

**Sudbury Men's Softball Rules
(2024 Printing)**

I General Rules, Player Eligibility, and Administrative Matters

1. In conjunction with these rules, the Sudbury Men's Softball (SMS) Code for Player Conduct and USA Softball (formerly known as ASA) rules shall apply to all games. Where USA Softball and local rules conflict, the SMS rules shall take precedence.
2. A protest of misinterpretation of a playing rule must be declared during the game per USA Softball Rule 9. Commissioners must be notified of any games played under protest within 48 hours of the game and the protest will be investigated in consultation with the umpires. The decision of the commissioners will be final.
3. Players must live or work full time in Sudbury, be a graduate of Lincoln-Sudbury RH, or be a graduating senior.
4. Three ineligible players per team may be added to the roster prior to opening day.
5. A player may only play for one team across all divisions.
6. Any player who has played at least 10 consecutive seasons on any one or more SMS teams in compliance with rules 3 & 4, above, is eligible, notwithstanding the above.
7. Rosters may be added to until July 7 or as otherwise announced at the League pre-season meeting. Anyone can be added to a roster until the first game. After the first game, a player added to a roster must wait 5 days before he can play in a game (Note, see #4 above on ineligible players). The league commissioners must be notified before a new person is added to a roster.
8. A player shall be eligible for the playoffs if he has played in at least six (6) of the team's regular season games.
9. No drinking of alcoholic beverages on the bench, bleachers, or in the general area when your team is playing. Players who show up for a game intoxicated shall not be permitted to play. Umpires have the authority to forbid or remove any player from playing pursuant to USA Softball Rule 5.12, 5.16, and the Safety Awareness Guide, which all prohibit alcohol use by game participants. The penalty for violation of this rule is ejection.
10. Any player ejected from a game shall receive a 1 game suspension, a second ejection shall be a 3 game suspension and a third ejection shall result in the removal of the offending player from the league. See the Code for Player Conduct for additional details.
11. Playing an ineligible or illegal player shall result in a forfeit. Forfeiture due to playing an illegal player may alter the standings at the end of the season. Commissioners, not umpires, will enforce this rule and notifications of violations should be made directly to the Commissioners. If alleged but not confirmed at the field prior to the start of a game, the game may be played under protest at the election of the team making the claim of ineligibility. Protests of a player's eligibility may be made at any time within 48 hours of discovery prior to the end of the regular season and shall be made in writing to the Commissioners. Managers are responsible for verifying the eligibility of their players.
12. Any team that forfeits 3 games will be removed from the league immediately.
13. Managers will review all rules with their team to avoid arguments. Ignorance of the rules will not be

allowed as an excuse for violation.

14. Scores need to be submitted via the web site (ww.sudburymenssoftball.org) shortly after each game. In the event of a rainout, a score of 0-0 and the note "rainout" should be submitted.
15. The Commissioners will coordinate with the Assignor of the umpires to arrange for umpires each game. Call the Assignor by 4:00pm if your game is not being played due to inclement weather. The second game will be automatically canceled if the first game is not played due to inclement weather. The first game managers will also call the second game managers.
16. Games rained out will be rescheduled at the discretion of the Commissioners, on a weekday evening at an available field.
17. Home team shall be decided by the first team listed on the schedule.
18. Batting practice must not be taken at home plate. Move back near the backstop. Suggestion; each team take one side and alternate pitches.
19. Infield practice shall not be hit from the batter's box.

II Equipment

1. **FOOTWEAR.** Per USA Softball Rules 7.6.D and 7.6.E, players may NOT participate without some type of shoe or sneaker. Bare feet, stocking feet, thongs, etc. will not be allowed under any circumstances. Rubber cleats may be worn, metal spikes may not.
2. **BATS** - All bats used in play must conform to USA Softball rules as well as SMS supplementary rules located on the league website. Bats permitted for use in SMS games will be inspected prior to first use by one of the SMS commissioners and a sticker will be placed on the bat. Bats without stickers are illegal, regardless of the model. Bats will be inspected by umpires prior to each game; see Rule III.1 below. **PENALTY:** see USA Softball Rule 7.6.D and 7.6.E.
3. **HELMETS.** Helmets must be worn by all offensive players on the field (batters and runners) and must comply with USA Softball rule 3.5.E; see Rule III.1 below. Helmets are to be provided by each team.
4. **MASKS:** The catcher **MUST** wear a mask. Pitchers are encouraged to wear masks.
5. All bases must be securely fastened at Featherland field per USA Softball Rule 2.3.H.
6. Per USA Softball Rule 2.3.N, the league shall employ a double bag at first base. The fielder is entitled to the white portion of the bag and the runner to the colored portion (see USA Rules for additional clarifications and rules).
7. Per USA Softball Rules Supplement 17, no equipment shall be left lying on the field, in either fair or foul territory.
8. SMS uses a 12", leather covered, cork center, core .47, yellow optic softball complying with USA Softball 4.C.2.C1.

III Pre-Game & Umpires

1. **INSPECTION** - Teams are required to place all bats and helmets along the fence on the field side in front of the dugout **no later than 15 minutes PRIOR** to the scheduled start of the game. The umpire(s) will inspect all bats and helmets prior the game. Any bat or helmet determined by the

umpire to not meet the requirements of USA Softball and SMS supplementary rules will be removed from the game. Umpire decisions are final, subject to the right to protest per Rule I.2, above. Refer to TIME LIMIT rule below for failure to comply.

2. **PLAY** - Any game (early, late, Curtis or Feeley) may be called off by the consent of both managers prior to the first pitch. Once the game has started, it can only be postponed or stopped by the attending umpires.
3. **PREP** - The home team manager is responsible for retrieving and returning the bases, for lining the field, and for turning on and off the lights. These tasks **MUST** be completed **no later than 15 minutes** PRIOR to the scheduled game time. Refer to TIME LIMIT rule below for failure to comply.

IV Game Lineups

1. **LINEUP** –

- A. Bat in rotation; every player must be in the lineup. Example; if 15 show up -- everyone bats not just 10 or 11. If only 11 are listed, the other 4 may not play at all that game.
- B. Lineup cards shall be reviewed by the opposing manager prior to the start of the game. Lineup cards at a minimum shall contain the following:
 - Team Name.
 - Game Date.
 - Players names arranged in batting order.
 - Opposing manager's signature or initials – Note a manager's signature does NOT denote acceptance of the player's eligibility. A manager may still challenge a player's eligibility after the game despite signing a lineup card.
- C. If a player arrives at a game after it has started, he bats after the last player listed in the lineup, and after informing the opposing manager, can be added to the lineup card.
- D. A properly filled out lineup cards must be submitted to the league for every game, and will be the primary basis for setting playoff eligibility. It is the responsibility of the manager to submit the proper lineup card for each game. Games with out cards will NOT be counted towards playoff eligibility.
- E. A player may play any time in the field, at any position, and come in and out of the field at the discretion of the manager; pitcher included.
- F. Every batter need not be a fielder ever.
- G. If a player is dropped from the batting lineup, he is out of the game. The dropped player's position in the batting order is eliminated but not counted as an out. This is to be done only in emergencies, and not to be used as an advantage.

2. **SHORT FIELDER** - All teams may use a 10th player (short fielder). This player may be positioned anywhere on the outfield grass. If one team has only 9 men, the other team can still play 10 men.

V Game Times and Regulation Games

1. **GAME FORFEITS** - A team must field at least 9 players by 15 minutes after start time or they forfeit the game. If a team has 9 players at the scheduled game time or at any time between the scheduled start time and the 15 minute grace period, they **MUST** begin the game. See USA Softball Rule 5.4.
 - A score of 7-0 (7 for the winning team to 0 for the forfeiting team) will be recorded on all forfeited games.
 - On a forfeit that occurs before the game begins:
 - No lineup card will be accepted, and no game credit (towards playoffs) will be given to the forfeiting team regardless of any player who may show up at the field.
 - For the team that takes a forfeit, credit of 1 game will be given to every player on the roster. On a forfeit that occurs during a game, normal lineup cards for both teams will be accepted.
2. **GAME LENGTH** - Games of 7 innings will be played. Exception; run-ahead rule. If a team is ahead by 12 runs or more after five full innings, the game is over. After waiting the appropriate amount of innings, the game ends immediately upon reaching a 12--run or more lead. There is no "last at bat".
3. **TIME LIMITS** - All games not completed under rule 2 above will be played to a time limit. At 90 minutes after the scheduled start time, the game will complete the inning that is in progress as the last inning of the game. No new inning will be played. If the game is tied at the expiration of the last full inning after the 90-minute time limit, and the game is official, it will be recorded as a tie in accordance with USA Softball rules. **Exception: single game nights in the playoffs.**
 - Time limit clock always starts at scheduled game time. If the grace period is used, it is only for the prevention of a forfeit and does not change the clock.
 - If the second game does not start on time because the first game uses its full allotted 90 minutes or more, the 90-minute clock for the second game will start upon the completion of the inspection of the helmets and bats by the umpires.
 - Rain delays do not extend the time limit. See Rule V.5, below.
4. **EXTRA INNINGS** - USA Softball tie breaker rule will be in effect for each inning following seven innings until a winner is determined (USA Rule 5.11), except that no substitute runner will be allowed (other than a courtesy runner where permitted per these rules) and without reference to the "short handed rule". **Exception: single game nights in the playoffs.**
5. A regular season game called by the umpire shall be regulation if 5 or more complete innings have been played, or if the team second at bat has scored as many or more runs than the other team has scored in 5 or more innings. See USA Softball Rule 8.3.E regarding ties. Games called during the regular season, if not yet official, shall be replayed from the beginning. Games called during the playoffs, official or not, shall be continued from the point of stoppage until completion. Teams should retain the lineup and score cards from the game if it is resumed and not replayed from the

beginning; re-ordering of players in the lineup is not permitted and any players appearing in the resumed game who did not play on the original date must bat at the end of the lineup.

6. Two games will be scheduled at Featherland each night except as indicated on the league schedule.
7. At the start of the season through May 31st (subject to adjustment by agreement with Sudbury Youth Baseball), the First Game will start at 7pm.
8. On June 1st to end of season (subject to adjustment by agreement with Sudbury Youth Baseball), the First Game will start at 6:45pm.
9. At the start of the season through May 31st (subject to adjustment by agreement with Sudbury Youth Baseball), the Second Game will start by 8:30 or when the first game ends, whichever is later, subject to the Time Limits above. The second game may start sooner than 8:30 if all parties (including umpires) agree.
10. On June 1st (subject to adjustment by agreement with Sudbury Youth Baseball) to end of season, Second Game will start by 8:15 or when the first game ends whichever is later, subject to the Time Limits above. The second game may start sooner than 8:15 if all parties (including umpires) agree.
11. Lights at Featherland must be out by 11:00 pm and the parking lot cleared immediately.
12. All Games at Curtis or Feeley Field will start by 6:30 PM. Games may start earlier if all parties (including umpires) agree. To save daylight early starts at Curtis on Feeley are recommended.

VI Play

1. **LEADING** – A runner must not leave their base before the ball leaves the pitcher’s hand. Consequences, ball is dead runner is out. See USA Softball Rule 8.7.S.
2. **BUNTING** – Bunting is not allowed. In the case of any player who, in the judgement of the plate umpire, bunts or attempts to bunt, the ball is dead, a strike is added to the batter’s count, and all runners return to the base they occupied before the pitch was thrown. If this results in a 3rd strike, the batter is out. This applies to all situations where a batter attempts to bunt, even if the bat is pulled back and steal there is no attempt to make contact.
3. **STEALING** - Stealing is not allowed.
4. **PASSED BALLS/WILD PITCHES/PICK OFFS** -
 - Any pitched ball that hits the fence (from dugout opening to dugout opening) will result in runners on 1st base or 2nd base being awarded one base, unless such award would force a runner on 3rd base to score. No runs may be scored on this play.
 - Runners must re-tag their original base on any ball not hit into play.
 - If a play is made to pick off a runner at any base, all runners can advance at their own risk by FIRST retagging their original base. All pick-off plays are force plays. Tagging a runner who has yet to return to their *original base* is NOT required.
 - Pickoffs may not be made on foul balls.
 - On a dropped third strike the batter is out and no runner may advance unless a pick-off attempt is made and the runner has tagged up, or the ball goes out of play or touches the fence (per above).

5. **COURTESY RUNNERS** – Before the game begins, managers shall get together and identify any player who requires a courtesy runner for the game. With the exception of an in-game injury, these will be the only players allowed a courtesy runner. Any designated player who reaches base shall be given a runner. Once designated the player must take a runner every time they reach base. The player who was last at bat and is not then on base becomes the courtesy runner. There is no limit to the number of courtesy runners that can be used in an inning or the number of times a player may be a courtesy runner in an inning. The player who was last at bat and is not then on base becomes the courtesy runner (if a runner is required in the first inning prior to any other player batting, the batter scheduled to be the last batter will be the courtesy runner)..

A. **RUNNER** - If the last player up and not on base is unable to become the courtesy runner, the next preceding player up and not on base is used until a runner is found.

6. Per USA Softball Rule 8.1.F, a batter hit by a pitch shall be entitled to first base. The batter must make an attempt from being hit by pitch in the judgement of the umpire.
7. Emphasis is placed on Rules Supplement No. 13, which states that “in an effort to prevent injury and protect a defensive player attempting to make a play on a runner, a runner must be called out when they remain on their feet and crash into a defensive player who is holding the ball and waiting to apply a tag. To prevent the out ruling, the runner may slide, jump over the defender* holding the ball, go around the defender or return to the previous base touched. If the act is determined to be flagrant, the offender is ejected.” On a play at the plate the catcher (or any other fielder) must allow a runner access to the plate. Home plate may not be blocked.

*Note that this has been interpreted as only applying when a fielder is kneeling, sitting, or laying on the ground; players should not attempt to jump over a standing fielder.

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8. **WARM-UPS**. Per USA Softball Rule 6B-9, pitchers are limited to three warm-up throws within one minute at the start of each half-inning. At the start of the game or with a pitching change five warm-up throws within one minute will be permitted..

VI Ground Rules

1. **FEATHERLAND PARK** - Over the fence on a fly is a home run. The ball must leave the park to be considered a home run. Any ball that strikes the fence on the fly and goes over is a home run. A ball that strikes the fence on the fly and bounces back into the field – “All you can get”. Over or under the fence on a bounce -- double. A fair ball that skids past the fence on the right field line – double. Ball hitting the trees on the fly results in a home run.

OUT OF PLAY - Balls that enter the openings of dugouts and all light poles are out of play as well as the road.

2. **CURTIS FIELD** - Hitting the fair portion of the second pine tree down the right field line on the fly – home run. If the ball hits the First tree that extends into fair play – the ball is dead and considered no pitch, runners return to their bases..
3. **FEELEY FIELD #2** - Into the tall grass on the fly – home run. Into the tall grass on a bounce or roll – “All you can get”.

OUT OF PLAY - First base -- Straight line from backstop along the bottom of the hill.
Third base -- Straight line from backstop to tree line.

4. **OUT OF PLAY (All FIELDS)** – All out of play boundaries should be reviewed with the umpires, and agreed to prior to each game.

VII Pitching

1. The League follows USA Rule 6B, with the following modifications and clarifications:
 - A. For clarification purposes, no step towards the rear may be made from the preliminary pitching position established in the rules.
 - B. The wrist shall not be further from the body than the elbow.
 - C. Throughout the delivery of the pitch, neither shoulder may turn more than 15 degrees from an imaginary line connecting the pitching rubber and the first and third base line.
 - D. The top of the pitching hand may not swing above the level of the pitcher's head.
 - E. For clarification purposes, twisting or turning the wrist, or spinning the ball, is allowed.
 - F. For clarification purposes, crow hops are prohibited (e.g., the pitcher cannot push off with the pivot foot from any place other than the rubber; no additional push off is allowed with either foot).
 - G. See USA Softball Rule 6B.11 for the illegal pitch penalty. In addition, after a third illegal pitch in a game, , the offending player must cease pitching for the remainder of the game but may remain in the lineup and play another position.
2. Teams objecting to a pitcher's delivery must send video evidence to the Commissioners for review, accompanied by a written report, within 48 hours of the game.

VIII Playoffs.

1. Division Play-offs

- a. **Three divisions:** Top four teams each league shall qualify for the playoffs.
 - i. Semi Finals -- Team 1 vs. Team 4; Team 2 vs. Team 3 in each league
 - ii. Finals -- Winners of the Semi Finals in each league
- b. **Two divisions:** Top four teams in a division with 6 or fewer teams shall qualify for the playoffs and proceed as noted above for three divisions. In a division with 7 or more teams, the commissioners may institute a one-game wild card round (with or without byes) by notice to the manager/coaches prior to the season and have more than the top four teams advance to the playoffs.

2. General Play-offs

- a. All playoff series will be 2 out of 3 unless the commissioners have designated a one- game wild card round.
- b. A player shall be eligible for the playoffs if he has played in at least six (6) of the team's regular season games and has properly registered for the league through the league website.
- c. A list of all eligible players for the playoffs shall be created from the submitted lineup cards and distributed by the commissioners prior to starting the playoffs.
- d. Playing an ineligible player in a playoff game will result in a forfeit of the game.

IX League Alignment

1. Any team that wins the league (not the playoffs) in a lower division two years in a row MUST move up to the higher division the following year. When a team moves up the last place team in the higher division MUST move down.
2. Any team that comes in last place in the upper division two years in a row MUST move down to the lower division the following year. When a team moves down the first place team in the lower division MUST move up.

IX Tie Breaking Rules

1. Head to head win loss record
2. Winning % in own division
3. Fewest runs allowed in head to head play
4. Fewest runs allowed season
5. Most runs scored season
6. Tie breaking game

Sudbury Men's Softball Code for Player Conduct (2024 Printing)

I. General:

In order to establish fair play, good sportsmanship and a fun environment for all teams, and umpires, the Sudbury Men's Softball has established a code for player conduct. These standards will apply to teams and players before, during, and after games. The league will have ZERO TOLERANCE for violation of these standards.

II. Umpires:

- Umpires are trained and certified annually by USA Softball, USA Softball of Massachusetts, and the local board. These umpires are hired by the league and are to be treated with respect.
- Any taunting, abusive language, threatening or "riding" of the umpire, directly or indirectly, will result in immediate ejection. No warnings are ever required.
- It is understood, by the league and umpires, that sometimes controversial or critical calls are made by the umpire that may cause a player to react to the decision. Any arguing or continuing to "ride" the umpire after the play has ended will result in ejection of the player.
- Only the manager who attended the pre-game meeting with the umpires may question a call. Such questioning may be done by requesting time out, then approaching the umpire who made the call and asking the question in a polite and professional manner. The umpire's response and decision is final (see below regarding appeals) and play is to resume immediately. The penalty for failing to comply with this rule is ejection of the player. If the manager fails to control his players or there is a repeated violation of this rule, the umpire has the discretion to eject the manager.

- Managers may NOT question judgement calls (see USA Softball Rule 9.2).
- A manager/coach, who feels an umpire failed in their duties or is not up to proper standards, may file a written complaint to the league Commissioners giving as much detail as possible. After review, the complaint will be forwarded by the Commissioners to the local umpire board, who will take appropriate action. Such written report MUST be filed no later than 2 calendar days after the game.

III. Manager/Coach;

- The manager/coach of a team shall be the only one to deal with the umpires in appealing or questioning calls during the game.
- The manager/coach has the responsibility to control the conduct of the players on their team.
 - If improper behavior cannot be identified to a single player the manager/coach and team shall be warned. A second incident shall result in the manager/coach being ejected from the game for failure to control the team.
 - The manager/coach will review this conduct policy with all players to assure compliance. Ignorance of this policy will not be accepted as an excuse.
 - The commissioners reserve the right to discipline a manager/coach for repeated violations of the Code for Player Conduct by the manager's team.

IV. Players;

- It is the player's responsibility to maintain proper conduct and control before, during, and after games. Failure to do so will result in disciplinary action.
- A player is subject to this code of conduct during their team's play whether or not they are in the official lineup (this includes suspended, hurt, or other players who choose not to play).
- Taunting of other players is not allowed. It is understood, by the league and umpires, that a certain amount of "gamesmanship" or chatter occurs between teams and players over the course of a game.
 - If at any point, in the judgement of the umpire, this "gamesmanship" or chatter becomes taunting, offensive, personal, or excessive, the player may be ejected from the game immediately; warnings are never required. Additional violations will result in ejection from the game.
 - On a serious offense, as judged by the umpire, a player will be ejected without warning.

V. Actions;

- An ejected player must, within five minutes, leave the park (at Featherland, that means leaving the complex; the player may not remain in the parking lot) for the remainder of the game night. Failure to do so will result in an immediate forfeit (see USA Softball Rule 4.8)
 - Any team who cannot field at least 9 players after the ejection will immediately forfeit the game regardless of score or inning (see USA Softball Rule 4.8).
- Per league rules, any ejection of a player will result in the following additional action, with no exceptions or opportunity to appeal except as provided below. All ejections are final.
 - 1st ejection – 1 game suspension

- 2nd ejection – 3 game suspension
- 3rd ejection – Removal from the league
- Any team that plays a suspended player shall forfeit all games played by that player during the suspension. In addition, the violating player's suspension will be doubled.
- A suspended player may sit in the stands and watch but may not aid in the play of the game. This includes (but not limited to), sitting on the bench, managing/coaching the team, coaching bases, keeping the official lineup or team score.
- A suspended player who addresses an umpire during their suspension will be treated as having an additional ejection for purposes of determining the length of the suspension.

VI. League;

- A manager/coach may appeal the suspension of a player to the league. This must be done within two calendar days of notification of such suspension and will be decided by the commissioners after investigation to include talking to all parties.
 - All appeals must be reviewed by the local umpire board.
 - During any investigations, the SMS commissioners may speak to the local umpire Board and vice versa. SMS commissioners may not speak directly to the umpires and the umpires may not speak directly to team managers or players.
 - No manager shall contact the local umpire board or individual umpires.
 - The decision of the commissioners will be final.
- The league reserves the right to review any issue involving player or manager/coach conduct, whether or not it involved ejection, and take additional action up to and including removal of the individual and/or team from the league as warranted by the circumstances.

