

## Rules and Guidelines for the San Francisco Architects | Engineers | Contractors Softball League

This is an informal league; safety and camaraderie are more important criteria than winning. The League motto is *Don't be a Dick*. In this spirit, a few rules and guidelines are used during games. The league has a 40+ year history of providing a means for employees in the architecture, engineering, and construction industry to enjoy a social setting outside the workplace. Teams in the league are expected, on an honor system, to have a large majority of players directly involved in the building design and construction industry. Teams or players wishing to participate in a more competitive atmosphere might consider joining a competitive Rec and Park league.

The following rules apply to every team and every game, unless exceptions are specifically agreed upon by both captains before the game begins. **Items in red were added for the 2023 Season.**

- **Basic Softball rules apply such as:**

1. No leading-off.
2. No stealing bases. *Aggressive base running is strongly discouraged.* Use common courtesy that when the ball is returned to an infielder or the pitcher after a play is completed, it's like an umpire calling "time." Running after a play is reasonably completed because an infielder or pitcher turns their back on the runner is a delayed steal, and stealing is not allowed.
3. Games are 7 innings (unless foreshortened by darkness—see "Last Inning" below).
4. On a force-out (runner is forced to advance), the fielder is only required to touch the base while in control of the ball before the runner reaches the base, but on a non-force-out the fielder needs to tag the runner with the hand or glove holding the ball. (See Force at Home rule below.)
5. When the final out of an inning is a force out at any base, a run cannot score on that play; when the final out of an inning is a non-force at any base, a run may score provided that the runner touches home plate *before* the final out is made.
6. Home/visitor team is indicated on the posted schedule, but a coin toss can be used if captains don't have access to the schedule at the start of the game.
7. Metal cleats are not allowed in this league.
8. Anyone can call "Infield Fly Rule" when it's appropriate (when there are fewer than two outs and there is a force play at third base—i.e., when there are runners at first and second base or the bases are loaded). If this call is made, the batter is out and runners remain on their bases.
9. The catcher or on-deck batter is expected to get bats out of the base running path.
10. A foul tip must go over the batter's head in order to be called out when caught by the catcher. If a foul ball hits the backstop, it's a dead ball (not an out if caught).

- **Sliding and Over-Running Bases:** In the interest of safety, sliding is not allowed in this league. A runner who slides into base is automatically out. Overrunning every base (without a turn toward the next base) is allowed to avoid injury. If a runner turns toward the next base, a tag out can be made. The use of a double base is encouraged at first base to avoid collisions, with runners stepping on the outside base and the fielder tagging the inside base. In the interest of avoiding collisions at other bases, captains are encouraged to coach their inexperienced infielders to stand out of the runner's path by tagging their base to the side with a toe on the base. When such coaching is unsuccessful and a fielder is standing squarely on 2nd or 3rd base (or 1st when a double base is not used), the runner may be called safe by running to the side of the base (onto an imaginary double base) to avoid a collision with the fielder, while making every possible attempt to safely touch a portion of the base. The guideline allowing over-running of every base (above) still applies—if the runner turns toward the next base, a tag out can be made.
- **Force at Home:** Unless otherwise agreed prior to the start of the game, an automatic force rule is always applied at home plate in the interest of safety. Double bases are to be set up at home plate with runners crossing the outside base and fielders touching the inside base. Regardless of whether the runner was forced to run to home plate or not, if a fielder possesses the ball and contacts the inside base before the runner reaches the outside base, the runner is out. Runners can be tagged out before reaching the base, however, by the catcher (or another fielder) who is pulled off the

base. A runner who commits to scoring by reaching the halfway point between third and home cannot return to third (no “pickle” after the halfway point); first base coach makes the call as to whether the runner crossed the halfway point. Note: This automatic force rule applies ONLY to home base.

- **Throws to first base from the outfield:** Captains should strongly urge outfielders to exercise judgment with safety in mind—if a play from the outfield is unlikely, don’t throw hard from the outfield that may lead to an injury to a runner or infielder.
- **Extra Base on Overthrow:** Only one extra base per runner is allowed when a ball is overthrown into foul territory. If a missed ball remains in playable territory (by a fence, for example), the ball is in play.
- **Dead Ball when Infielder is Injured:** If an infielder, including the pitcher, is injured by a line drive, it is declared a dead ball and no runner is allowed to advance bases. When the infielder recovers or is replaced, the batter returns to the batting box and the play resumes anew.
- **Run Limits:** Each team is limited to 7 runs per inning except in the last inning, in which unlimited runs may score (see last inning below).
- **Last Inning:** About 15 minutes after sunset, captains should agree that the next complete inning is the last inning (and the run limits are lifted).
- **Forfeits:** If a team has at least 7 players by the time the bottom of the first inning begins, the game can count even with loaned players if agreeable by both team captains. Otherwise the game goes on record as a forfeit unless captains agree otherwise at the beginning of the game. Any team calling off a regularly scheduled or playoff game will be charged with a forfeit, and the score will be recorded 7-0 according to ASA rules (1 run per inning) for purposes of run-differential rankings. For each forfeit, the forfeiting team will be charged half of the field fee in their fees for the following year, and the forfeited team will be credited the same amount. This fine is increased to the full field fee if the forfeit is declared the day of the game. Also, any team with more than two forfeits in a season will be restricted to six regularly scheduled games in the following year’s season. To help avoid forfeits, Captains are encouraged to borrow players from other teams to supplement their team in weeks when their roster is light: a list of players willing to be picked up for extra games is available to bolster teams needing last-minute extra players; and Captains should register with [SFSoftballMessageBoard@facebook](https://www.facebook.com/SFSoftballMessageBoard), which connects with people who might want to be picked up for extra games. As a courtesy, captains are encouraged to contact each other early in the week before each game to ensure the game is on, declare their forfeit at least 24 hours before the time of the game, and inform the Commissioner by text to increase the chance of the game being played with another team.
- **Women Players and Batting Order:** At least two women must play in the field at all times and must be evenly distributed in the lineup—no more than 5 men can bat consecutively between spots in the lineup designated for women batters (lineups of 9-12 batters must have at least 2 women batter spots, lineups of 13-18 batters must have at least 3 women batter spots, etc). When a team can only field one woman, that team is limited to 9 fielders and the woman player may bat twice in the batting order; if she is already on base or unwilling to bat a second time, the team will be charged with an automatic out for that spot in the batting order. Teams fielding no women automatically forfeit the game but are encouraged to play an exhibition game with 9 fielders and an out every fifth batter (unless the captains agree on alternative rules before the exhibition game). Teams must stay true to the batting order established at the beginning of the game (except to add team members to the end of the batting order who arrive late, or to scratch team members who leave the game early). These rules regarding women players are applied the same as the forfeit rule above—the women players must be in the game by the time the bottom of the first inning begins.

This league has a long tradition of including and encouraging as many participants as possible of all levels. Because of this, game rosters may include more players than the regulation 10-person

roster, with players rotating in and out at defensive positions in various innings. The batting line-up, however, should include all players in a single order except as outlined below.

Also in this league, when there are 2 women playing but the lineup requires 3 women batting positions—i.e., 14 men and 2 women playing but the lineup needs 3 women to remain in compliance, the 2 women can rotate into the 3 spots in the batting order designated for women batters. As a courtesy to the other team’s scorekeeper, the captain should notify the other team before the game begins if the designated woman lineup spot is to be used.

Example batting line-ups are as follows (read down; first column is number of batters in line-up):

1	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
2	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
3	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
4	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
5	W	W	M	M	W	W	W	M	M	M	W	W
6	M	M	W	W	M	M	M	W	W	W	M	M
7	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
8	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
9	W	M	M	M	W	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
10		W	M	M	M	W	W	M	M	M	W	W
11			W	M	M	M	M	W	M	M	M	M
12				W	M	M	M	M	W	W	M	M
13					W	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
14						W	M	M	M	M	M	M
15							W	M	M	M	W	W
16								W	M	M	M	M
17									W	M	M	M
18										W	M	M
19											W	M
20												W

- **Outfielder Positions:** Regardless of who is at bat, outfielders (including rovers) are to remain 30 feet behind the first-to-second and second-to-third bases until the ball is hit. Cones should be set up along the foul lines 30 feet behind first and third bases to establish the setback. Outfielders cannot be positioned in the infield under any circumstance before the ball is hit.
- **Fair/Foul Call:** The catcher calls fair or foul balls. Cones should be set up along both foul lines to help avoid uncertainty. Hit balls must go 10 feet into fair territory (to the grass on regulation fields) or will be deemed foul; catcher will call such balls fair or foul. Before each game, captains must carefully explain fair and foul rules to the catcher (including that if a ball hits the ground in fair territory and then rolls foul it is still a fair ball), and that the catcher is responsible for making the call loudly and as soon as the ball lands. The catcher’s call always governs.
- **Safe/Out Call:** First Base Coach declares plays at first and home safe or out; Third Base Coach declares plays at third and second safe or out. These coaches should invoke the help of the other base coach as necessary. In the friendly casual spirit of the league, if teams get into an argument about a play, they should simply do the play over. Also, when a close or controversial play is ruled in favor of a team, the next close play should be ruled in favor of the other team on an alternating basis.
- **Courtesy Runner:** Each team is allowed to have a courtesy runner for no more than two batters who have suffered a slight injury or who have such chronic conditions as “bad knees.” The courtesy runner should always be the player who made the last out, regardless of gender, and must stand outside the base path in line with 3<sup>rd</sup> and home facing away from the field, taking off running when the bat makes contact with the ball.

- Pitching and Batting:** Because this league is non-competitive in nature and does not rely on umpires or called strikes/balls, players need to be respectful of standard softball pitching and speed-of-game. Captains should make every attempt to field pitchers who are skilled at delivering consistently good pitches and who have the experience to react to line drives in order to adequately protect themselves. The pitching position by nature is dangerous and requires reflexes developed from experience. Pitchers are expected to deliver a standard softball slow pitch (underhand, above the batter's head, below 12-feet, with the ball landing on the plate or within 1-foot behind the back of the plate). A strike zone mat should always be placed behind home plate to provide a target for pitchers and a reminder to batters of would-be strikes. If, after one full inning, the pitched balls are consistently not hitting the strike zone mat, captains are allowed to request a new pitcher, and the defensive captain is strongly urged to change pitchers. At the same time, batters are expected to swing at reasonable pitches rather than waiting for the "perfect pitch." In the interest of speed-of-game, the following guidelines can be invoked after two complete innings if the game is not progressing at a reasonable speed: (1) A batter who swings 5 times without making contact with the ball will be out. (2) The captains should begin counting the number of pitches in each at-bat. If, in 10 pitches, the ball does not hit the strike zone mat at least 3 times, the batter walks and the pitcher is replaced. If, in 10 pitches, the ball hits the strike zone mat at least 3 times without being batted, the batter is out. (3) **If the pitcher (or new pitcher) continues to struggle throwing strikes, the opposing captain can put in their own pitcher the next inning ("pitch to yourself"), and the pitcher will field the ball as if on the opposing team. Alternatively, both captains can agree that both teams will pitch to themselves, and the pitchers will field balls.**
- Regulation Softballs:** Teams should always use ASA-approved 12-inch circumference .44cor softballs (such as Worth "Gold Dot" balls). The use of bright yellow balls is strongly encouraged for better visibility since our games routinely include late innings at dusk. Captains are strongly encouraged to bring at least two new regulation softballs to each **home** game to ensure that a firm ball is used throughout the game. If a "mushy" ball is used, it should be used the full inning and then replaced with a new ball. Examples of online sources for appropriate softballs include:  
<http://www.eastbay.com/product/model:103402/sku:15447806/worth-super-gold-dot-pro-tac-softballs-mens/yellow/blue/?cm=GLOBAL%20SEARCH%3A%20KEYWORD%20SEARCH>  
<http://www.mansionathletics.com/12-inch-44-cor-300-compression-red-stich-zulu-slowpitch-softballs-yellow-12rysc-44-300-baseball-zulu.html?channelid=GoogleAdwords&qclid=CIGXw8jHpMUCFYOTfgodl50AoA>
- Regulation Bats:** For the safety of infielders (particularly pitchers) and to provide a level playing field between men and women batters, bats used by male batters in this League must be made entirely of wood and have a manufacturer-applied stamp containing the word "Softball." The stamp may state "Official Softball," "ASA Softball," or "Slow Pitch Softball" but not "Chicago Style Softball." **Baseball bats and composite bats of any variety, as well as unmarked bats, are not permitted.** Wood bats need not be "certified"—see Q1 at the following site:  
[http://downloads.asasoftball.com/about/pdf/03\\_Updated\\_FAQs.pdf](http://downloads.asasoftball.com/about/pdf/03_Updated_FAQs.pdf)  
ASA Rule 3.1.B states that a bat must be marked as "Official Softball" and sections C-F explain what constitutes an "Official Softball" bat:  
C. *Length and Weight.* The official bat shall not be more than 34 inches long, nor exceed 38.0 ounces in weight.  
D. *Diameter.* The official bat shall not be more than 2.250 inches in diameter at its largest part, which includes any tolerance for expansion of the bat.  
E. *Shape.* The official bat shall be round within 0.050 inches in diameter, and the bat handle must be round or oblong and may be angular.  
F. *Surface.* The official bat shall be smooth with a maximum surface roughness of 250 microinches. It shall be free of burrs and visible cracks, and shall not have exposed rivets, pins, rough or sharp edges or any form of exterior fastener that would present a hazard.

To prevent catchers, pitchers, and fans from getting hurt by flying bats, all bats should have grip tape applied to the handle. If a batter is found to be using a bat without grip tape, the batter is out. If a bat is accidentally thrown by an inexperienced or overly excited batter, the opposing team is allowed to issue a warning. If a bat is thrown a second time in that game, the batter is out.

The use of a metal bat or a composite or unmarked wood bat by a male player constitutes an automatic out. Wood softball bats are generally only available online at such sites as:  
<https://www.phoenixbats.com/>  
<https://www.phoenixbats.com/wood-softball-bats/fast-ship-softball-bats.html>  
<http://www.justbats.com/default.aspx?s=Wood%20Softball>

Women players in this League may use any fast-pitch or slow-pitch bat of their choosing not currently banned by the San Francisco Softball League <http://www.sfsoftball.com/league-info-rules/illegal-bats/>.

- **Bases:** Each team should bring their own bases to every game to ensure that the game can proceed with enough bases. Bases should be the sturdy, heavy, flat rubber variety or carpet samples with rubber backing. Bases that tend to move around easily are not encouraged.
- **Start Time:** Teams should make every effort to begin games at 6:30 p.m. to avoid playing in darkness (particularly playoff games) as listed on the posted schedule. Our permits from SF Rec and Park are for game times beginning at 6:30 (some fields have other events scheduled until 6:30) and ending at 7:30. When Youth Leagues or other Rec and Park sanctioned leagues are on the field when you arrive, be respectful of their permitted time and keep your practices (and beverages) off the playing field until 6:30.
- **Rainouts:** In case of rain, check the following website for field status:  
<http://sfrecpark.org/PermitsAndReservations-RainOut.aspx>
- **Youngblood-Coleman and Rossi fields:** Before games at Youngblood-Coleman, Captains are encouraged to discuss a field rule that after three over-the-fence home runs, subsequent over-the-fence hits represent an out. Similarly, Captains are encouraged to discuss if over-the-fence foul balls to left foul territory at Rossi 2 field are outs.
- **Helmets:** Teams are encouraged to provide helmets for players who feel safer wearing them while batting and running bases, especially players who have been hit by an errant ball and might otherwise not play. Teams with players who prefer wearing helmets might consider providing them for every player as a show of support.
- **Young Players:** The league has a long history of allowing players' children to play on their team. Captains are advised to be mindful of the safety of young players when the opposing team tends to be overly competitive. If someone believes it isn't safe—it isn't safe, and young players should be removed from play in the interest of safety.

### **Playoff Guidelines:**

- An informal playoff tournament is generally scheduled the third and fourth Wednesday and Thursday evenings in August. Two tiers are scheduled—Competitive and Non-Competitive. The Competitive tier is restricted to teams scheduled to play approximately 65% of the available weeks of play during the regular season (the specific number is listed in the questionnaire issued at the beginning of the season) and are ranked in the top 14 of participating teams based on the "games back" summary followed by total run differential for the regular season games. Teams are asked at the beginning of the season if they will likely wish to participate, and then are asked to confirm their participation in the last weeks of the regular season. Teams that do not qualify for the Competitive tier will be seeded in the Non-Competitive tier.\*
- The Competitive tier is scheduled using a standard ASA single-elimination bracket. Seeding for the Competitive tier will be based on results through the last game of the regular season, using the basis described above. Captains who signed up their teams for the playoffs must make sure their players are prepared to play both Wednesday and Thursday nights during both weeks of the playoffs. (The top two seeded teams receive a bye the first Wednesday.)

- The Non-Competitive tier is scheduled as a round-robin tournament with each team playing two games, balanced based on results through the last game of the regular season. The winner and team ranking of this tournament will be determined based on (1) win-loss record in the tournament, followed by (2) run differential in the tournament, followed by (3) head-to-head winner in the tournament, followed by (4) games-back in the regular season, followed by (5) run differential in the regular season, followed by (6) head-to-head winner in the regular season.
- Teams are urged to start playoff games promptly at 6:30 with at least 7 players, and declare that the last inning should begin no later than 15 minutes before sunset (approximately 7:45) in order to prevent problems of darkness.
- If a game in the Non-Competitive Tier is tied when darkness makes continuing the game impossible or dangerous, the game ends in a tie.
- If a game in the Competitive Tier is tied when darkness makes continuing the game impossible or dangerous, captains can agree to:
  1. Complete the game on a subsequent day before the next scheduled playoff game if possible (note that a fee will mostly likely be charged for an extra field); or
  2. Declare that the winner is (in this order):
    - a. the team that won the head-to-head match in the regular season; or
    - b. (if the two teams didn't play in the regular season or they tied) the team with the higher seed (by games-back then run differential) going into the playoff tournament.
- \*The League Commissioner may exercise some latitude in the seeding of teams in the two tiers in order to balance the schedule.

**Players' Risk:**

This is an informal softball league for professionals in the Architecture, Engineering, and Construction industry. As such, it is not a formal entity and assumes no liability for any player injury or property damage resulting from the softball games it organizes. Individual participants are expected to be covered by health and liability insurance policies.