



Softball – Sport Rules Modifications, Interpretations, and Points of Emphasis

The Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Softball dated June 2016 will be in effect for the 2017-2018 SONC program year. This document is intended to be used in conjunction with the American Softball Association rules and SOI Rules; therefore, those rules are not repeated here but they will be enforced unless in direct conflict to SONC modifications.

Appropriate Attire and Equipment¹

Individual Skills

- The appropriate uniform for athletes competing in individual skills includes long or short softball/baseball pants, athletic style shorts, solid color t-shirt, or baseball/softball jersey. Each delegation must provide their own helmets that athletes must wear while competing in base running and hitting.² Shoes must be worn and can either have smooth sole or have soft or hard rubber cleats.
- Please bring mitts, bats (marked as “official softball”), and helmets to Summer Games for use in competition.
- Jewelry: No jewelry may be worn. Medical alert bracelets are not considered jewelry, but if worn, must be taped to the body.

Team Competition

- General: All protective equipment should be worn properly. If a player is requested by the umpire to remove jewelry, illegal shoes or an illegal part of the uniform, and they refuse, the player will not be allowed to play. Teams that do not adhere to the uniform standards are subject to disqualification or like penalty. Full team uniforms that adhere to the uniform standards must be worn at qualifiers and for state-level competition.
- Headwear: All batters and base runners must wear batting helmets with chin straps. Each team should have a minimum of five chin straps. Caps or visors are optional for players, but if worn, must be alike in style and color and worn properly. Handkerchiefs, do-rags, and bandanas do not qualify as headbands or caps and may not be worn.
- Pants/Sliding Pants: All players’ pants may be long, short or mixed in style, as long as they are alike in color.
- Numbers: An Arabic whole number (0-99) of contrasting color from the jersey, at least six inches high, must be worn and visible on the back of all uniform shirts. No players on the same team may wear identical numbers (0 and 00 are the same number).
- Shoes: Shoes must be worn by all players and coaches and shall be considered official if made of canvas or leather uppers.
- Jewelry: No jewelry may be worn. Medical alert bracelets are not considered jewelry, but if worn, must be taped to the body.
- Coaches should dress in a similar manner to players (i.e. shirt and shorts) and **wear closed-toed shoes**.
- Each team must provide own batting helmets,³ catcher equipment,⁴ protective cup (if applicable), softball bats marked by the manufacturer as “official softball,” gloves,⁵ and own softballs⁶ for team use.
- Safety bases (double base) will be used for team competition in the form of an extra base at Summer Games.⁷ Players should become familiar with a safety base during practices.
- Only a scoring home plate will be used for SONC softball competitions.⁸

¹ Please refer to the SOI rules for a complete listing of appropriate attire and equipment.

² SONC change from requiring helmets during all competition to just running and batting.

³ Batting helmets must have chin straps and must be worn by batters and base runners.

⁴ Catcher mask/helmet (throat protector is optional), chest protector, shin guards.

⁵ Modification of Section 3.4.4. A first baseman’s trapping mitt may be worn by any player.

⁶ 12 inch .44 core red stitched softball with 375 compression – SOI Rule 3.3.7

⁷ See SOI Section 5.5.1 for full explanation of safety (double) base

⁸ Modification of Section 5.6.1

Competition Interpretations and Modifications

Slow Pitch Team Competition

- Team quota slots for Summer Games will be allocated on a random-draw basis. This means that a local program may not be represented in that team sport (i.e. Jones County may not get their one team slot because Wake County had two team slots randomly drawn instead). This is done to ensure that all teams no matter from what size program they come will have an opportunity to be selected.
- All players must participate in the divisioning round at Summer Games in order to be eligible for play Saturday and Sunday.
- On Friday at Summer Games, both games will be played in traditional shortened game format.
- For all games, all substitutes are to play by completion of the same game. If a player does not play by the end of a game, the team shall forfeit that game.
- Minimum roster size to register a team for Summer Games is 12 players; the maximum is 15.⁹
- A regulation game consists of seven innings. The game shall last no longer than 60 minutes, and no new innings will start after 55 minutes of play.¹⁰
- Run rule: During the first three (3) innings of play, teams will be limited to seven (7) runs or three (3) outs per inning. All innings left remaining within the time limit will be played as traditional ASA games. This applies for all games EXCEPT championship game determining gold medal.
- Mercy Rule: When one team leads the other by 15 or more runs after three (3) innings, or 10 or more runs after four (4) innings the game will be considered complete.¹¹
- If there is a tie game at the end of regulation time during preliminary round/pool play, the softball sport development team and competition management team will look at head-to-head games and total score. If a tie still exists, there will be a coin toss to determine the winner.¹²
- All games determining final placement (Sunday games at Summer Games) of a team will have be limited to six (6) innings or 90 minutes (1 ½ hours; no new innings after 85 minutes), however the mercy rule **does** apply in these games.¹³ All ties will be played out regardless in of innings and/or time in accordance with SOI tie breaker rules. At the beginning of the 8th inning and each inning following until a score is recorded, each team will place the last out of the previous inning as a baserunner on second base.¹⁴
- The distance from home plate to the pitcher's rubber shall be 46' for all divisions unless otherwise changed to 40' for teams determined to be within a lead-up division by Competition Managers, SONC staff, and/or umpires.¹⁵ Base paths for determined lead-up divisions will be set at 60'. All other divisions will play on fields with base paths set at 65'.
- Intentional removal of the batting helmet by a base runner will be an automatic out.
- Any person intentionally slinging a bat will be subject to the following penalties: Warnings are issued before the games by the official; first offense thereafter – out for the play; second offense – removed from the game.¹⁶
- To facilitate the flow of the game, when there are two outs and the catcher bats and he/she successfully reaches first base, the last player called out will replace him/her as the base runner.
- Teams will be allowed to intentionally walk any player one (1) time per game. After a player is intentionally walked, the opposing team must make a valid attempt to pitch to that player for the remainder of the game. If the team does not make a valid attempt to pitch to the player, the player will be awarded second base. The batting team may also choose for the next player to be awarded first base.¹⁷

⁹ SONC Modification of Section

¹⁰ Modification of Section 8.10.1

¹¹ SONC modification of Section 8.5.1

¹² Tiebreaker rules apply in order to determine seeding for final round; do not apply to championship games.

¹³ Modification of Section 8.10.1

¹⁴ See SOI Section 8.6 for full explanation of tie breakers

¹⁵ Modification of Section 9.1.2

¹⁶ Emphasis on Section 14.8 that a slung bat is an example of unsportsmanlike conduct and penalties of such behavior.

¹⁷ Modification of Section 9.8.1

- SONC does not allow “courtesy runners,” even for medical reasons. Teams will need to follow the ASA substitution rules to substitute a runner.¹⁸
- Teams that do not play all players by the end of the game will forfeit those games.
- Only the **SONC certified softball coach** will be allowed to appeal a play or file a protest on which the umpire has not made a call.¹⁹ This must be done before the ball is again put into play (i.e. before the next pitch).
- Coaches will be held responsible for the conduct of their players. Any player or coach showing unsportsmanlike conduct will be ejected from the game and must leave the field of play within one minute or the umpire will have the authority to forfeit the game.
- Only persons connected with the team are allowed in the dugout. This includes three coaches and one scorekeeper. For the safety of the players and spectators, no other personnel are allowed in the dugout or on the field at any time.
- There will be no infield practice or hitting on the infield prior to a game.
- There will be no smoking, chewing tobacco, or electronic cigarettes on the playing field or in the team dugout.

Tee-ball Team Competition (Locally Popular Sport)

- Local programs are encouraged to start a team, and should contact Lauren Saulter at lsaulter@sonc.net for more information.
- Tee ball competition will follow all slow pitch rules and regulations, with the exception of the following rules that are only specific to Tee-ball.
 - A regulation game consists of six innings, however will not last longer than 60 minutes with no new innings beginning after 55 minutes.²⁰
 - Any ball that is not hit beyond the neutral zone 45’ from home plate will be ruled a foul ball.²¹
 - A defensive coach will be located on the field of play, directly behind second base in a designated circle.²²

Individual Skills Competition

- Individual Skills Competition is competition designed for lower ability athletes. It is not for athletes who can already play the game.
- Athletes will be grouped in initial divisions based upon entry scores submitted with Summer Games registration. All athletes will go through a preliminary round of competition to ensure proper divisioning.
- At Summer Games, the athlete’s final score is determined by adding together the scores achieved in each of the four events in the final round.
- For the base running competition, base paths will be set at 60 feet.²³ Please train accordingly.
- Athletes will have **five total attempts** during the fielding competition. Please train accordingly.
- Coaches are not allowed on the field of play during competition, which includes the dugouts and field within the fence.
- Please bring mitts, bats, and helmets to Summer Games for use in competition.
- Individual Skills Competition will take place over two days at Summer Games. The schedule will consist of a preliminary round on Saturday, followed by final round competition on Sunday.

Special Notices

- Team rosters must be consistent from the screening rounds to final rounds at the state-level competition.
- The registration form includes spaces for individual ratings based on the [individual assessment form](#). A **completed** form is required for state level competition registration
- Additional competition opportunities are being researched for Unified Sports. This is being done in anticipation of potentially removing all Unified competition from state-level events starting in the 2018-2019 program year.

¹⁸ Modification of Section 14.7

¹⁹ Modification of the SONC protest procedure where this must be done within thirty minutes of the offense – SOI Rule 16.2.2.1

²⁰ See SOI rule Section 7.1.4

²¹ See SOI rule Section 7.2.4

²² See SOIT rule Section 7.2.5

²³ SONC modification of Section 6.1.5.1.3