



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

The Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Softball dated October 2022 will be in effect for the 2023-2024 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.

Individual Skills Competition

Appropriate Attire and Equipment

- For proper placement/size/color of SONC and local program logos on uniforms and equipment worn and used by athletes and coaches, please refer to the SONC Uniform and Logo Guidelines document.
- The appropriate uniform and equipment for athletes competing in individual skills includes:
 - Long or short softball/baseball pants or athletic type shorts (no pockets),
 - Solid color t-shirt or local program jersey,
 - Smooth sole shoes (like tennis shoes), or cleats (soft or hard rubber), and
 - Helmet with chin strap, mitt, and bat (should be marked as “official softball”).
- Athletes that are not outfitted with all the proper attire for individual skills will be disqualified from competition.

Competition Interpretations and Modifications

- Base Running: The athlete’s fastest time or best score (i.e. lowest time) is **rounded down** to the nearest second then subtracted from 60 to get the final score. The lowest possible score is 0.¹

Slow Pitch Team Competition

Appropriate Attire and Equipment

- For proper placement/size/color of SONC and local program logos on uniforms and equipment worn and used by athletes and coaches, please refer to the SONC Uniform and Logo Guidelines document.
- For rules regarding uniforms (including but not limited to shirts, pants, number, and caps/visors), please refer to SOI Section 4.
- Helmets must have a chin strap fastened. (SONC modification of SOI Softball Rule 3.6.7)
- For rules regarding shoes/cleats, please refer to SOI Section 3.5.
- Protective equipment and all other game equipment and clothing should be worn and used 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 penalty.
- Coaches should dress in a similar manner to players (i.e. shirt and shorts) and **wear closed-toed shoes.**²
- Teams are responsible for all defensive and offensive equipment to be used by their team. Please refer to SOI Section 3 for specific requirements.

Competition Interpretations and Modifications

- A safety base at first base (double base) will be used for team competition.³ Players should become familiar with a safety base during practices.
- A double home plate must be offered for all SONC softball competitions.⁴
- 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 state-level competition is 12 players; the maximum is 15.⁵

¹ SONC interpretation of Section 6.1.5.1.4; emphasis added to “rounded down.”

² SONC interpretation of SOI Section 14.1

³ See SOI Section 5.5.1 for full explanation of safety (double) base

⁴ Modification of Section 5.6.1

⁵ SONC Modification of Section 14

- 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.⁶
- 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 games determining gold medal and games with a shortened time format. In the case of a shortened time format, the run rule will be limited to four (4) runs or three (3) outs per inning.
- Run Ahead 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.⁷
- 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.⁸
- All games determining final placement at the state-level event 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.⁹ All ties will be played out regardless 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.¹⁰
- 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.¹¹ 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’.
- 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.¹²
- 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.¹³
- SONC **does not** allow “courtesy runners,” even for medical reasons. Teams will need to follow the ASA substitution rules to substitute a runner.¹⁴
- 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.¹⁵
- 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.
- 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.
- Please refer to Section 14.10 for rules regarding dugout personnel and protocol.

Tee-ball Team Competition (Locally Popular Sport)

- Local programs are encouraged to start a team and should contact the sports department at sports@sonc.net for more information.
- Refer to SOI rule section 7.1.4 for competition rules.

⁶ Modification of Section 8.10.1

⁷ SONC modification of Section 8.5.1

⁸ Tiebreaker rules apply in order to determine seeding for final round; do not apply to championship games.

⁹ Modification of Section 8.10.1

¹⁰ See SOI Section 8.6 for full explanation of tie breakers

¹¹ Modification of Section 9.1.2

¹² Emphasis on Section 14.8 that a slung bat is an example of unsportsmanlike conduct and penalties of such behavior.

¹³ Modification of Section 11.1.2.2

¹⁴ Modification of Section 11.11

¹⁵ Modification of the SONC protest procedure where this must be done within thirty minutes of the offense – SOI Rule 16.2.2.1

- Refer to SOI rule sections 7.2.4, 7.2.5 for additional rules.

SONC Fall Tournament Reminders

Individual Skills Competition

- Refer to SOI rule 6.1 for individual skills competition rules.
- Individual Skills Competition preliminary and final rounds will take place on one day of the state-level competition.
- For the base running competition, base paths will be set at 65 feet. Please train accordingly.
- Athletes will have five total attempts during the fielding competition. Please train accordingly.
- Please bring mitts, bats and helmets to all competitions for use in competition.

Slow Pitch Team Competition

- Team rosters must be consistent from the preliminary round to final round 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.