

NTBSS RULES 2025-2026

STATEMENT

Senior Softball USA (SSUSA) Rules are in effect for any situation NTBSS rules does not address. We abide by the rules and regulations of Pasco County Parks, Recreation, and Natural Resources.

SECTION 1 • DEFINITIONS

NTBSS Board Also known as The Board

An elected group of NTBSS members to lead the organization and make decisions on behalf of its members. The Board consists of a Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, Secretary, Treasurer, and Committee Coordinator.

PLAYERS COMMITTEE

After the initial draft, a committee composed of a representative from each team, will be formed. A chairman and secretary will be elected. The tenure of this committee will be through the current playing season. The role of the players' committee is to receive comments during the course of the season from the general membership and make recommendations to the Board.

Open Inning: An inning in which there is no limit to the number of runs allowed per inning.

Substitute players by the card method: An available method used to pick substitute players at game time for teams with 8-10 rostered players present.

SSUSA 1.1 • APPEAL PLAY

An appeal play is a play in which an umpire may not make a decision until requested by a manager or assistant manager. The appeal must be made before the next pitch, before an intentional walk or before the pitcher and all infielders have clearly vacated their normal fielding positions and have left fair territory on their way to the bench or dugout area. On the last play of the game, an appeal can be made until the umpires leave the field of play.

A. Types of appeal plays:

1. Missing a base.

2. Leaving a base early on a caught fly ball before the ball is first touched.
3. Batting out of order.
4. Attempting to advance to second base after making a turn at first base (umpire's judgment).
5. After the third out in order to nullify a run.
6. Illegal substitute – must be made while they are in the game and before the umpires leave the playing field

SSUSA 1.15 • COMMITMENT LINE

A minimum six (6) foot commitment line shall be marked across and perpendicular to the 3rd base foul line and placed thirty feet from home plate. **Once a runner has crossed the commitment line, the runner:**

- **cannot re-cross the line - if so, the runner will be called out**
- **cannot be tagged out by the defensive player - if so, the runner will be ruled Safe due to Obstruction**
- **the defensive player must touch the Home Plate/Strike Zone Mat in possession of the ball to record an out. The ball remains live.**

SSUSA 1.23 • FAIR TERRITORY

Fair territory is that part of the playing field within, and including, the first and third base foul lines from home plate to the bottom of the playing field fence and perpendicularly upwards. (NOTE: Any batted ball first hitting any portion of the strike mat then settling in fair territory is a fair ball. Fair territory includes the Home Plate/Strike Zone Mat.)

SSUSA 1.24 • FAKE TAG

A fake tag is a form of obstruction by a fielder who neither has the ball nor is about to receive the ball. This obstruction impedes the progress of a runner either advancing or returning to a base. The runner does not have to stop or slide. Merely slowing down when a fake tag is attempted would constitute obstruction.

SSUSA 1.37 • INTENTIONALLY DROPPED FLY BALL

If a fielder intentionally drops, or let's drop, a fair fly ball, including a line drive, that can be caught by a fielder with ordinary effort with first base only, or first base and any other base(s), with less than two outs, only one recorded out (to the batter) may be made on the play and the ball is dead. All runners return to their base at the time of the pitch to the batter. This is an umpire's judgment call.

SSUSA 1.41 • INFIELD FLY

A fair fly ball (not including a line drive) that can be caught by any fielder with ordinary effort when first and second bases or first, second and third bases are occupied with less than two outs. Any fielder can catch an infield fly.

NOTE: When it becomes apparent that a batted ball will be an infield fly, the umpire shall immediately declare, "infield fly - batter is out", to aid the runners. If the ball is near the foul lines, the umpire shall declare, "infield fly - if fair". The ball is live and runners may advance at the risk of the ball being caught, or re-touch and advance after a fielder touches the ball. If the hit ball becomes a foul ball, it is treated the same as any other foul ball. Failure of the umpire to call "infield fly," does not negate the infield fly. If the error is discovered prior to the next pitch, the infield fly rule may still be called.

SSUSA 1.45 • INTERFERENCE

Interference is the act of an offensive player or team member that impedes or confuses a defensive player attempting to execute a play. A base runner must avoid a fielder making a play.

SSUSA 1.48 • OBSTRUCTION

Obstruction is the act of:

- A. A **defensive player** or team member who hinders or prevents a batter from striking at or hitting a pitched ball.
- B. A fielder who is not in possession of the ball, in the act of fielding a batted ball, nor about to receive a thrown ball, who impedes the progress of a runner or batter-runner who is legally running bases.

PROTESTS

Only managers, assistant managers or acting managers may notify the umpire of their intent to protest. There are two types of protest:

A. **Misinterpretation of a playing rule** – must be made before the next pitch or, if on the last play of the game, before the umpires leave the playing field. If the manager or acting manager does not accept the umpire's ruling, he may protest to a Field Official.

B. **Ineligible player** – can be made any time during or after the game. **Eligibility is the decision of the Field Official.**

SECTION 3 • PLAYERS' EQUIPMENT

Metal cleats are prohibited

SECTION 4 • PLAYERS AND SUBSTITUTES

- **Minimum Age Requirements:** The player will be considered '60' or '50'(women) if the birthdate is during the current season.
 - Men 60 years of age
 - Women 50 years of age

It is the team **manager's discretion to play a minimum of nine (9) players.**

A team can play eleven (11) defensive players from its team roster.

All rostered players present must bat.

EXCEPTION see SSUSA 8.5 (1) USING COURTESY RUNNERS

The player in-the-hole, or any bench/dugout player may not enter the playing field until play has stopped. The Player in-the-Hole may be positioned at the opening of the dugout or on the dugout bench.

GAME TIME ROSTER SUBSTITUTION PROCEDURE

- **Players may sign up to be substitute players at the scorekeeper's table.** Managers will notify the scorekeeper if subs are needed.
- **The visiting coach will get the first pick of the cards.**
- **Managers may choose from cards for the numbers of subs available.** The card number matches the players listed as possible substitutes. Substitute players must wear the same color shirt as the team they're playing with.
- **A team with eight rostered players will be allowed to pick up to three players.** The first two players will be selected by the card method, however, the third player will be selected by the opposing manager from the substitution list. (EXCEPTION: When games are scheduled other than Friday, a team will be allowed only seven players and can pick up four, with the last two picks selected by the opposing manager)
- **A team with nine (9) rostered players will be allowed to pick up to two players. The first substitute player will be by the card method.** The second substitute player will be selected by the opposing manager from the substitution list.
- **A team with ten (10) rostered players, will be allowed one substitute player.** The opposing manager will select the player from the substitution list.
- **Substitute players can play: Pitcher, Catcher, First Base, or Right Field ONLY**

EJECTED PLAYER:

- **An ejected player or coach must vacate the dugout immediately.** The field official will be notified. If the Umpire deems this to be a flagrant violation, the ejected player or coach must leave the ballpark premise and must do so immediately. If the ejected player or coach fails to comply, said player's or coach's team will forfeit the game. Any ejected player discovered participating will constitute a forfeit. Any ejected player re-entering the grounds after being told to leave will constitute a forfeit.
- **If no player is available to substitute for the ejected player** in the batting lineup, an out will be recorded every time the ejected player's position comes to bat.
- **An ejection brings an automatic one game suspension to the player,** effective immediately, which includes no participation in any and all NTBSS activities during the suspension. The Board will decide if and when the player or coach will be reinstated after serving the suspension.

INJURED PLAYER

If a player is injured/ill and cannot bat, the player is classified as an out. On subsequent at bats, the player will not be counted as an out.

BLOOD RULE or SERIOUS INJURY

A player, coach or umpire who is bleeding shall be prohibited from participating further in the game until appropriate treatment can be administered. If medical care or treatment is administered in a reasonable length of time, the individual will not have to leave the game. The length of time that is considered reasonable is left to the umpire's judgment. **Game time clocks will PAUSE for treatment only as determined by Umpire.**

Uniform rule violations will not be enforced if a uniform change is required. The umpire shall:

- A. Stop the game and immediately notify a coach, trainer or other authorized person of the injured player and allow treatment.
- B. Apply the rules of the game regarding substitution, short-handed player and re-entry if necessary.

SUPPLEMENTAL DRAFT (ADDING PLAYERS AFTER INITIAL DRAFT)

- Managers must notify the Commissioner in writing requesting an additional player(s) be added to their roster due to long term injury, or no longer available (voluntary or involuntary withdrawal from NTBSS, moved away, incapacitated, or death)
- If the player that had been replaced, returns prior to the end of the season, the Board may remove the added player.
- Manager(s) will select from the players available. If more than one team needs an additional player, the team with the worse/worst record will choose first from the supplemental players available.
- The Board will determine the need for a supplemental draft based upon new player availability and request(s) of additional players by a manager(s).

SECTION 5 • THE GAME

A team will forfeit if it does not have eight rostered players at game time. A forfeit is considered a loss in the standings. (EXCEPTION: If a game is scheduled on a day other than Friday, a team may have a minimum of SEVEN rostered players at game time.

The team can play 11 players on defense from the roster but all rostered players present must bat unless injured or ill. EXCEPTION see 8.5 (1) USING COURTESY RUNNERS

Judgement calls by Umpires cannot be challenged, except for calls involving:

- Checked swings
- Catch / No Catch
- Pulled foot (off the bag)
- Swiped Tag
- ‘Sight Blocked’ - A play where the umpire’s line of sight is blocked/hindered. (umpire must request help)

SSUSA 5.4(2) • INTERNATIONAL TIE-BREAKER RULE

- Teams start each half-inning with a runner on second base. The runner is the last batter of the previous inning whose turn at bat had been completed, assuming a position on second base. No substitute or courtesy runner may replace him until the runner has reached third base. EFFECT: If the last batter of the previous inning cannot continue to play because of injury, illness, etc., that player will be declared out and the previous batter will be the tie-breaker runner.
- Extra innings will be considered as an Open Inning.

SSUSA 5.5 GAME LIMITATIONS

SSUSA 5.5(1) • FIVE-RUN LIMIT PER INNING

Teams are limited to five runs per inning, except for the final inning of the game in which each team may score an unlimited number of runs. The umpire must announce the last inning unless it is the seventh inning.

SSUSA 5.5(2) FLIP-FLOP RULE

The flip-flop rule will be invoked in any game when there is a 10 run differential in favor of the visiting team at the start of the 'open' inning. If the visiting team is ahead by ten or more runs, the home team will remain at bat and start a new at-bats (beginning their seventh or last inning at-bats), meaning all runners then on base will return to the dugout. It will be an open inning. If the home team fails to tie or go ahead of the visiting team, the game ends and the visiting team wins. If the home team ties or goes ahead, the visiting team takes its turn at bat.

SSUSA 5.5(3) MERCY RULES

If a team is ahead by 20 runs after the fourth inning, or 15 or more runs after the fifth or sixth innings, the game shall be declared a complete regulation game.

If games are timed, there will be a 70-minute time limit.

When play has stopped, the Home Plate Umpire will make both teams aware that time has expired.

If time expires at the top of an inning and there are no outs, the current inning will be played out and the game ended. Otherwise, the inning will be completed and one more full inning will be the final inning (open inning)

Any forfeited game that is played will STOP IMMEDIATELY at the 70 MIN time limit if applicable.

SSUSA 5.10 • DELAYS

- **5.10(1) – INJURY**

A time out for an injured player will be called and the **game clock stopped at the discretion of the umpire.**

If **game time temperature is below 45°**, the game(s) will be rescheduled for a later start time or canceled. The Field Official will make this determination.

If the heat index (relative humidity/temperature) reaches 104 degrees F, the Field Official shall

make the decision to play a shortened game.

- A time limit of 40 minutes shall be allotted prior to the start of the game. At the end of the 40 minutes, the teams shall finish that inning and one final/open inning.
- 4 ½ innings will be considered a completed game if the home team is ahead. If not, the game will be suspended and the Board will decide if the game will be completed at a later date.

To determine the Heat Index, the Field Official will use the standard IOS Weather App.

SSUSA 6.0 • PITCHING REGULATIONS

The pitcher's foot must be in contact with the rubber at the time of the release of the ball. The pitcher must stay behind the screen (head and torso) until the ball is hit. A warning will be issued by the Umpire for pitching screen violations. Any subsequent violation by the pitcher regarding the screen will result in that pitcher being removed for the remainder of the game but may assume another position on the field. **If the pitcher is not behind the screen when the batter makes contact with the ball and the pitcher attempts to field the ball or is struck by the batted ball, the batter is awarded first base. (deadball)**

SSUSA 6.4 BEFORE STARTING THE PITCH

The Pitcher must have the ball with the at least one foot in contact with the Pitcher's Plate (rubber) and come to a full and discernible stop for at least 1 second long prior to starting the pitching motion to release the ball.

QUICK PITCH

The pitcher shall not attempt a QUICK PITCH of the ball before the batter has taken his position or when the batter is off balance as a result of a pitch. EFFECT: The umpire will call the pitch Illegal

PENALTY FOR ILLEGAL PITCHES

- **A ball shall be called on the batter.** EXCEPTION: If a batter swings at any illegal pitch, it is nullified and the result of the play stands.

SSUSA 6.3 • THE ARC

The height of a legal pitch must be from six to 12 feet above the playing surface.

All batters start with a one ball and one strike count. (1 -1)

With a two (2) strike count, any ball delivered from the pitcher that is ...

- Legally pitched and hits the Strike Mat
- Batted into foul territory or into the Pitcher's screen
- Swung and missed by batter
- Bunted

Will be considered a 3rd Strike. The batter is ruled out. If a foul ball is caught, runners can tag up and advance.

The pitcher has ten seconds to release the next pitch after receiving the ball, or after the umpire indicates "play ball."

Umpire can call a pitched ball 'illegal' **AFTER** the ball hits the ground or the strike mat.

SECTION 7 • BATTING

Players aged seventy-five (75) and older and Women players coming to their at-bat must inform the home plate Umpire. The team manager can also advise the Umpire. The Umpire will raise his/her arm and announce Seventy-Five or female batter. **The base award is void if notification is not given prior to the pitch that the ball was hit into the outfield.**

Players aged 75 and older and Women players cannot be thrown out at first base if the batted ball lands or rolls onto the outfield grass to include the ball striking an infielder or glove and rolls onto the outfield grass

No bunting allowed.

A batted ball that strikes the pitcher's screen is a strike and a dead ball. Runners cannot advance.

A strike is ...

- A pitched ball (6' to 12' height) that touches the strike mat before hitting the ground
- A ball batted into foul territory or into the pitcher's screen
- A ball that is swung on and missed

A ball is...

- An illegal pitch (6' to 12' height) called by the umpire
- An unswung pitch that does not hit the strike mat

A foul ball must go over the batter's head to be ruled out if caught by the catcher.

A batter will be issued a Warning by the Umpire if the batter, after hitting a ball, accidentally throws the bat towards the catcher. A second occurrence from that batter will be an automatic **OUT**. (interference) The ball is dead. Runners will return to the base they were at the time of the pitch.

A batter will be automatically ejected by the Umpire if the bat is intentionally thrown.

A batter will be called Out if the batter-runner reaches first base while still carrying the bat.

A batter has 10 seconds to enter the batter's box after umpire signals 'play ball'. A strike can be called against the batter.

INCORRECT BATTER

The offensive team may correct a wrong batter at the plate without Penalty.

If the error is discovered while the incorrect batter is at bat, the correct batter may take his place and legally assume any balls and strikes.

NOTE: The offensive team may correct a wrong batter at the plate with no penalty.

See SSUSA 7.1 • BATTING ORDER for other rules regarding this topic.

SECTION 8 • ON BASE SITUATIONS

Two base runners may not occupy the same base simultaneously. EFFECT: The runner who first legally occupied the base is entitled to it. The other runner can be put out by being touched with the ball. (See §8.1 B.)

BATTER/RUNNER

If there is a play on a batter-runner going to first base, the batter-runner must touch some portion of the double bag extending into foul territory. Batter-runner will be called for failure to do so, except if, in the umpire's judgment, the batter-runner is avoiding a collision. The batter-runner simultaneously touching both portions of the double bag is permitted. This is NOT an appeal play. Important: The defending player has only the white base. Exception, to avoid collision, either the defensive player or batter-runner may touch any portion of the 1st base bag.

USING COURTESY RUNNERS

Any player on the roster and present may be a courtesy runner if listed on the official lineup, but the same courtesy runner may not be used more than once per inning.

Any courtesy runner found running more than once per inning will be called out.

A runner who is replaced with a courtesy runner may not be used as a courtesy runner for the remainder of the inning.

A courtesy runner may not be replaced by another courtesy runner except for injury causing removal of the original courtesy runner permanently from the game.

SSUSA 8.5(4) • COURTESY RUNNER COMING TO BAT WHILE ON BASE

A courtesy runner on base when it is his turn to bat will be declared out. The runner will be removed from the base and a second courtesy runner cannot be substituted. The courtesy runner called out does not lose his turn at bat.

EFFECTS:

1. The out occurs at the base the courtesy runner abandons to take his required turn at bat, unless it is the third out; and

2. The courtesy runner retired for the third out will be the first batter of the team's next half-inning at bat.

SSUSA 8.5(5) • COURTESY RUNNER OFFICIALLY IN THE GAME

A courtesy runner must report to, and be acknowledged by, the umpire before play resumes. A **courtesy runner may enter the game only prior to the first pitch to any batter**. A courtesy runner is in the game when the runner touches the base. If a courtesy runner is determined illegal, the runner will be called out upon touching the base and no other courtesy runner is allowed. The original runner may not return as the runner. An illegal courtesy runner on base is committing continuing violation and may be called out upon appeal at any time while on base or, if the runner scores, prior to the first pitch to the next batter. **Once time has been called, the runner on base does not have to wait to leave the base for the courtesy runner.**

SSUSA 2021 Rule Obstruction:

Defenders cannot block the base while waiting on a throw to make a play. To avoid an **Obstruction Call** for impeding the base runner, the fielder must have possession of the ball or be in the act of fielding a batted ball.

Every effort must be made to avoid collisions with fielders and runners when running the bases. When a force-out is obvious, **Runners must veer to the right or left when approaching second or third base to avoid contact**. The batter and the runner will be called out for failure to veer.

SUSSA 8.6 • WHEN SLIDING IS OPTIONAL - AVOIDING COLLISIONS

Sliding or diving into first base or the scoring line or scoring plate is permitted only to avoid a collision with a defensive player. This is an umpire's judgment call and is not subject to protest or appeal. A player may slide or dive into second or third bases, or when returning to any base. A runner must make every effort to avoid colliding with opposing players while running the bases or sliding or diving. If in the umpire's judgment a runner misses a base to avoid a collision, the runner will not be called out. If in the umpire's judgment the runner fails to avoid a collision with a defensive player involved in the play, the ball will be declared dead and that runner called out. All base runners except

the batter will be returned to their previous base unless forced to advance. If in the umpire's judgment the runner's collision with the defensive player involved in the play negates a double play, the umpire may award a second out.

SSUSA 8.7 • OVER-RUNNING BASES

SSUSA 8.7(1) • OVER-RUNNING SECOND AND THIRD BASES

Players are not permitted to over-run second and third base without being in jeopardy of being tagged out. A player has the option of sliding. This option is included primarily so a player can avoid a collision.

SSUSA 8.7(3) • OVER-RUNNING WHEN RETURNING TO BASE

A runner who overruns any base when returning to it is liable to be put out.

Runner is OUT if the runner crosses back over the Commitment Line.

A runner advancing to score and has passed the Commitment Line must continue to the Scoring Line.

Runner advancing to score is OUT:

- if the defender is in possession of the ball and is in contact with the Strike Mat after the runner passes the Commitment Line AND before the runner touches Scoring Line or the ground after of the Scoring Line.
- **If a runner crosses the commitment line and touches the strike mat or any portion of the 9.5 foot distance between the strike mat and the marked scoring line, the runner is out and the ball is live.**

SECTION 9 • MISCELLANEOUS

9.1 • DEAD BALL

The ball is dead and not in play:

- A. When the ball is batted illegally.
- B. When a batter steps from one box to another when the pitcher is ready to pitch.
- C. When a ball is pitched illegally.
- EXCEPTION:** If the batter swings at an illegal pitch, the play stands.
- D. When the umpire declares "No pitch."
- E. When a pitched ball touches any part of the batter's person or clothing, whether or not the ball is struck at.
- F. When a foul ball is not caught.
- G. When a base runner is called out for leaving a base early on a pitched ball.
- H. When the offensive team causes interference.
- I. When the ball is outside the playing limits of the playing field. A ball is considered "out of play" when it touches the ground, person on the ground or object outside the playing area.
- J. In case of interference with the batter or fielder.
- K. When the batter bunts or chops a pitched ball.
- L. When the umpire calls time.
- M. When the umpire calls time and an appeal play follows, the ball remains dead throughout the appeal.
- N. When any part of the batter's person is hit by his own batted ball while he is in the batter's box.
- O. When a runner runs the bases in reverse order.
- P. When a coach near third base runs in the direction of home plate on or near the baseline while the fielder is attempting to make a play, and thereby draws a throw to home plate.
- Q. When a base runner fails to keep contact with his base until the pitched ball has reached home plate.
- R. When a play is being made on an obstructed runner, or if the batter-runner is obstructed before he reaches first base.
- S. When a blocked ball is declared.
- T. When the batter enters the batter's box with or uses an illegal or altered bat.
- U. When a fair batted fly ball, including a line drive that can be handled by any infielder with ordinary effort, is intentionally dropped, with less than two outs, and with a runner or runners on base at the time. **EXCEPTION:** An "infield fly" is a live ball.
- V. When a fielder carries a live ball into dead ball territory

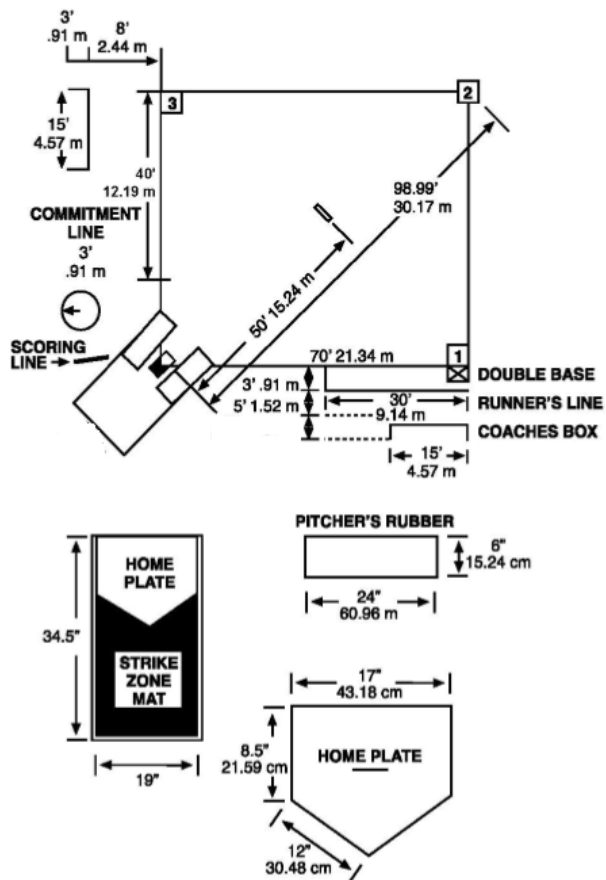
Field Official Responsibilities

- A. Responsible for ensuring the field is ready for the first game and the necessary equipment is in place for the game to begin.
- B. Oversee the substitution selection(s) (if applicable) before each game.
- C. Settle any disputes arising from game/rules conflict but not to be involved in umpire's judgment calls. The umpires are responsible for the game calls.
- D. The field official will notify both managers and all umpires of any warning issued a player and notify the affected player that he/she will be ejected if his/her behavior occurs again.
- F. Available for any questions or concerns for managers
- G. Responsible for ensuring at the close of the day's games that the field equipment is placed in the shed, the dugouts are free of any left gloves or bats, and there is no trash on the field or in the dugouts.
- H. If the field conditions due to rain, wind, or excess heat become an issue, the field official will make the call to suspend the game or cancel the game. The field official will take into consideration the judgment of both coaches. The field official has the final call to suspend or cancel the game. A suspended game will be considered a completed regulation game if five or more innings have been played.

Revised 8-26-2025

SSUSA*OFFICIAL DIMENSIONS***SENIOR SOFTBALL DIAMOND**

Infield Layout, Base Dimensions, Pitching Distance,
Running Lines, Commitment Line, Coaches Boxes



Batter's Boxes, Catcher's Box, Scoring Line/Plate

