

# THE SLO-PITCH ONTARIO ASSOCIATION PLAYING PROCEDURES

Slo-Pitch is a variation of the game of softball. Softball was originally played as an indoor version of baseball. It has been played under many different names (kitten ball, mush ball, town ball, three pitch) and as many different sets of rules. Formalized rules were set up in 1923 and softball has become an international game played by men, women, boys and girls around the world. It is basically a stick and ball game played on a field with four bases in a square pattern called a diamond. Each team gets an equal number of chances (called an inning) to earn runs. Each team's inning continues until three players have been dismissed (called out). The winning team is the team that records the most runs. A run is earned by each runner that successfully advances in the proper progression around all four bases. Slo-Pitch is intended as a game of hitting, base running, and fielding conducted in friendly, sportsmanlike competition.

The playing rules for all slo-pitch games in Ontario shall be the 2009/2010 Softball Canada Rules with the exceptions as designated ( **highlighted** ) in these procedures. Changes for 2010 are **highlighted** . The following procedures do not constitute the Rules of the game but simply list the special SPO rule differences as well as some of the basic concepts of the game of slo-pitch. Any protests must refer to the official Softball Canada playing rules. The masculine form of personal pronouns is used to assist readability. All masculine pronouns (except when referring to male categories) represents both males and females

## Playing Field

**Bases are 70 feet apart. (All divisions)**

Pitching distance is 50 - 55 feet

**Pitching Box - 2 feet wide by 5 feet long. The front edge of this box shall be centered on a direct line from home plate to second base and 50 feet from the rear corner of home plate.**

Batters' box is 7 feet by 3 feet

Double base shall be used at first base.

Coaches' box is 15 feet by 5 feet, 12 feet back from the foul line

**Strike Mat/ Home Plate: A 2' by 3' mat.**

**All Masters / All Coed / All Recreational / All D & E: A safe line at home plate and a commitment line 21 feet from home plate shall be used.**

## Equipment

Minimum uniform shall be identical shirts with identifiable ten (10) cm high numbers on the back.

Gloves may be worn by any player. Trappers may be worn by the catcher, pitcher and first baseman only.

**Shoes may not have metal cleats**

**Caps, if worn, must face forward.**

Bats: Must be approved by SPO. Approved bats must comply with the current USSSA Bat Certification Policy.

Balls: Mens: 12 in. .44 max C.O.R., 525 lb max compression. Recommended C.O.R.is .40  
Womens: 11 in. .47 max C.O.R., 525 lb max compression  
Colour may be white or optic yellow

Helmets: Approved helmets may be worn by any player. They must match in colour any caps worn

## Team

The batting order shall consist of a minimum of 10 players

**Extra Players** : Teams may use **unlimited** "EXTRA PLAYERS(s)". **The total number of regular players (10) and extra players may not exceed the number of players on the team's legal roster (maximum 20).** If more than 10 players are on the batting order, any 10 may play defense.

**a. If a player is unable to continue in the game and no legal substitute is available when he is due up to bat, he is declared out and play continues with the next batter in the batting order. If, with 2 out, the batter before the missing player is walked (intentional or unintentional), the automatic out is waived and the next batter will bat. (This does not apply if the player is declared unable to continue just prior to the team's offensive half of the inning)**

b. The manager of the player unable to bat is responsible for notifying the plate umpire of this situation. Failure to do this will result with the manager being ejected

c. A team must have a minimum of ten (10) players to start and to continue the game. If a team has less than ten (10) players the game is forfeited.

**d. Short Handed Rule: Teams may start a game with a minimum of nine (9) players. However, an out shall be declared when the tenth position in the line-up is scheduled to bat. A tenth player may be added to the tenth position any time before the end of the game. Any team that starts a game with ten or more players may drop to the minimum of nine players to finish the game. All vacant spot(s) in the line-up will be declared an out every time that line-up position is due to bat. A team may not add extra player(s) at a later time. Any player that leaves the game for any reason may not return to the game. If a player is ejected from the game for any reason leaving the team with less than ten players, the ejected player's team must have a substitute available to replace the ejected player or that team will forfeit the game.** Exception: A player, who has left the game under the blood rule, may return.

**Substitutions:** Any player in the batting order may be replaced during any stoppage of play with a legal rostered player not already in the batting order. Each starting player may re-enter the game once in the same position in the batting order. Substitutes must be listed on the lineup card.

## Blood Rule

Any participant (player, coach or umpire) who is bleeding or has blood on his uniform may not participate until the bleeding is controlled and his soiled uniform changed. The replacement uniform need not conform to the official team uniform. If the cleanup and/or uniform change can be accomplished quickly, play would be suspended until the participant is ready to play. If this cannot be done quickly, the player is removed from the game and replaced by a Replacement Player (may be any eligible roster player not already in the line-up.) who may act for the removed player for the remainder of the inning in progress and the following complete inning. When the player has had the bleeding controlled and the soiled uniform replaced, he **must** resume his place in the game. Should he not be able to return to the game within the time described, an official substitution must be made. The use of a replacement player is not counted as an official substitution, meaning, the player may leave the game again and be re-entered (if a starting player) and also the player that was used as the replacement for him is still a legal substitute and may be used later in the game. If a player is removed due to blood and the team does not have a legal substitute/replacement available when needed, **his place in the batting order is simply missed and there is no penalty.**

## Courtesy Runner

**a. A team may use a maximum of three (3) courtesy runners per game.**

### Exceptions

**Masters: 35+ & 40+ (4) - 50+ & 55+ (7 - same runner may not run twice) - 60+ & 65+ (Unlimited)**

**b. The courtesy runner must be a legal rostered player**

**c. The courtesy runner must be announced to the home plate umpire before he takes his place on the base**

**d. If the courtesy runner is due up to bat, the team may**

**i) use another courtesy runner and have the original courtesy runner come to bat**

**OR**

**ii) use a substitute or utilize the re-entry rule (if applicable) to go up to bat leaving the original courtesy**

runner on base.

OR

iii) If i) or ii) is not implemented, the batter is ruled out but remains on base as the courtesy runner and the next batter in the lineup comes to bat.

### **Starting the game**

A coin toss, with the winner choosing, will determine which team will bat second.

### **Duration**

A game consists of seven innings. The game ends if the team batting second has scored more runs in six innings or before the third out in the last half of the seventh inning than the other team has scored in seven innings. A tied game will continue with extra innings until one side has scored more runs at the end of a completed inning, or until the team batting second scores more in their half inning before their third out. A game stopped by the umpire will be considered complete if five innings (four and one half innings if the second batting team is leading) have been completed.

### **Mercy Rule:**

A team shall be declared winner if they are 12 or more runs ahead of the opposition after five or six innings if the visiting team or after four and one half, five and one half or six and one half innings if the home team. A team may voluntarily withdraw from the game if they are losing by 15 or more runs any time after 3 innings (2 1/2 innings if home team)

All E divisions & Masters 50+, 55+, 60+ & 65+: A maximum of 5 runs per inning may be scored. (Exception: 7th inning)

### **Forfeits**

A game shall be declared a forfeit if a team fails to field the required number of players prior to or during the game, refuses to continue the game after a suspension of play, intentionally tries to delay or hasten the game, or intentionally violates a rule of the game after being warned by the umpire. A forfeit shall be declared if a player, ejected from the game by an umpire, does not leave the park when directed to do so. When a player is ejected and must leave the ball park, that player must move far enough away so that they may not be seen or heard by the participants of the game and may not participate with the game in any manner.

### **Profanity**

Any team member openly using profanity during a game shall be ejected from further participation in that game.

### **Jewellery**

(Youth only) A batter or runner is ruled out immediately if discovered wearing exposed jewellery. Any advance by other runners as a result of this player batting the ball is nullified. If, after making a play, a defensive player is discovered wearing exposed jewellery, the manager of the offensive team may take the result of the play or have the play nullified, and have the batter return to bat with the same count as before the infraction and all runners must return to their previous base. In all cases, the player must remove the jewellery. Facial jewellery may not be covered with tape.

**NOTE:** It is strongly recommended that any type of jewellery not be worn in any SPO play. If worn, each player is solely responsible for any injury/damage that may be caused by this jewellery. The umpire may have any player removed any jewellery or equipment that he deems dangerous.

### **Scoring**

A run is scored when a player safely touches, in order first base, second base, third base and home plate. A runner may not score ahead of a preceding runner who has not been retired. A run may not score if the last out of an inning is a force out or a preceding runner declared out. The score of a forfeited game shall be 7-0 in favour of the team not at fault.

## Home Run Rule

A limit of over the fence home runs will be used in all divisions. A batter hitting a ball over the fence in a game in excess of the limit, shall be ruled out. Any ball touched by a defensive player which then goes over the fence in fair territory shall be a four base award and not considered a home run. If a player hits an over the fence home run but then misses a base and/or does not score it will count towards the team home run total. If a batter is ruled out because of the excessive home run rule, the ball is dead, no runs may score and all runners must return to the base occupied at the time of the pitch.

Men A - 7	Masters 35 Comp - 5	Masters 40 Comp - 5	Masters 50+ - 3	Womens Comp - 7
Men B - 5			Masters 55+ - 3	
Men C - 3	Masters 35 Int - 3	Masters 40 Int - 3	Masters 60+ - 3	Womens C - 3
Men D - 2			Masters 65+ - 3	Womens D - 2
Men E - 1	Masters 35 Rec - 0	Masters 40 Rec - 0	Womens Masters - 2	Womens E - 1

Walk Off Home Run - On any fair-batted ball hit over the fence (touched or untouched) for a home run, the batter and all runners are credited with a score. The batter and any runners do not run the bases but go directly to their team area.

## Pitching

Before each pitch, the pitcher must stand with one foot (pivot) within the pitcher's, facing the batter with the ball held in one hand. This position must be maintained for 1 - 5 seconds.

The delivery starts when the pitcher makes any motion of his windup after the required pause. A step may be taken in any direction simultaneous with the release of the pitch provided the pivot foot remains in contact with the box until the pitch is released.

The pitch shall be delivered with an underhand motion and at a moderate speed.

Any type of windup is legal provided the ball is pitched immediately after the pitching motion, there is no stoppage or reversal of motion, there is not more than one revolution in a "windmill" pitch, and the windup does not continue after the delivery of the ball.

Any infraction of these rules shall constitute an illegal pitch.

**No pitch** is declared if the pitcher pitches:

- during a dead ball.
- before the batter and/or umpire are ready.
- when a runner is out for leaving a base too soon.

The ball is dead after a strike or ball is called. (Runners may not advance)

## Batting

Players must bat in the order listed on the batting order. If a player's turn at bat has not ended when his team's half-inning ends, he is the first to bat in the next half-inning. The batter must take his position within the batter's box within 10 seconds. Substitutes must bat in the position in the batting order of the person they replace. A strike is a legally pitched ball that makes contact with the mat, any pitched ball swung at and missed by the batter, or a batted ball that is ruled foul. A ball is a legally pitched ball that lands outside the strike mat and not swung at by the batter or an illegally pitched ball that the batter does not swing at.

A batted ball may be classified as one of the following:

- fly ball - a batted ball that has not yet touched the ground or any object other than a fielder.

- line drive - a fly ball that is batted sharply and directly into the playing field.
- bunt - a tapped ball not swung at but met with the bat
- chopped ball - a batted ball intentionally directed downward so that the ball bounces high into the air.
- ground ball - a batted ball that touches the ground, an umpire (in fair territory), or a runner (after a fielder has had a chance to make a play on it).
- infield fly - a fair fly ball that can be caught by an infielder with a normal effort.
- foul tip - a batted ball that goes directly to the catcher's glove and does not go above the batter's head.

Batted balls are ruled fair (batter and runners may advance) or foul (a strike) by the umpire.

An illegally batted ball occurs when the batter steps on the **mat** or **has his foot on the ground completely in front or behind the mat** when the bat contacts the ball.

A batter shall be ejected from the game if he is discovered to be using an altered bat or a non-approved bat after entering the batter's box. The ejected player is suspended for the remainder of the tournament with a review by the Disciplinary Committee. A second offence will result in a minimum of one year suspension.

**Note:** An altered bat is one that has had its physical structure changed, including, but not limited to

1. The bat has had the surface of the barrel or the taper changed in any way such as by sandpapering or applying a solvent to the surface such as fingernail polish remover or by any other means,
2. The bat has had the plug or the knob removed/replaced or changed in any way,
3. The bat has had anything removed or added or inserted to the inside or outside of the bat other than tape at the handle or knob.
4. The bat has been repainted.

Other examples of an altered bat would be changing or replacing manufacturers' markings or replacing the handle of the metal bat with a wooden handle.

Cracked, worn, or damaged bats are not altered bats, but will be removed from play. Such cracked, worn, or damaged bats will not result in a player suspension unless the player returned the offending bat into play after it has been removed.

## Running

The batter may proceed around the bases:

- when he hits a fair ball
- after four balls or an intentional walk
- after interference by the catcher

When the batter runs to first, he may overrun first base and safely return to the base provided he does not try to advance to second base. **In Masters 60+, the runner may overrun all bases.**

On the batter's first attempt at first base on and play is made a first, he must use the orange portion of the Double Base. Once the batter has safely reached first base, he must now use the white portion. The defensive player always uses the white portion.

### A runner may run the bases:

- when a fair ball is hit
- when a caught fly ball is first touched
- when the ball is overthrown and remains in play.

### A runner is advanced:

- when a fair batted ball goes out of play (2 bases awarded from the time of the pitch)
- when a thrown (2 bases) or batted ball (3 bases) is contacted by a thrown glove (awarded from the time of the pitch)
- if forced when the batter is awarded a base on balls.
- when a live ball is carried or dropped out of play (1 base awarded from the time the ball became dead.)
- when the ball is overthrown and goes out of play (two bases awarded from the time of the throw/).

- when a defensive player obstructs the runner as he progresses around the base path. The umpire will award the placement he felt the runner would have made had there been no obstruction. All awarded bases are from the last base legally touched and must be touched in the proper order.

### **A runner must return to the base:**

- when the pitcher is ready to pitch (If he is not in contact with the base, he is declared out for a leadoff).
- when a foul ball is hit
- when the batter or another runner interferes with the defensive team (unless forced by the batter being awarded first base).
- when the ball is batted illegally.
- when a fly ball is caught. He may advance when the ball is first touched by a fielder.
- during a live ball, a runner may return to touch a base unless he has left the field of play or a succeeding runner has scored. He must proceed in reverse order touching all intervening bases.
- during a dead ball, a runner may return to touch a base.

### **Dismissals**

A batter is out. The ball is dead and no runners may advance if:

- he has three strikes.
- he illegally bats the ball
- he bunts or chops downward on a pitch.
- a fielder deliberately drops a fly ball with at least a runner on first base and less than two out.
- he enters the batter's box with an illegal or altered bat.
- the batter before reaching first base, retreats towards home plate to avoid a tag.
- the batter hits an over the fence homerun in excess of the team limit.
- **the batter is discovered to be wearing exposed jewellery. (Youth)**

A batter is out. The ball is alive and runners may advance if:

- his fly ball (fair or foul) is legally caught.
- **his foul tip is legally caught.**
- on a fair ball not caught on the fly, the ball is held by a fielder while touching first base before the batter touches first base.
- he hits an infield fly with less than two out and runners on first and second or first, second and third.

A runner is out, and the ball is dead if:

- on a pitched ball, he leaves the base before the ball has reached the plate, hits the ground or is swung at by the batter.
- he fails to return to his base following a halt in play.
- while off the base, he is hit by a fair batted ball before it has passed an infielder and no other fielder is in a position to make a play.
- he deliberately runs into a fielder who has the ball and is waiting to tag him.
- he interferes with an attempt to field a ball or with a thrown ball.
- **the runner is discovered to be wearing exposed jewellery. (Youth)**

A runner is out, and the ball is alive if:

- he runs more than 1m. outside the established basepath to avoid a tag.
- on a force out, the fielder, while holding the ball, touches the base before the runner.
- while off his base, he is touched with the ball held by a fielder
- he overtakes a preceding runner
- a coach physically assists him.

A runner is not out if:

- he is touched by a fielder who does not have or does not maintain control of the ball.
- he runs outside the baseline to avoid interfering with a fielder fielding a ball.
- he is unintentionally hit by a batted ball while on a base.
- he is unintentionally hit by a batted ball while off a base, if no fielder has a chance to field the ball.

Note: A batter or runner is not out, if the fielder making a play on him uses an illegal glove or **(Youth only) is discovered to be wearing exposed jewellery.**

### **Explanations:**

Basepath - An imaginary line from the runner to the base to which he is advancing.

Catch - A catch is not completed until the fielder securely holds the ball in his hand or his glove (which is properly worn on his hand) long enough to prove he has control of the ball and any release of the ball is voluntary or intentional. If the ball has hit anything other than the fielder or another fielder, it cannot be a caught fly ball.

Commitment Line - A line in foul territory drawn 21 ft from the back of home plate and perpendicular to the third base line. When a runner crosses this line by touching the ground beyond the line but does not reach home plate, he shall be called out when the ball is legally held by a defensive player in contact with home plate. Runners, who have not crossed the line or who cross the line but must tag up on a caught fly ball, may return to third base.

Fair Ball - A batted ball that is touched while on or above fair ground, stops on fair territory within the infield, contacts a base, bounces over first or third base, or first lands on fair ground beyond the infield.

Foul Ball - a batted ball that is not fair.

Inbounds - The ball or a player is in bounds until they touch the ground or an object that is outside the designated playing area.

Interference - An offensive team player may not do anything to confuse, distract or hinder a fielder making a play.

Obstruction - A defensive player may not hinder or restrict a runner from progressing from base to base unless fielding a batted ball, holding the ball, or about to catch the ball.

Safe Line - A line drawn in foul territory starting at the top left-hand corner of home plate perpendicular to the third base line. A runner attempting to reach home must do so by touching the ground in foul territory on or beyond the SAFE line. Sliding into home plate is not allowed. The runner is out if he touches home plate **whether or not a play is being made.** A runner is not out if the plate is touched in an attempt to avoid a collision.