



## SLOW PITCH SOFTBALL 2026 RULES revised 2.5.26

Games are played under the guidelines and rules of the current USA rulebook. All other rules will remain, with the following exceptions, deletions or modifications:

- 1) The team listed second on the schedule will be the home team. The home team will always use the First base dugout. The umpire will keep game scores. If score is ever questioned, only an official scorebook will be used for clarification purposes. Tally marks are not considered an official book. Bats will be kept in the dugout area at all times.
- 2) The Kirkwood Parks & Recreation softball league will be using a one and one count, with no courtesy foul in all leagues. Each batter will start their at-bat with a count of one ball and one strike.
- 3) Players may participate on only one team per league, where the interdivisional play is involved. Players may play on only one team per division where there is no interdivisional play. Players are limited to playing for two teams per day of the week. Players must be on the team roster to participate in any game. (See roster regulations)
- 4) A legally pitched ball must, in the judgment of the umpire, reach a minimum arc of six (6) feet and shall not exceed a maximum height of ten (10) feet from the ground. Any ball that, in the umpire's judgment does not meet these requirements will be a delayed dead ball. The umpire will make a visual and/or verbally signal to indicate an illegal pitch. A batter may choose to swing at the ball, and in doing so negates the dead ball. In this case, all results of the play are valid. If the batter chooses not to swing, the pitch will be called a "ball". No fake pitches are allowed, whether while on the pitching rubber or not. The pitcher must come to a complete stop prior to pitching the ball. (No walking starts or quick pitches). The pitcher may start up to 6 feet behind the pitching rubber.
- 5) If, after a catch, a player's momentum carries him out of bounds, the player may not return to the playing field to make a throw. The ball is dead and out of play. Out of play lines will be marked on all fields. Base runners may advance one base without liability to be put out. On Diamond's #3 & #5, the outfield fence will be played the same as an out of play line. If a player goes over the fence without having contact within the playing field, a home run will be awarded to the batter.
- 6) Runners may leave the base as soon as the ball crosses the front plane of the plate, or when the ball is contacted with the bat, whichever comes first. If a runner on base leaves too early, he/she will be called out, and a NO-PITCH will result. Stealing is illegal.

**Optional:** When a runner occupies either 1B or 3B, the runner shall notify the umpire if they will use the option to stand off to the side, (at a distance of up-to ten feet), in-line, directly with the base, until the ball crosses the plate and hits the ground, or until the ball is hit. Once the ball hits the ground or is hit by the batter, the runner shall return to the base and retouch before they are able to advance.

**Effect:** If, after the pitch leaves the pitcher's hand, the runner begins to run/advance towards the base before the ball either hits the ground or is hit by the batter, the umpire shall declare a "NO PITCH" and the runner using the option shall be called out. The "NO PITCH" prevents any further action by either the offense or defense – the violating runner is out.

**Note:** Failing to notify the umpire, or retouch the base after the ball hits the ground or is hit by the batter, allows the defensive team to properly make a dead ball appeal. Should the appeal be made, and the runner has not touched the base before the appeal, the runner shall be out.

- 7) Free substitution will be allowed to promote participation. If used, it must be employed for the entire game. Players may be substituted freely defensively at the beginning of each inning, and all players present will be put in the batting order. Players arriving after the game begins will be placed at the end of the batting order.

- 8) No new full inning may start more than 55 minutes after the starting time of the game. We will finish that inning. Games tied at the conclusion of that inning/the allotted playing time, will be recorded as a tie. A run ahead rule will be in effect, 10 runs after 5 innings, 15 after 4 innings, and 20 after 3 innings.
- 9) A completed game is anything after 4 innings or 3 ½ if the home team is up. If any game is stopped for any reason, the score will revert to the last full inning played, and may be recorded as a tie.
- 10) Fielders must leave access to all bases and home plate. Failure to allow a runner clear access to any base will result in the runner being awarded that base. In addition, it is the runner's responsibility to avoid contact with the defensive player at all bases. If, in the opinion of the umpire, any contact outside of incidental, the runner will be called out and will be ejected from the game. A runner who initiates contact in an effort to dislodge the ball from the fielder's grip will be declared out, and may be subject to the penalties of Rule 11.
- 11) At the discretion of the umpire, any person who instigates a fight, provokes a physical confrontation, attempts to maliciously injure another player, or is involved in such activities, can be ejected from the game immediately, and suspended for an additional game(s) up to, and including the remainder of the season (or beyond, if the event occurs at the end of the season). Any player participating in, or continuing in, an outbreak of physical violence of any kind, will result in a minimum 1 year (365 days) suspension.
- 12) Profanity Rule: If a player audibly uses profanity as judged by the umpire, both teams will be warned not to use profanity. If profanity is used again by a player from either team, that player will be ejected. If it is an offensive player, an out will be immediately accessed to the team. If it is a defensive player, or there are no outs remaining in the current inning for the offensive team, the out will be accessed to begin the next inning. **Please note:** no batter will be skipped in the lineup due to this out being recorded.
- 13) At no time will players, teams or spectators be allowed to threaten, harass, berate, belittle, make loud obnoxious remarks, "trash talk", or make obscene remarks or gestures about other players, teams, spectators, or umpires. Any verbal abuse will be considered unsportsmanlike conduct, and will not be tolerated. Unsportsmanlike conduct will be left to the discretion of the umpire, and failure to observe these rules will mean ejection from the game and a one-game suspension. (For double-header leagues, the next scheduled night of play). Offender(s) may be subject to ejection from the league, without prior warning, pending further investigation.
- 14) No steel spikes are to be worn at any time. If worn, the umpire will ask them to change into other shoes. If they do not have a pair, they cannot play until they can find another pair. Playing in sandals or bare feet is not allowed.
- 15) No beverages (including alcohol), or tobacco, are allowed on any playing territory of the field. Players who abuse this privilege, or who show signs of inebriation, will be removed immediately from the game, and will be suspended for one additional game for the first such occurrence; and three games for a second such occurrence. **Glass bottles are not allowed in the park.** The manager and players of each team will be responsible for policing themselves, and their spectators with regard to conduct. This includes abusive language, as well as the physical appearance of the park during and after they have used its facilities.
- 16) All bats must meet the current USA bat list to be considered legal for all divisions at Kirkwood Park. Any bat that is on the USA non-approved bat list will be considered an illegal bat. Use of an illegal bat will result in immediate forfeiture of the game in progress. Player(s) using the bat will be suspended for that night, and an additional night of play. Players have the primary responsibility to determine that the bat they use is legal. You may get the list from <https://www.teamusa.org/usa-softball/certified-equipment>
- 17) Teams may use (1) pinch runner per inning. This runner does not have to be the last out/can be any player. NOTE: If at any time the pinch runner's batting position is due up when he/she is on base, an OUT will be recorded for the runner that was being run for. The courtesy runner will be removed from the base and must take their turn at bat. A second runner will only be allowed if a player is injured during the play and cannot continue with the game.
- 18) Kirkwood Recreation reserves the right to place teams, in an effort to create a competitive balance within each division/league/night. Any team that wins a lower division may be moved to a more competitive division on the same night. If no higher division is offered, the team may be moved to another night, offering a more competitive level of play. When moving nights, you will not be allowed to move back to the old night without moving divisions.

- 19) Any team that loses a division will have the option to move down to a lesser division the next year if they choose to do so. At no other time will a team be allowed to move divisions without permission. In a case of a tie for the last place in the higher division, head to head record will be the determining factor which team will be allowed to move. If still tied, the 2 teams will remain in the higher division unless there are 2 spots open in the lower division.
- 20) Players throwing or flinging bats into backstops or safety fences will be immediately ejected from that game.
- 21) The umpire(s) have the authority to deny the participation any player, who in their opinion, appears to pose a threat to themselves and/or others due to intoxication or influence by a controlled substance.
- 22) For all games on Diamond #4, the following rule will apply: Any ball hit over the outfield fence must touch or travel between the two center light-posts for a home run to be awarded. For #4 any ball hit that travels over the outfield fence between the foul-ball pole and an inside light post, a ground-rule double will be awarded. Two of any kind per inning will be allowed. Any additional, will be charged an out. Umpire discretion will be used for any ball that hits a tree overhanging the fence.
- a. For games on field #3 and #5 there will be a 3 Home Run limit, with 1 up. Either team can hit their first 3 home runs without penalty, regardless of whether or not the other team has hit their 3 home runs. However, once a team has hit their 3, they can not hit another home run until the other team has hit all 3 of theirs as well.

Once both teams have hit their home run limit, each team is allowed to go "one up" on the other. This means that they can hit a home run, so long as doing so does not bring the difference in total home runs to a number greater than 1. If the difference does exceed 1, the home run will result in an out.

Example under the above rules: One team has hit 5 home runs, and the other team has hit 4. The team with 4 home runs is currently batting. They hit a home run, which brings both teams to 5 home runs each. They then hit another home run. This is fine, because now, they have 6 home runs, while the other team has 5. This is still "one up."

In the last inning, the home team is NOT allowed to go "one up" on the visitors, as both teams must have an equal chance at hitting a home run.

- 23) On home runs over the fence, a hit and sit rule will apply. You do not have to touch any of the bases. **YOU DO NEED TO RETRIEVE THE BALL.**
- 24) The Kirkwood Parks & Recreation Department will supply a maximum of 1 new & 3 used softballs for each game. If any of these balls are hit outside of the field area, it is the responsibility of that team to retrieve the ball for play. **Umpires will start assessing outs for any ball that is not attempted to be retrieved.**
- 25) Kirkwood Parks and Recreation will supply safety screens for league use starting in the Spring/Summer 2025 season. The provided screens are the only ones that are to be used for league play, as they will be uniform in size specifications. The supplied screens are expected to be utilized by all teams, and pitchers are expected to remain behind the screen until contact. Any team/individual that refuses to use the screen, is doing so at their own risk. If an individual refuses to use the screen, they are agreeing to the same implied risk that follows every other player/position on the field. Please notify the umpire, Rec Aid, and League Director immediately if there is an issue with the screen, so we can be repair/replace it.
- a. Any ball that strikes the screen will be a dead ball, foul ball. No runners advance.
- i. Example: If a batted ball strikes the screen during a 1-strike count, the contact will be a dead ball, foul ball. No runners will advance, and the batter now has 2 strikes.
- ii. Example: If a batted ball strikes the screen during a 2-strike count, the contact will result in strike 3. The batter is out, and no runners will advance.
- b. The pitcher can participate on defense, but must remain behind the screen until the ball is contacted. If the pitcher moves from behind the screen prior to the ball being hit, the batter runner will be awarded first base, and all other runners will advance if forced.

- c. Screen placement may not be moved during a half inning, once the first pitch is thrown (unless the screen is moved during a defensive play, or moved by a batted ball). In these cases, the screen is to be returned to its original placement. The screen may be placed anywhere from the leading edge of the pitcher's plate and 3 feet in front of the pitching plate, within its 24-inch span. The pitching screen may not exceed 3 feet in front of the plate, and may not be placed behind the pitching plate.
- d. If a new pitcher enters the game mid-inning, they may adjust the screen to their preference before the first pitch is made to the batter.
- e. If the ball hits the screen during a defensive play, it will be a live ball as it is considered part of the field.
- f. As an added safety precaution, all players are still encouraged to wear any protective safety gear they feel necessary. This includes items such as helmets/masks, heart/chest protection, and shin guards.

#### ADDITIONAL RULES FOR SENIOR MEN LEAGUES

- 26) Only players that reach the age defined by the age group before December 31<sup>st</sup> will be allowed in the leagues (for example, all players in the 60+ age group must be at least 60 before Dec 31<sup>st</sup>). All Players must register with the community center, including subs. Failure to do so will result in a forfeit.
- 27) Balls over the outfield fence will count as a home run. Unlimited home runs are permitted.
- 28) A maximum of five (5) runs are allowed per inning except for the last inning. The last inning will have unlimited runs allowed. Games will be 65minutes in length, and can end in a tie.
- 29) Senior leagues will play double innings in which the visiting team bats for two consecutive half-innings and the home team bats for two consecutive half-innings. The 7<sup>th</sup> inning will be a single inning.
- 30) A pinch runner can be used for the batter. This runner must contact the center post of the backstop. Pinch runner must be declared before stepping into the batter's box. Failure to do so will result in runner not being allowed. If the batter strikes out and is not used, the runner can be used later. Pinch runner for all other batters will be allowed from the furthest base reached that at-bat. No pinch runner will be allowed after the next batter enters the box unless for an injury and the player on base is leaving the game. Any eligible player in the lineup may be used. Unlimited number allowed each inning. Pinch runner whose turn at bat comes while on base will NOT be called out, and will take his turn at bat. A player may be a courtesy runner once per inning. A pinch runner may not run for an existing courtesy runner. A violation result in an out and the runner is removed from the base. The pinch runner cannot go beyond 1<sup>st</sup> base on a batted ball.
- 31) Protective pitcher net must be placed 3 feet in front of pitching rubber. It cannot be placed outside the width of the pitcher rubber.
- 32) Any batted ball that hits the protective pitcher screen is a dead ball/no play. A 2<sup>nd</sup> batted ball from the same batter from the same at-bat is a strike. If it's the 3<sup>rd</sup> strike, it is an out.
- 33) A runner who is caught in a rundown may change direction only one time during the rundown. A runner changing direction more than once during a rundown shall be called out.
- 34) A scoring plate or a scoring line will be used. A foot down on the scoring plate, or down on or past the scoring line, prior to the ball being received by a defensive player touching home plate, is the same as a foot down on home plate for the purpose of scoring a run. The runner must touch the scoring plate or cross the scoring line. The runner shall be called out if he touches or crosses over any portion of either home plate or the strike zone mat.
- 35) A commitment line twenty (20) feet from the scoring plate will be used. Once a runner's foot touches the ground on or past this line, the runner is committed to advancing to the scoring plate. NOTE: If a runner crosses the commitment line again, he will be declared out and the ball remains live. Tag by a defensive player is not allowed. If a defensive player tags a runner who has passed the commitment line and is attempting to score, the runner will be called safe and the ball remains live. The defensive player should step on home plate; it will always be a force out. A runner who slides or dives at any time will be called out.

- 36) Senior teams can start with a minimum of eight (8) players and borrow a catcher from the opposing team. This catcher is not allowed or expected to be a part of a defensive play.
- 37) Seniors **will not** use the USA senior bat rules. They **will use** the standard USA bat list. (see rule 16)
- 38) Senior leagues will follow the Missouri State High School Activities Association guidelines for heat cancelations. If at an hour and a half before the game, the heat index/feels like temperature is 105 or above, the games will be canceled at that time.
- 39) Outs at EVERY base, are force outs.
- 40) A batter/runner (or the pinch runner) can not be forced out at First Base by a throw (or assist) from an outfielder.

### **General Policies and Procedures**

**Sportsmanship-** The ump will grade each team, each night on that night's game(s).

4 = Excellent, displayed good sportsmanship to even out the game. I.e. A runner was safe and they confessed they were out or they trapped the ball instead of catching it. (Not impossible to get but not handed out easily.)

3 = Nothing to report, the team/players did what they should of.

2 = Minor issues, single player Issue. Constant bickering/arguing for calls. (people are going to questions calls, it's what they continue to do after the question that gets them this)

1 = Major issue, multiple players, or an Ejection. (same as above but on a team basis.)

Teams that cannot carry a 2.5, will not be allowed in the playoffs (if applicable) and may not be allowed back for future years/session. A team that receives a 1 could be removed from the league immediately.

**Rosters-** Each team must submit a completed roster, with a maximum of 20 players, prior to the start of the season.

Failure to complete a roster by this deadline will result in forfeiture of any protested game, and the loss of opportunity to participate in playoffs and subsequent seasons. Only 4 players can be listed on a roster that is also listed on another roster from a higher division. At no time will a team be allowed to play with more than 4 players from a higher division or league. Roster changes can be submitted online by 4:30 p.m. of the day before a team's 4th game or (set of games) in the summer, and 2<sup>nd</sup> game (or set of games) in the Fall. After this time, changes can be made only for medical reasons, or if a player moves out of town. No roster changes will be allowed once a team qualifies for playoffs. All roster changes must be made online. They cannot be made to the umpire. A player must appear on the roster in order to legally participate in a game. Roster changes are subject to approval by the softball supervisor. All players must have some sort of picture ID at each game to establish their identity; failure to do so will be grounds for forfeiture. Each team (all players) may be checked prior to all playoff games with regard to their official online team roster. All rosters are filed with USA Softball, and are eligible for USA tournament play.

**Protests** - Judgment calls cannot be protested, only an interpretation of the rules. If a protest is necessary, **lodge the protest immediately with the umpire**. The game shall be stopped and the umpire should note which game, the score, and position of any players at the time of the protest. A written letter of protest and a \$25 protest fee must be submitted to the Parks & Recreation Department no later than the end of the 2nd business day after the disputed game. The \$25 protest fee will be refunded if the protest is ruled in your favor. Protests will be ruled upon within 1 week of the protest submitted. Roster protest must be done before the game begins, or at the time the protested player enters the game.

**Eligibility** - All players must be listed on the online roster to be eligible to play. If a team uses a non-roster or otherwise ineligible player and protest is upheld, the offending team will forfeit that particular game. Protest regarding eligibility of players regarding age (minimum of 18 years old), gender or roster inclusion must be made prior to the start of the game, unless a player arrives after the start of the game. In this case only the player arriving late is subject to review. Individuals must present a valid state issued photo I.D. to the umpire if requested to do so to verify their identity. Failure to produce a state-issued photo I.D. by the player in question is grounds for a protest being upheld. Protesting team must follow up with a written protest and fee as described above.

Forfeits - If you will not be able to field a team for whatever reason, please text/call 314-791-2815 with the details of your game (game time, team name, etc.) before 4:30pm, to allow us to inform the other team. If a team forfeits more than 25% of their games, it will be dropped from the remainder of the schedule. Additionally, any team that forfeits more than 16% of their games will lose its "returning team" status for the next summer season. If you **HAVE** to text/call after 4:30, **please still do so** as "No Call-No Show" forfeits will be charged a \$25 fee. This fee must be paid before your team can play their next game. PLEASE NOTE: Appropriate notice time is still required in order to avoid this fee.

Strike Zone Mats- All umpires, on all leagues and divisions will use a strike zone mat.

Reschedules -Games that were canceled due to poor field conditions will be rescheduled on the same night as the original games until we run out of field availability. Refunds will be provided for unplayed games. Games will not be rescheduled for any reason outside of weather.

Number of players - A team must have at least nine players present to take the field (within 5 minutes of the assigned starting time) or they will forfeit the game(s). If a team is unable to field at least nine players at the designated game time, that team will automatically assume the rule of "visitor". Once a team has assumed the visitors' role, home team privileges will not be returned to them even if additional players arrive. If their ninth player has not arrived by the time the 1st half inning of play is completed, or all present players have batted one time, the game will be forfeited. If neither team has nine players, a double forfeit will result. For coed leagues, four of the nine must be female players. No additional penalties will be enforced for having only nine players. If a change in Home teams is made during the first game of a doubleheader, the teams will not switch Home and Visitor for the second game. (Same team will be Visitor for both games). If the first game is forfeited in a double-header league, the team that has the insufficient number of players will have 15 minutes to get nine players on the field. If they cannot, the second game will be forfeited as well.

League Tiebreakers - Tiebreakers for League play is as follows:

- Least number of forfeits.
- Head to head record
- Runs scored head to head
- Runs against head to head
- Overall runs scored
- Overall runs against

Ejections - Ejected players must leave the field and vicinity of the field or a forfeit may occur. Umpires have the authority to eject an individual from the park if their action so warrants. Any player ejected from any game, will be ineligible for the next scheduled game. If it is the 1<sup>st</sup> game of a double-header, they will be considered ineligible for the second game. If it is the 2<sup>nd</sup> game of a doubleheader, they will be ineligible for the 1<sup>st</sup> game of the following week. Any team that has three or more players ejected from one game will forfeit that game. **Furthermore, if a player is ejected, they will be fined \$25 for the first ejection, and \$75 for the second ejection. In addition to the second ejection, the player will not be allowed to play the rest of the current season. During the next season, if the player is ejected again, they will be banned from the softball leagues for three (3) years. The fine must be paid before the team can play their next game. The team may be subject to additional penalties. Reminder, the manager will always be accountable for the players on his/her team.**

Playoffs – The championship game will not have a time limit, but run rules will still be in place. Run rules and time limitations will be followed as usual for all other playoff games. We will try our best to hold playoffs for all leagues. This will count as one of your 12 weeks of play if the season is shortened.

Weather Hotline – If weather is ever questionable, please use the App/Phone number "Rainout Line". The phone number is **314-433-4313**. The extension will be the field you play on (**3, 4 or 5**). This is where we will update cancellations. It is also an app if you would like to download it to your phone. You can also set up automatic notifications. This will send you a message any time status changes are made. We cannot guarantee a separate phone notification for cancelations, so please make sure your teams utilize this option.