



Special Olympics Minnesota 2025 Softball Handbook

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COACH CERTIFICATION RATIO TABLE

The updated coach certification ratio tables can be found in the Special Olympics Minnesota Coaches Portal under policies and fact sheets, or here: [Coach Ratio Table](#)

MORE INFORMATION

Practice ideas, skill assessment/development, and rules can be found in the SOI Quick Start Guides and SOI Rules for each respective sport can be found at www.specialolympics.org/sports.aspx

TRADITIONAL SOFTBALL RULES

Rules of competition for Amateur Softball Association and Special Olympics International will be used for all events conducted by Special Olympics Minnesota. The rules listed below are highlights of the rules of competition along with any exceptions. Modifications of the rules may be made at the discretion of event management.

Equipment

The ball being used will be a .52 COR, 300 compression level, 12-inch stitch softball. Batters and runners must always wear helmets while in live ball territory. Athletes coaching from the coach box must have a helmet on as well. Athletes who remove their helmet during play will be declared out.

Catchers must wear a helmet, face mask and chest protector. Face masks are optional for all fielders besides the catcher. Shin guards are optional. No wood bats, metal cleats or jewelry are allowed during the competition.

Game Length

Games will be either seven innings or a maximum of 70 minutes. No new inning will begin after 60 minutes. The only time a game will run over 70 minutes will be to ensure that teams have an equal amount of batting opportunities. If a team has a 10-run lead or more after the completion of five innings, the game will be over.

Extra innings will be played with a maximum of two extra innings. If the game remains tied after the completion of both extra innings, the results will be determined by going back to the last inning when a team had the lead.

Roster

Rosters need to have a minimum of 11 athletes, and a maximum of 20. Teams must start a game with at least 10 players; if one is lost to injury, a team may continue to play, but anytime that athlete is due up to bat an out will be declared. If a team loses another player (that brings their roster down to 8 players), the game will be forfeited. The teams may finish out the game, but it will be recorded as a forfeit.

Teams can bat all athletes only if the opposing team agrees to it. Should the opposing team not agree to it, then a maximum of 11 athletes may bat. Batting order must remain the same throughout the game. A position player removed from the game due to substitution (not injury) may return to the game one time as a substitute but will not be allowed to re-enter the game if substituted for a second time. Players who bat in a position in the batting order other than the one previously occupied by the person they are replacing will be declared out.

An extra 11th player can be used in the game. The extra hitter (EH) must play the entire game and must bat in the same batting order. You may substitute for the extra hitter and place them in any defensive position, but the substitute bats in the same position.

The original extra hitter can re-enter the game. A substitute for the extra hitter can be anybody who has not already played in the game. If the extra hitter leaves the game without a substitute, an out will be called. You must inform the umpire and opposing team if you choose to use an extra hitter.

Players who are ejected can be replaced with a substitute. Ejected players will be done playing for the day, not just the game from which they were ejected.

Coaches are not permitted to be in the field of play at any point during gameplay. It is recommended that any athlete that requires 1-on-1 support to play should compete in our Individual Skills event.

Gameplay Rules

There will be three outs per inning, or a maximum of 10 batters per inning. If the 10th batter puts the ball in play, the inning will end when time is called by the umpire. The pitching rubber will be 40-50 feet from home plate. The ball must be pitched in an underhand motion and should travel in an arc no less than 6 feet and no more than 12 feet. Each batter will begin with a one ball and one strike count. After reaching two strikes, one courtesy foul will be allowed, but a foul ball after one courtesy foul will constitute the third strike and the batter is out.

At the umpire's discretion, teams will first receive a warning for delaying progression of the game in between innings, batting players, or other notable instances. If continued after the first warning, teams will receive an out for that offensive player. If it occurs on defense, the team will begin their following at bats with one out.

While running the bases, athletes cannot be physically pulled or pushed to run in a certain direction by a coach. If a coach physically touches a player, the batter or runner will be declared out. If incidental contact occurs, there will be no action taken against the batter or runner. Athletes, Unified partners, and coaches will be allowed to be base coaches on first and third base. They must always wear a helmet. They cannot contest calls from the umpire or interfere with defensive players. Athletes and Unified partners in this position are allowed to be in the batting order and can be replaced by a coach or another athlete or partner for their plate appearance.

When there is a close play at a base, the runner should make an attempt to avoid unnecessary contact. Sliding is encouraged during plays but not required. If a runner runs over a defensive player, the runner will be called out. Defensive players cannot hinder the progress of a runner by blocking the base or basepath without possession of the ball.

Players cannot lead off at any base. They must stay on the base until the ball is hit. Courtesy runners are allowed and must be a rostered player. The last player to be called out will be the only player allowed to be used for a courtesy runner. Only one courtesy runner per inning is allowed.

Due to the limited number of batters per inning, intentional walks are not allowed. If the umpire deems that a batter was intentionally walked, the offensive team is given another maximum batter. Balls thrown out of the playing area are considered dead balls and play stops immediately. The runners will be awarded two bases, the base they are running to at the time of the throw, and the following base.

The infield fly rule will be used when there is less than two outs and a force out at third or home plate. Any ball hit up in the infield which can be caught with ordinary effort (by either an infielder or outfielder) will be called an infield fly and the batter will be out. The runners may advance at their own risk. If the ball is caught, they must tag up. If the ball is not caught, they do not need to tag up. This call is considered an umpire's judgement and cannot be protested.

Protests are not allowed on judgement calls, only on rule interpretations. Appeals are defined as a play in which an umpire is unable to decide unless they are requested to do so by a coach or player. Appeals are allowed when there is a question about a player leaving a base too soon, missing a base, or a check swing. If time has been called, the defensive team must set itself and request judgement from the umpire on the play in question before initiating the next play.

If a team forfeits 50% or more of their games at a competition, they will receive a participation ribbon. Forfeited games will be marked as a 10-0 loss on the schedule. For tiebreakers between two teams, places will be determined by head-to-head competition. When three or more teams are involved, places will be determined based on runs scored against. Teams with the fewest runs scored against will be given the higher place in the results.

COACH PITCH RULES

A 6-pitch, 3-swing rule will be enforced in coach pitch softball. After six pitches or three swings, whichever comes first, the batter will be out. Players cannot be walked.

A coach from the team batting will do the pitching and must stand on the rubber. The defensive team will still field an athlete in the pitcher position, as the coach pitching does not field at all, but they can defend themselves. A dead ball will be declared if the ball contacts the coach, and the batter/runners will be awarded one base. It is the umpire's discretion to award the base if deemed the coach could not get out of the way. **All other rules in coach pitch softball are the same as traditional softball.**

Athletes in coach pitch that need a tee may use a tee when they are batting. T-Ball assistance is meant for athletes that are unable to hit a live pitch. When registering, athletes using a tee must be noted. Only athletes that have been properly registered as needing T-Ball assistance are allowed to use a tee during competition. Athletes may not switch between coach pitch and tee during the same at bat but may switch between at bats. Teams may only register half their roster for T-Ball assistance.

A 45-foot arc is marked from the first base line to the third base line. If a ball does not cross the arc, it is considered a foul ball. Players can rush the ball if it is still moving, but if the ball stops forward movement prior to the arc, it is a foul ball. If there are three missed swings or the batter has two strikes and fouls off the third attempt, it will be considered a strikeout, and the batter will be out.

UNIFIED SOFTBALL RULES

All gameplay rules for Unified are the same as traditional gameplay, besides the following.

Rosters must be a minimum of 11 participants, with a maximum of 20. There should always be an equal number of athletes and Unified partners. This is because athletes and Unified partners must alternate in the batting order, and the order remains the same throughout the game.

The lineup must start with 10 players and include 5 athletes and 5 Unified partners. If a player is lost to injury, a team may continue to play, but anytime that player is due up to bat, an out will be declared. If a team loses another player and go to 8 or less, the game is forfeited. The teams may finish out the game/time limit, but it will be recorded as a forfeit. If a team has less than 10 players, there must be an equal number of athletes and Unified partners in the field or more athletes than Unified partners. There will be no extra hitter used, and teams do not have the option of batting their entire lineup.

Courtesy runners are allowed and must be a rostered player. The last player to be called out will be the only player allowed to be used for a courtesy runner. Only one runner per inning, and the role of the runner must be the same as the person they are replacing. Unified partners can run for Unified partners, athletes can run for athletes.

Fielding positions must be balanced between athletes and Unified partners. This means that the infield should have two of each, the outfield should have two of each, and the pitcher and catcher should be one of each. In Unified, players at first base, third base, and pitcher are required to wear a facemask. The catcher is required to wear a helmet, facemask, and chest protector. Helmet facemasks are encouraged for batters and players in the infield.

There is a limit of two over-the-fence homeruns in Unified games per team. Athletes and Unified partner over-the-fence homeruns count towards the two. If an additional over-the-fence homerun is hit, the ball is dead, the batter is out, and no runners can advance bases.

INDIVIDUAL SKILLS RULES

The Individual Skills competition is provided for athletes with limitations (such as walkers and wheelchairs), younger athletes and athletes new to the sport of softball and older athletes who still have the skills to play softball but cannot play an entire game. Individual Skills is not for athletes who can already play a full game.

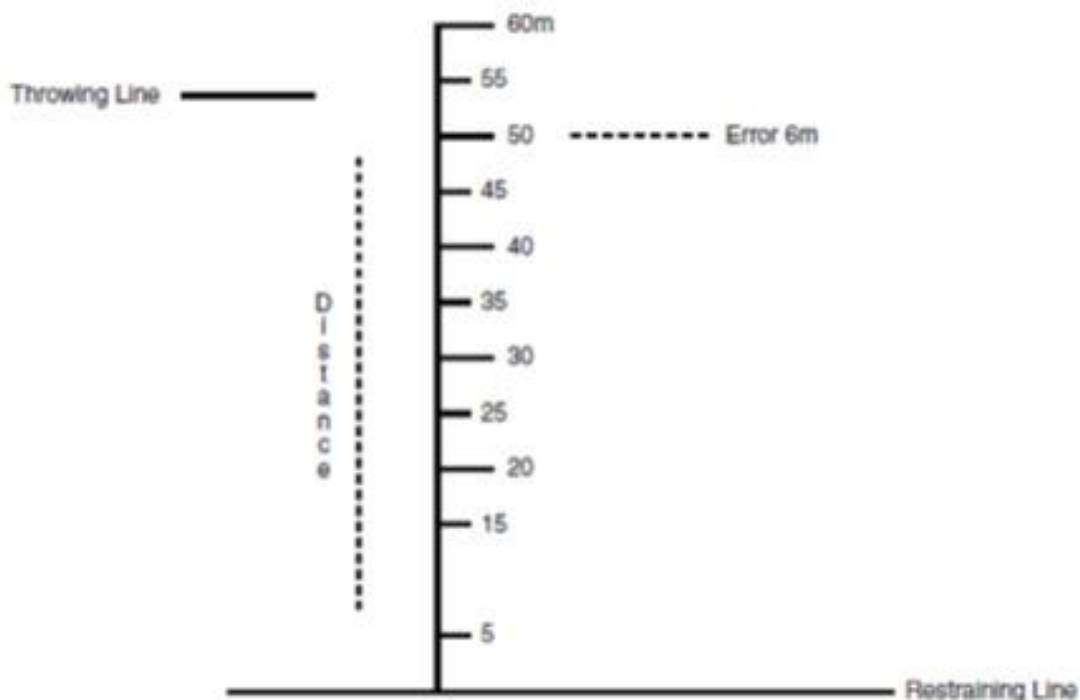
There are four events: Throwing, Fielding, Base Running, and Hitting. The athlete's final score is determined by adding together the scores achieved in each of the four events.

Throwing

The athlete throws behind the restraining line, may take one or two steps to approach the line to throw. An athlete has two attempts to throw the softball as far and as straight as possible down the throwing line without stepping over the restraining line. The better of the two throws is measured and recorded as the player's score. If a player steps on or over the line before releasing the ball, the trial must be repeated. There will be a maximum of two repeats.

For scoring, the final score is the throwing distance, measured at a point on the throwing line straight across from the spot where the ball landed, minus the error distance. The error distance is the number of meters the ball landed off target away from the throwing line. Scores and distance are measured to the nearest meter.

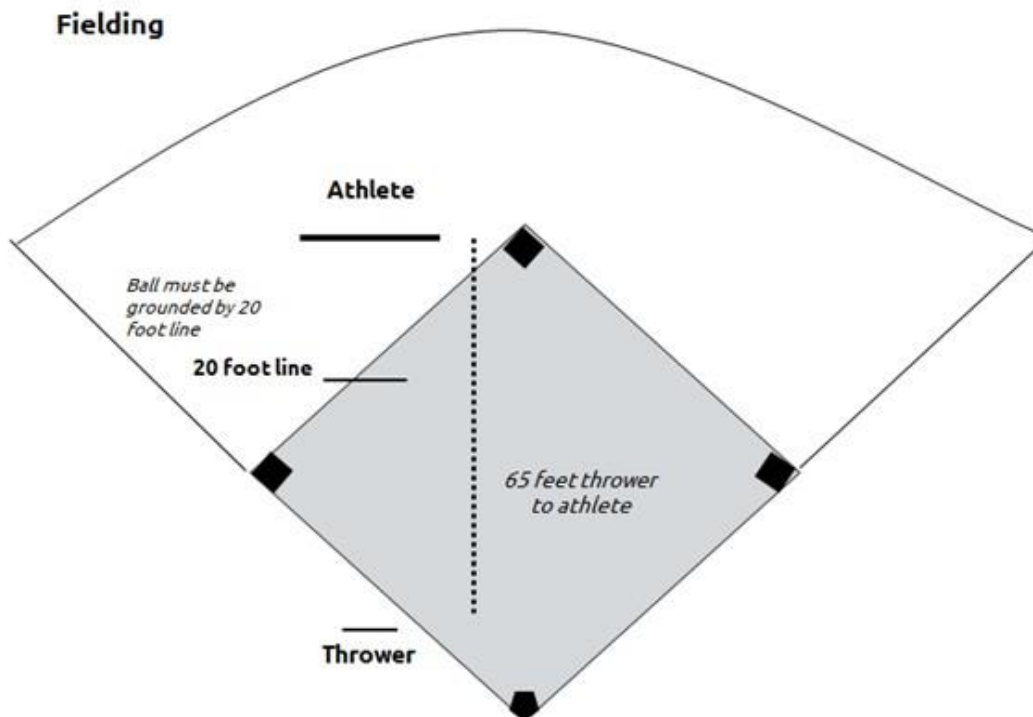
For example, if a ball lands at 50 meters and is 6 meters off to one side, the player's score is 44 points. If the total score ends with a decimal, round the score down to the nearest whole meter. If the final distance is 45.87 meters, the final score is 45.



Fielding

The athlete will stand between and behind two cones. The official must throw the ball on the ground to the athlete, between the cones. The throw to the athlete must hit the ground before the 20-foot chalk mark, and the thrower should be 65 feet from the athlete. The athlete may move aggressively toward the ball. If the thrown ball is outside of the cones, the throw must be repeated. Each athlete gets five fielding attempts per trial and receive two trials total.

For scoring, the athlete received five points for a cleanly fielded ball, which means that it was either caught in the glove or trapped against the body, but off the ground. The athlete will receive two points for a ball that is blocked, and zero points for missing the ball. Final score is the total of the ten attempts.



Base Running

Bases are positioned 60 feet apart. The athlete is instructed to start on home plate, and run around the bases as fast as possible, touching each base along the way.

For scoring, the time starts when the athlete leaves home plate and stops when the athlete returns to home plate. A penalty of five seconds for each base missed will be assessed. The best score of two trials is recorded as the final score. The Base Running score will be calculated by subtracting the time in seconds from 60. For example, a time of 48.5 seconds would result in a score of 11.5, because $60 - 48.5 = 11.5$.

Hitting

Standing in the batter's box, the athlete hits the ball off the tee. Missed swings, nicking the tee, or making contact with the ball will all count as an attempt. The athlete will receive three attempts.

For scoring, the distance of the longest hit will determine the athlete's final score. The distance of a hit is measured from the batting tee to the point where the ball first touches the ground. If the distance falls between meters, distance should be rounded down. For example, a ball hit 46.75 meters would result in a hitting score of 46.



Special Olympics
Minnesota

20XX Sample Competition

Softball Skills: Individual Skills

John Doe

MN.07.ELK: Elk River

07

Base Running

Best out of two trials. For each trial, take 60 seconds, add 5 seconds for each penalty (a penalty is a missed base) and subtract the time taken to complete the trial. Both times are measured to the nearest second and should be rounded down. IE: 22.67 = 22 seconds.

	Penalty	Time	Score
Trial 1:	60 - _____	- _____	= _____
Trial 2:	60 - _____	- _____	= _____

Best Score:

Hitting

The distance of the longest hit shall determine the athletes' final score. The distance of a hit is measured from the batting tee to the point where the ball first touches the ground. The distance is measured to the nearest meter, IE: 1m = 1 point. 46m = 46 points. If the score falls between meters, scores should be rounded down IE: 46.73 = 46 points.

Attempt 1	Attempt 2	Attempt 3
_____	_____	_____

Best Score:

Fielding

The athlete receives five points for a clearly fielded ball (either caught in glove or trapped against the body, but off the ground); two points for a ball that is blocked and zero points for a missed attempt for a maximum score of 50 (10 total attempts in two sets of five).

Total Score:

Throwing

The net throwing score equals the throwing distance, measured at a point on the throwing line straight across from (perpendicular to) the spot where the ball landed, minus the error distance - the number of meters the ball landed off target, away from the throwing line. The player's score is the better of the two throws. Both error scores and distance are measured to the nearest meter. IE: If a ball lands even with (perpendicular to) the 50m point on the measuring tape, but is 6m off to one side, the player score is 44 points. (Distance thrown (50) minus number of meters off target (6) results in a net score of 44m.) Athletes score one point per meter. IE: 44m = 44 points. If score falls between meters, score should be rounded down. IE: 44.73 = 44

	Distance	Error	Score
Throw 1	_____	- _____	= _____
Throw 2	_____	- _____	= _____

Best Score:

An athlete's final score is determined by adding together the scores achieved in each of their four events and writing that score in the box to the right.

Final Score:

DIVISIONING

As a part of the regional registration process, each team will be registered with a level: Novice, Intermediate, or Advanced. This will replace our process of requiring individual qualifying scores. On page 11, there is information that will assist coaches with deciding which level is best for their team to compete at. Teams will be placed in divisions with teams in the same level, and all levels will follow the same rules of play.

The state office has discretion to assign levels based on regional gameplay, past results, or other information that has been provided by the coaching staff. If a coach needs more assistance in deciding team level, reach out to the state office. If the delegation is creating a new team, the state office may reach out to ask for additional information to assist with the initial divisioning.

Divisioning is based on the selected level of play and the results from previous competitions. When divisioning for state, much more emphasis is put on common opponents, coach notes, previous game results at competitions.

SPORTSMANSHIP

Good sportsmanship is both the coach's and athlete's commitment to fair play, ethical behavior, and integrity. In perception and practice, sportsmanship is defined as those qualities which are characterized by generosity and genuine concern for others. Below we highlight focus points and ideas on how to teach and coach sportsmanship to your athletes by leading by example.

Competitive Effort

- Put forth maximum effort during each event
- Practice the skills with the same intensity as you would perform them in competition
- Always finish a game; Never quit

Fair Play Always

- Comply with the rules
- Demonstrate sportsmanship and fair play
- Respect the decision of the officials
- Strategy discussions with any athlete and/or partner are prohibited once the game begins
 - If an official determines that a coach, partner, or spectator is violating this rule, the official may sanction the offending individual. Sanctions may include verbal warning, citing the coach/partner with unsportsmanlike conduct, or expulsion from the games.

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

LEVELS OF PLAY			
Competency	NOVICE	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
Game Awareness	The team has a basic conceptual understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Infield/Outfield Defensive Play/Positions <input type="checkbox"/> Generating Offense <input type="checkbox"/> Primary Sport Rules <input type="checkbox"/> Situational Game Awareness <input type="checkbox"/> Pitching (only for players in this role; at least 1 pitcher/team) <input type="checkbox"/> Catching (only for players in this role; at least 1 catcher/team) 	The team has a moderate conceptual understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Infield/Outfield Defensive Play/Positions <input type="checkbox"/> Generating Offense <input type="checkbox"/> Primary Sport Rules <input type="checkbox"/> Situational Game Awareness <input type="checkbox"/> Pitching (only for players in this role; at least 2 pitchers/team) <input type="checkbox"/> Catching (only for players in this role; at least 1 catcher/team) <input type="checkbox"/> In-Game Adjustments 	The team has an advanced conceptual understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Infield/Outfield Defensive Play/Positions <input type="checkbox"/> Generating Offense <input type="checkbox"/> Primary Sport Rules <input type="checkbox"/> Situational Game Awareness <input type="checkbox"/> Pitching (only for players in this role; at least 2 pitchers/team) <input type="checkbox"/> Catching (only for players in this role; at least 1 catcher/team) <input type="checkbox"/> In-Game Adjustments <input type="checkbox"/> Game Strategy
Technical Skills	The team has basic skills in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Base Running <input type="checkbox"/> Batting <input type="checkbox"/> Catching <input type="checkbox"/> Fielding <input type="checkbox"/> Throwing 	The team has moderate skills in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Base Running <input type="checkbox"/> Batting <input type="checkbox"/> Catching <input type="checkbox"/> Fielding <input type="checkbox"/> Throwing 	The team has advanced skills in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Base Running <input type="checkbox"/> Batting <input type="checkbox"/> Catching <input type="checkbox"/> Fielding <input type="checkbox"/> Throwing
Tactical Awareness	The team has basic skills in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> On-field Communication <input type="checkbox"/> Player Movements (in field / defensively) <input type="checkbox"/> Player Movements (on base) 	The team has moderate skills in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> On-field Communication <input type="checkbox"/> Player Movements (in field / defensively) <input type="checkbox"/> Player Movements (on base) <input type="checkbox"/> Field awareness + positioning 	The team has advanced skills in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> On-field Communication <input type="checkbox"/> Player Movements (in field / defensively) <input type="checkbox"/> Player Movements (on base) <input type="checkbox"/> Field awareness + positioning <input type="checkbox"/> Game speed + tempo
Intangibles	The team has basic: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Speed/Quickness <input type="checkbox"/> Endurance/Fitness <input type="checkbox"/> Strength (for batting + throwing) 	The team has moderate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Speed/Quickness <input type="checkbox"/> Endurance/Fitness <input type="checkbox"/> Strength (for batting + throwing) 	The team has advanced: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Speed/Quickness <input type="checkbox"/> Endurance/Fitness <input type="checkbox"/> Strength (for batting + throwing)
Coaching	Coaches have basic understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Sport rules <input type="checkbox"/> Game Management + Strategy <input type="checkbox"/> Game Instruction + Player Development 	Coaches have moderate understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Sport rules <input type="checkbox"/> Game Management + Strategy <input type="checkbox"/> Game Instruction + Player Development 	Coaches have advanced understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Sport rules <input type="checkbox"/> Game Management + Strategy <input type="checkbox"/> Game Instruction + Player Development