



Governing Rules

The Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Softball shall govern all Special Olympics competitions. As an international sports program, Special Olympics has created these rules based upon the World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) Rules for slow pitch softball found at <https://www.wbsc.org/> or National Governing Body (NGB) rules shall be employed except when they are in conflict with the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Softball or Article 1. In such cases, the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Softball shall apply.

Refer to Article 1, <http://media.specialolympics.org/resources/sports-essentials/general/Sports-Rules-Article-1.pdf>, for more information pertaining to Codes of Conduct, Training Standards, Medical and Safety Requirements, Divisioning, Awards, Criteria for Advancement to High Level of Competition, and Unified Sports.

Equipment

- Ball: Red stitch 30.5cm (12 inch) restricted flight softball with a compression of 300 and a COR of .52 and under
- Bats: Must follow the WBSC rules found [WBSC Approved Softball Bat list](#). No more than 86.4cm (34 in) long, nor exceed 1077.0g (38 ounces) in weight. Diameter may not be more than 5.7cm (2 ¼ in) in diameter at its largest part. A tolerance of 0.80mm (1/32 in) is permitted to allow for expansion.
 - Bats may not be altered in any way.
- Gloves: All players must wear a glove when on the field.
- Shoes: No metal or hard plastic cleats, nylon or polyurethane spikes similar to a metal sole and heel plate are allowed.
 - Athletes must wear closed toe shoes.
 - Can wear soft or hard rubber cleats.
- Helmets: Batters/Runners must wear a helmet at all times while in live ball territory. Athletes coaching from coach box must have a helmet on as well. (Athletes who remove their helmet during play shall be declared out.)
- Catcher: must wear a helmet, face mask with throat protector & body/chest protector. Shin guards are recommended.
- **NO JEWELRY ALLOWED.**



Uniforms

- Teams must wear uniforms alike in color, trim, and style.
- Coaches must be neatly attired, including the wearing of suitable footwear, or dressed in team uniform in accordance with the color code of the team. If a coach wears a cap, it must be approved headwear.
- All unified partners must wear an identifying piece of clothing, wristband, etc. that may be easily identifiable by scorekeepers and umpires. All identifying article must match for all Unified Partners.
- Caps, Visors, & Headbands
 - Optional for players but can be mixed. If more than one type is worn, they all must be of the same color and each of the same type must be of the same color and style. Plastic or hard visors are not allowed.
- Undershirts
 - Players may wear a uniform, solid colored undershirt (it may be white). It is not mandatory that all players wear an undershirt but if one player wears one, those that are worn must be alike and of the same color. No player may wear ragged, frayed, or slit sleeves on exposed undershirts.
- Pants/Sliding Pants
 - All player pants shall be either all long or all short in style. Players may wear a uniform solid color pair of sliding pants. It is not mandatory that all players wear sliding pants, but if more than one player wears them, they must be alike in color and style except temporary, snap-on or Velcro sliding pads. No players may wear ragged, frayed or slit legs on exposed sliding pants.
- Numbers
 - An Arabic number of contrasting color at least 15.2cm (6 in) in height must be worn on the back of all uniform shirts.
 - No manager, coach, or player on the same team may wear identical numbers, (numbers 1 and 01 are examples of identical numbers).



- Only whole numbers 01 – 99 may be used.
- Players without numbers will not be permitted to play.
- Casts
 - Casts (plaster, metal or other hard substances in its final form) may not be worn in a game. Note: Any exposed metal (other than a cast) may be considered legal if adequately covered by a soft material, taped and approved by the umpire.
- Jewelry
 - No items, other than medical alert bracelets or necklaces, may be worn. Medical alert bracelets and/or necklaces are not considered jewelry, but if worn, they must be taped to the body. **If a player refused to comply, then that player will be removed from the game.**

Divisioning

- *Prior to state-level tournament play, coaches must submit a Softball Skills Assessment Test (SAT) Score for each player on their roster, which will be used as part of the preliminary divisioning process. The 'team score' shall be determined by adding the top 12 players' scores together and then dividing that total by 12. This assessment score must be completed on the state-level registration forms.*
- All players and teams are required to participate in the mandatory team screening process on Friday afternoon during Summer Games. If a player fails to make the screening game, he/she cannot play in the competition games the next days.
- Teams may be required to play a game following team screening.
- Teams are to wear their game uniforms.
- Teams should play to the best of their ability levels during all games, including games in the divisioning round. Should teams not follow this protocol, teams should be warned they may be in violation of the Honest Effort policy. If teams continue to circumvent the Honest Effort policy, penalties may be levied upon the head coach, assistant coach and players.



Unified Softball Rules

- **A maximum of 15 players and 2 coaches per team.** (Must have a non-playing coach responsible for line-up and conduct of team)
- Each team must have 5 Special Olympics athletes and 5 Unified Partners on the field at all times.
 - A team without 5 athletes/partners will have to forfeit.
- Regulation game shall consist of 6 innings.
- Games will be scheduled on an hour and a half basis and must start on time.
- A new inning may not start after the 1 hour and 15-minute mark.
- A coin toss will be used to determine the choice of first or last bat in the inning.
- The batting order must alternate athlete/partner.
- Defensive positions in the infield and outfield must alternate athlete/partner.
- Pitchers and catchers must alternate athlete/partner.
- **Each pitch must be delivered with a perceptible arc of at least 6 feet and no more than 10 feet from the ground.**
- **The pitching distance shall be set at 50 feet.**
- Each batter will start with a “1” ball and “1” strike count.
- If a batter has 2 strikes and fouls off a pitch, he/she will not be called out and will still be “alive.” The second foul ball with two strikes will result in an out.
- No stealing is allowed in Special Olympics play.
- Helmets are to be worn by all batters and base runners.
- Protests must be made before the next pitch, or before all infielders have left fair territory or, if on the last play of the game, before the umpires leave the playing field. (Exception: Player ineligibility). Protests can only be filed by the certified head coach.
- Proper sportsmanship must be followed at all times by all participants, including athletes, partners, coaches and spectators. Any disagreements regarding a call must be discussed by the coach and not players.



- Coaches, players and spectators may not use language that will reflect negatively upon players, umpires or spectators.
- A game called by the umpire shall be regulation if 5 or more complete innings have been played, or if the team second at bat has scored more runs than the other team has scored in 5 or more innings. The umpire is empowered to call a game at any time because of darkness, rain, fire, panic or other cause, which puts the patrons or players in danger.
- Teams must have a non-playing adult coach on the bench at all times. Coaches cannot play as a unified partner.
- All players dressed in uniform and on the bench, must play.
- Mercy rules:
 - 15 run lead after 4 innings
 - 12 run lead after 5 innings.
- **A limit of 2 over-the-fence home runs will be allowed per team in any game. Both athlete and partner home runs count towards the Unified limit.** For any in excess, the ball is dead, the batter is out, and no runners can advance.
- Partners may not dominate or encroach on the positions of others in the field. If the umpire or games committee feels a player has intruded on another teammate's play, the umpire will overturn the on-field decision or outcome of the play. A warning will be made to the coach of the offending team regarding the infringement. Future dominance will result in a partner being ejected from the game. (Example: A partner who is pitching taking the throw at home plate instead of the Special Olympics athlete catcher who is in position, or a partner in the outfield catching a ball going to an athlete.) Ejections will be for the remainder of the game.
- Athletes may not crash into the catcher to dislodge the ball. Sliding is not required, but a runner may not make contact with the catcher to interfere with the play, nor shall they run into a base player to interfere with the play.
- **Infield Fly Rule will be in effect**
 - An Infield Fly is a fair fly ball (not including a line drive or an attempted bunt) that can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort when first and second, or first, second,



and third bases are occupied, before 2 are out. The pitcher, catcher, and any outfielder that positions himself in the infield on the play shall be considered infielders for the purpose of this rule.

- Note: When it seems apparent that a batted ball will be an infield fly, the umpire shall immediately declare, “INFIELD FLY, IF FAIR-THE BATTER IS OUT”, for the benefit of the runners. The ball is alive and runners may advance at the risk of the ball being caught, or retouch and advance after the ball is touched, the same as on any fly ball. If the hit becomes a foul ball, it is treated the same as any foul.
- If a declared infield fly is allowed to fall untouched to the ground, and bounces foul before passing first or third base, it is a foul ball.

- **Batting**

- 3 outs per inning or a maximum of 10 batters per inning.
- The 6th inning will be unlimited batters and runs.
- Intentional walks are not allowed due to limited amount of batters per inning. If a batter is intentionally walked the offensive team is given another maximum batter.

- **Tie Game**

- Extra innings will be played with a maximum of 2 extra innings. If the game remains tied after the completion of both extra innings, the result will be determined by going back to the last inning when a team had the lead.

- **Batting Order**

- The batting order must show the first and last name, uniform number and position on the line-up card, and must be delivered by the manager or captain to the plate umpire. The line-up card will also designate “A” for athlete and “P” for partner next to that player’s information.
- The batting order shall alternate athlete and partners.



- Batting order delivered to the umpire must be followed throughout the game unless a player is replaced by a substitute. When this occurs, the substitute must take the place of the removed player in the batting order.
- First batter in each inning shall be the batter whose name follows that of the last player who completed a turn at bat in the preceding inning.

- **Batting Position**

- The batter must take his position in the batter's box within 10 seconds after the umpire has declared "Play ball".
- An offensive team member may not, under any circumstances, deliberately erase the lines of the batter's box at any time during the game. This includes a coach erasing lines during the pre-game meeting. If a batter erases a line, the umpire will call a strike. The pitch does not need to be thrown and the ball becomes dead. If a coach erases a line, the strike will be called on the next scheduled batter in the line-up.
- The batter must have both feet completely within the batter's box prior to the start of the pitch. He may touch the lines, but no part of his foot may be outside the lines prior to the pitch.
- The batter is out when:
 - His foot is completely outside the lines of the batter's box and touching the ground, or any part of a foot is touching home plate when he hits the ball fair or foul.
 - When he leaves the box to gain a running start, but has returned to the box when he makes contact with the ball.

- **Substitutions**

- Any player may be substituted from the game during any dead ball.
- If an injury to a batter-runner (or runner) prevents them from proceeding to an awarded base, and the ball is dead, the batter-runner (or runner) may be substituted



for. The substitute will be allowed to proceed to any awarded base(s). The substitute must legally touch any awarded or missed base(s) not previously touched.

- A position player removed from the game due to substitution (not injury) may return to the game one time as a substitute but will not be allowed to re-enter the game if substituted for a second time. Players who bat in a position in the batting order other than the one previously occupied by the player they are replacing will be declared out.
- Athletes must substitute for other athletes, and partners must substitute for partners.