



THE RESEARCH TRIANGLE PARK **SOFTBALL LEAGUE**

2020 Rule Book

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Contents

LEAGUE PHILOSOPHY	3
LEAGUE PROCEDURES	4
LEAGUE RULES	4
Field Details	4
Equipment	4
Game Balls	5
Tournament / Playoff Format	5
Tie-Breakers	5
CODE OF CONDUCT	6
PLAYER SAFETY	6
Safety Regulations	6
Player Injuries	7
Thrown Bats	7
GAME RULES	7
Valid Game Conditions	7
Valid Starting Rosters	7
Lineup Order	8
Batting Count	8
Scoring	8
Pitching Arc	8
Strike Zone	8
Bunting	9
Stealing	9
Double First Base	9
"Walked Man" Rule	10
Ground Rule Double	10
Courtesy / Pinch Runners	10
Obstruction	10
Infield Fly Rule	10

Home Run Rule	11
Mercy Rule	11
Additional Hitters	11
Defensive Players	11
Adding Players During Game	11
A substitute who is withdrawn may not re-enter.	12
GAME TIMES & SCHEDULING	12
Game Starting Times	12
Rainouts	12
Forfeits	13
UMPIRING & ARGUMENTS	14
Umpires	14
Arguments	14
Ejections	15
Promotion / Relegation	15
LEAGUE CONTACTS	16

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LEAGUE PHILOSOPHY

The Research Triangle Park Softball League (RTPSL) is a co-ed, recreational, adult, slow-pitch softball league. Participants should play to have fun, make friends, get exercise, and represent their sponsor company to the best of their ability. Players must temper their competitive spirit with good sportsmanship and always attempt to avoid injury, both for themselves and others.

RTPSL participants must recognize that, as in any sport, there is a potential for significant injury. Players should also recognize that some of their teammates and opponents might have little or no experience playing softball, which makes injuries more likely. For their own safety, all players should learn proper techniques of batting, fielding and base running, and instruct less skilled players in the proper techniques.

ALL PLAYERS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR PLAYING THE GAME AS SAFELY AS POSSIBLE.

It is the responsibility of the team captains and umpires to monitor the conduct of the players and to take appropriate actions to correct objectionable behavior. Teammates of the offending players should also help to stop offensive behavior. Umpires are charged with ejecting players if, in their opinion, the situation warrants it.

Permission to use the playing fields is contingent upon our respect for the facility and our behavior on and off the fields. Follow all the regulations regarding drinking and parking. You are expected to remove all trash from the field when you leave.



LEAGUE PROCEDURES

All official correspondence with the league should be sent through e-mail to the Chad Johnson9+ (Commissioner) at rtpcommish@gmail.com

Rules regarding team rosters and game day lineups:

- Rosters will be limited to a maximum of 25 players and a minimum of 12 players.
- Players are only allowed to play on only one team in the RTPSL.
- Players may be added or deleted from rosters before the halfway point of the season.
- Roster changes should be submitted through email at least 1 week prior to the game.
- Waivers are mandatory with no exceptions and need to be received before any player participates in their first game of the season.
- Any player that participates in a game who is not on that team's roster or has not signed a waiver will cause their team to forfeit the game. Contact your commissioner via e-mail if there is any doubt.

LEAGUE RULES

Field Details

- Distance from home plate apex to pitching plate edge is 50 feet.
- Distance from home plate apex to base outside corner is 65 feet.
- The black border that outlines the plate is NOT considered part of Home Plate.
- Home team occupies the dugout on the first base sideline.

Equipment

- All players must have matching jerseys including same color with a different number. Rule takes effect on fourth week of the season.
- All players must wear close toed shoes, no sandals, boots or bare feet.
- Only official softball equipment may be used.
- All Bats must be ASA certified.
- Bats will be inspected by the umpires to insure they meet specifications set forth by ASA.
- Any player that is caught using a banned bat in competition will be an automatic out,



ejected from the game, and suspended 1 more game. The coach will receive the same suspension as their player.

- Metal spikes are NOT allowed; failure to comply will result in ejection.

Game Balls

- All Game Balls must follow these specification:
 - 12", Synthetic, Max .52 COR, Max 300 lbs. Compression.
- Game Balls will be distributed to every team before the season.
- Each game, the Home Team will provide the Game Ball. A back up ball should be provided by the away team.
- When a ball is hit out of play that cannot be immediately retrieved, the backup ball is to be used first. If that ball is no longer be available, the team that hit the ball out of place has to replace it.

Tournament / Playoff Format

The playoff brackets for each league will be determined based on the number of teams in each league.

IN A 6-TEAM LEAGUE:

- All 6 teams play in a single elimination tournament to decide the champion.
- Top 2 Teams get a first round bye.

IN A 8-TEAM LEAGUE:

- All 8 teams play in a single elimination tournament to decide the champion.

Tie-Breakers

If two or more teams are tied at the end of the season, the following tie breaker(s) will be used to determine the regular season champion and seeding for the tournament:

- The team with the best record in head-to-head competition.
- The team with the most runs scored in head to head competition.
- The team with the best run differential.
- The team with the most runs scored overall.



CODE OF CONDUCT

- Abusive language and/or profanity and vulgar behavior will not be tolerated and can result in player and/or coaches being suspended.
- Individuals will not insult opposing players or umpires.
- Players should park only in the designated parking lots. This includes motorcycles and vans. Do not park on the grass.
- Do not broadcast loud music. Audio equipment is not allowed on the field.
- Fighting constitutes automatic suspension for one calendar year.
- No smoking or unused equipment is allowed in the playing area or the coaching boxes.
- No alcoholic beverages or grills are allowed on RTP Foundation property

PLAYER SAFETY

Safety Regulations

- It is the responsibility of all players to try and avoid collisions with other player whenever possible.
- It is the base runner's responsibility to run around fielders to avoid collisions. The runner may be called out for running out of the base path if, in the judgment of the umpire, he/she was doing so only to avoid a tag.
- A runner should make every attempt to avoid a collision with a fielder in possession of or making a play on the ball. If a collision does occur, the runner will be called out if he/she could have avoided the collision. The runner is out even if the fielder loses control of the ball. This rule especially applies to plays at home plate. If collision occurs and is called so by the umpire the ball is dead and no other runners can advance.
- If a runner deliberately and forcefully runs into a fielder, the runner is called out and will be ejected immediately.
- Some collisions are inevitable. When a runner sees that a collision is inevitable, he should slide or slow down. A runner can be called out, but not ejected, if he/she did not slide or otherwise try to reduce the impact of an inevitable collision. If the runner slides, he may be tagged out, but will not be called out because of this rule.
- The fielder also has a responsibility to avoid collision whenever possible. If the fielder appears to purposefully contact a runner, according to the umpire, that runner will be awarded an extra base and the fielder may be ejected.



Player Injuries

- If a player is injured and cannot continue to play a team may replace that player with a substitute player from the roster without penalty. The injured player may no longer participate in play once replaced. If the injury results in a team only having 7 remaining participating players that team will be forced forfeit the game.

Jewelry

For safety, no jewelry is allowed, including watches, earrings, or bracelets. There is an exception for wedding bands and necklaces that can be kept under the shirt collar, which are allowed. Failure to comply will result in an out or ejection.

Thrown Bats

- The first player to throw a bat during a game will be issued a warning that will apply to their entire team. Any additional thrown bat by that team during the game will result in an automatic dead ball out for the batter. A thrown bat will be defined as any situation where the batter endangers the catcher, umpire, or on-deck batter with their bat after a swing.

GAME RULES

Valid Game Conditions

- A game can officially start when a team has 8 or more players, with at least 2 female players.
- If a team only has 8 players, the opposing team may volunteer to supply a catcher whose only duty is to return pitched balls.

Valid Starting Rosters

- There must be a minimum of 2 women in defensive positions to start a game.
- A maximum of 7 men are permitted in defensive positions.
- A team may play 7 men and 2 women if a third woman is unavailable.
- There must be a minimum of 8 players to start a game, including 2 women.



Lineup Order

- There can be no more than 3 men batting in a row regardless of the bottom and the top of the order.
- For example, if a team has 11 men and 4 women and is batting the whole team, the order cannot be as follows:
 - WRONG: MMW1MMW2MMMW3MMW4MM
 - This is disallowed because there would be 4 men batting in a row (bottom to top of lineup).
 - RIGHT: MMW1MMW2MMMW3MMMW4M
 - In this case the woman's place must be moved back to prevent 4 men from ever batting in a row.

Batting Count

- 3 strikes is an out. 4 balls is a walk.
- In all games, each batter will begin his or her at-bat with a 1-1 count.
- There is no courtesy foul in effect. After the second strike, a foul ball is an out.

Scoring

- The home team is required to keep the official score, though the visiting team should also keep score to verify the home team's records.
- After the game, the home team captain should confirm the score with the away team and report the final score to the umpire before leaving the field.
- The umpire will then update the official standings on the league website.

Pitching Arc

This is a slow pitch league. The ball must be delivered at a moderate speed from below the hip with an arc of at least 6 feet from the ground to a maximum of 10 feet.

Strike Zone

- The strike zone of a hitter is the space over any part of home plate which is between the batter's armpits and knees. The ball must also be thrown in an arc 6-10ft. high.



- A strike is a pitched ball which is within the strike zone of the batter, or when the batter swings at and misses the ball, or fouls off said pitch.
- A pitched ball that lands on any part of the plate is a BALL.

Bunting

- Bunting, or chopping, is not allowed. Attempts to bunt or chop will be an automatic out; a dead ball will be declared, and runners will return to their bases.

Stealing

- Base stealing is not allowed.
- Leading-off from the base is not allowed.
- Pickoff plays are also not allowed.
- If a runner leaves the bag prior to the ball crossing the plate, the runner will be called out.

Double First Base

- The intent of the double first base is to reduce the chance of a collision between the first baseman and the runner during the initial force out attempt by giving them separate targets, the white part for the first baseman, and the orange part for the runner. Every runner must try to avoid a collision at any base, including both the orange and white parts of the double first base, as described in the section of the Playing Rules regarding collisions.
- A batted ball hitting or bounding over the white portion is declared fair and a batted ball hitting or bounding over the orange portion is declared foul.
- On any force out attempt from the fair side of first base, the defense must use the white portion and the batter/runner the orange portion. The batter/runner is out when there is a play being made at first base and the batter/runner touches only the white portion.
- On any force out attempt from the foul side of first base, or an errant throw pulling the defense off the base into foul ground, the defense and the batter/runner can either use the white or orange portion.
- On extra base hits or balls hit to the outfield, the batter/runner may touch the white or orange portion.
- After the batter/runner passes first base, whether overrunning or toward second base, the color no longer has significance, and the batter/runner can return to either part of the double base.



"Walked Man" Rule

- If a man is walked (intentionally or not) with less than 2 outs and the next batter is a woman, the male batter automatically advances to second base and the female batter is up to bat.
- If a man is walked (intentionally or not) with 2 outs, the female batter has the option to bat or to take a walk.

Ground Rule Double

- If a batted ball rolls under the outfield fence it will be ruled a double; the fielder should raise his hand indicating to the umpire this has occurred.
- All runners on base before the hit will be awarded two bases.

Courtesy / Pinch Runners

- Every inning 1 player may use a pinch runner, for any reason. The pinch runner should be the last out, if there is not out it should be the last runner in the lineup.
- If a second player in that inning requires a pinch runner, the team must take an automatic out.
- Another male must pinch run for any male. Another female must pinch run for a female.
- The pinch runner can be anyone on the team of the same gender, but the team incurs an automatic out if the pinch runner is still on base when their turn to bat comes up.

Obstruction

- The runner is awarded an extra base if obstructed by a fielder in the base path, unless the fielder is trying to defensively field the ball or has the ball in his possession ready to tag the runner.

Infield Fly Rule

- The infield fly rule is in effect. The infield fly rule is described as when there are fewer than two outs and there is a force play at third base (i.e., when there are runners at first AND second base, or the bases are loaded), the batter will be called out. This will be a dead ball and the runners cannot advance.
- If a fielder chooses to field the ball when the infield fly has been called, at the time the fielder touches the ball, that ball is live and the runners on base can choose to



try and advance at their own risk.

Home Run Rule

- There is a limit of 3 over-the-fence home runs per team.
- Any over-the-fence hits after that will result in an out.
- Inside-the-park home runs do not count against the 3 HR limit.

Mercy Rule

- Games will be considered over due to the Mercy Rule under the following conditions:
 - One team is winning by 15 or more runs after 4 full innings.
 - One team is winning by 10 or more runs after 5 full innings.

Additional Hitters

- If a team starts with a full lineup (10 players in the field with at least 3 women), it can choose to have a 10-position batting order or to have a longer batting order including any number of Additional Hitters so long as this rule is fulfilled.
- Any numbers of Additional Hitters are allowed, if they maintain the MMMW format.
- When using a longer batting order including additional hitters, it is permissible to have some players that bat, but do not play defense.

Defensive Players

- All players that play on defense must be in the batting order. There is no “designated hitter” rule like there is in Major League Baseball.

Adding Players During Game

- If a team starts with only two women, the game can be started with 12 people in a lineup. If the 3rd woman arrives in before the 10th spot in the batting order comes up to bat, the full 12-person lineup can be used. If the 10th spot comes up to bat and the third woman has not yet arrived, the affected team will have to drop the 11th and 12th spots in the batting order and will be forced to use the 10-person lineup:
- 9 players, all of whom must play in defensive positions, and an automatic out for the 10th



spot in the batting order where the missing woman would have been.

- Additional Hitters are not allowed if a team has only two women. Substitution is allowed, but there must always be a minimum of 2 women. If the third woman comes late, she takes the place in the batting order of the automatic out.
- Once a team has batted through its entire line up the lineup cannot be altered to facilitate late players. Substitutions may be made, but additional players may not be added to the bottom of the lineup.
- Substitutions and re-entry are done after a team completes its at-bat, not while at bat. This is to make it easier for the other team to update their scorebook. The team captain must tell the opposing team captain when a substitution is made, and which place in the batting order the new player takes.
- Any of the starting players may withdraw and re-enter once, provided such player occupies the same batting position whenever he or she is in the lineup.

A substitute who is withdrawn may not re-enter.

GAME TIMES & SCHEDULING

Game Starting Times

- Official starting times for all games will be 6:00 pm for a single game, or 7:10pm for the 2nd game of a double header.
- At 5:55 pm, the Umpire will call for the Home team to take the field.
- If a team cannot field a valid starting lineup at 6:00 pm, the team will forfeit the game.
- Regardless of when the game starts, no new inning shall begin after 6:55 pm.
- If required, the second game of a double header will start at 7:10pm, or ASAP after the first game ends.
- All games will have a duration of 1 hour.
 - The umpire will give a 10-minute warning for the end of game time.

Rainouts

- Before 4pm on any game day, in case of rain or unplayable field conditions, the league commissioner for that league will declare a rainout of games that will not be played by sending email to the team captains.
- If the umpire rules the field unplayable at game time, the game will be declared a rainout and rescheduled.



- If the game is in progress, the umpire has the right to suspend play due to rain, lightning, darkness, or unplayable field conditions.
 - If a game is stopped after 5 complete innings, or 4 ½ if the home team is winning, then the game is official.
 - If a game is stopped before 5 innings, the game will be resumed where it left off.
 - Games that are suspended due to rain or darkness are resumed at the point they were suspended. A separate set of players may play in the resumed game, but the male-female sequence in the original batting order should be maintained in the resumed game, or as close as practical, through the first eight positions of the batting order.
- The league commissioner will reschedule all cancelled or suspended games. The league will notify the teams involved through the web site.
- If a rained-out game cannot be played before the end of the season, then each team is awarded +0.5 points in the league standing.

Forfeits

If a team cannot field a team of at least 8 players at game time, the team will forfeit the game to the other team.

- The team responsible for calling a forfeit prior to the scheduled game time, must inform the league commissioner, the team affected and the head umpire of the decision in the event prior to game time.
- Forfeits will result in a 7-0 score in favor of the winning team.



UMPIRING & ARGUMENTS

Umpires

- Umpire coordinator is TBD
- Umpires will be supplied by RTPSL.
- Umpires will discuss ground rules before the game starts.
- Email is the preferred method of contact.

Arguments

- Judgment calls cannot be argued.
- All decisions of the umpires are FINAL.
- Rules interpretations may be challenged, but only by team captains. Players are not allowed to discuss matters with umpires.
- There is a protest rule. A coach may protest a game if and only if one of the two following circumstances occurs:
 - An opposing team has players on the field that are found not to be on the roster.
 - An opposing team uses illegal equipment.
- All formal protests need to be emailed to the commissioners no later than 24 hours after the completion of the game. The email must contain the reason for the protest and the circumstances of the situation. The protest will be reviewed by the commissioners. If the protest is found to be upheld, the protesting team will be rewarded a victory and the team that was found to be in violation will be given a loss.
- If an umpire incorrectly interprets the rules, the commissioners should be notified in writing via email. The outcome of the game cannot be changed but the league will try to clarify the rule, especially to the umpire who incorrectly applied it.



Ejections

- The umpires and commissioners have the right to eject any person from a recreational facility within their jurisdiction.
- Umpires should report ejections to the commissioner.
- Any player or coach ejected from a game will not be eligible to play in their team's next game.
- Any player ejected from two games will be suspended for the remainder of the season, including tournaments.
- Any ejected player or participant who does not leave the field within two minutes or who continues to harass other participants shall cause the game to be forfeited by his/her team.
- Minor violations may result in a warning, one time only, from the umpire. This is necessary to maintain competitive balance throughout all leagues in the RTP Softball league.

Promotion / Relegation

- At the end of each season, some teams may be required to move up or down to a different league for the following season, based on performance. This is necessary to maintain competitive balance throughout all leagues in the RTP Softball league.

WINNING / PROMOTION

- Commissioner has right to move teams up in the interest of competitive balance.
- If a team wins their league's regular season title, that team will be moved up to the next league in succession.
- If a team wins the end of season tournament, they will also be considered to move up to the next league in succession to preserve competitive balance.

LOSING / RELEGATION

- Commissioner has right to move teams down in the interest of competitive balance.
- If a team finishes in last place in the league, they will be moved down a league



LEAGUE CONTACTS

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