SOFTBALL RULES

Amateur Softball Association (ASA) Rules will be used.

*Italic print indicates special rules for co-recreational play.*

A valid UNC One Card or valid government issued ID must be shown before a participant may be allowed to play.

All other rules listed are for Men’s, Women’s, and Co-Recreational play.

### THE GAME, FIELD AND EQUIPMENT

#### TIME REGULATIONS

Team(s) who are not present on their assigned field at their scheduled time shall receive a forfeit. No grace period.

Each game is scheduled for seven (7) innings or 45 minutes, whichever occurs first. No new inning (Top) will be started after 45 minutes have expired, but an inning started before then will be completed if necessary.

Tie games will be decided by extra innings. **(Playoffs only)**

Three (3) full innings (or two and a half innings if the home team is ahead) constitute a complete game whenever inclement weather appears. The Intramural Sports Program Supervisor will make this decision.

#### EQUIPMENT

No jewelry (i.e. earrings, watches, necklaces, bracelets, etc.) is allowed. Medical bracelets and/or necklaces are allowed, as long as they are secured to the body.

Bats, balls, and a catcher’s mask (if preferred) will be provided. No other equipment will be provided.

No metal cleats are allowed. All players must wear shoes.

#### SPORTS OFFICIALS

The game shall be played under the supervision of two (2) or three (3) officials. Each team shall designate to the Plate Umpire the team captain(s). If more than one player is designated, a speaking captain must be selected to make all decisions.

Team representatives, including players, substitutes, replaced players, coaches, trainers, and other persons affiliated with the team are subject to the rules of the game, and shall be governed by decisions of the officials assigned to the game. The official’s decisions are final. Official’s judgment cannot be protested.

Any rules interpretation protest must be made to the umpire at the time of the incident during the game. The Intramural Sports Program Supervisor must be notified immediately. If this is not done, the protest will not be considered.
**PLAYER REQUIREMENTS**

A team must start and finish with at least eight (8) players

- A Game shall be played with 10 players
- Official Game = 8-10 players present
- Default = 5-7 players present
- Forfeit = less than 5 players present

Courtesy runners may be used when necessary. The courtesy runner must be either the last person who received an out or a player who is not in the game.

**PLAYER SUBSTITUTIONS**

Teams may choose one of the following before the game begins. Your choice must be made to the Plate Umpire before the game begins. After you have made your choice, you cannot change your substitution pattern once the game has begun.

**Choice A - UNLIMITED SUBSTITUTION**—If a team has more than ten (10) players, it may list all of its players on the batting order and each player will bat in order as his/her name appears. You must follow the original lineup throughout the game. Late players must be added to the end of the batting order.

**Choice B - ASA Re-entry Rule**—a maximum of ten (10) players may bat. Others may be substituted into the lineup at any point.

1. Any of the starting players may be substituted and re-entered once, provided players occupy the same batting positions whenever in the lineup. The starting player and the substitute(s) may not be in the lineup at the same time.
2. A starting player removed from the pitching position by the umpire and substituted for can re-enter the game at another position, but cannot return to the pitching position.
3. Late players, nine and ten, can be added to the end of the lineup if all players have not completed their first at bat.

**POINT DIFFERENTIAL**

1. If a team is ahead by fifteen (15) or more runs after the trailing team has batted 3 times, then the game shall be called.
2. If a team is ahead by ten (10) or more runs after the trailing team has batted 4 times, then the game shall be called.

**APPEAL PLAYS**

**Live Ball** - if the ball has not been called dead, a fielder may go directly to a base or base runner, apply a tag and wait for the umpire’s call

**Dead Ball** - Once the ball has been returned to the infield and time has been called, any infielder (including the pitcher or catcher), or outfielder with or without the ball, may make a verbal appeal. The Plate Umpire should acknowledge the appeal, and the administering umpire should make a decision on the play. Base runners cannot leave their base during this period, as the ball remains dead until the next pitch.
Batting Order - Except for a wrong batter at bat, batting out of order is an appeal play which may be made only by the defensive team. The defensive team forfeits its right to appeal batting out of order when one (1) legal or illegal pitch has been made to the following batter, or when the pitcher and all infielders have clearly vacated their normal fielding positions and left fair territory on their way to the bench or dugout.

1. If the error is discovered while the incorrect batter is at bat, the correct batter may take his place and legally assume any balls and strikes. Any runs scored or bases run while the incorrect batter was at bat shall be legal. NOTE: The offensive team may correct a wrong batter at the plate with no penalty.

2. If the error is discovered after the incorrect batter has completed his/her turn at bat and before a legal pitch has been made to the following batter or before the pitcher and all infielders have clearly vacated their normal fielding positions and have left fair territory on their way to the bench or dugout area, the player who should have batted is out.

3. Any advance or score made because of a ball batted by the improper batter or because of the improper batter’s advance to first base as a result of obstruction, an error, a hit batter, walk, dropped third strike or a base hit shall be nullified. The next batter is the player whose name follows that of the player called out for failing to bat. If the batter declared out under these circumstances is the third out, the correct batter in the next inning shall be the player who would have come to bat had the player been put out by ordinary play.

4. No runner shall be removed from the base he/she is occupying except the batter-runner who has been taken off the base by the umpire as in (#2) above to bat in his proper place.

PITCHING

The pitcher shall take a position with both feet firmly on the ground and with one (1) or both feet in contact with the pitcher’s plate. The pitcher’s pivot foot must remain in contact with the pitcher’s plate throughout the delivery.

The pitcher must come to a full and complete stop with the ball in front of the body. The front of the body must face the batter. The position must be maintained at least one (1) second before starting the delivery.

The pitcher shall not be considered in pitching position unless the catcher is in position to receive the pitch.

LEGAL DELIVERY

- The pitcher must not make any motion to pitch without immediately delivering the ball.
- The windup is a continuous motion
- The pitcher must not use a windup in which there is a stop or reversal of the pitching motion.
- The pitcher must deliver the ball toward home plate on the first forward swing of the pitching arm past the hip with an underhanded motion.
- The pivot foot must remain in contact with the pitcher’s plate until the pitched ball leaves the hand. If a step is taken, it can 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.
- The pitcher must not pitch the ball behind his/her back or through his/her legs.
The pitch shall be released at a moderate speed. The speed is left entirely up to the judgment of the umpire.

The ball must be delivered with perceptible arc and reach the height of at least six (6) feet from the ground, while not exceeding a maximum height of twelve (12) feet from the ground.

He/she does not continue to wind up after he/she releases the ball.

The pitcher has ten (10) seconds to release the next pitch after receiving the ball, or after the umpire indicates “play ball”

**Quick Pitch** - The pitcher shall not attempt a quick return of the ball before the batter has taken his/her position or when the batter is off balance as a result of a pitch.

**Warm-up** - At the beginning of each half inning or when a pitcher relieves another, not more than one minute may be used to deliver not more than three (3) warm-up pitches.

**NOTE:** A pitcher returning to pitch in the same half inning will not receive warm-up pitches.

**No-Pitch** - No pitch shall be declared when:

- The pitcher pitches during the suspension of play.
- A runner is called out for leaving the base before the pitched ball reaches home plate or is batted.
- The pitcher pitches before a runner has retouched his/her base after a foul ball has been declared and the ball is dead.
- The ball slips from the pitcher’s hand during his/her windup or during the back swing.
- No player, manager or coach shall call time, employ any other word or phrase, or commit any act while the ball is alive and in play for the obvious purpose of trying to make the pitcher commit an illegal pitch.

**NOTE:** In all of the above, the ball is dead, and all subsequent action of the pitch is cancelled.

3 BALLS, 2 STRIKES

When a batter has one (1) strike and fouls off another pitch for their second strike, they will receive a strike. This keeps the batter alive but the next strike, whether called, missed or fouled, will result in the batter being out. A batter will receive a walk on the third called ball.

BALL IS DEAD

**THE BALL IS DEAD AND NOT IN PLAY:**

- When the ball is pitched illegally.  
  **Exception:** if the batter swings, the play stands and the pitch is no longer illegal.
- When “no pitch” is declared.
- When it rolls down the hill in the outfield off of the field of play
- When a pitched ball touches any part of the batter’s person or clothing whether the ball is swung at or not. The hand is not considered part of the bat.
- When a fair ball strikes a base runner or umpire before touching an infielder, including the pitcher, or before passing an infielder, other than the pitcher. The batter/runner gets first base and the base runner is out.
- When a batter/runner interferes with a catcher. The batter/runner is out.
- When a member of the offensive team intentionally interferes with a live ball.
• When the ball is outside of the established limits of the playing area. The ball is considered outside the playing area when it touches the ground, person on the ground or object outside the playing area.
• When a batter bunts or chops the ball
• When any part of the batter’s person is hit with his/her own batted ball when he/she is in the batter’s box.
• When in the judgment of the umpire, the coach touches or physically assists the runner to return or leave a base; or when the coach near third base runs in the direction of home plate in an attempt to draw the throw to home and away from a fielder attempting to make a play.
• When a base runner fails to keep contact with the base to which he/she is entitled until a legally pitched ball has reached home plate. The runner is called out and “no pitch” is declared.
• When the catcher interferes with the batter’s attempt to hit a pitch. 
  **Exception:** the ball remains alive and the play stands if the batter reaches first safely and all other runners advance at least one base.
• When a play is being made on an obstructed runner or if the batter/runner is obstructed before he/she reaches first.
• When a fielder carries a live ball into dead ball territory. The batter/runner may not advance on a dead ball unless awarded a base(s) by rule. 
  **Exception:** Catch and Carry Rule- to allow for a little more playing area since the dead ball areas are so close, a player is allowed to catch the ball while completely in playable area then, taking NO MORE THAN TWO (2) STEPS, stop and throw the ball back into play. This is in effect only if the fielder clearly has possession (both feet last leaving playable area) before he/she goes out of play.

**THE BALL IS ALIVE AND IN PLAY:**

• When a base runner is called out for passing a preceding runner.
• When no play is being made on an obstructed runner. The ball shall remain live until the play is over or a play is being made on an obstructed runner.
• When a base is dislodged while base runners are progressing around the bases. In this instance, the base runner should go to the original spot of the base, not to the dislodged base.
• When a base runner runs more than three (3) feet from a direct line between that base and the next one in regular or reverse order to avoid being touched by the ball in the hand of the fielder. The base runner is out, but the play continues.
• If the batter drops the bat and the ball rolls against the bat in fair territory and in the judgment of the umpire, there was no intention to interfere with the course of the ball. The batter/runner is not out and the ball is alive.
• When a thrown ball strikes an umpire.

In all of the above situations, the ball remains alive until the umpire(s) call “time”, which should be done when the ball is held by a player in the infield areas and in the judgment of the umpire, all play has ceased.

**THE BATTER**

The batter is out when:

• The second strike is struck at and missed or is a called strike
- The batter bunts, half swings or chops the ball downward so that the ball bounces high into the air.

THE BASE RUNNER

THE BASE RUNNER IS OUT:

- When a base runner physically passes a preceding runner before that runner has been put out.
- When the batter/runner legally overruns first attempts to run to second base and is legally touched by the ball in the hand of the fielder while off base.
- When running or sliding for home plate and he/she fails to touch home plate, returns to the dugout, making no attempt to return to base. The fielder then holds the ball in his/her hand while touching home plate and appeals to the umpire for a decision.
- When the base runner intentionally interferes with a fielder attempting to field a batted ball or intentionally interferes with a thrown ball. If this interference, in the judgment of the umpire, is an obvious attempt to prevent a double play and occurs before the base runner is put out, the immediate succeeding runner shall also be called out.
- When a base runner is struck with a fair batted ball in fair territory while off base and before it passes out of the infield or touched by an infielder.
- When anyone, other than the base runner, physically assists a base runner while the ball is in play.
- When a runner, after being declared out or after scoring interferes with a defensive player’s opportunity to make a play on another runner. The runner closest to home plate at the time of this interference shall also be called out.
- When a base runner fails to keep contact with the base to which he/she is entitled until a legally touched ball has reached home plate.

THE BASE RUNNER IS NOT OUT:

- When a base runner runs behind or in front of the fielder and outside the three (3) foot baseline in order to avoid interfering with a fielder attempting to field a ball in the base path.
- When a base runner does not run in a direct line to the base, providing the fielder in the direct line does not have the ball in his/her possession.
- When more than one fielder attempts to field a batted ball and the base runner comes in contact with the fielder unintentionally, and in the judgment of the umpire, the contacted fielder was not entitled to field the ball.
- When a base runner is touched with a ball not securely held by a fielder.
- When hit by a batted ball while the base runner is touching his/her base or a fielder has already touched it, unless he/she intentionally interferes with a ball or a fielder making the play.
- When a base runner is hit with a fair batted ball that has passed an infielder, excluding the pitcher, and in the judgment of the umpire, no other fielder has a chance to make an out.

GENERAL DEFINITIONS

**Fair Ball** - A fair ball is a batted ball that:

- Settles on fair territory between home and first base, or between home and third base.
- Is on or over fair territory, including part of first base and third base, when bounding toward the outfield or touches first, second, or third base.
• First falls on fair territory beyond first or third base.
• While on or over fair territory, touches the person of any umpire or player, judged by the position of the ball, not the player.
• While over fair territory, passes out of the playing field beyond the outfield fence.

**Illegally Batted Ball** - An illegally batted ball occurs when:

• A batter’s foot is completely out of the batter’s box on the ground when he/she hits a ball fair or foul.
• Any part of the batter’s foot is touching home plate when he/she hits the ball.
• The batter hits the ball with an illegal bat.

**Infield Fly** - An infield fly is a fair fly ball (not including a line drive) which can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort when first and second bases, or first second and third bases are occupied before there are two (2) outs. The pitcher, catcher and any outfielder who positions him/herself in the infield at the start of play shall be considered infielders for the purpose of this rule.

The infield fly is ruled when the ball reaches the highest point based on the position of the closest infielder regardless who makes the play. When it seems apparent that a batted ball will be an infield fly, the umpire shall immediately declare, “Infield Fly. The batter is out.” For the benefits of the runners. If the ball is near a foul line, the umpire shall declare, “Infield Fly. The batter is out if fair.”

The ball is alive and runners may advance at the risk of the ball being caught. The runner can tag up and advance once the batted ball is touched (prior to catching), the same as on any fly ball. If a declared infield fly becomes a foul ball, it will be treated the same as any foul.

**Interference** - Interference is the act of an offensive player which impedes, hinders, or confuses a defensive player while attempting to execute a play.

**Aiding a runner** - The runner is out when anyone, other than the other runner, physically assists him/her while the ball is in play. If this assistance occurs prior to a caught batted fly ball, regardless of whether the ball is fair or foul, a delayed dead ball call will be made, after which he/she will be declared out.

**Ball Hitting Umpire** - The batter becomes a batter/runner when a fair batted ball strikes the person, attached equipment, or clothing of an umpire or a runner.

**Base Coach**

• When the coach near third base runs in the direction of home plate or near the baseline while a fielder is attempting to make a play on a batted or thrown ball and thereby draws a throw to home plate.
  
  • **Effect**: The runner closest to home shall be declared out

• When one of more members of the offensive team stand or collect around a base to which a runner is advancing, thereby confusing the fielders and adding to the difficulty of making the play.

**NOTE**: Members of a team include batboy or any other person authorized to sit on team’s bench.

• When a coach intentionally interferes with a thrown ball while in the coach’s box, or interferes with the defensive team’s opportunity to make a play on another runner.
Effect: The runner closest to home plate at the time of the interference shall be declared out.

Overall effect of above items: The ball is dead and the runner is out. Each other runner must return to the last base legally touched at the time of the interference.

**INTERFERENCE**

**BY RUNNER:**

- When he interferes with a fielder attempting to field a batted ball or interferes with a thrown ball. If this interference, in the judgment of the umpire, is an obvious attempt to prevent a double play and occurs before the runner is put out, the immediate succeeding runner shall also be called out. **Note:** If a ball ricochets off one defensive player and another player has the opportunity to make an out, the runner will be ruled out if he/she interferes with a second fielder.
- When he/she is struck with a fair untouched batted ball while not in contact with a base and before it passes an infielder, excluding the pitcher.

Effect for above two teams: When runners are called out for interference, the batter/runner is awarded first base, the ball is dead and the runner is out. Each other runner must return to the last base legally touched at the time of the interference.

- When he/she intentionally kicks a ball which an infielder has missed.
  - **Effect:** The ball is dead and the runner is out. Each other runner must return to the last base legally touched at the time of the interference.
- When, after being declared out or after scoring, a runner interferes with a defensive player’s opportunity to make a play on another runner.
  - **Effect:** The runner closest to home plate at the time of the interferences shall be declared out.
- When a defensive player has the ball or is about to receive the ball and the runner remains on his/her feet and deliberately, with great force, crashes into the defensive player.
  - **Effect:** The runner is out, the ball is dead, and each other runner must return to the last base touched at the time of the interference. **Note:** If the act is determined to be flagrant, the offender shall be ejected.

**BY BATTER:**

- The batter shall not hinder the catcher from catching or throwing the ball by stepping out of the batter’s box, or intentionally hinder the catcher while standing within the batter’s box.
  - **Effect:** The ball is dead, the batter is out and each runner must return to the last base that, in the judgment of the umpire, was touched at the time of the interference.

**BY ON-DECK BATTER:**

- The on-deck batter may not interfere with the defensive player’s opportunity to make an out:
  - **Effect:**
    - If it involves a runner, the runner closest to home plate at the time of the interference shall be declared out.
    - If it is with the defensive fielder fielding a fly ball, the batter is out.
BY OFFENSE EQUIPMENT ON FIELD:

- When the ball is in play and is overthrown (beyond the boundary lines) or is blocked.

Effect: All runners will be awarded one base, and the award will be governed by the positions of the runners when the ball left the fielder’s hand. If two runners are between the same bases, the award is based on the position of the lead runner.

Exception: If the ball becomes blocked due to offensive equipment not involved in the game, the ball is ruled dead and runners are returned to the last base touched at the time of the blocked ball. If the blocked ball prevented the defense from making a play, the runner closest to home is called out.

OBSTRUCTION

- A defensive player or team member who hinders or prevents a batter from striking at or hitting a pitched ball.
- A fielder, who is neither in possession of the ball, in the act of fielding a batted ball, nor about to receive a thrown ball, which impedes the progress of a runner or batter/runner who is legally running bases.

Effect: When any obstruction occurs (including a rundown), the umpire will signal a delayed dead ball. The ball will remain alive.

1. If the obstructed runner is put out prior to reaching the base he/she would have reached had there not been obstruction, a dead ball is called and the obstructed runner and each other runner affected by the obstruction will always be awarded the base or bases he/she would have reached, in the umpire’s judgment, had there not been obstruction.

2. If the obstructed runner is put out after passing the base or bases he/she would have reached had there not been obstruction, the obstructed runner will be called out. The ball remains alive.

3. When a runner, while advancing or returning to a base, is obstructed by a fielder who neither has the ball nor is attempting to field a batted or thrown ball, or a fielder who fakes a tag without the ball, the obstructed runner and each other runner affected by the obstruction, will always be awarded the base or bases he/she would have reached, in the umpire’s judgment, had there been no obstruction. If the umpire feels there is justification, a defensive player making a fake tag could be ejected.

Effect: The umpire shall give a delayed dead ball signal.

1. If the batter hits the ball and reaches first base safely, and if all other runners have advanced at least one base on the batted ball, catcher obstruction is cancelled. All action as a result of the batted ball stands. No option is given.

2. If the manager/coach does not take the result of the play, obstruction is enforced by awarding the batter first base and advancing all other runners only if forced.
OVERTHROWN BALLS / DEAD BALLS

An overthrow occurs when a thrown ball from a fielder goes beyond the boundary lines of the playing field (dead ball territory) or becomes a blocked ball.

- When the ball is in play and is overthrown (beyond the boundary lines) or is blocked

Deadball Rule: Once ball enters the dead ball area the batter/base runner will receive one base.

Carrying the ball:

- When a live ball is unintentionally carried by a fielder from playable territory into dead ball territory.

Effect: The ball is dead and each runner is awarded one base from the last base touched at the time the fielder entered dead ball territory. Note: A fielder carrying a live ball into the dugout or team area to tag a player is considered to have intentionally carried I there.

Exception: In UNC-Chapel Hill Intramural play, to allow for a little more playing area due to the closeness of the dead ball areas, a player is allowed to catch the ball while completely in playable territory and then, TAKING NO MORE THAN TWO (2) STEPS, stop and throw the ball back into play. This is if the fielder clearly has possession (both feet last leaving playable area) before he/she goes into dead ball territory.

- If, in judgment of the umpire, a fielder intentionally carries, kicks, pushes, or throws a live ball into dead ball territory.

Effect: The ball is dead. Each runner is awarded one base from the last base touched at the time the fielder entered or the ball was kicked, pushed or thrown into dead ball territory.

DEAD BALL AREA CLARIFICATIONS

The hill between Hooker Fields and South Road is considered a dead ball area.

The hill between Hooker Fields and Fetzer field is considered a dead ball area.

Field 3 on Hooker fields is considered a dead ball area.

IN FOUL AREA:

- A ball must be caught in live area to be considered an out.
  - A player who catches the ball in the live area is allowed two steps into the dead ball area for the play to remain live. After two steps into the dead ball area, the ball becomes dead.
- A ball that is hit into fair territory then veers off into the dead ball area in foul territory results in the next base plus one.

IN FAIR AREA:

- A ball that rolls into dead ball area is ruled as next base as soon as it enters the dead ball area.
  - Including: A ball that is hit into fair territory then veers off into the dead ball area in foul territory.
• A ball that lands in/on the dead ball area is ruled as next base at the point the ball hits the blue area.
• A ball that lands over the dead ball area is a homerun, including hitting any object on the furthest side of the dead ball area (e.g. a fence or rock wall).

**MISCELLANEOUS**

There will be no headfirst sliding. Initial headfirst sliding is an automatic out. Diving back to a base, after initial contact, is legal.

**CO-RECREATIONAL SOFTBALL RULES**

**PLAYER REQUIREMENTS**

A team must start and finish the game with at least eight (8) players.

A team must consist of one of the following:

1. Ten (10) players of which five (5) must be male and five (5) must be female.
2. Nine (9) players which you can have either: Five (5) males and four (4) females, or five (5) females and four (4) males.
3. Eight (8) players of which four (4) must be male and four (4) must be female.

Fewer than five (5) players will constitute a forfeit. Fewer than eight (8) players but more than five (5) players constitute a default.

**BATTING ORDER**

Team batting orders must alternate men and women.

Exception: If a team has nine players, then they must list a "ghost" batter at the end of the batting order. When the “ghost” batter comes around in the batting order, an out will be recorded.

**PLAYER SUBSTITUTIONS**

Teams may choose one of the following substitution methods before the game begins. Your choice must be made to the Plate Umpire before the game begins. After you have made your choice, you cannot change your substitution pattern once the game has begun.

**Choice A - UNLIMITED SUBSTITUTION**—If a team has more than ten (10) players, it may list all of its players on the batting order and each player will bat in order as his/her name appears. You must follow the original lineup throughout the game. Late players must be added to the end of the batting order.

**Choice B - ASA Re-entry Rule**—a maximum of ten (10) players may bat. Others may be substituted into the lineup at any point.

Substitutions with this option must be male for male, and female for female

1. Any of the starting players may be substituted and re-entered once, provided players occupy the same batting positions whenever in the lineup. The starting player and the substitute(s) may not be in the lineup at the same time.
2. A starting player removed from the pitching position by the umpire and substituted for can re-enter the game at another position, but cannot return to the pitching position.
3. Late players, nine and ten, can be added to the end of the lineup if all players have not completed their first at bat.

FIELDING POSITIONS

Once positions are established when a team takes the field at the beginning of an inning, teams must continue to play the same-sex player at that position for the entire inning (i.e., if a female starts out at shortstop, a female must play shortstop throughout that inning; a team may not change fielding positions in response to certain batters.)