

Latest Update: April 12, 2023

**FRANKLIN SENIOR SOFTBALL LEAGUE
COMPETITION RULES FOR 2023 SEASON**

The Franklin Senior Softball League is a recreational League founded in 2006 to promote co-ed softball. Managers are responsible for their teams and players following all league rules and for the proper conduct of their players and fans.

USA (ASA) rules apply to any situation not covered by league rules.

In these rules, the word “he” is gender neutral.

- 1. Game Days- Games are traditionally played on Friday evenings and Sunday mornings. Games scheduled for Fridays shall be scheduled to start at 6:15 p.m. before May 15 and 6:30 thereafter. Games to be played on Sundays shall be scheduled to start at 9:30 a.m. In all cases, forfeit time shall be 15 minutes after the scheduled start time. *Regular season & post-season games can only be postponed or re-scheduled with the permission of both team managers.***
- 2. Players-A maximum of eleven fielders may be positioned in the field. One of the extra fielders must be in the outfield. The minimum number of fielders shall be nine. A team with only nine players at the scheduled start time must start the game on time.**
- 3. Late arriving players, once the game has started must be added either by replacing someone else in the batting order or added at the end of the original batting order.**
- 4. Borrowing players-During the regular season, a team with only 9 players can borrow one or two players from the opposing team. The shorthanded team can either (1) borrow them for the duration of the game whereas they can play the field and bat with that team at the bottom of the batting order or (2) borrow any available player or players each inning to fill a position in the field in which case the borrowed player(s) remain in their own team's batting order. A team with only 9 players may also borrow a player from one of the other teams in the league with the permission of the opposing manager.**
- 5. Playing time-There are no league rules for mandatory individual playing time either for innings in the field or times at bat. However, team managers should make every effort to be fair and give sufficient playing time to all team members. Every player attending a game is expected to be given the opportunity to play and get to bat. Complaints about playing time can be directed to the league commissioner. This rule will be interpreted as requiring managers and teams to place all attending roster players who are willing and able to play into the batting order from the start of the game or as soon as a player arrives after the start. Injured players as well as players with long term health problems are exempt. Managers will notify one another at their games of any roster players who are present but considered injured or unavailable to play. Such players cannot then be inserted into the game without the approval of the**

opposing manager. Managers only may decline to play initially and later insert themselves into the lineup or pinch hit with the permission of the opposing manager.

6. Forfeits-A forfeit can be declared by the umpire in favor of the team not at fault in the case of insufficient players, the minimum is (9) to either start a game or continue a game or in the case of gross violation of league or Township park rules. Teams have a 15 minute "grace period" from game time to have sufficient players to start.
7. Batting Order- each team may establish its own number of batters in the order up to a maximum of 22, so long as all fielders appear in the batting order.
8. Players leaving a game early: Before the start of a game, a team manager must inform the opposing team of any players planning to leave the game early. No penalty will then be imposed.
9. **Any player removed from a batting order during the game whether from an injury, emergency or other circumstances can result in an automatic out for their next scheduled at bat unless a pinch hitter is available and used. In the case of an injury, when the effected player's turn comes up in the batting order, he must bat in that slot unless a pinch hitter is used as provided for in Rule 28 or an out shall be recorded. However, the opposing Manager can and should agree (unless he feels the injury or emergency is not legitimate) that the player's turn in the batting order can be skipped for the remainder of the game with no out recorded, in which case that player cannot re-enter the game in any capacity (provided that team can still field a minimum of 11 fielders without him). See rule 31 for injured baserunner.**
10. **ARC Pitching-For the 2023 season the league has voted to use an arc pitching style in all its games. Arc pitches must be delivered between 6 to 12 feet above the ground. The umpire will call a pitch illegal while it is still in the air and it counts as a ball. The batter may swing and put such a pitch in play whereas it is treated as any other hit pitch. Any declared illegal pitch counts as a strike if the batter swings and misses or hits it foul. Any pitch within the arc limits is a legal pitch whether it has topspin, backspin etc.**

A batter is out after a third strike, including a foul ball after two strikes. The pitching rubber will be 50 feet from the back point of home plate. The league will use a wooden strike zone measuring 35 inches long by 21 inches wide.

Not in use for 2023 season: [Legal Modified Pitching-Pitches shall be underhand of any speed, bowling style – slow, lob or fast. However, *no windmill pitching: the backswing of a pitcher's arm shall not rise more than 90 degrees to his torso (arm-hip-shoulder). No slingshot pitching: pitchers' arm must follow through in a smooth continuous motion past his hip, no stop motion.....no whip pitching: The ball may be brought behind the back on the backswing, but the shoulders and hip must be square to the batter upon release. The ball can be released away from the body but no more than at a 45-degree angle to the hips and as long as the palm is facing forward or towards the body. It cannot be released while outside of the wrist. "Arc ball" pitching is not allowed. A legal pitch will not rise over the batter's head more than one foot (12 inches). Managers are responsible for making sure their pitchers are following these rules. Any pitcher that consistently violates this rule as determined by the

Managers Council can be barred from further pitching in the league. Illegal pitches will be called a ball by the umpire. The pitcher's rubber shall be no closer than 45 feet from home plate. In delivering his pitch the pitcher shall begin the pitching motion with a pivot foot being in contact with the pitching rubber within two feet on either side of an imaginary straight line determined by the umpire that runs between home plate and second base].

- 11. Warm up pitches-Pitchers will be allowed 8 warm up pitches before the start of the game and 4 warm up pitches between innings. New pitchers will be allowed 4 warm up pitches.**
- 12. Umpires-All umpires will be made available by the League. Teams cannot request a certain umpire or request that a certain umpire be removed from a game. They may complain to the Commissioner who can investigate.**
- 13. Umpires/Safety-An umpire can call off any game or end a game at any time if he feels that the actions of participants or weather and field conditions warrant it. In the course of applying any rule or generally managing the conduct of a game, the umpire shall be mindful at all times of safety considerations and act at all times to avoid or minimize the risk of injury to any player.**
- 14. Wooden strike zone extended plate in use for the 2023 season for Arc pitching. [Strike Zone-The strike zone shall extend from the top of the batter's shoulders to the bottom of his knees when he takes his normal batting stance. The initial count on each batter shall start at 0-0. No "plate extender" shall be used].
If a batter is hit by the pitch, it shall be called a ball.**
- 15. Walks-For 2023 No Maximum walks per inning rule. Intentional walks are allowed, but the pitcher must throw four pitches that are out of the strike zone.**
- 16. Foul Balls-In all cases: A foul tip that does not rise higher than the batter's head and is caught by the catcher with less than two strikes on the batter shall count as a strike only. A foul on any count that rises higher than the batter's head and is caught by the catcher is an out.
Not in effect for 2023-[If the batter hits a foul ball on the third strike (unless it is a foul tip caught by the catcher, thereby resulting in an out), the batter gets one more strike only (called or foul)].**
- 17. Equipment: The home team must supply regulation bases, stuffed not plastic, plus two home plates and one stuffed orange colored auxiliary first base and a pitching rubber. If not provided the game is forfeited to the visiting team.
Teams should also have a First Aid Kit at every game including cold packs.**
- 18. Bases-Bases shall be 65 feet apart and not tied down (unless the field being used has permanent bases in which case the permanent bases shall be used regardless of the distance between bases). For safety reasons, an auxiliary home plate and an orange-colored stuffed auxiliary first base for the runner shall be used.**
- 19. Commitment Line-A commitment line shall be established halfway between third base and the regular home plate. If the runner passes that line, they must proceed to the auxiliary plate. If the runner advances to the regular home plate, the umpire will call him out.**
- 20. Force at any base rule-For safety reasons, a fielder does not need to tag a runner advancing to any base. An out shall be recorded if the ball arrives in possession of**

the fielder while he is touching any base including the regular first base or home plate before the runner touches the auxiliary first base, auxiliary home plate or regular second and third base. *However, a fielder still has the option to tag a passing runner or in a traditional run-down play and any fielder covering a throw to any base except home maintains the option of tagging the runner.* On a ball hit into the outfield, a runner may touch the regular first base when running to second on a continuous play. A runner who is judged to have rounded a base with the intention of possibly advancing rather than having run through the base can be tagged out. Any player caught between bases can be tagged out as in a traditional “run down” play.

21. **Collisions/NO Sliding** -In the interests of safety, a runner is out if he intentionally collides with a fielder. Also, a runner is out if he intentionally slides into a base; **this includes the act of diving back to a base.** An obvious trip shall not be considered an intentional slide. A decision by the umpire that a collision was incidental or unavoidable shall be final and not appealable. If a collision is deemed flagrant by the umpire or both Managers, the runner shall also be ejected from the game. No tagging of a runner coming from third is allowed if he has crossed the commitment line; to record an out the regular home plate must be tagged. If a runner touches the regular home plate before or without touching the auxiliary home plate, the runner is out automatically.
22. **Interference-Verbal interference** by the team at bat or anything that distracts or deters a team or player from making a play will result in a warning and subsequently in an ejection. Umpire may also call a batter out. In the umpire’s judgement if an injury results from an interference, then an immediate ejection will result. Also, obstruction may be called on the defense based on a fake tag or any verbal interference and remedied by the umpire awarding bases.
23. **Over Running Bases Rule**-For reasons of safety, “overrunning” of bases (either going toward **or returning to a base**) is allowed; provided, however, that if a fielder completely blocks the base, the runner must pull up or go around the base even if the fielder is technically at fault, and the umpire shall make sure this rule is strictly enforced. In such situations, the umpire shall have the discretion to call the runner safe or to award the runner an extra base if he feels the runner would have advanced safely had he not been required to avoid a collision. Decisions made by the umpire in accordance with the preceding rule shall be final and not appealable. *While overrunning a base, the runner can be tagged out if he makes an obvious commitment to attempt an advance to the next base.* If the runner chooses to advance to second base after an overrun of first base, he need not retag first base. A runner who overruns second or third must retag the base he overran before proceeding to the next base. If a runner is advancing to a base that has been moved for any reason, to be safe the runner must tag the spot where the base was originally located, such spot to be determined in the sole judgment of the umpire.
24. **Baserunners**-No bunting or base stealing is allowed. Runners may not take a lead off any base and may only leave a base when the pitched ball arrives at the plate. If the umpire catches a runner leaving early, he shall call “no pitch” and call the runner out; if the batter hits the pitch anyway, it does not count.

Runners may not advance on a passed ball, wild pitch or errant return throw from the catcher that is dropped or missed by the pitcher. A batter is automatically out if a third strike is dropped by the catcher; no throw to first base is required. Overthrows to first, third or home that go out of play: runners can proceed to the base to which they are advancing, plus one more. The infield fly rule shall be applicable. If in the discretion of the umpire, a fielder intentionally drops a fair fly ball that can be caught with normal effort when a base is occupied by a runner, he may call the batter “out” automatically and the runner(s) shall be allowed to safely return to the base occupied before the play began.

25. **Regulation Game-**A regulation game will last 7 innings unless cancelled sooner by the umpire or both Managers due to weather, darkness or other unsafe playing condition. An official game in the regular season shall be any game where the losing team has had at least 5 at bats; a game that has not become official that is called for any reason shall be replayed in its entirety from the beginning. *During the regular season managers may agree to end a game in a tie after 7 innings or play extra innings. They may also agree to resume such a game or a game that is tied in extra innings at a later date.*
26. **Regulation Game Rule for playoffs:** A game that must be called before it is complete **and regardless of whether it is yet an official game** shall be resumed at the point at which it was stopped as soon as conveniently possible and played to completion. In the event of a tie game after regulation play, play shall continue into extra innings until one team is ahead at the completion of an inning. A game that has become official that remains tied but then is called for any reason, and any incomplete playoff game that is resumed as provided above, shall resume at a later date from the exact point where the game was called, using the same players, position in the batting order then at bat, base runners, etc. as closely as possible as they were in effect when the game was called, any disagreement about which is to be determined by the Managers in a good faith, cooperative manner upon consultation with the umpire if necessary.
27. **Mercy Rule-**There will be a mandatory 15 run “mercy rule,” that is, if one team leads the other by 15 runs or more at any time after five complete innings have been played, the game is over. **The mercy rule is in effect for playoff games.**
28. **Five Run Rule-**In any inning, except the last inning or extra innings: A team tied or in the lead can score no more than 5 runs in that inning; a team that is losing can score as many runs as possible but cannot take the lead by more than 5 runs. In the last inning or extra innings, there is no limitation on the number of runs that can be scored.
29. **Scorekeeper-**Each team shall designate a scorekeeper. The scorekeepers shall compare scores after each half inning. Any discrepancy in the score between scorekeepers shall be resolved by the Managers before the next half inning begins. The home team scorebook is the official scorebook. Scorekeepers/managers are responsible for reporting game results to the League Secretary/Commissioner within 24 hours.
30. **Free substitution of fielders-**Changes in the field shall be made by the managers on the honor system. There is no need to advise the other team's scorekeeper

when a change is made. This is permitted so long as the batting order is maintained. Players removed from the field to 'sit out' may return so long as they keep their same place in the batting order and may do so any number of times.

31. Pinch Hitter-At any point a Manager may, **with permission of the other Manager** and upon notifying the umpire, insert themselves into the game and into the batting order as the last batter or act as a designated pinch hitter for another batter. The designated pinch hitter is then permanently removed from the game after he bats and runs the bases.
32. Courtesy Runners-A courtesy base runner is permitted to substitute for any batter (whether or not injured) who has reached base safely, but can only be inserted immediately after the batter safely reaches base, **before the first pitch to the next batter**. Managers need not designate which batters will have courtesy runners beforehand. As a courtesy base runner, **a player may run only once per game**. A player used as a courtesy base runner may also run for himself as a batter in the same inning. However, if a courtesy runner's regular slot in the batting order comes up while he is on base, the manager must choose either to lose the runner and no out recorded or the courtesy base runner can remain on base and an out is recorded. A player may be used once per inning as either a courtesy runner or designated runner but not both in the same inning. A player who is replaced by a courtesy runner cannot be a courtesy runner in **the same inning**. Designated runners and courtesy runner must be players who are in the batting order.
33. Runners from Home-One batter from each team **below age 75 so designated before the start of the game in the discretion of the manager and** (b) any other designated batter who has reached or will reach age 75 by Aug 1 of current season, may have a courtesy base runner from home plate, such runner to start from a point behind the regular home plate chosen by the umpire. A courtesy runner for each such "designated batter" must be used each time that batter is up. To avoid confusion on the part of the fielders, if a batter who has a courtesy runner from home plate nevertheless begins to run to first base after a pitch is struck, the umpire shall call the batter "out." **A player used as courtesy runner from home if he reaches base cannot then have another courtesy runner replace him. He must complete his turn on the bases. A player may only be used once during a game as a designated runner from home. Therefore, each time a player using a runner from home comes to bat he must use a different player as his designated runner. A player may be a courtesy runner once per game and they may also be a designated runner from home once per game. These are two different restrictions.**
34. Injured Baserunner-If a courtesy base runner, or a batter who is no longer eligible for a courtesy base runner becomes injured while on base or advancing to a base, he either must remain on base or he may be removed from the base with no out recorded (in which case he may not re-enter the game in any capacity provided his team can still field a minimum of eleven fielders without him). **In this situation no courtesy base runner for the injured runner is permitted.**

35. **Weather-Cancellation of a game before it begins due to poor weather or playing field conditions will be made by 4:00 PM on weekdays and 8 AM on weekends. If due to unforeseen circumstances or poor field conditions, the umpire can also make the decision to cancel the game and inform the Commissioner within 24 hours. The Franklin Township Recreation Dept. shall have the final say in the use of township fields. The League Commissioner shall schedule a makeup game for a game cancelled either pre-game or before it becomes an official game, or continuation of a tie game that has gone at least 5 innings, as soon as possible thereafter.**

36. **Approved bats-Only bats approved by Franklin Senior Softball league are permitted in league games. Approved bats shall be defined as legal bats that are properly inspected and stickered. League games will include pre-season exhibition games, regular league games and pre-game batting practice. Legal bats are defined as bats having a clear and permanent ASA or USA Softball certification stamp. Any bat marked as "Seniors" is considered an illegal bat. Inspections: League stickers will be applied before and after games including pre-season exhibition games after being properly inspected. Players may request two or more league managers or a league umpire along with a league manager to inspect a legal bat and apply a league sticker.**

Before league games all bats must be made available for possible inspection by league managers and umpires.

Penalty: Any player in possession of an unstickered bat or attempting to use such a bat on a league game day will be made to remove that bat from the field. Any player found to have used an unstickered legal bat to put a ball in play during a league game will be called out provided it is called to the umpire's attention before the next batter receives a pitch. Any batter stepping into the batter's box with an unstickered ILLEGAL bat will be called out and removed from the lineup for the remainder of the game. Their place in the batting order will be skipped over without penalty.

All decisions by the umpire regarding the use of bats are final and not appealable.

The league also reserves the right to require bats be removed from play that appear on the annual USA Softball Non-Approved List.

37. **Altered Bats-No altered bat will be allowed in any game or batting practice for any reason. Any violation of this rule against altered bats being used in a game by any player shall result in the player being called out, removed from the game and referred to the Managers Council for possible suspension. Definition: a bat is considered altered when the physical structure of a legal bat has been changed. Examples are: replacing the handle of a metal bat with a wooden or other type of handle and inserting material inside the bat also bat rolling and bat shaving. Replacing the legal grip with another legal grip is not considered altering the bat. End caps that are cracked, loose or removed make it a potentially altered bat and should not be used in league play. A "Flare" or "Cone" grip attached to the bat is NOT considered an altered bat.**

38. **Game Balls-Softballs-Each team shall supply one new ball for use at the start of each game. Game balls are restricted to those provided by the league.**

39. **Uniforms-Uniforms and softball spikes, while not required, are encouraged. Spikes shall not be metal. Any type of glove may be used at any position.**
40. **Catcher's gear-protective gear is in the discretion of the catcher except that the catcher shall always wear a protective mask. Pitchers and fielders have the option of wearing a protective mask when in the field.**
41. **[Waiver Form- No person shall be permitted to participate as a team member unless and until he signs a waiver legally releasing all parties from liability in the event of an injury. Team Managers shall be responsible for enforcing this rule and should have all signed waivers available at all team activities for inspection by other parties if asked]. Not in effect for 2023.**
42. Game results-All scores shall be promptly reported by the home team Manager to the League Commissioner and/or to his designee, who shall keep the official record of league standings updated and distributed weekly.
43. **Playoffs for the League Championship shall be held after the conclusion of the regular season. (See section 1 rules). Player eligibility for playoffs shall be a minimum of 6 games played during the regular season. However, the League Council can waive this requirement in cases of injury, illness or other extenuating circumstances by a majority vote.**
44. The throwing of a bat or losing a bat during a swing that hits the catcher and/or umpire is an immediate ejection from the game. If there is no replacement available that player may remain in the game to play the field but will be skipped in the batting order with no automatic out recorded. Intentional throwing of the bat will result in an immediate ejection from the game (no option to remain in the field if there is no replacement player available). Second ejection from an intentionally thrown bat at any time will result in an immediate ejection from the game and from league play for the remainder of the season.
45. No Gentleman Agreements-Managers cannot make a separate agreement between them to use rules different or altered from league rules for their games.
46. NO Home Run Limits-There will not be a home run limit for balls hit over the fence at Middlebush Field. However, teams hitting home runs or foul balls are responsible for retrieving the balls.
47. Protesting a call-The only call made by an umpire that can be protested is a misinterpretation of a rule. Judgement calls cannot be protested. All such protests must be made to the umpire and opposing scorekeeper before the next pitch after the incident. The official score cannot be protested.
48. Protests-All game protests including player eligibility questions must be made to the league commissioner by the end of the next business day in writing, by text or email.
49. **Doubleheaders-Teams may schedule doubleheaders to make up lost games on their schedule. The two team managers can agree to different than the normal start times for Friday or Sunday doubleheaders as well as a different number of innings or starting pitch counts to speed the games along; such as two 5 inning games, or starting batters with a "one ball and one strike count".**
50. Ejections-Any ejected player or coach must leave the ball park area including the parking lot immediately before the game can continue. Failure to do so can result in a forfeit. A second player ejected from the same team will result in a forfeit.

Managers are responsible for the conduct of their players and fans, failure to help resolve a problem when asked may result in an ejection.

51. Casual Profanity and any unsportsmanlike language, even in frustration and even if it's not directed at the umpire can result in an out being called against the offending player's team.
52. **Aggressive profanity, fighting or intentional throwing a bat or other equipment at a player, coach or umpire will result in an ejection.**
53. **Double Forfeit-Any physical altercations such as pushing, shoving, hitting, kicking etc. between opposing players will result in a double forfeiture.**
54. **Suspended players or managers may not be present at the field during league games.**
55. **Blood Rule-Any bleeding player must be removed from the game and given first aid. He may then return to the game.**
56. **Home team occupies the first base bench.**
57. **Protective Barrier-The use of a barrier by a pitcher is allowed but is not mandatory. Any batted ball striking the barrier is declared a dead ball. Any thrown ball while in play that hits the barrier remains in play.**
58. **Batters Box-the dimensions will be 3 feet wide by 7 feet long starting 6 inches from home plate. The length of the zone being 4 feet above the middle of home plate and 3 feet below the middle of home plate.**