

New Mexico Senior Olympics

Softball Team Rules

Revised 1-2024

Playing Format

1. This tournament will be conducted in accordance with Softball Players Association (SPA) (Senior) rules and National Senior Games Association except as modified herein and in New Mexico Senior Olympic House Rules onsite. For a copy of these rules, please write or call:

Softball Players Association (SPA)	National Senior Games Association
45 W Armstrong Dr	P.O. Box 5630
Mustang, OK 73064	Clearwater, FL 33758
(405) 376-7034	(727) 475-1187
https://softballspa.com/	www.nsga.com
2. New Mexico Senior Olympics will hold a qualifying tournament for men's and women's softball teams during the even years. The results of this qualifying tournament will be forwarded to the National Senior Games Association in the qualifying year it is held. The top three New Mexico teams in each gender and age division will be named as the representative teams for New Mexico in the National Senior Games.
Team Players/Coach eligible for team rosters for Nationals - All team player(s)/coach must be registered and have checked in and signed in at a qualifying team sport in order to be eligible for addition to a National roster. Documentation of player/coach registration must be provided by the State Coordinator to Nationals.
3. There will be no local pre-qualifying for this tournament and a team fee will be charged. The team fee will be reflected in registration information.
4. Teams must be of all one gender. A team player may only be on one roster per sport. Team rosters shall be limited to 22 persons, including non-playing coaches, non-playing captains and non-playing bench personnel. No more than 20 of these persons may be players. Teams are no longer limited to the number of out-of-state players on their rosters. It is the captain's responsibility to declare team residency at time of registration.
5. Captains will be limited to 3 changes to their roster after schedules are posted and before teams first **POOL PLAY** game of tournament as long as changes do not affect age division. Arbitration committee may be consulted concerning changes. NMSO recognizes a team member may have a valid medical emergency and will attempt to work with the team to identify a replacement. NMSO will require documentation and every situation will be reviewed individually with the tournament arbitration committee.
6. All registration and team rules apply to non-playing coaches, non-playing captains and non-playing bench personnel.
7. **Registered athletes MUST PLAY IN POOL PLAY to be eligible to play in BRACKET PLAY. All registered athletes must be listed on a roster, check in and sign in on-site prior to the team's first scheduled POOL PLAY Game.**
8. **Teams must provide their own bats, gloves, and practice balls. NMSO will provide game balls and they must be used.**
9. Age divisions for all team competition will be determined by the age of the youngest team player as of December 31 of the competition year.
10. Men and Women will be open classification; no skill division will be used.
11. Teams that forfeit ALL pool play rounds shall not be permitted to advance to bracket play, NO EXCEPTIONS.
12. **Home Team:** Home team will be decided by the flip of a coin before every game. The team designated as home team shall bat last in the inning. EXCEPTION: A team giving an equalizer shall be designated as the home team.

Softball Team Playing Format (cont.)

13. Seeding for double elimination bracket play will be determined based on pool play results in the following order:
 - a) Win/loss record
 - b) Head-to-head results – only when all teams play each other
 - c) Total runs allowed
 - d) Run differential
 - e) Total runs scored
 - f) Coin Toss
14. NMSO and Sport Coordinator reserve the right to change the tournament format for any age division based on entry numbers, space restrictions or other circumstances.
15. **Sliding or Diving** into first base is permitted only to avoid a collision with a defensive player. 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. (SSUSA Rule 8.6)
16. **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. This rule applies to all age divisions. A player has the option of sliding primarily so a player can avoid a collision. (SSUSA Rule 8.7(1)) Over-Running first base – A player may over-run first base without being in jeopardy of being tagged out. If the base runner, in the umpire’s judgment, is tagged out before returning to first base after attempting to advance to second base, he will be declared out. (SSUSA Rule 8.7(2)) Over-Running when returning to base – A runner who overruns any base when returning to it is liable to be put out. (SSUSA Rule 8.7(3))

Playing Rules

1. **Strike zone mat:** A strike zone mat will be used. The top of the mat will be placed at the top of home plate. The mat will measure twenty-one (21) inches wide and thirty-five (35) inches long with a white home plate centered at the front of the mat measuring seventeen (17) inches across the front, 8 1/2 inches down each side, and 12 inches diagonally to a point nearest the catcher. A legal pitch not swung at that strikes any part of the strike zone mat or home plate shall be called a strike by the umpire.
2. **Pitcher’s Plate/Box:** a pitcher’s box consisting of the area from the front of the pitcher’s plate, 50 feet from home plate, and extending back ten feet (10ft) and twenty-four (24) inches wide perpendicular to the pitcher’s plate shall be used. The pitcher must release the ball after coming to a complete stop with one foot or both feet in contact with the pitcher’s plate or within the pitcher’s box. One foot must remain in contact with the plate/box when the pitch is released with an underhand motion. A step simultaneous with the release of the ball may be taken in any direction with the free foot. The pitcher must be facing the batter when delivering the pitch. The catcher must remain within the lines of the catcher’s box until pitched ball is batted, touches the ground or home plate, or reaches the catcher’s box. This area should be chalked off.
3. **Players and substitutes:** USA Softball rules for re-entry and extra player (EP) will apply. Extra players may play defense at any time provided the total number of defensive players on the field at any time does not exceed the total allowed for that age division.
 - a. Men in age division 50+, 55+ and 60+: Ten defensive players shall constitute a team. A team must have a minimum of nine players at the beginning and end of a game. For any team playing with nine players, an out will be recorded when the 10th position in the batting order appears. A 10th player may be added as he/she shows up for play; however, he/she must be listed as the 10th offensive player and bat after the other nine players. If EPs are used, a team must start and end a game with 11 players, including the EP. In addition, for teams using EPs, 10 players must play defense.

Softball Playing Rules (cont.)

- b. Men in age divisions 65, 70+ and 75+ and women's age divisions 50+, 55+, 60+, 65+, 70+ and 75+: Eleven defensive players shall constitute a team. A team must have a minimum of 10 players at the beginning and end of the game. An 11th player may be added as he/she shows up to play; however, he/she must be listed as the 11th offensive player and bat after the other 10 players. Teams in these divisions may use up to two EPs. If EPs are used, a team must start and end a game with 11 players plus the number of EPs used. In addition, for teams using EPS, 11 players must play defense.
4. **Line-up cards:** Official line-up cards must be presented to the opposing manager and scorekeeper 10 minutes prior to game time. Tournament line up cards will be furnished to all team managers. FULL name of player and number must be indicated on line-up card.
 5. **Batting Line Up:** A Team can bat the allowed number of players or the ability to bat any number of players that are available. This must be declared prior to the beginning of the game and indicated on the line-up card. When an injured player comes up in the batting line-up, this is considered an out every time that player comes up to bat.
 6. **Runs per inning:** For all pool play and bracket play, there shall be a five (5) run per inning rule, with unlimited runs allowed in the seventh or final inning.
 7. **Mercy Rule:** A mercy rule will be in effect for all games. The rule shall be 20 runs after four innings and 15 runs after five innings, or any time a team may not mathematically score enough runs to stay in the game, ending the game.
 8. **Homerun rule:** Homeruns will be 1 up when different age divisions play each other. The first ball hit over the fence will count as a home run. Subsequent balls hit over the fence by the same team will count as singles until the opposing team has hit a ball over the fence (home run). Base runners may only advance one base per single over the fence. This rule shall continue throughout the entire game. Any fair ball hit over the fence for a home run or a four base award, the batter and all runner(s) are credited with a run. The batter and the runner(s) are NOT required to run the bases.
 9. **Time limit:** The length of Pool Play games will be determined by the number of teams registered and will be noted in House Rules. The length of double elimination games will be seven innings or one hour and fifteen minutes. After one hour the umpire shall announce that teams will finish the current inning and play one more. This last inning shall be played with unlimited runs allowed. Tie games after seven innings or at the end of regulation time will continue until one team is ahead after completion of any subsequent inning using the international tie-breaker rule. If, at the end of official time limit or beginning of the 8th inning the International Tie Breaker is necessary, the last batter from the previous inning will go to 2nd base to start inning. There will be no time limit for championship/medal games. Run rule will be in effect and there will be a 5 inning max.
 10. **Sliding or Diving** into first base is permitted only to avoid a collision with a defensive player. 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. (SSUSA Rule 8.6)
 11. **Overrunning base:** 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. This rule applies to all age divisions. A player has the option of sliding primarily so a player can avoid a collision. (SSUSA Rule 8.7(1)) Over-Running first base – A player may over-run first base without being in jeopardy of being tagged out. If the base runner, in the umpire's judgment, is tagged out before returning to first base after attempting to advance to second base, he will be declared out. (SSUSA Rule 8.7(2)) Over-Running when returning to base – A runner who overruns any base when returning to it is liable to be put out. (SSUSA Rule 8.7(3))

Softball Playing Rules (cont.)

12. **Courtesy runner:** An unlimited number of courtesy runners may be used per inning. A player may only be used as a courtesy runner once per inning (except women 70+ and 75+ which a player can be a courtesy runner as many times as needed per 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. A courtesy runner on base when it is his/her turn at bat will be declared out as the runner. Another courtesy runner may not be used to circumvent this rule.
13. **Pitching Mask:** All pitchers are encouraged to wear a defensive face mask while pitching in all games
14. **Legal Pitching Height:** Ball must be delivered with perceptible arc and reach a height of at least 6 feet from the ground while not exceeding a maximum height of 12 feet (Senior Slow Pitch) from the ground.
15. **Commitment line:** A 6-foot line drawn perpendicular to the 3rd base line, beginning at the base line and extending into foul territory. This line is located 30 feet from point of home plate, measured along the 3rd base line. Once a runner's foot touches the ground on or past the commitment line, the runner may not return to third base; the runner must continue toward the scoring plate. Violations will result in an out. Once both feet have touched/crossed, the runner (a) cannot be tagged out by the defensive player; and (b) the defensive player must touch the strike zone mat. The ball remains live.
16. **Scoring plate:** A scoring plate shall be placed 8 feet from the back tip of home plate on an extended line from first base. A line shall be drawn from third base to the scoring plate. The scoring plate is for use by the offensive player only.
17. All plays at the plate shall be force plays. A defender shall record an "out at the plate" by having possession of the ball and tagging home plate prior to the runner touching the scoring plate. If a defender attempts to tag an offensive player at the scoring plate the runner shall be called safe. A runner who attempts to score by touching other than the scoring plate shall be called out. Players who violate this rule are subject to ejection from the game.
18. **Double bag/mat:** A double bag/mat, twice the size of a standard base, shall be placed at first base, the double portion of the bag or mat being in foul territory. For the purposes of plays at first base, the entire bag shall be considered to be in fair territory.
19. **Runner's line:** A runner's line measuring 3 inches wide, and 30 feet long shall be marked parallel to, and 3 feet away from, the first base foul line in foul territory, extending from first base back toward home plate. Runners shall stay between this line and the foul line while running to first base. Failure to do so will result in the runner being declared out.
20. **Base Distance/Field Dimensions:** State qualifying games and the 2025 National Senior Games will utilize a double first base, second home plate, 30-foot commitment line between third base and home plate and a 6-foot pitching box. A field diagram with dimensions is included in the USA Softball rulebook (with the exception of the 6 foot pitching box and strike zone mat). If in the Tournament Director's discretion, such an adjustment is feasible, base paths will be 70 feet for men's age division 50-65+, 60 feet for women's 75+. The base paths will be 65 feet for men 70+ and women 50-70+ age divisions.
21. **Metal cleats:** Metal cleats will not be permitted. Players found wearing metal cleats in a game will be ejected from the game, and, if on base, a "dead ball out" will be called. If there are less than three outs, any players on base must return to the base occupied at the time the ejected player came to bat.
22. **Equalizer rule** (Games against different age divisions): When a team is playing an opponent in a different age division as determined by tournament officials, the older age division shall be given one run per inning starting in the second inning with a max of 5. If the teams are two or more age divisions difference, the older team will receive seven (7) runs (allocated at one run for each of the first seven, only, innings played).
23. **Ejection of Player:** If player is ejected, he/she shall not return to the game ejected from and the team's next game. If ejected a 2nd time, the player cannot play in the rest of the tournament.

Softball Playing Rules (cont.)

24. **Game Time:** Official game time starts two minutes after the umpire's coin toss at the pre-game manager's meeting. If, in the umpire's and Tournament Officials judgment, a team is unable to play at the scheduled game starting time, that team will be assessed a forfeit.
25. **Runner hit by fair ball:** A runner is not out when he/she is hit with a fair, untouched, batted ball that has passed an infielder, excluding the pitcher, and, in the judgment of the umpire, no other infielder had a chance to make an out. When a runner is struck with a fair untouched batted ball while not in contact with a base and before it passes an infielder, excluding the pitcher, or if it passes an infielder and another fielder has an opportunity to make an out – the ball is dead and the runner is out. A runner is out if he/she intentionally contacts a fair ball that an infielder missed.
26. **Uniform:** Team clothing must be of like design and color. An Arabic whole number (0-99) of contrasting color, or outlined in contrasting color, at least 6 inches high must be visible on the back of uniform shirts. No players on the same team may wear identical numbers. Sponsors may be added to jersey but cannot interfere with number placement. Uniforms shall be free of inappropriate symbols or wording. **Player(s) will not be allowed to play until the uniform is corrected.**
27. Jewelry is allowed to be worn at the player's risk.
28. The men's divisions will play 12-inch slow pitch (.44 core and a compression rating of no more than 375 psi). The women's divisions will play 11-inch slow pitch (.47 core and a compression rating of no more than 525 psi).
29. **Bat Rules:** All bats with a BPF of 1.21 or less will be legal for play, must be stamped with a BPF of 1.21 or less, and must have either a manufacturer installed non-slip grip surface, or a minimum of one wrap of tape. Bats without the BPF stamped on the bat will be considered illegal. A bat is not required to bear a USA Softball certification mark.

Note: this rule is an approved exception to the USA Softball bat policy and will be utilized in state qualifying games and the 2023 National Senior Games. All bat models approved for senior play by ISA, ISSA, SPA and SS-USA will be allowed for tournament play in NSGA.