

-- HUNTSVILLE ROCKETS 2024 PLAYING RULES --

1. USA Softball (Amateur Softball Association) Playing Rules will be followed except for the following exceptions, modifications and clarifications.
2. Courtesy Runner Rule:
 - a. The purpose of this rule is to:
 - i. Allow a player who is injured, and prefers not to risk further injury, to participate in the game
 - ii. Prevent further injury to a player that was injured during a game
 - b. The Team Manager (or designee in the event of manager's absence) must request time out from the umpires and initiate the request for a courtesy runner.
 - c. As selected by the Team Manager (or designee in the event of manager's absence), any team player may be used as a courtesy runner.
 - d. A player can only be used one (1) time per inning as a courtesy runner.
 - e. If a courtesy runner's turn to bat occurs while he/she is on base, he/she shall be removed from the base, ruled out, and will take his/her turn at bat.
 - f. Prior to the start of the game, the Team Manager (or designee in the event the manager's absence) must inform the opposing Team Manager and the home plate umpire of player(s) with a known injury, which will require a courtesy runner. The injured player must still reach base safely before the courtesy runner can replace him/her.
 - g. After a walk, the injured batter/runner may proceed directly to the dugout without touching first base, and the designated courtesy runner shall go immediately to first base.
 - h. A courtesy runner is in the game when announced by the umpire.
 - i. **Note: The courtesy runner rule is not intended to allow a team to substitute a slower runner with a faster runner for competitive advantage. A courtesy runner may only be used for an injured runner.**
3. Metal or hard plastic spikes similar to metal spikes are not permitted.
4. Only Team Managers may dispute a call with an umpire and disputed calls should be confined to possible misinterpretation of a rule. A judgment call cannot be contested by anyone. It is expected for all players to exhibit courtesy, brevity and common sense when

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voicing disagreement with umpires. After warning the Team Manager, the umpire may eject the offending player after the next complaint.

5. Runners shall be called out for contact with a defensive player if, in the judgment of the umpire, the contact was deliberate or the runner could reasonably have been expected to minimize or avoid contact under the circumstances and failed to do so. If the contact is determined to be flagrant, the offender shall be ejected from the game. When advancing, the runner must veer in or out, to avoid the defensive player if a play has already been made at that base. The runner shall be called out and in the case of a follow-on force play the preceding runner will also be called out. The defensive player must stand clear of the base or the runner's base path when no play is imminent. If the defensive player impedes the progress of the runner, the runner may be awarded the follow-on base.
6. Obstruction shall be called when a defensive player makes contact with a runner if, in the judgment of the umpire, the contact was deliberate or the defensive player could reasonably have been expected to minimize or avoid contact under the circumstances and failed to do so. If the contact is determined to be flagrant, the offender shall be ejected from the game.
7. A defensive player may retire the runner trying to score from third base by having possession of the ball while touching any part of the black strike mat before the runner touches the scoring plate. The runner shall be called out if he touches home plate. There are no tag plays of any kind at home plate except in a rundown between the commitment line and third base.
8. League games will be scheduled for seven innings in length. The first game will start at 6:00 PM. Games will start when both teams have ten players on hand, or when both Team Managers agree to start shorthanded. If a team is not ready to play by fifteen (15) minutes after 6:00 PM, the other team wins by forfeit. The starting time for the second game is 7:30 PM., or immediately after the conclusion of the first game if both teams have ten players on hand. The same fifteen (15) minute grace period is available to each team before forfeit. The fifteen (15) minute grace period for the second game starts at 7:30 PM and ends at 7:45 PM or at the conclusion of the 6:00 PM game, whichever is later. Note: Allowances will be made in the grace period of the 7:30 PM game to accommodate the arrival of players who umpired in the 6:00 PM game on the other field.
9. Teams may score up to 5 runs per inning with unlimited home runs, with the following exceptions:
 - a. Teams are limited to three (3) home runs per team per game during the run-limited innings (see rule 9b). After the limit, any home run hit will be scored an out, and base runners cannot advance. In the seventh inning and any extra innings, rule 9c applies.
 - b. Run limits will not be in effect in the seventh inning and any extra innings.

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- c. Teams are limited to one (1) home run per team per game during the combined period that includes the seventh inning and any extra innings. After the limit, any home run hit will be scored an out, and baserunners cannot advance.
 - d. The player hitting an allowed home run may "Hit and Sit" and does not have to touch first base and base runners may go directly to the dugout and do not have to touch the next base. A ball that strikes an electric wire in fair territory over the outfield is a home run.
10. Unlimited substitution is permitted at any time. If a player has already been in the game and returns for a second time, he must bat in the same batting order position as he was in previously. Each team shall place all players present in the batting lineup for the entire game. With the exception of an injury forcing a player to be removed from the game, late arrival by a player to a game already in progress, or the game being called due to inclement weather after the completion of 5 innings but prior to completion of 7 innings, each team may sit out players 3 innings on defense per game. Failure to meet this requirement shall result in the game being declared a forfeit. Team Managers themselves are exempt from the minimum innings in the field requirement; and Team Managers, involved players, and game umpires may agree to other exceptions.
11. Only ASA/USA approved .44 COR, 375 compression softballs will be used.
12. The use of an altered, non-approved by USA/ ASA, or otherwise illegal bat is an appeal play. Any player on the defensive team's roster may appeal. A bat must be appealed before a pitch is thrown to the next batter. A bat must be appealed the first time it is used in a game. When an appeal is made, the plate umpire will call a dead ball time out. If the bat is determined by the plate umpire to be altered, non-approved by ASA, or otherwise illegal the batter using the bat is declared out. The bat will be removed from the playing field. All base runners will occupy the base they held before the batter entered the batter's box.
13. A runner advancing to home base, whose foot touches the ground on or past the commitment line (a line marked perpendicular to the foul line 20 feet from home plate), must continue towards the scoring plate and cannot re-cross the line in the direction of third base. Violation will result in the runner being called out.
14. Substitutions: If a team cannot field enough players to have a minimum of nine (9) to begin a game, the Team Manager will select players in one of the following ways:
- a. The opposing Team Manager may select players from his team to bring the short team to ten (10) if he has sufficient numbers. These players may be exchanged by the opposing Team Manager in the course of the game.

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- b. The Team Manager (with the approval of the opposing Team Manager) may select registered players from the other teams in the league. A **Group 1** player can only substitute for a **Group 1** player or a **Group 1 alternate** player (see League Rule 18d), a **Group 2** player can substitute for a **Group 1** or **2** player, a **Group 3** player can substitute for a **Group 1, 2 or 3** player and a **Group 4/5** player can substitute for any skill level player. If a **Group 4/5** player is not available the short Team Manager with the approval of the opposing Team Manager may use a **Group 3** player in place of a **Group 4/5** player.
- c. The short team will not be allowed to have the opposing team supply a catcher. The short team must start the game with 9 players, but will be allowed to pick up a substitute player during the game using criteria in paragraph b.
- d. The opposing team may supply a catcher when the short team has 8 or less players to start a game. The short team must pick up a substitute player when available using criteria in paragraph b.
- e. If a player leaves the game for any reason other than ejection the Team Manager may replace the player with another player on the team roster or select a pick-up player using the criteria in paragraph b. If the Team Manager chooses not to replace the player leaving the game the team may continue with one less player. The team may not use a pickup player if the player is ejected from the game and an out shall be declared for each turn at bat. (see rule #23 in the Rockets League Rules).
- f. Players asked to be substitutes are under no obligation to do so, but are strongly urged to participate. Teams are required to have at least six regular team members (no more than four substitutes) or forfeit.
- g. Should a player arrive on the field after the game has begun and a pickup player was selected for him, he may not enter the game until the pickup player has completed one turn at bat. The late-arriving player will be inserted in the lineup where his pickup player batted.
- h. Substitutes can play anywhere in the field and will bat in the last positions in the lineup.
- i. Before the HR limit is reached, any over the fence home run hit by a substitute player will be a walk. After the limit, any over the fence home run hit by a substitute player will be an out and base runners cannot advance.

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15. A strike mat will be used to call balls and strikes and by the catcher for plays at home. The mat will measure twenty-one (21) inches wide and thirty-five (35) inches long. Any third strike will constitute an out.
16. Batters will start with a 1 ball/1 strike count with one courtesy foul ball after two strikes.
17. Either field umpire can call the infield fly rule.
18. Pitching:
 - a. Pitching arc will be a minimum of six (6) feet and maximum of twelve (12) feet from the ground.
 - b. Pitcher may pitch up to six (6) feet behind the pitching rubber and must keep one foot within the width of the pitching rubber.
 - c. The league highly recommends a protective mask or a pitching screen be used. If a pitcher uses the pitching screen and the opposing pitcher chooses to wear a face mask, the screen will be carried on and off the field, between innings, by the pitcher using the screen.
 - d. If a pitching screen is used:
 - i. The placement of the pitching screen must cover at least half the pitching rubber "left to right" or "right to left" and can be no more than three (3) feet in front of the pitching rubber
 - ii. For the safety of the pitcher, he/she should be completely behind the pitching screen after the pitch.
 - iii. Any batted ball hitting the pitching screen will be a foul ball.
 - iv. Any thrown ball from the infield or outfield that hits the pitching screen is a live ball.
 - v. The pitcher cannot stand directly behind the pitching screen and pitch over it. The batter must be able to see the pitched ball without the pitching screen being in the way.
19. Flip-Flop: A Flip-Flop rule shall be used in the event that the home team is trailing by ten (10) or more runs at the conclusion of the sixth inning. The home team will remain at bat and become the visiting team. If that team (new visiting team) does not score enough runs to tie or take the lead, the game is over. If they tie or take the lead, then the new home team will bat to complete the game.

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20. Slow Runner Rule: Outfielders are not allowed to throw the ball directly to first base to force out the batter running to first base. Infielders are always allowed to throw directly to first base for the force out even if the infielder throws from the outfield grass.

21. Intentional walks are not allowed during the run limited innings. Intentional walks are allowed during the seventh inning and any extra innings.