

Basic Softball Rules

Object

Softball is played by two teams of 9 players each who try to score more runs than their opponent by rounding the bases and crossing home plate as many times as possible. The batting team stays up to bat until the fielding team puts out 3 batters.

Playing Area

A softball field consists of a pitching rubber, 4 bases (3 bases plus home plate), an infield, and an outfield.

Equipment

You need a bat, a softball, and softball gloves for each fielder, 4 bases, and a pitching rubber.

Starting Play

The visiting team bats first while the home team starts out in the field on defense. Each fielder lines up in one of the 9 fielding positions. The first batter steps into the batter's box and prepares to hit the pitch.

Positions

Fielding players line up in the following positions:

Pitcher – on the pitching rubber

Catcher - behind home plate

1st Baseman

2nd Baseman

3rd Baseman

Shortstop – between 2nd and 3rd base

Leftfielder – outfield between 2nd and 3rd base

Centerfielder – outfield behind 2nd base

Right fielder – outfield between 1st and 2nd base

Batting

There is a batter's box on both sides of home plate. The batter may choose which side of the plate to hit from, but both of her feet must be inside the box. They attempt to score runs by hitting the ball when it's pitched to them. The batter may continue to hit until they:

Hit the ball in fair territory, get 3 strikes, or get 4 balls.

Strikes

The strike zone is the area between the batter's shoulders and knees. A "strike" is called when the batter:

Fails to swing at a pitch that crosses the plate in the strike zone, swings at a pitch and misses, hits the ball out of bounds with fewer than two strikes against them.

Once they get 3 strikes they're out, and the next batter comes up to the plate.

A batter can't strike out on a foul ball. If they have two strikes, there's no limit to the number of foul balls they're allowed to hit. They can only strike out on a swing and miss or a ball they fail to swing at in the strike zone.

Balls

A "ball" is a pitch that is delivered outside of the strike zone that is not struck at by the batter. If a batter receives 4 balls, she gets to walk to first base.

Runner

The batter becomes a runner when:

They hit a ball in fair territory and runs to first base, walks after 4 balls, or hit by a pitch.

A runner may overrun 1st base when she hits the ball as long as she turns out of bounds after she passes the base. Runners may not overrun any other base. If they do and are tagged while they are off the base, they are out.

Duration

A standard game lasts 7 innings.

Scoring

The team that scores the most runs is the winner. A run is scored when a base runner rounds all of the bases by stepping on each one in order from 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and crosses home plate. If the ball is hit over the outfield fence in fair territory, it is considered a home run and the batter has a free trip all the way around the bases until she crosses home plate.

Putting Players Out

A batter is out if:

They hit the ball and it's caught while it's in the air (even if it's caught in foul territory), gets 3 strikes.

A runner is out if:

they are hit by a batted ball while off a base, a fielder tags her with the ball when they're not touching a base, they run more than 3 feet out of the baseline to avoid being tagged, a fielder with the ball tags a base at which there is a force play before the forced runner reaches the base, they fail to tag up and is thrown out, they run past a base runner that's ahead of them.

Double play - When 2 players get out on the same play.

Steal - When a runner runs to the next base without the ball being hit. The runner may not leave the base until after the pitcher releases the ball. The runner is out if she is tagged with the ball before reaching the base.

Tagging up – When a fielder catches a fly ball, a runner cannot leave the base until after the ball hits the fielder's glove. If they leave the base too early, they have to go back and touch the base before they can run to the next base. If the ball gets to the base before they return to tag up, they are out.

For official NIRSA rulings go to:

http://lsuuniversityrec.com/lsuurec/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Softball_Rules.pdf