

**SPECIAL OLYMPICS GEORGIA
SOFTBALL RULES AND REGULATIONS**

NOTE: All attached Rules and Regulations will be adhered to for all Tournaments, Invitationals, etc. that use the Special Olympics name.

Special Olympics Georgia Softball Rules are based on USA Softball Slow Pitch Rules and modifications from the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules book (2024 Revised Edition).

This is only a synopsis of the Rules and the Coach should refer to the ASA Rules Book and the Special Olympics Rules book for complete information. For Unified Team Play, refer to the section attached labeled "Unified Teams, Softball Rules and Regulations".

TEAM NUMBERS: Traditional = 12 players per team, Modified = 12 players per team, Unified = 14 players per team (7 Athletes / 7 Partners). NOTE: There are NO Unified Modified teams.

RULE 1, DEFINITIONS:

BATTER'S BOX – The lines are considered as being within the batter's box. Prior to the pitch, the batter may touch the lines, but no part of his / her foot may be outside the lines.

FOUL TIP – A foul tip is a batted ball, which goes directly from the bat, not higher than the batter's head, to the catcher's hand(s) or glove and is legally caught by the catcher. NOTE: It is not an out unless the ball goes higher than the batter's head.

HELMET – The helmet must have **double earflaps and a chinstrap**, which is approved by the National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment (NOCSAE).

ILLEGALLY BATTED BALL – An illegally batted ball occurs when:

1. A batter's entire foot is completely outside the lines of the batter's box and on the ground.
2. Any part of the batter's foot is touching home plate when the batter hits the ball.
3. The batter hits the ball with an illegal or altered bat.

STRIKE ZONE – The strike zone is that space over any part of home plate between the batter's back shoulder and his front knee when he assumes a natural batting stance.

BLOOD RULE – Any area exposed with blood must be handled / covered as stipulated in the USA rules. This will be enforced.

INFIELD FLY – Refer to USA Rules book for the definition of the Infield Fly.

PROTESTS – Refer to USA Rules book for clarification of protests. ***(Must be filed within 15 minutes upon completion of the game.)***

RULE 2, THE PLAYING FIELD

BASES – 65' (19.81 meters) {the double base will be used on first base}

The Double base on first base measures 15" x 30" and is made of canvas or other suitable material. Half the base is white (over fair territory) and half is orange (over foul territory). The rules concerning the double base can be found in the ASA Rules book, and will be enforced.

The 2nd Home Plate and 20' Commit Line will be used in Modified, Traditional and Unified Team Competition.

PITCHING –

Junior Traditional and Junior Unified **(40' – 55')**

Senior Traditional and Senior Unified **(40' - 55')** – *(An exception may be made for 1st year Senior Traditional Teams just moving up from Modified Softball Team Play)*

Masters Traditional and Masters Unified **(40' - 55')**

Modified (50')

RULE 3, EQUIPMENT

BAT – Only bats marked by the manufacturer as “Official Softball” *and bear either the 2000 Certification Mark or the 2004 Certification Mark and must not be listed on the USA Non-Approved Bat List* may be used (USA Rules – Rule 3, Section 1)

SOFTBALLS – A 30cm (11 $\frac{3}{4}$ ”) red-stitch restricted softball with core .44 optic must be used. **Modified Teams will use a 12” Synthetic Cover, Soft Training Softball for competition.**

GLOVES – A first baseman’s trapping-type mitt may be worn by first basemen and catchers only. A glove is required for all players.

SHOES – Athletic shoes or rubber-cleated shoes are required. No metal spikes or hard plastic or polyurethane spike shoes are allowed. Hard sole street shoes are not allowed.

CATCHERS – All catchers must wear a facemask and batter’s helmet with double earflaps or a catcher’s helmet. ***Chest protectors and leg protectors*** will also be required.

HELMETS – All batters (including the on deck batter) and base runners must wear a batting helmet with double earflaps ***and a chinstrap***. (SOGA modification of rule)

UNIFORMS – Team members shall wear shirts of like color. A number approximately 6” in height (of a contrasting color) must be worn on the back of all uniform shirts. No two (2) players on the team may have identical numbers. **Shirts with numbers must also be worn for divisioning.** Plastic sun visors are not permitted during play. ***Coaches must be neatly attired and dressed alike in team uniform and in accordance with the color code of the team. (Closed toed shoes must be worn by coaches! No flip flops or sandals are to be worn!) NO JEANS WILL BE ALLOWED FOR ANY ATHLETE OR UNIFIED PARTNER FOR DIVISIONING OR COMPETITION.***

JEWELRY – Exposed jewelry, which is judged by the umpire to be dangerous, must be removed and may not be worn during the game with the exception of flat, unjeweled wedding bands.

MEDICAL ALERT JEWELRY – Medical alert bracelets or necklaces are not considered jewelry. If worn, they must be taped to the body so as to remain visible.

RULE 4, PLAYERS AND SUBSTITUTES

A team should field ten (10) players to start a game. The short-handed rule (USA) may be used in continuing a game. Refer to the USA Rules book for a complete explanation of the short-handed rule.

If you start the game with 9 players an out will be taken when the 10th position in the lineup comes up for bat.

When absolutely necessary, a courtesy runner will be allowed once per inning for a player with a physical disability or other medical condition without retiring that player from the game if the umpire and opposing coach are notified before each game. This information must also be noted on the scorebook prior to the game. The courtesy runner may be any eligible player on the official line up including available substitutes. The courtesy runner must be entered prior to the first pitch to the next batter. The batter must get to first base by him / her self before a runner can be put in. The courtesy runner may be substituted after the batter has arrived on first base and the play is dead.

EXTRA PLAYER (EP) – An extra player (EP) is optional, but if one is used, it must be made known prior to the start of the game and be listed on the scoring sheet in the regular batting order. If the EP is used, he must be used the entire game. Failure to complete the game with 11 batters as a result of an ejected player, results in a forfeiture of the game unless the short-handed rule is used (See USA Rules).

The EP must remain in the same position in the batting order for the entire game. If an EP is used, all 11 must bat and any 10 may play defense. Defensive positions may be changed, but the batting order must remain the same. The EP may be substituted at any time. The substitute must be a player who has not yet been in the game. The starting EP may re-enter.

RE-ENTRY – Any of the starting players may be withdrawn and re-entered once, provided players occupy the same batting positions whenever they are in the line-up. The starting player and the substitute(s) may not be in the line-up at the same time. (See USA Rules)

Every player listed on the Team Roster for the Tournament MUST play one complete inning per game, consisting of one at bat and in the field.

BATTING OPTIONS – Teams may choose to bat all 12 players on the roster. Teams choosing this option are allowed free substitutions in the field each inning. This must be decided at the beginning of the game and shall hold true throughout the game. If a player is unable to bat due to sickness or injury, when said player comes up in the batting line up, it will constitute as an out.

RULE 5, THE GAME

A regulation game shall consist of 7 innings or one hour. The game will be considered complete if after 5 full innings of play one team leads the other by 12 runs or more, after 4 innings if ahead by 15 runs, or after 3 innings if ahead by 20 runs. **NO OTHER RUN RULES WILL BE ADHERED TO.** Teams should be sure to turn in accurate scores for divisioning.

Time limit on games: NO new inning will start after 1 hour play. If game is tied after 1 hour of play, the International Tie Breaker Rule will be applied in order to end the game.

RULE 6, PITCHING REGULATIONS (SLOW PITCH)

The pitcher shall have one or both feet in contact with the pitcher's rubber. The pitcher's pivot foot must be in contact with the pitcher's rubber until the pitched ball leaves the hand.

A legal delivery shall be a ball which is delivered to the batter with an underhanded motion. The pitch shall be released at a moderate speed. The ball must be delivered with perceptible arc and reach a height of at least 6' from the ground while not exceeding a maximum height of 12' from the ground.

WARM-UP PITCHES – At the beginning of each half inning, or when a pitcher relieves another, not more than one minute may be used to deliver not more than three (3) warm-up pitches. Play shall be suspended for this time. For excessive warm-up pitches, a pitcher shall be penalized by awarding a ball to the batter for each pitch.

RULE 7, BATTING

The on-deck batter shall take a position within the lines of the on-deck circle nearest his / her bench.

The batter must have both feet completely within the lines of the batter's box prior to the start of the pitch. He / she may touch the lines, but no part of a foot may be outside the lines prior to the pitch. The umpire should hold up the pitch until the batter is within the lines.

A foul tip is an out if it is the third strike.

The batter is out when an entire foot touching the ground completely outside the lines of the batter's box when he / she hits a ball, foul or fair.

The batter is out when any part of a foot is touching home plate when he / she hits a ball, foul or fair.

The batter is out if he / she bunts or chops the ball.

Four balls constitute a walk and three strikes constitute an out. If the batter has two strikes and fouls off the third pitch, he / she shall be declared out.

RULE 8, BATTER – RUNNER AND RUNNER

The batter becomes a batter-runner as soon as he / she hits a fair ball.

If the pitcher desires to walk a batter intentionally, he / she may do so by notifying the plate umpire who shall award the batter first base.

Bases left too soon on a caught fly ball must be retouched prior to advancing.

Base stealing is NOT allowed.

The batter – runner is out when he / she hits an infield fly, as declared by the umpire, with runners on first and second or on first, second, and third with fewer than two outs. This is called the INFIELD FLY RULE.

If a coach touches a runner while the ball is still in play, the runner will be declared out. Coaches are required to stay within the boundaries of the Coaches' box.

RULE 9, PROTESTS

Refer to USA Rules

Protests may be submitted up to 15 minutes following the game. The rules committee will decide the outcome of the protest.

RULE 10, UMPIRES

The Umpires are empowered to make all decisions on the playing field. A protest may be made only if it questions the applicability of the rules. No protest will be considered which pertains to any judgment call made by an umpire.

In the case of a protest, the team coach of the protesting team shall immediately notify the plate umpire that the game is being played under protest. The plate umpire shall in turn notify the opposing coach, official scorekeeper, and SOGA Rules Committee member(s).

The official written protest must be filed with the SOGA Rules Committee within 15 minutes of the conclusion of the game. The decision rendered on a protested game must result in one of the following:

1. Protest is considered to be invalid and the game score stands as played.
2. When a protest is determined to be valid because of the misinterpretation of a playing rule, the decision will be corrected and the game shall be replayed from the point at which the incorrect decision was made.
3. When a protest for ineligibility is determined to be valid, the offending team shall forfeit the game being played or the game last played to the offended team. The team forfeiting the game will receive participation ribbons.

30 minutes before each game, the umpires and team representatives will flip for home position. The coach should report to the main building 30 minutes before game time.

Revised 6/24/2025