER – SHORTENED GAMES

- Games called off due to weather-related conditions are official and ended if one team has the lead, and four innings have been completed.
- The winning team needs only (3) complete innings at-bat for an official game. The losing team must have played a minimum of (4) innings at-bat to be official.
- If the game ends before it is an official/complete game, it will resume at a later date from the exact place it was left off.
- If a game is cut short after four innings have been played, but the away team took the lead in the top half of the inning in which the game has been called off (prior to the inning ending) the game is official and will revert back to the score as it was after the last completed inning.
- Regular season shortened, but official, games may end in a tie.
- These rules regarding weather-shortened games do not necessarily apply to playoff games. If a playoff game is shortened by weather, the league coordinator has the final say as to when and if the game will be completed at a later date. The goal will be to have all playoff games be complete seven-inning games.

ROSTERS

- **No player is allowed to participate in any game without being on a signed Empire Roster Form on file with the league.** The roster form that Empire has on file for each team is considered to be the official roster of that team.
- The official, fully completed roster form of any team must be turned in at or before the time of the first scheduled game for any player on that team to participate. Players can be then be added to the roster at any point in the season. However, in order to be playoff eligible, a player must have been added to the roster and played a minimum of one game prior to the roster freeze date (in addition to the total minimum games played requirement)
- Approved players can be added to any roster up to the 25th player. Any player on this roster is playoff eligible whereas the player reaches the minimum games played requirement for the given season, and played a minimum of one game prior to the roster freeze date.

- For playoff eligibility, team managers will have the option to apply to the league to add players to the roster after the roster freeze date, but this request will only be granted in extremely rare circumstances. This request must be made in writing to the league, and the team manager must wait to receive a written approval from the league before allowing any new players to participate.
- If any illegal player (non-roster, underage, etc.) is found to have played in a game, even after the game is complete, the offending team will forfeit the game, and the team manager will be subject to suspension for a minimum of one future game.

PROTESTING GAMES:

- **All protests must be made with the umpire or scorekeeper at the time of the infraction.** The umpire or scorekeeper should initial your scorebook that the protest has been noted, and the game will continue. The team manager must then contact the league, in writing, within 24 hours of the game.
- If a manager is protesting an illegal player, the umpire will ask the player in question to produce identification. The player in question will be allowed to finish the game, and the league office will make a forfeit decision after the fact once it is confirmed whether or not the player was eligible to participate.
- Managers may not protest games because of umpire judgment calls. Batting out of order, batting consecutive men in coed, inaccurate scorekeeping and other such instances are not grounds for protesting a game because managers are required to bring these types of things to the umpire's attention at the field to allow for corrections. Game outcomes will not be changed after the game ends for such errors.
- If a manager chooses to protest a game for a legitimate reason (illegal player, non-compliance with rulebook, etc.) they must do so by contacting a League Coordinator by email **within 24 hours** of the completion of the game. No protests for any reason will be heard after that.
- For recordkeeping, a forfeited game will be notated as a 10-0 final score. If the League Coordinator forfeits a game after it has been played due to a protest or other violation, the winning team may choose to keep the actual final score (as opposed to it changing to a 10-0 final score) if it is to their benefit.
- A protest due to an ineligible player in a playoff game must be done prior to the last pitch of the game, and will only be valid for the game that is under protest. For example, if Game 2 of a playoff series is being protested, any protest would not apply to the first game already completed.

PLAYERS

- Maximum roster size is 25 players.
- No player is allowed to participate in any game without having signed the team roster form.
- If a player is caught playing on two different teams within the same division, they will be suspended at the discretion of the league.
- Each team must have 8 players present to start a game. If a 9th or 10th player comes late, they can enter the game immediately at the next dead ball. They are placed last in the batting order, unless a batting order spot was already documented for them.
- If a player leaves the game for any reason *other than an injury or illness*, and cannot be replaced, their spot in the batting order will be an automatic out.
- Managers are required to report any injury to the league within 24 hours of the game.

PLAYOFF ELIGIBILITY

- **In order to play in any playoff game for their team, a player must be listed on the official team roster as of the established roster freeze date.** Players not listed on the team roster form on the roster freeze date are ineligible for playoffs, regardless of how many games they have played, or when they joined the team.
- Players are playoff eligible if they are listed on the team roster as of the established roster freeze date, and have met the following minimum playing time:
 - **Spring League** – 3 games played.
 - **Summer League** – 8 games played.
 - **Fall League** – 5 games played.
- In the event of a forfeit, either at the field or cancelled ahead of time, all roster players listed on the team roster of the winning team as of that date will be given credit for having played those games towards their total games played for the season.
- Proof of ID may be requested by a scorekeeper or league official at any time during the regular season or playoffs in order to maintain accurate records and to ensure fairness. Players unable to produce identification upon request will be automatically considered an ineligible player.

UMPIRES

- Only the team coach or league coordinator may confer with the game umpire regarding disputed calls or rulebook compliance issues.
- Each team is responsible with providing the game umpire with a new ball at the start of each game. These balls will be supplied before the first game of the season. Do not use these balls for practice.
- Umpire fees must be paid in cash before the start of each game.
- The amount of break time between games is at the umpire's sole discretion.
- The umpire is always in control of the game, and all umpire decisions are final. Extended arguing of calls or any aggressive behavior towards an umpire will not be tolerated.

WARNING/EJECTION/SUSPENSION RULES

- Foul or abusive language will not be tolerated!
- Inappropriate behavior on the field will cause an umpire warning. If behavior persists the player/coach will be ejected from the playing field. If the ejected player cannot be replaced resulting in only 7 remaining players, the team must forfeit the game.
- If a player/coach is ejected from a game for unsportsmanlike conduct in the first game of a doubleheader, they are automatically suspended for the second game. No exceptions. The league coordinator will determine if suspension from additional future games is warranted.
- If a player/coach has been ejected from a game, and is subsequently ejected from another game at any time during the remainder of the season for a serious conduct violation, the league coordinator will enforce a mandatory suspension of NO LESS than three future games. However, the league may enforce a longer suspension, including all remaining games, if it is deemed necessary.
- **If a player is ejected from a game for the third time in the same season, they are automatically suspended for all remaining games including playoffs, no exceptions.**
- When a player/coach is automatically suspended from their next scheduled game, the suspension will be enforced on the next scheduled game for their team. If that game is postponed due to weather or some other circumstance, the suspension will be enforced when the game is made up, which may not be the next scheduled game.

- If at any time physical contact (ex. punches thrown) is made between players, managers or guests, the parties involved will be subjected to immediate suspension and will be banished from all USSSA play, as well as from all Empire Sports leagues and events, for a minimum of one year from the date of infraction.
- Threats of violence, at any level, will not be tolerated. Attempting to incite another person, through name calling, aggressive play, or the like is grounds for suspension. By playing in the league, players agree to be bound by the disciplinary decisions made by the league coordinator, who reserves the right to suspend any player for any period of time as they deem necessary to ensure that everyone in the league feels safe and comfortable.
- Coaches are ultimately responsible for the behavior of the guests and spectators of their team. Guests are also subject to ejection and suspension from Empire games. Ejected or suspended players or guests **MUST LEAVE THE PLAYING AREA**. A player ejected from the game for unsportsmanlike conduct must leave the field and is not allowed to stay on the sidelines and watch.
- If a player is suspended for a future game, they are not allowed to come to the field at all, even as a spectator.
- The League Coordinator will investigate all incidents or perceived incidents of inappropriate behavior and will have the final and complete power to enforce any disciplinary action as they deem necessary.
- All participants should carefully review the Empire Softball Code of Conduct for an outline of the high standard of conduct required of all players, coaches and guests.

ALCOHOL AND TRASH

- No private facility, school, town, county or state park allows the consumption of alcohol at the fields, and umpires will be asked to strictly enforce this rule. Repeat violations will result in automatic termination from the league without refund.
- Teams are asked to please clean up after each game. Please do not leave the dugout or parking lot with bottles and trash.

RAIN OUT PROCEDURES

- The league will contact all managers by text message if a game has been cancelled by weather as soon as that decision is made.
- The league website (www.empiresoftball.com) will also have up to the minute game status information. Managers and players must be patient and either check the website or wait to hear from the league regarding game status when weather or field conditions are questionable.
- As a general rule, we try to play games as often as we can because rescheduling rainouts can be difficult. However, only the field owner may attempt to prepare a field for game play, which includes pushing or raking puddles. The league and players are not authorized to attempt to clean a field for play.
- There is no guarantee that every rained out game will be made up, but every effort is made to do so.
- If a game is shortened by weather and is not yet an official game, it will be resumed at a later date. Both managers must confirm with each other ***before leaving the field*** the exact game scenario at the time the game was called. This includes score, inning, number of outs, base-runner positions, batter count, etc. **Both coaches must submit this info to a League Coordinator that night.**
- The League will usually announce within 48 hours of a rainout the date, time and location of the makeup game. In the event that there are no longer available dates for a makeup game, the league may ask that teams play on a different day of the week or time than is normal for the division to give everyone the opportunity to play a full season schedule. If the makeup game is scheduled on a different date or time than is normal for the division, and either team is unable to play, the league will not penalize the team with a forfeit.

STANDINGS / PLAYOFFS

- Throughout the year and at the end of the regular season, the standings will be updated based on scores submitted by scorekeepers and/or teams. It is the responsibility of team managers to ensure that standings and scores are reported accurately throughout the season. Scores will not be changed at the end of the season.
- The top 4 teams in each division will qualify for playoffs, unless otherwise noted.
- In the event that teams finish the season with a different number of games played (for example if some rained out games were not able to be rescheduled) the final standings are based on winning percentage, not total games won or games lost, or anything else.

- In the event of a tie between (2) teams in the final standings, the tie-breaker will be determined by the win-loss record that the teams have ***against each other*** during the regular season. If the head-to-head record is also tied, the team with the better overall runs allowed will win the tie, followed by overall run differential.
- In the event of a tie between (3) or more teams in the final standings, the tie-breaker will be determined by the combined win-loss record that the teams have against each other during the regular season. If any of the teams remain tied after using the head-to-head tiebreaker, overall runs allowed will be used, followed by overall run differential.
- In single elimination playoff games, the higher seeded team will be the home team. In best of three playoff series, the higher seeded team will be the home team for games one and three.

REFUNDS

- Teams will be responsible for the full season league fee once the team is placed on the official schedule.
- There are no partial-refunds for games not completed due to weather conditions, player or team suspensions, or for any other reason that a team does not complete their season schedule.

INSURANCE

- All team managers are required to inform players regarding the insurance options.
- Personal injury and liability insurance is not included in the league fee, but it is available as a separate transaction between the team manager and insurance carrier.
- Managers should not take it upon yourself to decide whether or not your team wants the insurance. It should be a team decision.
- Liability and medical insurance may only be purchased for the entire team (not individual players).
- Liability and medical insurance may be purchased at any time and applications (with payment) must be sent to the insurance company directly! Do not send insurance applications or payment to the League Office. Applications sent to the League Office will not be processed and are invalid.

MANAGER RESPONSIBILITIES

- Manager is responsible for timely payment of all fees.
- Submission and updates to team roster form.
- Responsible for the behavior and conduct of all players.
- Submitting scores and ensuring that standings are accurate throughout the season.
- Reporting all injuries.
- Clean up of the dugout and playing area after the game.
- Check the league website for weather related game status.
- Full understanding of the Empire rulebook and maintain a copy at all games.
- Team managers are responsible for the behavior and conduct of all guests of the team. Only players on the team roster are permitted in the team bench or playing area. All guests, including family, scorekeepers, friends and all children are strictly prohibited from being near the playing area or team dugout.

The League Coordinators maintain the right to interpret, add or modify any information in this rulebook at their discretion, at any point during the season.

Direct any rulebook questions to Empire Softball League Coordinators:

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