



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 identity, 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, harassment, 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. Any player making an offensive comment to another individual is subject to ejection at the umpire's discretion.

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. MSSC reserves the right to not refund any teams or players removed from the league for violation of our Code of Conduct.

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 them to contribute towards the entire team fee. TeamPayer charges an additional fee on each transaction, whereas options like Venmo are free. 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. Most times we can segment for the regular season, but if not possible for the regular season, the playoffs may be segmented into separate brackets based on final regular season standings. Weekday leagues that only have one field cannot be segmented since we have limited capacity
- 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 should 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, a traditional playoff bracket may only be used in the division that awards prizes. Teams in other divisions 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
 - 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. **It is the captain's responsibility to notify MSSC of this request before the playoff schedule is released. Forfeit fees apply in the playoffs as well**

Prizes

Prizes will be announced in the playoff email that goes out to all registered participants. In the past they've generally included gift cards to sponsor bars or cash prizes processed as refunds to the captain or available as a credit for a future season. Prizes are subject to change any given season. We only award prizes to the first and second place teams in the entire league and do not award prizes in each division if there are multiple divisions.

Shirts

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 a color from a prior season. Shirts are generally available at the fields by the second game of the season, depending on the schedule of the printer. **Please wear league shirts every week. Teams at every level of organized sport – from T-ball through Major League Baseball – all wear the same shirt/jersey/uniform**

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 gender 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 may 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, but a team may have as many females as it wants in the field. If a team does not have at least four female players, they must play shorthanded in the field.
- 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 batting ratio.
- 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. 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. The Player

- A. The maximum number of players in the field is 10
- B. There is no rule stating that there must be a certain number of any given gender in the outfield or infield
- C. A player must specifically identify as a female in order to count toward the minimum number of females required to be present during play for purposes of co-ed participation. The rest of the team can be any number of males and/or non-binary individuals
- D. It is the responsibility of the team captain to communicate with the umpire regarding team composition when it comes to co-ed participation rules. The captain must make the umpire aware of any situations in which the identity of any given player(s) could be misconstrued

4. 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 a USA Softball or ASA Softball stamp to be legal for play. Bats manufactured in 2020 or later likely have a USA Softball stamp. No bats on the banned bat list are permitted even if they do have the aforementioned stamps. A list of non-approved bats can be found at <https://www.teamusa.org/USA-Softball/Certified-Equipment> . The site is somewhat difficult to navigate, so a recent list of banned bats appears at the end of this document
 - There are bats made specifically for slow pitch and fast pitch softball. While it's not illegal to use fast pitch bats in slow pitch, it's also not recommended. Fast pitch bats are generally smaller and lighter and may break if used in slow pitch. They also put the hitter at a disadvantage, as they typically won't generate as much power as a slow pitch bat
 - Many bats are not rated for play in cold temperatures. It's recommended to check the specs on your bat for the lowest temperature at which it can be used. Some bats will crack or shatter if used in cold temperatures

- Any team found to be using an illegal bat at any point in the game is subject to forfeiting the game unless the opponent agrees to let the game continue (with the illegal bat taken out of play)

5. Fielding and the Playing Field

- MSSC many times uses multiple diamonds, which are not always the same size
- Any field with a “short porch” (250 feet or less to center field fence) will have a limit of three home runs per team per game. Any home run after three is an automatic out. Short porches include Bowman #2 and #3 and Olbrich #3 and #4
- 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
- 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 they were advancing
- 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
- 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
- The catcher is generally the only defensive player allowed in the vicinity of home plate. If there are two defensive players in the vicinity of home plate, the runner will be ruled safe. Exceptions:
 - 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
 - Another player may also cover home if a runner advancing from third to home is caught in a run-down (“pickle”) situation
- 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
- 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

6. Officials

- 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
- 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

- C. Players are not allowed to argue judgement calls with umpires. Judgement calls include balls and strikes, close plays at a base, infield fly rule, and anything else involving umpire discretion when determining the outcome of a play. There are no challenges and no replays, so you're not going to get a judgement call overturned by arguing
- D. Any concern about an umpire's lack of knowledge of the rules must be communicated to MSSC and not taken up with the umpire during a game

7. 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. A pitch declared illegal by the umpire is a ball provided the player doesn't swing at it. Players may swing at a pitch deemed illegal by the umpire. A player who swings at such a pitch accepts the outcome of the swing – positive or negative
- 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, the ump has the right to award balls to hitters until they are walked

8. 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 that player's 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. Four balls result in a walk. Three strikes result in an out. A player with two strikes is allowed one "courtesy" foul ball. A subsequent foul ball results in an 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 non-female players if the opponent does not choose to take the forfeit win 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 fewer females present and a team does not have enough 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. Players may swing at a pitch deemed illegal by the umpire. A player who swings at such a pitch accepts the outcome of the swing – positive or negative
- I. MSSC uses the infield fly rule. Infield fly is in play when these three conditions are met:
 - There are runners on first and second, or the bases are loaded
 - There are fewer than two outs
 - A hit ball is in the air in fair territory

When these conditions are met, any high pop-up that "can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort" invokes the infield fly rule. The ball remains live but the batter is out, and in all other respects it is simply a fly ball. As with any ordinary fly ball, if the ball is caught, runners would have to tag before advancing. Otherwise runners may advance at their own risk

- J. If a non-female batter is walked on three straight pitches with a female on deck, the batter will take second base. If there was a runner on second, the runner advances to third, but not home. The following female batter will hit
 - If the bases were already loaded, or become loaded by the non-female hitter being walked, the batter is only awarded first base and the following female batter must hit
- K. The on-deck hitter must be in the on-deck area so the fielding team is aware of who is on deck

9. 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.
 - 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. Sliding is allowed, provided it is not in an attempt to knock a ball loose or break up a double play. Aggressive or unnecessary sliding that could take out or injure a player may result in the runner being called out and possibly ejected from the game (at the umpire's discretion)
 - 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. Runner interference occurs when a batter or runner interferes with the defense's ability to make a play. This includes, but is not limited to, the batter or runner interfering with a fielder's

attempt to catch a ball, trying to block a throw made by a fielder, trying to prevent a fielder from picking up a ball on the ground, etc.

- 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 basemen 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
- E. 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)
- F. 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. Runners may be called out if they attempt to step on the plate and initiate an unacceptable amount of contact with the catcher
- G. Pinch runners are allowed in the case of injury. The last female out will pinch run for an injured female runner. The last male or non-binary individual out will pinch run for an injured male or non-binary individual
- H. Runners may only advance one base on an overthrow that leaves the field of play

10. Timekeeping and Length of Game

- A. Each game is allotted seven innings or approximately one hour – whichever comes first. No new inning may begin after 55 minutes of actual playing time have elapsed, but a game in progress may continue as long as needed to complete the final inning. All diamonds have a count-down timer that will be displayed behind home plate and will make an audible sound when 55 minutes have elapsed (if a game lasts that long)
 - The hour will start at whatever time the game starts. If the start of a game is delayed for any reason, teams will still get to play for one hour. Example: If a game begins at 6:35, the game can go until 7:35, with the 55 minutes applying at 7:30
 - A game may last longer than one hour provided the last inning started before 55 minutes had expired. Example: Game starts at 6:30. Last inning begins at 7:23. The game may continue as long as needed past 7:30 to finish the current inning
- A. 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
- B. 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

- Fighting and other forms of physical altercations will NOT be tolerated, period. Excessive unsportsmanlike conduct (verbal or otherwise) will also make the player subject to ejection, suspension, and potential permanent ban from all MSSC leagues and events. All parties involved in such behavior (subject to the umpire's discretion) may be ejected from the game and subject to ejection from the league at MSSC staff discretion. Ejections from the game will cause the offending team to play down a person for the remainder of the game. The umpire also has discretion to award a forfeit win if players engaged in such behavior will not leave the premises or they engage in conduct that disrupts the game once play has resumed. No full or partial refunds will be given to any player ejected from the league for any of this conduct
- 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
- 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.