



Co-ed Softball League Rulebook and General Information

Purpose and Scope of This Document

This Rulebook is intended to give all participants a broad overview of how the league operates and explain most rules and procedures that govern the league. This document is not intended to cover every last detail, such as schedules for each team and various other procedural and administrative items. Many additional details for the league will be disseminated via e-mail and on the Club website, so please check both frequently. If you have a SPAM filter on your e-mail, please add patrick@madisonssc.com to your list of safe senders to ensure you receive all e-mails pertaining to the league. This is the only e-mail address from which e-mails regarding the league will come.

Code of Conduct

Madison Sports and Social Club does not tolerate discrimination, racism, sexual harassment, unwelcome sexual advances, violence, threats, or any other type of behavior that may make any player or official feel uncomfortable or threaten his or her health and well-being. We expect all players to treat everyone with respect and abide by common standards of decency and good sportsmanship.

Team names must not be offensive toward any race, nationality, gender, or any other group of individuals. They must not contain profanity. Please use tact and common sense when choosing a team name. MSSC reserves the right to reject any team name it finds offensive. You will be asked to supply a new name in the event your team name is deemed inappropriate.

Players will read and understand the rules. They are sent to all roster players prior to the season and are available on the MSSC website as well. Not reading rules is the single biggest cause of problems in our leagues. If players have a question about the application of any given rule, they can ask an official during a break in play or after a game if time allows. They will not argue calls with officials or ask to have rules explained to them during play unless an official feels an explanation is necessary before play continues. Officials are human and make mistakes and MSSC does not tolerate abuse of its officials.

All participants must refrain from threatening, taunting, name-calling, put-downs, intimidation, violence, and other inappropriate behavior toward teammates, opponents, and officials. Everyone makes mistakes, and we will not tolerate criticism or intimidation of anyone involved with our leagues due to differences in skill level or any other factor. Coaching, tips, and helpful hints are welcome, provided they are relayed in a constructive and friendly manner.

All players are encouraged to report offensive behavior to the Club President, Patrick Fosdick, via e-mail at patrick@madisonssc.com. All reports will be kept anonymous and taken seriously, and appropriate action will be taken if deemed necessary, including, but not limited to warnings, suspension, and removal of the offending individual(s) from league play.

Softball Registration and General League Information

- Registration is only available on our website: <http://www.madisonssc.com>
- Full teams will be enrolled in the league before Free Agents. In the event that we fill up any given league, Free Agents will unfortunately not be able to participate, unless any teams are looking for additional players.
- Captains must indicate the team's preferred t-shirt colors when registering. Teams composed of Free Agents will need to select a captain and decide on a shirt color
- Team captains may choose to divide up the team registration fee amongst their players online by using TeamPayer. This service allows the captain to send an e-mail to each member of the team and indicate an amount for him or her to contribute towards the entire team fee. Alternatively, the captain may pay in full and collect money from his or her teammates. Any outstanding balance may be charged to the captain's credit card after the second game of the season
- Leagues will be segmented into separate divisions whenever possible if we have multiple fields. Depending on the number of teams registered, there could be up to three divisions: Lower, Intermediate, and Upper. Most times we can segment for the regular season, but if not possible for the regular season, the playoffs will be segmented into separate brackets based on final regular season standings. Weekday leagues that only have one field cannot be segmented since we are limited to seven teams
- Teams must maintain complete and accurate rosters. All players, including subs, should be listed on a team's roster, and players who play in any number of games must complete the waiver, which is accomplished through accepting a spot on the team from a captain's e-mail invite. Teams in violation of waiver policies will be subject to forfeiting games at MSSC's discretion
- Following the regular season, an appropriate postseason structure will be established. If there are multiple divisions (i.e. Upper and Lower), a traditional playoff bracket may only be used in the Upper division. Lower division teams may get 2-3 games against opponents assigned at random. The number of games will depend on what the schedule allows. In general, all teams are eligible for postseason play with the following exceptions:
 - Any team forfeiting two or more regular season games may be left out of the postseason at MSSC's discretion
 - If time or space constraints arise, teams may be left out of the playoff bracket to allow completion of the league in a timely and/or efficient manner. This rarely ever happens. Depending on the reason for the exclusion, a team may be refunded for a missed playoff game
 - Any team determined to have exhibited extremely poor sportsmanship or other conduct detrimental to the league on a regular and consistent basis may be left out of the postseason at MSSC's discretion. Refunds will NOT be issued to any teams under these circumstances, as this is a violation of our Code of Conduct
 - Any team who does not wish to participate in the postseason may be excluded at the captain's request. There is no requirement to participate in the playoffs

Prizes

The League Champions will be provided with MSSC Champions t-shirts. Gift cards or cash prizes will also be awarded in the following amounts:

- League Champion: \$100
- Runner-up: \$50

Prizes are only awarded in the Upper division. Any other divisions play for fun. Prizes generally depend on any arrangements with sponsor bars that provide such prizes for the league.

Shirt Pickup

Each player on a team's roster will be provided with a t-shirt. Shirt colors will be assigned on a first registered, first awarded basis, unless a returning team is using shirts from a prior season. Shirts are generally available at the second game of the season, depending on the schedule of the printer and the timeliness of all teams getting their shirt orders in.

Rules and Regulations

1. General Rules

- A. All games in the league shall be governed by the rules outlined herein.
- B. Please try to remember that we are here to have fun. Please refrain from any action that is considered poor sportsmanship. Such actions include, but are not limited to: arguing with umpire's calls, running into other players in the field, and yelling at opposing players in an attempt to distract them.
- C. Players must respect the authority of the umpires to regulate the games and abide by their decisions. Umpires have the authority to eject players from the game for detrimental conduct. All decisions of the umpires are final. **Any situations not specifically covered in the rules are up to the discretion of the umpire.** We do not default to ASA or any other rules.

2. Team Size and Forfeits

- A. Full teams consist of 10 players in the field. Eight players (including a minimum of three females) must be present to start and continue each game. If a team wishes to add a player (or players) after the start of the game, the players may be added at the end of the batting order, while still taking into account the required male-female batting ratio
 - If one team decides to take a forfeit win, this must be decided and captains must sign to acknowledge the forfeit before the game begins. It is the responsibility of the team taking the forfeit win to ensure this happens.
 - Teams who no-show games or show up with fewer than seven players will be charged a forfeit fee according to the procedures outlined on the Forfeit Fees page of the MSSC website (<https://madisonssc.leaguelab.com/page/forfeitfees>)
- B. At least four fielders must be female for a full team. A team may use as many females as it wants, but no more than six males are allowed in the field for any team at any time.
- C. If a player leaves a game for any reason and no substitute is available, or a team is shorthanded, the game may proceed as long as there are at least 8 players present, including three females. The batting order may need to be changed to ensure a proper male-female batting ratio. A team may still only have six males on the field.

- D. If a team is not ready to play at game time, they may play shorthanded with the opposing team's consent. The opposing team has the option to accept the forfeit win or allow the opposing team to play shorthanded. There will be a five minute grace period allowed to furnish a full team.
- E. Teams may recruit subs from other teams to play with them in the regular season. Subs from other teams are not allowed in the playoffs unless the opposing team consents. This includes teams who have been eliminated
- F. Players in the Upper division may not sub for teams in divisions below them without consent of the opponent of the team requesting to use the Upper division sub
- G. Any sub or roster rules or limitations may be disregarded if the opponent consents to the use of any sub(s) or number of players present, whether it is a regular or postseason game

3. Equipment

- A. Team shirts are provided by MSSC. Players and base coaches must wear shirts and shoes (not sandals) at all times while on the field
- B. **Metal cleats are not allowed.** No open toed shoes or sandals are allowed. A player may be warned once by an umpire about illegal footwear. If the player does not change out of it, he or she shall be ejected from the game
- C. The league will provide the official 12" softball. No other ball will be used
- D. Players must furnish their own warm-up balls, gloves, bats, batting gloves, helmets, and any protective gear they wish to wear. Many leagues recommend pitcher's masks due to the speed at which the ball comes off the bat. MSSC encourages the use of masks for this reason, but we cannot provide them since everyone has a different preference for equipment
- E. All bats must have an ASA stamp to be legal for play. No bats on the ASA's banned bat list are permitted. A list of non-approved bats can be found at <https://www.teamusa.org/USA-Softball/Play-USA-Softball/Certified-USA-Softball-Equipment>. Click the "Go" button beneath "Bats" and scroll down to "NON-APPROVED BATS: 2004 and Beyond." A sample of illegal bats appears at the end of this document

4. Fielding and the Playing Field

- A. MSSC many times uses multiple diamonds, which are not always the same size
- B. All outfielders must remain behind the infield dirt. There cannot be more than 6 players on the infield dirt at any one time. Once contact has been made, the outfielders may enter the infield. If an outfielder enters the infield before contact has been made, the batter will be awarded first base
- C. A fielder who has no play on a runner must be out of the base path and yield the area to the runner. If a fielder is judged to have held up a runner, the runner will be called safe at the base toward which he or she was advancing
- D. Umpires have the authority to rule interference on any play in which a fielder is judged to have unnecessarily held up or blocked a runner. The interference must occur within a reasonable distance of the runner – i.e. if the players in question are ten feet apart, interference should probably not be called provided the fielder does get out of the way of the runner

- D. The on-deck area will be just inside the gate near each dugout. This is the only area in which players may take practice swings on the playing field
- E. The catcher is generally the only player allowed to make a play at home plate. If there are two defensive players in the vicinity of home plate, the runner will be ruled safe.
Exceptions:
 - a. If a ball is overthrown when intended for the catcher, the pitcher or another player may then cover home while the catcher retrieves the ball
 - b. Another player may also cover home if a runner advancing from third to home is caught in a run-down (“pickle”) situation.
- F. Warm-ups on the field are not allowed prior to games, with the exception of the home team taking the field a couple minutes before game time
- G. Beverages (in non-glass containers) are allowed at games. If players choose to take beverages on the field, containers must be at least six feet from any base or base path. All beverages (including empties) must be removed when the team leaves the field to bat. If a hit ball strikes a beverage container of the fielding team, the umpire has discretion to make a call that will be the most advantageous to the hitting team, depending on the situation

5. Officials

- A. All games will be officiated by an impartial umpire supplied by the league. The umpire governs all game play issues and has authority for final rulings
- B. The umpire is not a babysitter and is not expected to police immature behavior. MSSC expects all players to act like adults and respect their teammates, opponents, and the umpire. The umpire may intervene in situations where a player’s conduct is deemed dangerous to anyone else at the field or violates MSSC’s sportsmanship terms mentioned earlier in this document

6. Pitching

- A. This is a slow-pitch league
- B. The arc of all pitches must be between 6 and 12 feet. The umpire will have wide latitude in this area, as exact heights are difficult to measure
- C. The pitcher must keep one foot on or behind the pitching rubber when pitching the ball. On diamonds with two pitching rubbers, the one further back will be used
- D. Any pitch hitting the plate or black mat is a strike
- E. The pitcher must make pitches within a reasonable timeframe. If the umpire believes the pitcher is stalling, he has the right to award a ball to the hitter until he or she is walked

7. Batting

- A. Any player who plays in the field must bat. In the case of injuries or other special circumstances (i.e. pregnancies), the following options apply:
 - a. The player can take the at-bat, but may use a pinch runner if he or she reaches first base
 - b. Any player who does not feel safe batting may abstain from hitting, but the team will take an out for his or her spot in the order
- B. All players will hit a 12” ball

- C. Bunting is not allowed. Any hitter who bunts is out, and any runners must return to the base they occupied before the bunt. A bunt will be determined at the umpire's discretion. There will be no warnings given for bunting
- D. Hitters must promptly take their position in the batting box when it is their turn to hit. Any practice swings should be done in the on-deck circle. There are no timeouts allowed unless an adjustment to equipment is necessary to protect the safety of the hitter or any other player
- E. The batter's box is not marked, but hitters must stand in the area generally considered the batter's box. Umpires have the discretion to tell a hitter to move closer to the plate if standing too far away. Running swings are not a part of softball
- D. All players start with a one ball, one strike count. A player may only hit one foul ball with a two strike count. If he or she hits another foul ball, he or she is out
- E. A female must hit at least every third at-bat, but may bat more often. If a team has the bare minimum of three females and subsequently loses a female to injury, disqualification, etc., they may bat with more males if the opponent does not take the forfeit at that point. In this circumstance, an automatic out will result in the order for any spot vacated by said female
- F. Females may be rotated through the order if there are significantly more males present than females and a team does not have enough females for a different one to hit every third at-bat
- G. In order for a foul tip to result in an out, the tipped ball must go above the batter's head. A foul tip that goes directly into the catcher's mitt will not result in an out unless it is the second consecutive foul ball with a two strike count.
- H. MSSC uses the infield fly rule. Infield fly is in play when there are less than 2 outs and runners on 1st and 2nd or bases loaded and a ball is hit within the infield with significant arc and deemed an easy catch by the umpire. In this situation, the batter is automatically out. Runners may advance at their own risk.
- I. If a male is walked on three straight pitches with a female on deck, he will take second base. If there was a runner on second, he or she advances to third, but not home. The following female batter will hit
 - If the bases were already loaded, or become loaded by the male being walked, he is only awarded first base and the following female batter must hit
- J. The on-deck hitter must be in the on-deck area so the fielding team is aware of whether there is a male or female on deck

8. Running

- A. Leading off or stealing is not allowed. Doing so will result in an out. Runners must be on the bag when the pitcher pitches the ball, and may not advance until contact by the hitter is anticipated.
 - a. Anticipated contact by the hitter is largely up to the umpire's discretion. It generally involves either a swing or check swing by the hitter. Runners who leave the bag before the hitter has a realistic chance to hit the ball will be out
- B. Collisions between runners and fielders are not allowed
 - a. If a runner initiates an unacceptable amount of contact with a defensive player, the umpire may rule the runner out. Any player who slides into another player in an attempt to break up a double play or injure the defensive player (in the umpire's eyes) will be ruled out.

- b. If a fielder is deemed to be blocking any base and not allowing a runner to touch or cross it, the runner will be ruled safe. Runners cannot be penalized for poor throws that pull a fielder off a base and into the runner's path.
- C. The umpire may call an automatic out or double play if "interference" is ruled.
- D. When running to first base the runner is entitled to the orange portion of the base. The fielder is entitled to the white portion of the base. If the fielder is blocking the orange portion as the runner is attempting to cross, the runner will be ruled safe. A runner cannot be penalized for a bad throw by the fielding teams that draws the first baseperson onto the orange portion of the base. If the runner crosses the white portion of the base and initiates an unacceptable amount of contact with the fielder, the runner may be called out at the umpire's discretion
- D. There is a line $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way between third base and home plate. Any runner touching or advancing past this line is subject to a force out at home (i.e. the catcher only needs to have possession of the ball while touching home plate for the runner to be out, and the runner need not be tagged)
- E. The runner must touch the black mat when running home. The catcher may only touch home plate itself. If the catcher is blocking the black mat, the runner will be ruled safe. A runner cannot be penalized for a bad throw by the fielding team. The runner may be called out if he or she attempts to step on the plate and initiates an unacceptable amount of contact with the catcher
- F. Sliding is allowed, provided the runner does not initiate an unacceptable amount of contact with a defensive player
- G. Pinch runners are allowed in the case of injury. The last player of the same gender to make an out will be the only player allowed to pinch-run
- H. Runners may only advance one base on an overthrow that leaves the field of play

9. The Player

- A. The maximum number of players on the field is 10.
- B. There is no rule stating that there must be a certain number of males or females in the outfield or infield.
- C. For all league purposes, any player is considered a "male" unless specifically identifying as a female

10. Timekeeping and Length of Game

- A. No new inning may start after 55 minutes of real time. The time will be kept by the umpire and will run continuously. The umpire may stop the clock temporarily in the case of serious injuries. A game is over once the inning that was being played at the 55 minute mark has been completed. This rule applies to all regular season and playoff games with the exception of the championship game
- B. Any warm-up a team wishes to do must be done outside the playing field. There is ample space to practice pitching or play catch, and teams will not be allowed to warm up on the field before their games
- C. Games cut short by rain, lightning, or other dangerous weather will be considered final if five full innings have been completed or 45 minutes of real time has passed

11. Additional Rules

- A. If a game is tied after seven innings of play, or the last inning using the 55 minute rule, the game will result in a tie for regular season games, while playoff games will result in extra innings until a team wins. Extra innings are played the same as all previous innings (i.e. there is no runner on second base to start each half inning)
- B. Players may point out and enforce corrections with illegal substitutions and improper batting order
- C. The home team is determined by the schedule in league play. The bottom team listed on the schedule and scorecard is the home team. The higher seeded team is the home team for tournament play
- D. Ties for league standings and seeding will be broken by the result of head-to-head games. If the tied teams did not face each other, or there continues to be a tie, the tiebreaker will continue on to least runs allowed, then run differential, then runs scored, and lastly, a coin flip

Miscellaneous Administrative Rules and Notes

- MSSC encourages Free Agents (or players without a team) to register. Full teams will be placed first, followed by Free Agents in the order they registered
- Free Agents are welcome to form teams on their own or request to play with friends; otherwise they will be assigned to a team by MSSC. It is possible that Free Agents may not be assigned to a team if no teams are looking for additional players and/or there are not enough Free Agents to form a complete team
- Spectators are welcome and encouraged at the games
- Dogs and glass containers of any kind are not allowed at any city of Madison athletic field – these are city rules, not MSSC rules. Anyone violating these rules is subject to a fine, should a park ranger stop by
- Club management reserves the right to alter the setup of the league at any time before or during the season. This includes, but is not limited to, league rules and prizes
- Umpires are provided by MSSC and should have no affiliation with any particular team in the league

End of the Game

At the completion of the game, the score card will be signed by each captain and submitted to MSSC as proof of the game's final score. All players are expected to shake hands and otherwise show good sportsmanship, regardless of the final score or any disagreements or situations that may have arisen during the game.

Results and Standings

Results and standings will be posted on the Softball page of the MSSC website (<http://www.madisonssc.com>) following receipt of the official scorecard from each game.

Cancellation/Rainout Policy

Games may be postponed or canceled due to dangerous weather, extremely poor field conditions, or a number of other factors. MSSC must abide by city regulations governing when the fields are considered unplayable. Any violation of these rules jeopardizes our ability to reserve fields in the future. A game will be considered final if five full innings have been completed or 45 minutes of real time have elapsed before the game is called for rain and/or lightning. All cancellations will be e-mailed, as well as posted on the MSSC website.

Good Sportsmanship

The final section of the rules and regulations of the league will reiterate what was stated at the beginning of this document: The purpose of our softball league is first and foremost to have fun. Winning should always come second. All participants must realize that not all players will be on the same skill level, and that there may be vast differences in skill level between members of the same team or between two teams in the league. Boasting, bragging, taunting, verbally abusing, or otherwise putting down other players will not be tolerated. The umpire and/or a representative of MSSC reserve the right to issue warnings, and ejections if any of the above-mentioned behavior becomes too severe. Winning may be important to you, but good sportsmanship must take priority over wins and losses.