



A department of MADISON METROPOLITAN SCHOOL DISTRICT



COMMONLY OCCURRING ASA SOFTBALL RULES AND POINTS OF EMPHASIS

1. APPEAL PLAYS

An appeal play is a one which the umpire may not make a call until a player or manager brings it to the umpire's attention. Examples are: a) a base runner missing a base or touching the white portion only of the double first base when a play is being made on the batter-runner at first base; b) a base runner leaving a base before a caught fly is touched; c) overrunning first base and attempting to run to second; and d) batting out of order.

In *all* games, once time has been granted, a dead ball appeal may be made. Once the ball has been returned to the infield and time has been called, any fielder (including the pitcher or catcher), with or without possession of the ball, may make a verbal appeal on a runner missing a base or leaving a base too soon. The plate umpire should acknowledge the appeal and the administering umpire then make a decision on the play. Baserunners cannot leave their base during this period as the ball remains dead until the next pitch.

Appeals are also allowed while the ball is alive in both FP and SP. Remember, however, that throwing to a base while in contact with the pitcher's plate while the ball is alive constitutes an illegal pitch and an appeal can no longer be made.

2. BASE PATH

The base path is three feet either side of a direct line from one base to another. The runner does not need to run in the base path unless a play is being made on him/her. In running the bases, a runner establishes the base path, i.e., batter-runner rounds first base on the way to second, the base path is on an arc. The ball remains in play if a baserunner is called out for running outside the base path to avoid a tag.

3. BAT INFORMATION

Bats used in the MSCR Adult Softball Program must either bear the Amateur Softball Association (ASA) approved 2000 certification mark or the ASA 2004 certification mark and **must also appear on the ASA approved softball bat list. The approved bat list can be viewed** on the ASA website, www.asasoftball.com. This site also can be linked from the MSCR website, www.mschr.org. The ASA is no longer publishing a comprehensive list of "banned bats" (new in 2009). A bat manufactured prior to 2000 will be allowed if, in the sole opinion and discretion of the umpire, it would comply with the ASA bat performance standards, if tested. The bat shall be marked "Official Softball" by the manufacturer or, in the judgement of the umpire, had the words "Official Softball" on it at one time.

(New in 2009) The official bat shall be of one-piece construction, multi-piece permanently assembled bat *or two-piece interchangeable construction. If the bat is designed with interchangeable components it must meet the following additional criteria:* 1.) Mating components must have a unique locking key to prevent uncertified equipment combinations in the field. 2.) All component combinations must meet the one piece bat rules.

3.) Manufacturer must demonstrate that the interchangeable bat fails in a safe manner (i.e. visible damage before locking features fail). 4) Bat components must be designed in a way to prevent uncertified equipment alterations.

The bat shall not be more than 34 inches long, nor exceed 38 ounces in weight. A legal bat shall have a safety grip of cork, composition material, or tape (not smooth) which is not less than 10 inches long or extend more than 15 inches from the small end of the bat. The official bat shall have a Safety Knob of circular or oblong cross section concentric to the bat handle and complies with ASA Rule 3-1-K. The knob may be molded, lathed, welded or permanently fastened to the bat. A one-piece rubber grip and knob combination is illegal. The bat shall be free of burrs, **all dents (new in 2009)** and visible cracks and shall not have exposed rivets, pins, rough or sharp edges or any form of exterior fastener that might present a hazard.

Heated bat bags are not allowed – this violates ASA rule 3-7 Note: “The characteristics of any approved equipment cannot be changed. One example would be icing, cooling or heating equipment.”

4. **BATTING OUT OF ORDER**

If a batter bats out of order, this is an appeal play, which must be brought to the umpire's attention. If it is detected while the incorrect batter is at bat, the correct batter assumes the count and all plays made will stand.

If it is detected after the incorrect batter has completed their turn at bat and before the next pitch, the batter who should have batted is out, the ball is dead and any advance or score made because of the improper batter's advance shall be nullified, ***however any runner or runners put out on the play remain out.*** The next batter is the player whose name follows that of the player called out for failing to bat. If the error is discovered after the first pitch to the next batter, the turn at bat of the incorrect batter is legal, all runs scored and bases run are legal and the next batter shall be the one whose name follows that of the incorrect batter. No one is called out for failure to bat. No base runner shall be removed from a base to bat in his/her proper place. They merely miss their turn at bat with no penalty.

5. **BATTING OUT OF THE BATTER'S BOX**

The batter is out and the ball is dead if he/she hits the ball, fair or foul, while his/her entire foot is completely out of the box and touching the ground or is touching home plate at the time of contact. The size of the batter's box is three feet wide by seven feet long, for both FP and SP play. The front line of the box is four feet in front of a line drawn to the center of home plate. The inside line of the batter's box is six inches from the edge of home plate. The lines of the batter's box are considered inside the box. In cases where there are not batter's lines evident, good judgement must be used and the benefit of any doubt must go to the batter.

6. **CATCH**

There is no rule, which states that a player must hold the ball for a specific number of seconds to be a valid catch. In establishing a valid catch, the fielder must hold the ball long enough to prove he/she has complete control of the ball and that the release of the ball is voluntary and intentional. It is not a catch if a fielder, immediately after he/she contacts the ball, collides with another player or fence or falls to the ground and drops the ball as a result of the collision or falling to the ground.

7. **COLLISIONS - DELIBERATELY CRASHING INTO A FIELDER WITH THE BALL**

When a defensive player has the ball, and the runner remains on his/her feet and deliberately crashes into the defensive player waiting to apply the tag, the runner is out, the ball is dead and all other runners must return to the last base touched at the time of the collision. Note: If the act is determined to be flagrant, the offender shall be ejected. In order to prevent a deliberate crash ruling, the runner can give up, slide, go around the defender, or return to the previous base touched. *This rule will be strictly enforced in order to prevent injury and protect the defensive player who has possession of the ball.*

- ***Fielders should not block the base without possession of the ball(that is obstruction), they should stand to the side of the base, not in front of the base, catch the ball, then apply the tag.***
- ***If a defensive player is fielding a thrown ball and the flight of the ball draws the fielder into the path of the runner, this would not be a crash.***
- ***If the ball, runner and the defensive player all arrive at the same time and contact is made, the umpire should not invoke the crash rule or obstruction-this is merely incidental contact.***

8. **CONFERENCES**

A. **Defensive** - A charged defensive conference takes place when the defense requests a suspension of play for any reason, and a representative enters the playing field and confers ***with any defensive player.*** **A team is allowed three conferences per seven innings.** A playing manager on the field is not included in this rule. The team may take all three conferences in one inning or spread them out over a seven-inning game. **Once the three conferences have been used, the pitcher must be removed for each additional charged conference.** In the event of an extra inning game, there will be one conference allowed per extra inning. On the second conference in an extra inning game, the pitcher must be removed. If the manager informs the plate umpire prior to removing the pitcher from the pitching position, it is not a charged conference.

B. **Offensive** - An offensive "charged conference" occurs when the offensive team requests a suspension of play and is granted time by the umpire to allow a team representative (usually the manager) to confer with a batter, baserunners or another team representative. Only one conference is allowed between the team representative (manager) and the batter, the baserunner(s) or another offensive coach per inning. The umpire will not allow a second conference.

9. DEAD BALL AREA - IMAGINARY LINE

Dead ball or out of play area is usually an imaginary line straight out from the end of the backstop parallel to the foul lines.

- A. Ball Carried Into Dead Ball Area - When a live ball is unintentionally carried by a fielder from playable territory into dead ball territory, the ball becomes dead and all baserunners are awarded one (1) base from the last base touched at the time he/she entered dead ball territory. If in the judgment of the umpire this act is ruled to be intentional, the award will be two (2) bases.
- B. Catching Ball in Dead Ball Area - When an imaginary line is used for the dead ball area, it is not a catch if either foot is entirely across the line on the ground when the catch is made. If one foot is on the ground inside the imaginary line, and/or touching the line, and the other is over the line but in the air (not touching the ground), the catch is good.

10. DISTANCES

Pitching Distances: All Slow Pitch (Men, Women and Coed) = 50 feet.
Women's Fast Pitch = 40 feet; Men's Fast Pitch = 46 feet.

Base Lengths: All Slow Pitch (Men, Women and Coed) = 65 feet.
All Fast Pitch (Men and Women) = 60 feet.

11. DOUBLE FIRST BASE

A double first base is used at all levels of MSCR play.

- A batted ball hitting the white portion is fair and a batted ball hitting the orange portion is foul.
- Whenever a *play* (ball must be thrown to first base in an attempt to record an out) is being made on the batter-runner, the defense must use the white portion and the batter-runner must touch the orange portion. If a play is made at first base, but the ball is overthrown or the fielder is pulled off the base by an errant or missed throw, the batter-runner is allowed to use the white base **if trying to advance to second base.**
(Clar-Exception) On a **play attempt** on the batter-runner **from the foul side of first base, or by an errant throw** pulling the fielder off the base into foul ground, the batter-runner and the fielder can use either white or orange portions of the base.
- On extra base hits or balls hit to the outfield when there is **no play** being made at the double base, the batter-runner may touch the white or orange portion. When tagging up on a fly ball, either the white or orange base may be used.
- The batter-runner is allowed to legally return to either color base after he or she has touched or missed first base. After returning to either portion of the base, an appeal cannot be made.

12. FAIR AND FOUL BALL

Home plate and all bases are completely in fair territory.

A. Fly Ball - in determining fair or foul, the relationship of the ball when touched, to the foul line is the deciding factor. The placement of the fielder's feet (inside/outside the foul line) is not a consideration.

B. Batted Ball

- 1) A batted ball that first hits the ground *before* it reaches 1st or 3rd base is fair, if it settles in fair territory, is touched by a player while the ball is on or over fair ground, or if the ball passes over 1st or 3rd base, regardless of where the ball hits the ground after going over the base.
- 2) A batted ball that first hits the ground *beyond* 1st or 3rd base is fair or foul based on where it hits the ground that first time.
- 3) A batted ball that hits a player or umpire in fair territory and then goes foul, is a fair ball.

- **(Emphasis) - Foul Ball/Foul Tip – The reference to the “height of the batter’s head” as it relates to a Foul Ball and Foul Tip no longer applies. This change allows more opportunity for the catcher to obtain “outs” by catching foul batted balls the same as the first and third base person.**

**Umpires need to judge whether the ball moves from the bat “sharply” and “directly” (the definition of a foul tip, which is a strike, and can be an out, if caught by the catcher, only on the 2nd strike in SP or the 3rd strike in FP), versus a ball that has a perceptible arc and/or if the catcher moves their glove to catch the ball after contact with the bat (which is a foul ball and an out, if caught, regardless of the number of strikes on the batter at the time).

13. FAKE TAG

A "FAKE TAG" occurs when a fielder without the ball deceives the runner by impeding their progress (i.e., causing them to slide, slow down, or stop running). The umpire will call "obstruction" and give a delayed dead ball signal. After all play is completed, the umpire shall award the obstructed runner and each other runner affected by the obstruction the bases they would have, in his/her opinion, reached had there been no obstruction. A warning should also be given to both teams. The next fake tag, by either team, shall result in the ejection of said player.

14. GLOVES

A glove **or mitt** may be worn by **any** player, but shall not exceed the specifications of ASA rule 3-4. Multicolored gloves are acceptable for all players. *The pitcher's glove may be of one solid color or multicolored as long as the color(s) are not the color of the ball being used in the game being played.*

15. INFIELD FLY

An infield fly is a fair fly ball (not including a line drive or an attempted bunt) which can be caught by an infielder, pitcher or catcher with ordinary effort when first and second or first, second and third bases are occupied with less than two outs. The pitcher, catcher or any outfielder who position themselves in the infield area on the play shall be considered infielders for the purpose of this rule. The general rule of thumb to use in determining if it is an ordinary effort catch is "Could the fielder be facing forward on the catch?" If an infield fly is called by the umpire and it is caught while fair or settles in fair territory, the batter is out, 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 ball.

16. INELIGIBLE PLAYER

When it is determined that a team uses an ineligible player in the game, except violation of the re-entry rule, the game shall be forfeited to the offended team. Violation of the re-entry rule results in disqualification of the offending player(s) for the remainder of that game.

17. INTENTIONAL WALK (SLOW PITCH)

Any time a pitcher desires to walk a batter intentionally, they may do so by notifying the plate umpire who should award the batter first base. In fast pitch, all pitches must be thrown.

18. INTERFERENCE

Interference is defined as the act of an OFFENSIVE player or team member which impedes, hinders or confuses a defensive player attempting to execute a play. Defensive players must be given the opportunity to field the ball ANYWHERE on the playing field. There are several different types of interference calls (i.e. batter, baserunner, on-deck batter, and coach). When one of these types of interference occurs, the ball becomes dead, someone must be called out (usually the player interfering or being played on), and all baserunners will return to the last base touched at the time of the interference. If the interference is done to prevent a double play, either the immediate succeeding runner or the runner closest to home plate will also be called out.

19. LOOK BACK RULE (FAST PITCH)

Once the pitcher has the ball within an eight foot radius of the pitcher's plate and the batter-runner has touched first base or is called out, all runners must immediately return to the base left or advance to the next base. If they do not, they are out and the ball is dead. The obligation to return to a base is on the runner, not the pitcher. The pitcher does not need to look, fake or play the runner back. Anytime the ball leaves the eight-foot radius, runners can move off base. After ball four is called, the ball is alive and the batter-runner may continue to advance past first base (round the base) even though the ball has been returned to the eight foot circle by the catcher. *However, after overrunning first base, if the ball is within the 8' circle, and the batter-runner commits back to the base, the batter-runner must then return non-stop to first base. (Committing to a base is the act of moving toward that base.)*

20. PITCHING (FAST PITCH) - Same rules apply to both Men and Women's FP

MSCR will use the Men's ASA pitching rule for all levels of play.

A. Contact with the Pitcher's Plate - *The pivot foot must be on the pitcher's plate and the non-pivot foot may be on or behind the pitcher's plate.* Both feet must be on the ground and within the 24" length of the pitcher's plate. The pitcher's shoulders must be in line with first and third base.

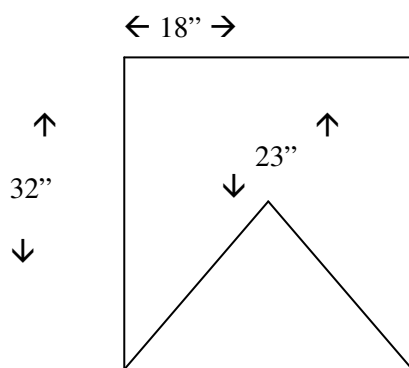
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- B. Signal - The pitcher must take or appear to be taking a signal with the hands clearly separated. It is legal for the pitcher to take a signal while standing behind and not in contact with the pitcher's plate, however, the pitcher must step on the pitching plate with the hands separated and pause before pitching. The ball held in one hand may be held in front or behind the body. It is illegal to toss the ball back and forth between hands while taking the sign.
- C. Preliminary to Wind-Up - The ball, after the signal is taken, must be taken in both hands and may not be held for longer than ten seconds. A stop may be made but is not necessary. The pitcher may immediately, without stopping their hands or body, go into the wind-up after the signal is taken.
- D. Start of Pitch - The pitch begins when the pitcher takes one hand off the ball. *If the pitcher decides to pitch with the non-pivot foot to the rear and off the pitching plate a backward step may be taken before, simultaneous with or after the hands are brought together.*
- E. Delivery - The delivery is limited to one revolution which is interpreted as not two. One and part of another is legal but two complete revolutions are illegal. The wrist may not be any further from the hip than the elbow. The delivery may not have a stop or reversal of the forward motion.
- F. Step and Release - A step (only 1) must be taken and it must be forward, toward the batter. Dragging the foot or pushing off with the pivot foot is legal. *The pitcher is allowed to "leap", provided the pitcher keeps the toes of his/her pivot foot pointing downward.* Pushing off from a spot other than the pitcher's plate is considered a Crow Hop and is ILLEGAL. Release of the ball must be simultaneous with the step.

21. PITCHING (SLOW PITCH)

- A. The pivot foot must be on the pitcher's plate and the non-pivot foot may be on, behind, or off the side of the pitcher's plate. It is not required that the non-pivot foot be within the 24" length of the pitcher's plate. The pitcher must not make any motion to pitch while not in contact with the pitcher's plate.
- B. The pitcher must come to a stop with the ball held in one or both hands, in front of their body for at least one (1) second. After receiving the ball or after the umpire calls "play ball", the pitcher has ten (10) seconds to release the next pitch.
- C. The pitch starts when the pitcher makes any motion with the ball, which is part of the delivery, after the required stop.
- D. There may be no stop or reversal of the forward motion. A wind mill delivery may be used. The delivery must be continuous but cannot continue after the ball is released. The ball must be released on the first forward swing of the arm past the hip. It cannot be released behind the back or through the legs.
- E. The pitch must have an arc of between six and twelve feet from the ground.
- F. If a step is taken, it may be forward, backward or to the side, provided the pivot foot is in contact with the pitcher's plate and the step is simultaneous with the release of the ball.

22. MSCR MAT SIZE



23. OBSTRUCTION

Obstruction is the act of a fielder, who neither has nor is attempting to field a batted ball, which impedes the progress of a runner. **Blocking a base, when not in possession of the ball, is a form of obstruction.** Whenever obstruction occurs (including a rundown), the umpire will call "obstruction" and signal delayed dead ball. The ball will remain alive.

When an obstructed runner is put out prior to reaching the base they would have reached had there not been obstruction, a dead ball is called (at the time of the putout) and all runners are awarded the base they would have gotten if obstruction had not occurred.

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When obstruction occurs during a "rundown" a delayed dead ball is called. If the runner is tagged after being obstructed, time is called and the runner awarded the base they would have made. If the ball is overthrown after the obstruction, the runner can advance the ball remains alive. If the obstructed runner is put out after passing the base they would have reached had there not been obstruction, the obstructed runner will be called out.

24. OVERRUNNING A BASE

The batter-runner is not out if they overrun first base and turn either way *unless* they make an attempt to advance to second base and are touched with the ball while off base. All other runners are out if they overrun a base and are tagged with the ball while off the base.

25. OVERTHROWS

Runners are always awarded two bases on overthrows that enter dead ball area or are blocked. All base awards are governed by the position of the runners when the ball left the fielder's hand. Direction of runners has no bearing, i.e., when an overthrow by an outfielder is made on a runner returning to first base and the ball leaves the outfielder's hand before the runner gets back to first, the runner would be awarded third base. (FP only: Pitched balls going out of play are limited to a one base award from the last base occupied at the time of the pitch.)

26. RETURN OF PITCH BY CATCHER DIRECT TO PITCHER

The catcher must return the ball directly to the pitcher after each pitch except after a strikeout or a putout made by the catcher. This also includes a new ball handed to the catcher. The penalty of an additional ball is called by the umpire. (Exception: This does not apply to fast pitch when there are runners on base or where the batter becomes a baserunner.) Also, there is no penalty if any fielder fields a batted ball close to the foul line and throws to a base. After a putout or a strikeout, the ball does not have to be thrown directly back to the pitcher.

27. SOFTBALLS – White balls for Slow Pitch & Coed, Optic Yellow Balls in Fast Pitch

The home team for each game must furnish two approved game balls, which are issued and marked "MSCR". A 12" ball is used for all players in Coed, as well as, Men's Slow Pitch, Men's Fast Pitch, and Women's Fast Pitch. An 11" ball is used in the Women's Slow Pitch program.

Optic yellow balls will be used in MSCR FP play only. A white ball will be used in all SP play(including coed).

28. "TIME" (SLOW PITCH)

When the ball is held in the infield after a hit and in the judgement of the umpire, all plays are apparently completed, the umpire shall call TIME. Runners do not have to be on their base nor does the ball have to be within the 8' radius circle around the pitcher's plate. As long as runners are not attempting to advance and no play is being made on them, TIME SHOULD BE CALLED.

Stealing is not allowed in MSCR slow pitch softball. MSCR has not adopted the ASA stealing rule for Slow Pitch softball (Rule 8-4 F).

Players must realize, however, that while TIME should be called by the umpire, the ball is live until the umpire calls TIME. Any play or advance prior to the umpire granting "Time" is legal.

29. THIRD STRIKE RULE (FAST PITCH)

The batter may run if the catcher fails to catch the third strike before the ball touches the ground when there are less than two outs and first base is unoccupied or any time there are two outs.

30. THREE FOOT LINE

A batter-runner must stay within the three foot line (which is the last half of the distance between home plate and first base and three feet from the foul line) to avoid being called out for interference with a thrown ball. If the runner is outside the line and, in the judgement of the umpire, interferes with the fielder taking the throw at first base, or if any part of the runner's body is hit with a thrown ball on the fair side of the foul line, interference will be called. The runner is out, the ball is dead and all other runners must return to the last base touched at the time of the pitch.

31. UMPIRES

An umpire, although he/she sees a play from what he/she believes was a better vantage point, may not overrule another umpire's decision as long as the play was in the second umpire's jurisdiction. They may discuss it but if a call is to be reversed, it must be done by the umpire who originally called the play. Both umpires may declare an "illegal" pitch or call a runner out for leading off base.