

# MSO RECREATION LEAGUE SOFTBALL RULES

(REVISED 2023)

## ALL DIVISIONS

The mission of Maplewood/South Orange Softball is to encourage participation in girls' softball and to develop the spirit of good sportsmanship and fair play. At all times, coaches should keep in mind that winning games is less important than building future good citizens. With this mission in mind, the rules in each division begin with instructional goals that every coach and player should try to achieve. The rules set forth in this document are meant to assist coaches and players in attaining those goals.

MSO softball will follow the rules established by ASA Softball with the adjustments listed below. Consistent application of these rules will result in each participant having a similar set of expectations and will increase the probability for a successful and enjoyable experience.

1. Only children who are registered with the Maplewood South Orange Girls Softball League are permitted to participate in Maplewood South Orange ("MSO") softball events. Only residents of Maplewood or South Orange are permitted to register for the MSO Softball League.
2. All coaches must supervise the players before, during, and after practices and games.
3. No child is to be left at a ball field without the child's parent, guardian, or coach present. If a child's parent or guardian is not present to pick her up after a game, practice, or other event, a coach must remain with the child until the parent or guardian arrives.
4. A player may supply her own bat; however, it must be ASA approved. Umpires and coaches will check bats. All bats approved for use must be made available for all players to use.
5. No player is allowed to handle a bat unless she is up to bat or, in some cases (Junior and Senior Divisions), she is on deck to bat.
6. Batgirls or Batboys are not permitted.
7. In Rookie, Junior, and Senior Divisions, players must wear helmets with cages when batting AND when running the bases. There are no exceptions. In T-Ball and Coach Pitch, helmet with cages are mandatory when batting a live pitch. Chin Straps for all divisions are recommended but not mandatory.
8. A player may supply her own helmet. However, any helmet supplied and used by a player needs to have a label stating that it meets the safety standards as set forth by the National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment, (NOCSAE).
9. Metal cleats are prohibited. Rubber cleats are highly recommended for all players.
10. A catcher must wear all of the following protective gear: helmet, mask, chest protector, and shin guards. Each team will be supplied one set of catcher's gear. Players may bring and wear their own catcher's gear.
11. Jewelry is prohibited (except for medical alert purposes). If a player must wear earrings, they can only be studs and must be covered, front and back, with medical or sports tape.
12. Prior to game time, the Maplewood Department of Recreation and Cultural Affairs is solely responsible for cancelling a game due to weather-related issues. Coaches will be notified via TeamSnap regarding any pregame cancelations. Once a game has started, stopping or cancelling

a game is the responsibility of the umpire for the Junior and Senior divisions and the responsibility of the coaches in the Rookie and T-Ball / Coach Pitch Division. An umpire may cancel a game at the first sight of lightning or may suspend the game for 20 minutes to see if lightning continues. A team forfeits a game if the Maplewood Department of Recreation and Cultural Affairs or umpire do not to cancel a game and the requisite number of players do not show up.

13. If a game is cancelled prior to the completion of an inning, then the game will end as of the last fully completed inning (top and bottom), and the official score will be as it was at that time. A Rookie, Junior, or Senior Division game must have lasted at least 4 full innings for it to be official, unless the home team is winning after 3 ½ innings. In that case the game is official after 3 ½ innings.
14. Rookie, Junior, and Senior Division games are SIX inning games. No new inning (top of) may begin beyond 1 hour and 30 minutes from the scheduled start of game time posted on the schedule. The T-Ball / Coach Pitch division should play as many innings as possible up to six within their 1 hour and 30 minute time allotment.
15. Coaches in all divisions must roster bat. This means that all available players must be listed in the line-up. Coaches are encouraged to rotate their batting order every game.
16. Only players, coaches, umpires, game officials, coaches, and Rutgers-certified parent substitute coaches (when applicable) are allowed on the playing field or in the dugouts or player benches.
17. Unless a coach grants permission to leave the game, all players must remain on the team bench, in the dugout, or on the field.
18. No one is allowed to stand directly behind the backstop.
19. Players are allowed to engage in only positive cheering.
20. To be eligible for Recreation League All Star games or the playoffs, players must play in a minimum of 50% of their team's recreation league games. For the purposes of this rule, a player plays in a game if they play at least one inning in the field and bat at least once. Exceptions will be made for injuries and other extenuating circumstances.
21. All players are required to wear their Recreation League provided uniforms for all games. Players may not wear uniforms from any other team while participating in Recreation League games.
22. For players arriving late and during the middle of a Recreational League game, the following rules will apply:
  - **Batting.** Late arriving players shall be added to the end of the batting order. Their turn to bat will naturally occur at the bottom of the order.
  - **Fielding/Pitching.** Late arriving players may only enter the game defensively at the start of an inning. No exceptions.
23. Players must remain on the team to which they are drafted or assigned. Trading players is absolutely prohibited.
24. In case of a tie in win/loss record at the end the regular season, the Softball Committee will use the comparative records between the tied teams to determine playoff standings. The Softball Committee will consider the following factors in this order:
  - i. Head to head record
  - ii. Average runs allowed per game for games between tied teams
  - iii. Average runs allowed per game for all games played
  - iv. Coin toss.

If more than two teams are tied, criteria will be applied to determine first place, and then reapplied for the remaining teams to determine first place, second place, etc.

### **T-BALL / COACH PITCH DIVISION (KINDERGARTEN & 1<sup>ST</sup> GRADE)**

In this division, coaches should teach the Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> Grade girls the very basics of the game of softball. Coaches should stress the concepts of teamwork and softball fundamentals. Coaches should focus on proper technique for the following physical skills: throwing, catching, base-running, fielding, hitting off a tee, and hitting a pitched ball. Coaches should be mindful that most 5- or 6-year-old children do not have the physical ability or coordination to master the art of catching or throwing properly.

There will be two games schedule per week (with some exceptions), and all games will be instructional. Each “game” will be split into two parts: half for instruction and half for a game. The first half of each game should be a practice where the coaches on each team provide players with instruction and teach the basic skills and fundamentals of softball. The second half of each game should be used to play a softball game utilizing the following rules:

1. All batters will hit from a stationary “T.” If the batter has better than average hitting ability, then the coach may pitch to her.
2. MSO Softball will supply a 11” training softball. This is the only ball that should be used during official events.
3. All runners are “safe” and should remain on the base even if they were thrown out, tagged out, their batted fly ball was caught or would otherwise be considered out under softball rules. REMEMBER, while this is an instructional division, each player should have a positive experience. Understanding the basics of running the bases in softball is an accomplishment for 5-, 6- and 7-year olds. There will be plenty of opportunity to learn about the more complex fundamentals of the game when they play in the older divisions.
4. All players should be on the field for defense. Make an attempt to place each player at an actual position even if that requires “doubling” up. (e.g., two left fielders). However, do not have more than one player at first base.
5. When creating batting line-ups, coaches MUST rotate the batting line-up every game so that everyone has an opportunity to bat first.
6. No bunting.
7. No leading. A runner must have one foot on the base until the batter hits the ball.
8. No stealing bases.
9. No sliding into bases.
10. If time permits we encourage each team to continue playing until each team has batted no more than six times. Teams have the fields for 1 hour and 30 minutes.

**DIVISION**  
**ROOKIE (2ND & 3RD GRADE)**

All games in this division games will be played under normal softball rules (any exceptions are listed below) and coaches from both teams will jointly umpire the game. Coaches should keep a score book and the winning coach will report the score within 24 hours of the end of the game. This division will have team standings and playoffs. In this division, coaches should continue to focus on instruction. Coaches should focus on expanding the rudimentary skills developed in the T-Ball/Coach Pitch Division. For example, skills such as running the bases, defensive techniques (e.g. the proper way to field a ground ball), and the mental aspects of the game (such as what to do with the ball once you catch it) should all be addressed at this level. Many 2nd and 3rd graders still struggle with some of the physical aspects of the game, but they should still be encouraged to “make the right play.” As with all of the divisions, the overall goals are teaching softball and having fun.

1. Coaches will pitch to their own team when their team is batting. After a total of 6 pitches, the batter must attempt to put all subsequent pitches in play; if she fails to make contact with the 7th pitch, she will be called out. If the 7th pitch is a foul ball, the batter will receive another pitch until she puts the ball in play or fails to make contact with the ball. The coach must pitch from a distance of 30 feet, measured from the pitching rubber to the back tip of the plate.
2. Bases should be 60 feet apart.
3. MSO Softball will supply a 11” training softball. This is the only ball that should be used during official events.
4. The inning will end after 3 outs or after 8 players have batted, whichever comes first. During the 6th inning only, the inning will end after 3 outs or after 10 players have batted, whichever comes first.
5. When creating batting line-ups, coaches MUST rotate the batting line-up every game so that everyone has an opportunity to bat first.
6. Runners on base already may advance one base on a hit to the infield. On balls hit to the outfield, runners may advance beyond one base at their own risk and may be tagged out at any time. Play will be ruled dead at the coaches’/umpire’s discretion once an infielder has secured the ball on the infield (defined by being within the inside of the baselines in fair territory) or a play is made on a runner at a base. If a runner is in between bases when play is ruled dead, the following rules will apply:
  - a. If no play is made on the advancing runners by the defense,
    - i. Runners must return to the previous base if they have not made it half way to the next base.
    - ii. Runners may advance to the next base if they have made it more than half ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ) the distance to the next base.
  - b. If the defense attempts to make a play on the runner, the runner’s fate will be determined by the outcome of the play. No further advancement shall be allowed regardless of an overthrow.
  - c. The same rules apply to any runners on the bases.
  - d. A ball hit to the outfield is defined as a batted ball that gets past the infielders cleanly (i.e., not touched by an infielder) and is fielded by an outfielder. This determination will be at the discretion of the coaches/umpire.

7. A player may not advance an extra base on an overthrow.
8. A player is not allowed to throw the bat after she hits the ball. She may only drop it along the first base path as she runs. Whether a bat is thrown is the coaches'/umpire's discretionary decision. Each team will receive one warning for a thrown bat, and each subsequent bat throwing offense by any member of the team will result in the player being called out.
9. No bunting.
10. No leading. A runner must have one foot on the base until the batter hits the ball.
11. No stealing bases.
12. Sliding feet first into bases is encouraged but not mandatory. No head first sliding is permitted.
13. Players will catch. They must wear full equipment including mask/helmet, chest protector and shin and knee guards as mandated by Maplewood Dept. of Recreation.
14. A team may field no more than 6 infielders.
15. Teams may field no more than 10 defensive players. If any team has less than 10 players available they must field all available players.
16. All outfielders must start each play on the outfield grass.
17. A team must have 6 available players to avoid a forfeit. If both teams have fewer than six players the game will be canceled and rescheduled. If the league is unable to reschedule the game (due to weather or field availability) the game will be recorded as a double loss (i.e., each team will record a loss for the game). Coaches must wait until 10 minutes after the scheduled start of the official game to declare a forfeit.
18. No player will sit on the bench for consecutive innings.
19. Coaches MUST rotate each player to a different position every inning. Coaches MUST give all players equal playing time both in the infield and the outfield. Safety is always a factor; therefore, a coach should not move a player into a position where her safety is compromised.
20. Games should go no longer than 6 innings, unless the game is tied and time permits for extra innings. No inning should start after 1 hour 30 minutes from the official start of the game.

## **JUNIOR (4TH & 5TH GRADE)**

Junior Division is a competitive division. Most standard softball rules will apply. Coaches should continue to develop basic skills and begin to teach the nuances of the game of softball at this level. Coaches should address skills such as running the bases, defensive techniques, (e.g., the proper way to field a ground ball), and the mental aspects of the game (such as what to do with the ball once you catch it, backing up, covering bases). Most 4th and, to some degree, 5th graders will still struggle with some

## DIVISION

physical aspects of the game (e.g., having their throws reach first base from third base), but should still be encouraged to “make the right play.” Again, coaches should encourage learning while having fun.

1. All ASA softball rules apply unless superseded below.
2. Bases should be 60 feet apart.
3. MSO Softball will supply a Yellow 11” softball. This is the only ball that should be used during official games.
4. Pitchers must pitch from the proper distance. The pitcher’s rubber is required to be 35 feet from the back tip of home plate to the front of the pitching rubber. The pitcher must start with both feet on the rubber. ASA pitching rules should be followed.
5. Pitchers will be allowed up to 8 warm up pitches in the first inning and 4 for pitches in all subsequent innings. New Pitchers who enter the game will be allowed a max of 8 pitches to warm up.
6. Pitchers should be encouraged to pitch windmill (full rotation) or modified windmill/sling shot (half rotation).
7. The individual pitching limits are 3 innings per game for Junior Division. Please note one pitch counts as one inning. Re-entry of eligible pitchers is permitted.
8. A runner must have at least one foot on the base until the ball crossed the plate. This means that a runner may only lead once the ball has crossed home plate. If a runner leaves the base before the ball crosses the plate, the umpire may call her out.
9. Players may NOT slide head first into any base (the only exception is if a runner overruns a base or is caught in a run down, then she is permitted to “dive” back to the base if warranted). Players are encouraged to slide feet first.
10. A runner may continue to advance to the next base (and beyond) while a ball is considered “inplay.” A ball is considered in-play unless an infielder has possession and control of the ball and asks the umpire to call for a time-out and the umpire grants the time out.
11. Runners may advance only one base on an overthrow to any base if the ball ends up in foul territory or is ruled “out of play.” If the ball remains in fair territory, or is returned to fair territory from foul territory by a defending player in an attempt to record an out, the play continues to be “live” until an infielder has possession and control of the ball and asks the umpire to call for a time-out and the umpire grants the time out.
12. If a runner is more than 1/2 way to the next base when play is ruled dead she may advance to the next base. This will be at the umpire’s discretion.
13. Third base is the only base players are allowed to steal. The runner attempting to steal third base may not advance to home on an overthrow.
14. An inning is over if the defensive team makes three outs or ten batters have batted in the inning, whichever comes first.
15. All players are required to bat in the line-up, whether or not they are in the game defensively. The player who was due to bat after the last batter of an inning (whether the 10th batter or the batter who makes the third out) will always be the first batter up in the next inning of that game.
16. Bunting is allowed. There is no fake bunting for the Junior Division. A fake bunt means that a player may not position herself for a bunt then take a full swing at the pitch. If she positions herself for a bunt she must either attempt to bunt the ball or pull back the bat. The penalty for a fake bunt is dead ball-batter out.
17. There is NO infield fly rule for the Junior Division.

18. There is NO dropped third strike rule. The batter is out if catcher drops the third strike
19. If a batter is hit by a pitch, she is awarded first base, even if the ball bounces first. However, the batter must make an attempt to avoid being hit by the pitch. This call is at the umpire's discretion.
20. A player is not allowed to throw the bat after she hits the ball. She may only drop it along the first base path as she runs. Whether a bat is thrown is an umpire's discretionary decision. Each team will receive one warning for a thrown bat, and each subsequent bat throwing offense by any member of the team will result in the player being called out.
21. A coach may use a courtesy runner for the catcher or pitcher at any time in order to keep the game moving.
22. A team may field no more than 6 infielders.
23. A team may field no more than 10 defensive players. If any team has less than 10 players available they must field all available players.
24. A minimum of eight players is required to field an official team. Any team without at least eight players will forfeit the game. If both teams have less than eight players the official game will be cancelled and rescheduled if the league is able to do so. Otherwise, the game will be declared a double loss, (i.e., each team will record a loss for the game). An umpire must wait until 10 minutes after official game time (as determined by the umpire) to declare a forfeit.
25. No player will sit on the bench for consecutive innings.
26. All coaches must be in the dugout unless they are coaching first or third base.
27. Coaches are allowed two trips to the pitching mound per pitcher per inning. On the second trip to the mound the pitcher must either be removed from the game or moved to another position, unless the reason is injury related.
28. An on-deck batter may take practice swings in a designated area, while supervised by a coach of the batting team. Only two players may have a bat at any one time; the batter and the on-deck batter.
29. Games should go no longer than 6 innings, unless the game is tied and time permits for extra innings. No inning should start after 1 hour 30 minutes from the official start of the game.
30. A game will officially end if any time after the 4th inning where one team is leading by 12 or more runs. The losing team must bat at least four times AND as many times as the leading team. The team in the lead will be declared the official winner. If the coaches of the teams decide to continue the game beyond this time, they may do so for practice, or scrimmage, purposes only.

## **SENIOR (6TH – 8TH GRADE)**

Senior Division is a competitive division. Most standard softball rules will apply. Coaches should continue to develop/reinforce basic skills and to teach the nuances of the game of softball. As always, coaches should encourage learning while having fun. Even though this is the highest level of competitive play in the MSO Softball program, coaches should remember that goals of sportsmanship and fair play trump the standings.

## DIVISION

1. All ASA softball rules apply unless superseded below 2.  
Bases should be 60 feet apart.
3. MSO Softball will supply a Yellow 12" softball. This is the only ball that should be used during official games.
4. Pitchers must pitch from the proper distance. The pitcher's rubber is required to be 43 feet from the back tip of home plate to the front of the pitching rubber. The pitcher must start with both feet on the rubber. ASA pitching rules should be followed.
5. Pitchers will be allowed up to 8 warm up pitches in the first inning and 4 for pitches in all subsequent innings. New Pitchers who enter the game will be allowed a max of 8 pitches to warm up.
6. Pitchers are encouraged to pitch windmill (full rotation), but this is not required.
7. There is no individual pitching limit in the senior division.
8. A runner must have at least one foot on the base until the ball is released from the pitcher's hand. A runner may only lead once the ball has been released. If a runner leaves the base before the release, the umpire may call her out. Runners lead at their own risk and cannot advance on overthrown pickoff attempts.
9. Players may NOT slide head first into any base (the only exception is if a runner overruns a base or is caught in a run down, then she is permitted to "dive" back to the base if warranted). Players are encouraged to slide feet first.
10. All standard softball rules apply regarding a ball being in "play." Umpires will set ground rules and discuss those rules with a coach from each team before a game. A ball is considered not in play, or "dead," if the umpire calls "dead ball," if the umpire declares time-out, or if the pitcher has control of the ball and is standing in the pitcher's circle. At all other times, runners are free to advance at their own risk.
11. Runners may advance only one base on an overthrow to any base if the ball passes through foul territory into an out of play area and becomes a dead ball. If the ball travels into foul territory but remains "in play" the play continues to be "live" until one of the preceding scenarios has occurred.
12. If a runner is more than 1/2 way to the next base when play is ruled dead, she may advance to the next base. This will be at the umpire's discretion.
13. Runners are permitted to steal 3rd base, but a runner may not advance to home on an overthrow. Runners are permitted to attempt to steal 2nd base only one time per half inning. Runner will not be allowed to advance to third base on a steal to second if there is an overthrow or fielding error. Stealing Home is not permitted.
14. During a play at the plate, the runner must make every attempt to avoid contact with the catcher. If a player slides, she will be deemed to be avoiding contact. If in the umpire's discretion, the runner does not attempt to avoid contact, she will be called out.
15. A team will remain batting until 3 outs have occurred; there is no limit to the number of batters per inning.
16. All players are required to bat in the line-up, whether or not they are in the game defensively. All players will bat in their spot in the batting order regardless if they played in the field or not the previous inning.
17. Bunting is allowed. There is no fake bunting for the Senior Division. A fake bunt means that a player may not position herself for a bunt then take a full swing at the pitch. If she positions herself for a bunt she must either attempt to bunt the ball or pull back the bat. The penalty for a fake bunt is dead ball-batter out.

18. There is NO infield fly rule
19. There is NO dropped third strike rule. Batter is out if catcher drops the third strike
20. If a batter is hit by a pitch, she is awarded first base. However, the batter must make an attempt to avoid being hit by the pitch. This call is at the umpire's discretion.
21. A player is not allowed to throw the bat after she hits the ball. She may only drop it along the first base path as she runs. Whether a bat is thrown is an umpire's discretionary decision. Each team will receive one warning for a thrown bat, and each subsequent bat throwing offense by any member of the team will result in the player being called out.
22. A coach may use a courtesy runner for the catcher or pitcher if the catcher or pitcher is on base. Coaches are encouraged to use courtesy runners for their catchers when there are two outs to give the catcher time to put on her catchers' equipment in order to keep the game moving.
23. A team may field no more than 10 defensive players: six infielders and four outfielders. All four outfielders shall be positioned on the outfield grass, a minimum of 15 feet beyond the infield/outfield boundary. If any team has less than 10 players, they must field all available players.
24. A minimum of eight players are required to field an official team. Any team without at least eight players will forfeit the game. If both teams have less than eight players the official game will be cancelled and rescheduled if the league is able to do so. Otherwise, the game will be declared a double loss, (i.e., each team will record a loss for the game). An umpire must wait until 10 minutes after official game to declare a forfeit.
25. No player may sit on the bench for two or more consecutive innings in any one game.
26. Intentional walks are ONLY allowed under the following conditions: first base is unoccupied and 2nd base is occupied. Coaches are only allowed to issue one intentional walk per game.
27. Coaches are not allowed to stand in fair territory while the ball is in play. Coaches are not allowed to physically assist or restrict a player.
28. Coaches are allowed two trips to the pitching mound per pitcher per inning. On the second trip to the mound, the pitcher must either be removed from the game or move to another position, unless the reason is injury related.
29. An on-deck batter may take practice swings in a designated area, while supervised by a coach of the batting team. Only two players may have a bat at any one time; the batter and on-deck batter.
30. Games should go no longer than 6 innings, unless the game is tied and time permits for extra innings. No inning should start after 1 hour 30 minutes from the official start of the game.
31. A game will officially end if any time after the 4th inning where one team is leading by 12 or more runs. The losing team must bat at least four times AND as many times as the leading team. The team in the lead will be declared the official winner. If the coaches of the teams decide to continue the game beyond this time, they may do so for practice, or scrimmage purposes only.

## **PROCEDURES FOR PROTESTS**

The MSO Softball Committee will not consider protests if they are based on a decision involving the accuracy of judgment on the part of an umpire. If a coach would like to file a protest based on something other than an umpire's discretionary decision, the head coach of the protesting team should send an e-mail to [msogirlssoftball@aol.com](mailto:msogirlssoftball@aol.com) requesting action the Committee. The Committee will rule on all properly submitted protests. The Committee will either provide a ruling or escalate to the appropriate person employed by the Maplewood Department of Recreation and Cultural Affairs.