



FULLY LOADED SOFTBALL

Junior School Playing Rules

Fully Loaded Softball

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Fully Loaded Softball has been updated for all **Primary School** and year 7 and 8 **Secondary School** competitions.

The rules are designed to enhance the experience of softball for students and teachers and provide a version of the game that is more appealing to a boarder audience.

The intention with this set of rules is to increase participation outcomes for students and to satisfy requirements to provide activities that are more engaging.

These rules are tailored to improve participation outcomes for students and to simplify the game for delivery by teachers and parents. The result is a game that is fit for purpose in the school market.

Fully Loaded Softball – Junior School Playing Rules employs simple, easy to understand rules creating a fast, action-packed game with maximum participant involvement catering to both boys and girls.

These rules can be adopted for club or interschool sport competitions at either Primary or Secondary school ages.

1 Summary of rule changes

Modified simple rules designed for school-based play and interschool competitions focused on **participation** rather than performance outcomes

- 1.1 Each innings will start with the “BASES LOADED” for maximum participation and reduced waiting time for the batting team
- 1.2 NO Tagging a baserunner
- 1.3 NO Sliding
- 1.4 The runner does not have to tag up on a fly ball, instead they can run as soon as the ball is hit without having to return to the base if the ball is caught, meaning there is NO “Infield fly rule”
- 1.5 There is NO dropped 3rd strike
- 1.6 The pitching is SLOWPITCH and uses a STRIKE ZONE MAT to determine balls and strikes
- 1.7 There are NO walks, instead the penalty for not throwing strikes is on ball three, the batter gets to hit the ball off a batting tee
- 1.8 Each batter bats once per innings
- 1.9 Rotating lead off batter each innings
- 1.10 Last three batters from the previous innings start on base each innings
- 1.11 Every player gets three turns at bat and one chance to run the bases every game where 9 players are used.

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2 Teams

- 2.1 It is recommended that for competitions a team can have a maximum of nine players on the field at any one time to achieve forecast participation outcomes.
- 2.2 Variations of team numbers can be agreed to at the beginning of a competition or in social events. Both teams should have the same number of players that take the field and that come to bat each innings.
 - 2.2.1 If it is a mixed competition, it is strongly recommended that each team have a maximum of three males on the field at any one time.
- 2.3 Normal competitions are conducted with 9 players on the field of play.
- 2.4 A team can have up to 12 players per team that bat through but only 9 on the field at once, unlimited substitutions with non-starting players is allowed.
- 2.5 If both teams agree they can use more, or less players during the game. For example, it can be agreed that all 12 batters can bat each innings, but it must be the same for both teams.
- 2.6 A team may make substitutions during the game without restriction.
- 2.7 A team is not required to wear a uniform.

3 Equipment

- 3.1 Softcore balls are required for use (Easton STB12Y for high school or STB11Y for primary school are recommended for school softball competitions).
- 3.2 A STRIKE ZONE MAT is used in replacement of a homeplate.
- 3.3 Shoes must be worn by all players. Metal cleats and shoes with screw in studs are not permitted.
- 3.4 Gloves must be used by all fielders.
- 3.5 Batting helmets should be worn by all batters and base runners.
- 3.6 A catcher's helmet/mask combo or all in one helmet with throat guard must be used by 'backstop' (or catcher).
- 3.7 Softball Safety Base must be used for all Regional and State Competitions
- 3.8 A Batting tee is required for when the batter gets three balls on them

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3.9 Official Softball Bats deemed to be in 'good condition' are to be used in competitions

4 The game

4.1 The recommended number of innings per game is three, taking approximately 50 minutes to complete a game.

4.2 One innings is completed when each team has batted and fielded.

4.3 A team's turn at bat concludes when all players have batted, regardless of the number of outs. Each batter bats once per innings.

4.3.1 If the last batter hits the ball, play will stop when a fielder has the ball and is on the Strike Zone Mat. If a runner is between bases at that time, they are deemed to be at the last base they reached.

4.4 Batters bat in a set order. When a substitution is made, the substitute takes the batting position of the player they have replaced.

4.5 A pitcher can only pitch in one innings of the game, a new pitcher is used every innings.

4.6 The fielding team must have a 'pitcher' and 'backstop' (or 'catcher') fielder, with all other fielders positioned as the fielding team chooses, within the field of play.

4.7 The Competition Organiser will determine the method of deciding which team bats and which team fields first. (Paper, rock, scissors or home team bats second)

4.8 The winner of the game is the team that scores the most runs.

4.9 A run is scored when a batter makes their way around all four bases (touching each one) and crosses the Strike Zone mat.

4.10 In the event of a tied game, the Competition Organiser may choose to award equal points to both teams or play a tiebreaker to determine a winner if time permits.

4.10.1 A tiebreaker consists of an extra innings of play, with each team having three batters each.

4.10.2 Each team can choose their three batters.

4.10.3 The team who fielded last will remain in the field to save time and bat second in the tiebreaker.

4.10.4 Any player, including a player who has already pitched during the game, can pitch in the tiebreaker.

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5 Starting each innings

- 5.1 Before each game both teams set their batting order 1st – 9th.
- 5.2 At the start of each innings the batting team sends one batter to Homeplate and 3 runners to the bases – This is called “**Loaded Bases**”
- 5.3 In the first innings the 1st batter leads off by going to bat, at the same time the 7th, 8th and 9th batters start the game on base.
- 5.4 In the first inning the 7th batter starts on 3rd, the 8th batter on 2nd and the 9th batter on 1st base.
- 5.5 Each subsequent innings the order is rotated. For example, in the 2nd innings the 4th placed batter would lead off the batting order with the original 1st, 2nd, and 3rd order batters starting on base.
- 5.6 In the third innings the 7th batter in the order would lead off the innings while the 4th, 5th and 6th ordered batters from the original order start on base.
- 5.7 The lowest order batter starts on 1st base each innings
- 5.8 This ensures a different player gets to lead off each innings and that each player gets to start an innings as a base runner.
- 5.9 Please note, this is worked out for a standard game which allows for 9 players. If playing with any other number, the running rotation may need to be adjusted and agreed by both teams, but generally the last three batters from the innings before start on base.

6 The pitch

- 6.1 The pitcher has at least one foot on the pitching plate when releasing the ball to pitch.
- 6.2 The ball is to be delivered in an underarm motion and at any stage during the pitch it should reach a height above the batter’s shoulder.
- 6.3 A windmill pitching action is not permitted.
- 6.4 The ball must be delivered on the first forward motion of the arm.
- 6.5 A back stop (or catcher) is not required to catch the pitch. However, a ‘Catcher’ or ‘Back Stop’ fields in a position at least four metres behind the batter to return the pitch to the pitcher.
- 6.6 At the start of play the back stop or catcher must start far enough back to avoid any risk of being hit by and accidentally thrown bat during a swing (at least 4 metres).

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7 Strike

- 7.1 A strike is determined:
- 7.1.1 for each correctly pitched ball that hits any part of the Strike Zone Mat on the full
 - 7.1.2 for each pitched ball (correct or incorrect) swung at and missed
 - 7.1.3 when a pitched ball, that is not swung at, hits the batter and the batter has a foot on the Strike Zone Mat
 - 7.1.4 for each foul ball when a batter has none or one strike on them.
 - 7.1.5 a batter cannot be struck out on a foul ball but can be out if a ball is hit and caught in foul territory.

8 Ball

- 8.1 A ball is called for each pitched ball:
- 8.1.1 When the pitch does not reach a point during the flight that is above the batter's shoulder height.
 - 8.1.2 not swung at, that does not hit the Strike Zone Mat on the full
 - 8.1.3 not swung at, that is not delivered correctly
 - 8.1.4 the pitched ball is deemed 'too high'. A pitcher cannot deliberately throw the ball too high to make it difficult for the batter. It must be delivered in an arc, over shoulder height, but not more than 10 feet at its highest point
 - 8.1.5 that hits the batter when not swinging at the pitch, provided the batter does not have a foot on the Strike Zone Mat.
 - 8.1.6 After three balls to a batter the pitcher is penalized by the batter being allowed to hit the ball off a batting tee. This rule makes it easier for the batter to hit but still gives the defensive team a chance to make and out.

9 Fair ball

- 9.1 A fair ball is a batted ball that:
- 9.1.1 Settles or is touched on or between the foul lines, between the Strike Zone Mat and first base, or between the Strike Zone Mat and third base.

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- (a) The ball must roll past the Strike Zone Mat inside the foul lines, if the ball comes to rest on the Strike Zone Mat, it should be called 'foul'.
- 9.1.2 Bounds past 1st or 3rd base, on or over fair territory, regardless of where the ball hits after going over the base.
- 9.1.3 Touches 1st, 2nd, or 3rd base.
- 9.1.4 While on or over fair territory, touches the person or clothing of a fielder.
- 9.1.5 First falls on or between the foul lines beyond 1st and 3rd base.
 - (a) If a home run boundary is used, if the ball lands over the boundary line over or between the foul lines, the batter is automatically awarded a home run (they must still touch all bases).
 - (b) If a line or cones are used to mark the home run boundary, and a ball that is deemed fair bounds over the boundary, the batter is automatically awarded three bases (they must still touch all bases).

10 Foul ball

- 10.1 A foul ball is a batted ball that:
 - 10.1.1 Comes to rest on the Strike Zone Mat
 - 10.1.2 Settles on foul territory between the Strike Zone Mat and 1st base, or between the Strike Zone Mat and 3rd base.
 - 10.1.3 Bounds past first or third base, on or over foul territory.
 - 10.1.4 First touches on foul territory beyond 1st or 3rd base.
 - 10.1.5 Touches the batter or the bat in the batter's hand(s) a second time before they have left the Strike Zone Mat area.
- 10.2 Base runners cannot advance on a foul ball unless it is caught on the full by a fielder and the batter is out. If a foul ball is hit and not caught, all base runners return to the base they were on when the ball was hit.

11 Out

- 11.1 The batter is out when:
 - 11.1.1 the third strike is swung at and missed

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- 11.1.2 the ball is hit and caught in fair or foul territory
- 11.1.3 they do not reach the safety base before a fielder, who is in contact with 1st base, has possession of the ball and is in control of it.
 - (a) A batter is permitted to run through the safety base. However, if they turn and attempt to run to 2nd base and then retreat to 1st base, they will be out if a fielder has possession and control of the ball at 1st base before the batter returns to 1st base.
- 11.2 A base runner is out when:
 - 11.2.1 they do not reach the base they are attempting to reach before a fielder, who is in contact with the base that the runner is attempting to reach, has possession and control of the ball.
 - 11.2.2 they do not reach the Strike Zone Mat before a fielder, who is in contact with the Strike Zone Mat, has possession and control of the ball.
 - 11.2.3 they overrun 2nd or 3rd base and a fielder has possession and control of the ball at the base before the runner returns to the base.
 - 11.2.4 they attempt to slide or dive into a base (no sliding or diving)
 - 11.2.5 they leave the base before the ball is hit
 - 11.2.6 they interfere with or prevent a fielder from making a play. All other runners will return to the last base held at the time of the interference.
 - 11.2.7 they are struck by a batted ball before it is touched by a fielder
 - 11.2.8 they overtake a baserunner ahead of them

12 Advancing bases & scoring runs

- 12.1 A base runner can run only after the ball has been hit in play by the batter, not before.
- 12.2 All base runners, when forced to do so, must run on a fair batted ball.
- 12.3 A base runner can advance on a batted ball that is caught, including a foul ball. There is no requirement for a base runner to tag up and wait for the ball to be caught.
- 12.4 Once a base runner has reached halfway to the next base they are running toward, they cannot turn back. If they do turn back, they are liable to be put out at the base they were attempting to reach. The only exception to this

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rule is if a baserunner ahead of them stops on the base they are running to. That being the case they can return to the base they just passed.

- 12.5 Each time a runner makes their way around all four bases (touching each one) and safely touches the Strike Zone mat, equals one run. For example, if there are loaded bases and the ball is hit allowing all three baserunners to make it safely home, three runs will score.
- 12.6 If the batter also makes it home, a homerun is called and all four runners score. The three runners count, plus the batter if they make it all the way safely home.
- 12.7 If a dead ball line is used and the ball crosses the line:
- 12.7.1 On an overthrow, base runners are awarded two bases from the time of the throw
- (a) If two runners are between the same bases, the award is based on the position of the lead runner.
- 12.8 A fielder cannot tag a runner to make an out.
- 12.9 A base runner is awarded the base to which they are running when a fielder, not in possession of the ball and not fielding a batted ball, obstructs a base runner.
- 12.10 A batter can stand to the side of the Strike Zone Mat and adjust their position according to the pitch if their back foot remains behind the front edge of the Strike Zone Mat. They cannot move their back foot beyond the front of the mat to hit the ball. If a player does this, the fielding team has the option of taking the result of the play or cancelling the result of the play and having the batter bat again with the same balls and strikes they had before the pitch.

13 Force plays

- 13.1 A force play occurs when there is a runner on a preceding base that is forced to run when the ball is hit by a batter. For example, at the start of the game the bases are loaded so there is a force play to each base including strike zone mat. A force out can be made to any of the bases.
- 13.2 A force plays happen to 2nd when there is a runner on 1st. A force out can be made at 2nd or 1st on the play but NOT 3rd or the strike zone mat. If there is a runner on first base and the ball is hit on the ground, the runner is forced to run to second as the batter will soon occupy first base. You cannot have two base runners on the same base at once.
- 13.3 A force plays happen to 3rd base when there is runners on 1st and 2nd base, a force out can be made at 1st, 2nd or 3rd on the play but NOT the strike zone

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mat.

- 13.4 Only one runner can be on any one base at the one time. If a runner is blocked by a runner stopping on the base ahead of them, they can return to the base they came from, even if they passed the half way line.
- 13.5 A runner returning to the base can be 'out' if the fielder touches the base they are heading to before the runner gets their, and while in control of the ball.

14 Ending the game

- 14.1 A game is finished when either:
 - 14.1.1 Time runs out
 - 14.1.2 Both teams have completed three full innings
 - 14.1.3 Time is running out and the team who batted second is already ahead before they come in for their last batting innings.
 - 14.1.4 The umpire calls "TIME and GAME"