

FULLY LOADED SOFTBALL

Senior Fastpitch Playing Rules



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Fully Loaded Softball – Senior Fastpitch Playing Rules are simple, easy to understand and action-packed. Along with the “Bases Loaded” concept, some additional rules come into the game to progress it from the Slowpitch version.

Fastpitch competitions are suitable once beginners have acquired basic concepts and skills often acquired with progression through modified games activities such as those found in Softball Batter Up programs, T-ball or Fully Loaded Slowpitch for Juniors/Seniors.

These Senior Fastpitch Playing Rules can be adopted for club or interschool sport competitions.

More advanced features of these rules include: Fastpitch pitcher/catcher rules, 3 outs per innings and tagging baserunners.

1 Teams

- 1.1 Team numbers can vary however it is recommended for Fastpitch to play nine players on the field at any one time.
 - 1.1.1 If it is a mixed competition, it is strongly recommended that each team have a maximum of three males on the field at any one time.
- 1.2 A team is not required to have a set minimum number of players to be able to play the game.
- 1.3 A team may have more than nine players on their team list and make substitutions during the game without restriction.
- 1.4 A team is not required to wear a uniform, although they will look really good if they do!

2 Equipment

- 2.1 Shoes must be worn by all players. Metal cleats and shoes with screw in studs are not permitted. Moulded cleats are allowed.
- 2.2 Gloves are required for all fielders.
- 2.3 Helmets are required for all batters and base runners.
- 2.4 Softcore balls are recommended for all Senior beginner programs. However if the skill level of participants is past beginner, regulation hard competition balls can be used. Decisions on what type of ball is used should be determined based on the skill level and experience of participants.
- 2.5 If using Competition balls (hard) suitably fitted batting helmets and catcher's equipment (covering chest, head/face and legs) **MUST** be used.

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3 The game

- 3.1 The recommended number of innings per game is three, taking approximately 45 minutes to complete a game.
- 3.2 One innings is completed when each team has batted and fielded.
- 3.3 A team's turn at bat concludes when 3 outs are made.
- 3.4 When the 3rd out is made, players have 60 seconds to take the field.
- 3.5 Batters bat in a set order. When a substitution is made, the substitute takes the batting position of the player they have replaced.
- 3.6 A pitcher can only pitch in one innings of the game.
- 3.7 The fielding team must have a pitcher and catcher, with all other fielders positioned as the fielding team chooses, within the field of play.
- 3.8 The Competition Organiser will determine the method of deciding which team bats and which team fields first.
- 3.9 The winner of the game is the team that scores the most runs.
- 3.10 A run is scored when a batter makes their way around all four bases (touching each one in order 1st, 2nd, 3rd, Home) and crosses the Homeplate.
- 3.11 In the event of a tied game, the Competition Organiser may choose to award equal points to both teams or play a tiebreaker to determine a winner.
 - 3.11.1 A tiebreaker consists of an extra innings of play, with each team having three batters each.
 - 3.11.2 Each team can choose their three batters.
 - 3.11.3 The team who fielded last will remain in the field and bat second in the tiebreaker.
 - 3.11.4 Any player, including a player who has already pitched during the game, can pitch in the tiebreaker.

4 Starting each innings

- 4.1 Before each game both teams set their batting order 1st – 9th.
- 4.2 At the start of each innings the batting team sends one batter to Homeplate and 3 runners to the bases – **“Loaded Bases”**
- 4.3 In the first innings the 1st batter leads off by going to bat, at the same time the 7th, 8th and 9th batters start the game on base.

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- 4.4 In the first inning the 7th batter starts on 3rd, the 8th batter on 2nd and the 9th batter on 1st base.
- 4.5 The batter that leads off each subsequent innings is the batter that was next to bat when the last out was made the innings before.
- 4.6 Each subsequent innings the last 3 batters of the innings before, start on base with the last batter on 1st base, the second last batter on 2nd base and the third last batter on 3rd base.
- 4.7 The lowest order batter starts on 1st base each innings

5 The pitch

- 5.1 Before delivering a pitch, the following actions must occur
- 5.2 All players must be positioned in fair territory, and the catcher must be in the catcher's box and in a position to receive the pitch.
- 5.3 The pitcher must have possession of the ball and be on or near the pitching plate.
- 5.4 The pitcher must have the pivot foot in contact with the pitcher's plate and both feet within the 61.0 cm (24 in) length of the pitcher's plate. The hips must be in line with first and third bases.
- 5.5 The pitcher must, bring their whole body to a full and complete stop, with the ball in both hands in front of the body. The stepping (non-pivot foot) must be stationary at the start and during pause. The stepping (non-pivot) foot can only move forward with the start of the pitch. Any backward movement of the non-pivot foot during or after the pause is an illegal action. This position must be held for not less than two (2) seconds and not more than five (5) seconds before releasing the ball. Holding the ball in both hands to the side of the body is considered in front of the body.
- 5.6 The pitcher has a maximum of 15 seconds to deliver the ball once it is thrown back to the pitcher or the umpire calls 'play ball'. Any longer and the umpire can call and illegal pitch.

6 Illegal Pitch

- 6.1 If an illegal pitch is not hit by the batter, a ball is called on the batter and each of the runners on base are awarded an extra base.

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7 Starting the pitch

- 7.1 The pitch starts when one hand is taken off the ball, or the pitcher makes any motion that is part of the pitcher's wind up. The pitcher may not use a pitching motion in which, after being in the pitching position with the ball in both hands, they take a backward and forward swing and return the ball to both hands in front of the body. This is an illegal pitch.
- 7.2 The pivot foot must remain in contact with the pitcher's plate prior to the start of the pitch. Lifting the pivot foot off the pitcher's plate and returning it to the plate, creating a rocking motion is an illegal pitch.

8 Fastpitch

- 8.1 If playing Fastpitch, the following must take place for a pitch to be a legal pitch.
- 8.2 A windmill pitch is permitted.
- 8.3 The pitcher must immediately deliver the ball to the batter upon making any motion to pitch.
- 8.4 The pitcher must only make one revolution on the windmill pitch. However, the pitcher may drop the pitching arm to the side and rear before starting the windmill motion. This allows the arm to legally pass the hip twice.
- 8.5 The delivery must be an underhand motion, with the hand below the hip, the wrist not further from the body than the elbow and with no stop or reversal of the forward motion.
- 8.6 The release of the ball and follow through of the hand and wrist must be forward and past the straight line of the body.
- 8.7 In the act of delivering the ball, the pitcher may take one step with the stepping (non-pivot foot) simultaneously with the release of the ball. The step must be forward toward the batter and within the 61.0 cm (24 in) length of the pitcher's plate. It is not a step if the pitcher slides either foot across the pitcher's plate, provided contact is maintained with the plate, and there is no movement backward off the plate.
- 8.8 The pivot foot must remain in contact with the pitcher's plate or push off and drag away from the pitcher's plate or be airborne prior to the stepping (non-pivot) foot touching the ground. The pitcher may leap from the pitcher's plate, land and with a continuous motion deliver the ball to the batter. The pivot foot may follow through with the pitcher's continuous action.
- 8.9 All movement of the pitching arm must be continuous as the pitcher steps or pushes or leaps from the pitcher's plate.

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- 8.10 The pitcher's push off to drag, leap or hop must start from the pitcher's plate. The pitcher must not crow hop or push off from any place other than the pitcher's plate.
- 8.11 The pitcher's arm on the release of the ball may follow through, provided the wind-up does not continue.
- 8.12 The pitcher must deliver the ball to the batter so as not to deliberately drop, roll or bounce the ball to prevent the batter from hitting it.
- 8.13 The pitcher has 15 seconds to release the next pitch after receiving the ball or after the Umpire indicates "play".

9 Modified Pitch

- 9.1 If playing modified pitch rules the following must take place for a pitch to be a legal pitch.
- 9.2 The pitcher must immediately deliver the ball to the batter upon making any motion to pitch.
- 9.3 The pitcher may take the ball behind their back on the backswing, provided there is no stop or reversal of the forward motion and the pitcher does not use a windmill or slingshot-type of pitch or make a complete revolution in the delivery.
- 9.4 The ball must be inside the pitcher's wrist on the downward motion and during the complete delivery.
- 9.5 The delivery must be an underhanded motion with the hand below the hip, and the palm may be pointing downward.
- 9.6 On the forward swing of the pitching arm:
 - 9.6.1 the elbow must be locked at the point of release; and
 - 9.6.2 the shoulders and driving hip must be squared to home plate when the ball is released.
- 9.7 The release of the ball must be on the first forward swing of the pitching arm and must pass the hip. The release must have a complete, smooth follow-through with no abrupt stop of the arm near the hip.
- 9.8 Pushing off with the pivot foot from a place other than the pitcher's plate before the stepping (non-pivot) foot has left the plate is a crow hop and is illegal.
- 9.9 In an act of delivering the ball, the pitcher must take one step simultaneous with the release of the ball. The step must be forward toward the batter and

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within the 61.0 cm (24 in) length of the pitcher's plate. The stepping (non-pivot) foot must be pointed toward home plate and must not touch the ground in front of, or across over a straight line between the pivot foot and home plate. It is not a step if the pitcher slides either foot across the pitcher's plate, provided contact is maintained with the pitcher's plate. Lifting the pivot foot off the pitcher's plate and returning it to the pitcher's plate, creating a rocking motion, is a violation of Rule 4.3.2(b).

- 9.10 The pitcher's arm on the release of the ball may follow through, provided the wind up does not continue.
- 9.11 The pitcher must deliver the ball to the batter so as not to deliberately drop, roll or bounce the ball to prevent the batter from hitting it.
- 9.12 The pitcher has 15 seconds to release the next pitch after receiving the ball or after the Umpire indicates "play."

10 The Catcher

- 10.1 The catcher must remain in the catcher's box until the pitch is released.
- 10.2 The catcher must return the ball to the pitcher promptly and directly after each pitch, including after a foul ball, except:
 - 10.2.1 when the batter becomes a batter-runner;
 - 10.2.2 when there is a runner on base;
 - 10.2.3 when a foul ball is fielded close to the foul line, and the catcher throws to any base for a possible out; or
 - 10.2.4 when, on a checked swing on a dropped third strike situation, the catcher throws to first base to retire the batter-runner.

11 Throwing to a base

- 11.1 After taking the pitching position, the pitcher must not throw or fake a throw to a base during a live ball while their foot is in contact with the pitcher's plate. If this occurs during a live ball appeal play, the appeal is cancelled. The pitcher may stop or disengage from the pitching position by stepping backward off the pitcher's plate before separating the hands. Stepping forward or sideways constitutes an illegal pitch.

12 Fair ball

- 12.1 A fair ball is a batted ball that:

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- 12.1.1 Settles or is touched on or between the foul lines, between the Homeplate and 1st base, or between the Homeplate and 1st base.
 - (a) The outside of the Homeplate is considered as part of the foul lines.
- 12.1.2 Bounds past 1st or 3rd base, on or over fair territory, regardless of where the ball hits after going over the base.
- 12.1.3 Touches 1st, 2nd or 3rd base.
- 12.1.4 While on or over fair territory, touches the person or clothing of a fielder.
- 12.1.5 First falls on or between the foul lines beyond 1st and 3rd base.
 - (a) If a home run boundary is used, if the ball lands over the boundary line over or between the foul lines, the batter is automatically awarded a home run (they must still touch all bases).
 - (b) If a line or cones are used to mark the home run boundary, and a ball that is deemed fair bounds over the boundary, the batter is automatically awarded three bases (they must still touch all bases).

13 Foul ball

- 13.1 A foul ball is a batted ball that:
 - 13.1.1 Settles on foul territory between the Homeplate and 1st base, or between the Homeplate and 3rd base.
 - 13.1.2 Bounds past 1st or 3rd base, on or over foul territory.
 - 13.1.3 First touches on foul territory beyond 1st or 3rd base.
 - 13.1.4 Touches the batter or the bat in the batter's hand(s) a second time while the batter is within the batter's box.
- 13.2 Base runners cannot advance on a foul ball.

14 Balls

- 14.1 Each legally pitched ball that is not hit by the batter is called a ball or a strike by the Plate Umpire.
- 14.2 A **ball** is called, and the ball is live, unless the ball becomes dead for any other reason:

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- 14.2.1 when a batter does not swing at a pitched ball that does not enter the strike zone, or touches the home plate, or touches the ground before reaching the home plate;
- 14.2.2 when the catcher fails to return the ball directly to the pitcher as required; or
- 14.2.3 when the pitcher fails to pitch the ball within 15 seconds.
- 14.3 A ball is called, and the ball is dead:
 - 14.3.1 for each illegally pitched ball not hit by the batter;
 - 14.3.2 for each illegally pitched ball, when the manager elects not to take the result of the play, after the ball has been hit

15 Strikes

- 15.1 Each legally pitched ball that is not hit by the batter is called a ball or a strike by the Plate Umpire.
- 15.2 A **strike** is called, the ball is live, and runners may advance with liability to be put out:
 - 15.2.1 when any part of a pitched ball enters the strike zone before touching the ground and the batter does not swing,
 - 15.2.2 for each legally pitched ball struck at and missed by the batter; or
 - 15.2.3 for each foul tip.
- 15.3 A strike is called, the ball is dead, and runners must return to their bases without liability to be put out, but need not touch the intervening bases:
 - 15.3.1 when a pitched ball hits the batter while the ball is in the strike zone;
 - 15.3.2 for each pitched ball swung at and missed which touches any part of the batter;
 - 15.3.3 for each foul ball when the batter has less than two strikes;
 - 15.3.4 when any part of the batter's person or clothing is hit with a batted ball while they are in the batter's box and the count is less than two strikes;
 - 15.3.5 when the batter fails to enter the batter's box within 10 seconds after the Umpire calls "play ball." A pitch does not have to be thrown;
 - 15.3.6 when an offensive team member deliberately erases the lines of

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the batter's box.

- (a) if a batter erases the lines, the Umpire will call a strike. A pitch does not have to be thrown.
- (b) when the coach or non-playing team member erases the lines, a strike will be called on the next scheduled batter (or their substitute) in the line-up.
- (c) should any person continue to deliberately erase a line after a first offense, that person will be ejected from the game;

15.3.7 when the batter steps out of the batter's box with both feet and delays the game and none of the exceptions apply. A pitch does not have to be thrown.

16 Strike Zone

- 16.1 The space over any part of home plate between the bottom of the batter's sternum (breast bone) and the bottom of the batter's kneecap, when they assume their natural batting stance.
- 16.2 The natural batting stance is the stance the batter takes after the release of the pitch when deciding to swing or not swing at the pitch.

17 Out

- 17.1 The batter is out when:
 - 17.1.1 the third strike is swung at and missed
 - 17.1.2 the ball is hit and caught in fair or foul territory
 - 17.1.3 a batter-runner does not reach the safety base before a fielder either tags the runner, or who is in contact with 1st base, has possession of the ball and is in control of it.
 - (a) A batter is permitted to run through the safety base. However, if they turn and attempt to run to 2nd base and then retreat to 1st base, they will be out if a fielder has possession and control of the ball and tags them before returning to the base.
- 17.2 A base runner is out when:
 - 17.2.1 they do not reach the base they are attempting to reach before a

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fielder, who is in contact with the base that the runner is attempting to reach, has possession and control of the ball on a force to that base.

- 17.2.2 they do not reach home plate before a fielder, who is in contact with the Homeplate, has possession and control of the ball, in a force play.
- 17.2.3 they overrun 2nd or 3rd base and a fielder has possession and control of the ball and tags the runner before returning to the base.
- 17.2.4 if they are between any base and are tagged by a fielder with control of the ball.
- 17.2.5 they interfere with or prevent a fielder from making a play. All other runners will return to the last base held at the time of the interference.

18 Tag

- 18.1 A legal tag is the action of a fielder in touching:
 - 18.1.1 a batter-runner or runner who is not in contact with a base, with the ball securely held in their hand(s) or glove. The ball is not considered as having been securely held if it is juggled or dropped by the fielder after tagging the batter-runner or runner, unless that player deliberately knocks the ball from the hand(s) or glove of the fielder. The runner must be tagged with the hand(s) or glove with which the ball is held; or
 - 18.1.2 a base with the ball securely held in their hand(s) or glove. The base may be touched with any part of the body to be a legal tag, (e.g., the fielder could touch the base with a foot, with a hand, sit on the base, etc.) This would apply to any force out or appeal situation.

19 Advancing bases & scoring runs

- 19.1 A batter gains a walk to 1st base when four balls are pitched. All base runners, forced by other base runners, advance one base.
- 19.2 All base runners, when forced to do so, must run on a fair batted ball.
- 19.3 A base runner must tag up on a ball that is caught, including a foul ball. Once the ball is caught or first touched a runner can advance.

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- 19.4 Each time a runner makes their way around all four bases (touching each one) and safely crosses Homeplate, equals one run. For example, if there are loaded bases and the ball is hit allowing all three baserunners to make it safely home, three runs will score.
- 19.5 If the batter also makes it home, a homerun is called and all runners score. The three runners count, plus the batter if they make it all the way safely home.
- 19.6 If a dead ball line is used and the ball crosses the line:
- 19.6.1 On an overthrow, base runners are awarded two bases from the time of the throw
- (a) If two runners are between the same bases, the award is based on the position of the lead runner.
- 19.7 A runner can be tagged by a fielder to make an out.
- 19.8 A base runner is awarded the base to which they are running when a fielder, not in possession of the ball and not fielding a batted ball, obstructs a base runner.
- 19.9 If a batting line is used and the batter steps over the line and hits the ball, the fielding team has the option of taking the result of the play or cancelling the result of the play and having the batter bat again with the same balls and strikes they had before that pitch.

20 Fly balls

- 20.1 Runners must tag up on base before they can advance on any fly ball that is caught.

21 Stealing

- 21.1 Stealing bases is permitted, however the runner must not leave the base while attempting to steal until the ball leaves the pitchers hand. A runner deemed to have left the base early when attempting to steal will be called out.

22 Force plays

- 22.1 A force play occurs when there is a runner on a preceding base that is forced to run when the ball is hit by a batter. For example, at the start of the game the bases are loaded so there is a force play to each base including homeplate. A force out can be made to any one of the bases.

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- 22.2 If there is a runner on first base and the ball is hit on the ground, the runner is forced to run as the batter will soon occupy first base. You cannot have two base runners on the same base at once.
- 22.3 Force plays happen to home plate when the bases are loaded, a force out can be made at any base.
- 22.4 Force plays happen to 3rd base when there is runners on 1st and 2nd base, a force out can be made at 1st, 2nd or 3rd on the play but NOT Homeplate.
- 22.5 Force plays happen to 2nd when there is a runner on 1st, a force out can be made at 2nd or 1st on the play but NOT 3rd or Homeplate.
- 22.6 Runners are also forced to move up if it is a force situation and the batter is walked. All base runners, forced by other base runners, advance one base.