

2026 MARS SOFTBALL CLUB GAME RULES

MARS Softball Club Rules are a supplement to the USA Official Softball Rulebook. All USA rules apply except as superseded by the MARS Softball Club rules below. A copy of these rules should always be present at the field.

SUMMARY OF RECENT CHANGES

- The 11" Ball will no longer be used in the Co-ed (or any Division). References to the 11" ball in the rules are removed.
- The 55-minute rule will remain in place as previously discussed in section X below.
- The Halo Rule will be in place for all Divisions. Further definition of this rule is described in Section I below.

I. MARS Club-specific Rules:

1. All players may bat and fielders may be substituted freely.
2. Players who arrive late are added to the bottom of the lineup order and cannot be inserted into the middle unless a substitution is made. If a substitution is made, the player being removed from the lineup can only re-enter the game once if the player is a starter and in the same position in the batting order that he/she originated.
3. To allow for as much participation as possible, a player may leave the game for an unplanned reason (work, family, injury, etc) and no penalty will be assessed if the team continues to play with more than 10 players. Teams with 10 or fewer players refer to the Short Handed Rule.
4. No player who has been removed from the game may re-enter the game at any time. However, as a courtesy, a player may re-enter the game if the opposing team captain is notified in advance and agrees to allow the player to re-enter in the same position that he/she vacated if a player must be absent from the game for a brief duration (attend to a child, attend to duties related to work, etc.).
5. FIRST RESPONDER EXCEPTION: Redstone Arsenal First Responders required to respond to an emergency call may leave the line-up without penalty and may re-enter the game in the same position that he/she vacated if they are able to return.
6. Halo rule – a high-velocity line drive hit (or grounder) towards the pitcher will be an automatic out. This applies to hits that are within the identified, marked regions that are within 2 feet on each side of the rubber mat.
7. No leading off bases. Player is out if they lead off or step off the base before the batter hits the ball.
8. No stealing bases. If a runner begins to advance after the ball is hit, and the batter is out, the runner must tag-up to the base before advancing to the next base.
9. Balls that get tangled up in the outfield fence are ground-rule doubles. The outfielders must wave their hands in the air to alert the umpire.
10. The Home Team is responsible for keeping the book and official score. The umpires should sign the book to confirm the final score. If the home team does not have anyone on the team available to keep the book, it's their responsibility to find someone to keep the book.

11. The umpires shall perform bat checks.
12. Line up cards should be presented and batting order maintained.
13. The 6:00 PM Home team is supposed to turn off the score controller in the dugout, put the controller in the cabinet, and turn off the scoreboard. The power to the scoreboard is on the scoreboard pole.

II. Short-Handed Rule:

Applies only to teams with fewer than 10 players.

1. The minimum number of players required to start and finish a game is 8.
2. If a team begins play with 8 or 9 players and uses an opponent's player as an extra defensive player (usually a catcher), that player must be listed in the batting order and an out is declared for each turn at bat when the extra defensive player's position is scheduled to bat. If an opponent's player is not used on defense, then an out will not have to be taken when batting (Exception: Coed division penalties for being short women still apply).
3. If a team begins play with 8 players, the team may continue a game with one less player than it started with whenever a player is forced to leave the game for any reason other than ejection, provided the opposing team is willing to provide a catcher.
4. When a player who has left, the game is scheduled to bat, an out is declared for each turn at bat, unless injured.
5. An inning or game may NOT end on a third out resulting from walking a batter ahead of a missing batter.
6. No penalty(s) will be assessed for any player(s) that must leave a game due to injury.
7. No penalty(s) will be assessed if both teams have an equal number of players. (Exception: Co-ed division penalties for being short of women still apply).

III. Injured Batter:

No Batter will be skipped and continue to participate in the game unless injured.

IV. Courtesy runner:

1. If a courtesy runner is needed due to prior injury before the start of any game, the opposing team captain and umpire must be notified and the courtesy runner granted prior to the game start. The umpire can remove the privilege of a courtesy runner at any time if, in his/her judgment, the courtesy runner is not justified.
2. If a courtesy runner is needed due to injury sustained in the game, the team at bat must call time and notify the umpire.
3. If no one of the same sex is available to the team, either on the bench or in the game, the courtesy runner will be designated as the player who made the last recorded out.
4. The final decision on whether a courtesy runner is justified rests with the umpire.

V. Home Run Limits:

The MARS softball league will use a progressive over the fence (OTF) home run rule. That is, at any given time during the game, teams are allowed a limited number of HRs more than their opponent. Any HRs more than this limit will be counted as an OUT. This means that a HR hit in the 2nd inning may be an out whereas a HR hit in the 5th inning may stand. It is up to the teams to clearly mark OTF HRs during each inning. If it is not clear from looking at the scorebook, whether a HR counts or not, the HR will stand.

- Recreational divisions will use a one (1) progressive over the fence home run limit.
- Competitive divisions (if applicable) will use two (2) progressives over the fence home run limit.

Any HRs in excess of this limit will be counted as an OUT and runners may not advance.

VI. Strike Zone:

1. The count begins at 1 ball and 1 strike. A player is allowed one foul ball when they have two strikes against them. The second foul ball **with two strikes against them** will be considered a strikeout.
2. The pitching arch is between 6 and 12 feet. That is, the ball must arch at least 6' above the ground but not more than 12'.
3. The pitcher must show the ball to the umpire and batter before pitching.
4. No quick pitches!
5. If the ball is pitched illegally the umpire shall shout "illegal pitch" at which time the batter may either swing at the pitch & take the result, or not swing and take an automatic ball.
6. There are no balks.
7. A batter hit by a pitch does **NOT** advance to first base.
8. If a batter catches a pitch a strike shall be called.
9. The strike zone is below the front shoulder and above the back knee.
10. Pitchers may wave a batter to first base if they wish to walk the batter intentionally.
11. If a pitch hits ANY part of home plate it is a ball.

VII. First Base/Safety Base

1. The colored/outside safety base is to be used only when the batter is initially running to first base. It cannot be used by a runner while the batter is at the plate. If a runner is on the safety base when the ball is hit, the runner will be called out.
2. If the runner intends to stay at first base, the runner must run to the colored/outside safety base. If the runner goes to the inside base, he or she will be called out.
3. The defensive player may not use the safety base at any time. If the defensive player is on the safety base when receiving a throw or tags the safety base when trying to get a runner out, the runner will be called safe.

VIII. Mercy Rule:

1. The Mercy Rule will be in effect for all games, including tournaments with the exception of the Championship game(s) for all divisions.
2. The game will be declared final if either team leads by 10 runs at the completion of five (5) full innings (4 ½ if the home team is ahead).

IX. Sportsmanship:

The NASA softball league is a recreational league designed to provide a safe, family atmosphere for the purposes of recreation, fellowship, and to increase the morale & welfare of Redstone Arsenal employees and their families. Good sportsmanship is encouraged at all times and inappropriate conduct by teams or individual players will not be tolerated.

1. Any conduct that is deemed inappropriate by the umpire will result in a warning to the team captain(s) and/or automatic ejection of the offending player(s) if, in the umpire's judgment, an ejection is warranted at the time of the offense. Any additional inappropriate conduct will result in automatic ejection from the game and may result in suspension from subsequent game(s).
2. Any physical contact with a fielder in possession of the ball to dislodge the ball is not allowed. If a runner is unwilling to slide at any base, including home plate, he must give himself up if the fielder has possession of the ball when the runner is approaching the base. Intentional collisions at any base will result in the player being called out, a warning issued to the offending team and / or automatic ejection if, in the umpire's judgment, the contact was reckless or intentional.
3. Verbally or physically distracting a fielder is not allowed (breaking up a double play, clapping at a fielder trying to catch a ball, yelling at a fielder, etc.). The umpire shall issue a warning to any player who intentionally distracts or otherwise interferes (physically or verbally) with a fielder in an attempt to break up a play or cause an error. The runner shall be called out and subsequent violations will result in ejection.
4. No fielder may intentionally block a base or attempt to tag (fake tags) a runner without having possession of the ball. The umpire shall issue a warning to any player who intentionally blocks a base or attempts to tag a runner without having possession of the ball. The runner shall be called safe and any subsequent violations in the same game will result in ejection. If, in the umpire's judgment, a fielder intentionally blocks a base to cause a collision, the fielder will be ejected.

X. Starting Times and Game Times

1. Start Times (Regular Season and Tournament): All first games will start at 5:00 PM, and forfeit time is 5:05 PM. When two games are played per day, the second game time and forfeit time are 6:00 PM, or 5 minutes after the completion of the first game, whichever is later.
2. Game Times (Regular Season and Tournament): All games except for the Championship will last 7 innings or 60 minutes, whichever occurs first. **No new** inning will start **55 minutes** after the start of the game. The 6:00 PM

game can be called due to darkness if 5 innings have been completed (4 ½ if the home team is ahead). Game start times should be noted by the home team. The Championship game will last 7 innings with no time limit.

3. Tied Games (Regular Season): All games last a maximum of 60 minutes. Once the game reaches the time of 55 minutes, then the umpire will complete the final inning, and if the game ends in a tie, then the game is scored as a tie in the standings. If the game is tied after 7 innings and time remains on the clock the game will continue using the "International Tie-Breaker Rule". Under this rule, each team starts their next at bat, in the following inning, with the player who completed the last official at bat, as a base runner on second base. Each subsequent inning will start the same until a winner has been determined, or time has expired.
4. Suspended Games (Regular Season): All games suspended due to inclement weather, darkness, or other circumstances beyond the control of either team shall be replayed from the beginning unless 5 innings have been completed (4 ½ if the home team is ahead) or the 60-minute time limit has elapsed. By agreement between the captains, a game score at the time of suspension may be accepted as final even if fewer innings have been completed. The captains will inform the league commissioner immediately after suspension of the game if they do not wish to replay it. Once the commissioner is informed, this decision is final.
5. If a game must be called in the middle of an inning after 5 innings have been completed (4 ½ if the home team is ahead) but before the time limit has been reached, the final score will revert to the last completed inning (or half inning if the home team is ahead).
6. All forfeited games are scored as 7 – 0 in the standings.

XI. Pick-up/Substitute Players:

To allow as much participation as possible and to minimize forfeits, the MARS softball club does not encourage, but will allow pick-up players to be used in order to field a team during the **regular season only**. The use of pick-up players is governed by the following:

1. Teams must have a minimum of 6 of their own players (listed on their official roster) or the game will be forfeited. Further, the teams may only add a maximum of 2 pick-up players per regular season game, and a lineup maximum of 10 total players may not be exceeded when pick-up players are used. If the opponent is also short players, pick up players can only be added to equal the number of players on the opposing team. *For example: if team "A" has 7 regular players with 2 pick-up players listed in the lineup (to equal 9 total players), and team "B" only has 8 total players, only 1 pick-up player is allowed to play with team "A", creating equal play for each team and a total of 8 players in both team's lineups.*
2. The game may still be played, but the result will be officially recorded as a forfeit. The umpire is encouraged to remain and continue to call the game.
3. Teams can only add pick-up players at the beginning of a game and must be listed on their lineup.

4. The captain of the opposing team must be notified before a pick-up player bats or plays defense. If notification is not made, the pick-up player will be considered an illegal player, and the game is subject to forfeit.
5. If a player must leave the game early from the opposing team, resulting in fewer players in their lineup than the team using pick-up players, pick-up players must also be relinquished until both teams have the same number of players remaining.

XII. Co-Ed Recreational Rules

1. All coed division teams must always play with a minimum of two women (fielding and hitting). A team may play short or without women but will be penalized as stated.
 - a. One woman short: Offensively - the team playing short will list her in the batting order and will take an out each time she comes up to bat. The batting order may only have ten positions, with one being the automatic out. Defensively - the team will play with 9 players on the field.
 - b. Two women short: Offensively - the team will list both women in the lineup and will take an out each time they would come up to bat. The batting order may only have ten positions, with two being the automatic outs. Defensively - they will play with 8 players in the field.
 - c. A "dead player" (a player with no defensive responsibilities) may not be used in place of the missing woman fielder (e.g., a team short one woman may not use a "dead player" as a catcher, allowing the team to play with all other defensive positions filled).
2. An inning or game may NOT end on a third out resulting from walking a male batter ahead of a missing woman batter.
3. If a male batter is walked ahead of a woman batter, the male batter may advance to second base. All base runners that are forced to advance shall be advanced one base. Other runners may not advance. The woman batter then has the option of walking to first base or taking her turn at bat.
4. A maximum of six (6) players is allowed in front of the outfield restriction line (170-foot arc from home plate) before a ball is hit by a woman player. All other players (normally the outfielders) will not be allowed to cross the outfield restriction line until after the ball is hit. If a player crosses the arc to make a play before the ball is hit and an out occurs during the play, the umpire shall call an outfield line rule violation upon appeal by the batting team. The out is not recorded, and the woman batter will be awarded first base. All base runners that are forced to advance shall be advanced one base. Other runners may not advance. If the out occurred as a result of a runner attempting to advance more than what the rule allows safely during the play, there will be no violation called. If an out does not occur then play proceeds without reference to the violation.

XIIa. Open Recreational Rules – Women Players

1. A maximum of six (6) players is allowed in front of the outfield restriction line (170-foot arc from home plate) before a ball is hit by a woman player. All other players (normally the outfielders) will not be allowed to cross the outfield restriction line until after the ball is hit. If a player crosses the arc to make a play before the ball is hit and an out occurs during the play, the umpire shall call an outfield line rule violation upon appeal by the batting team. The out is not recorded, and the woman batter will be awarded first base. All base runners that are forced to advance shall advance to one base. Other runners may not advance. If the out occurred because of a runner attempting to advance more than what the rule allows safely during the play, there will be no violation called. If an out does not occur, then play proceeds without reference to the violation.

XIII. Equipment:

1. A 12", 52 COR/300 lbs. compression USA-approved softball will be used. The umpire will inspect and approve all game balls, if necessary. The league will provide a new game ball and the home team will provide an approved used ball as a backup.

Only USA certified slow pitch softball bats are allowed to be used during the game. No fast pitch bats, baseball bats, senior softball bats, or non-USA approved bats may be used in regular season or tournament play.

- a. The opposing team must appeal to the umpire when they believe an illegal bat has been used. If the umpire determines the bat is illegal, the result of the play shall be an out, and the runners shall return to the base they started from on that play.
 - b. If a bat already declared illegal is used again in the same game, the player using the bat shall be ejected from the game.
 - c. Bats declared illegal by the umpire must be removed from the dugout.
 - d. Legacy ASA-stamped bats may still be used.
2. The catcher and pitcher are encouraged but not required to wear a helmet and/or face mask.
 3. NO METAL SPIKES OR CLEATS. Players found with metal spikes or cleats, even in the dugout prior to taking the field, will be ejected from the game. Repeat offenders will be suspended for the season. Non-metallic cleats may be used. However, if no cleats, running/tennis shoes are acceptable.

XIV. Lightning and Adverse Weather Policy:

1. The MARS Softball Club will observe all MSFC weather and safety policies and procedures, without exception.
 - a. At the NASA Fields, games will be paused or postponed (or suspended in the tournament if play cannot resume) when the MSFC lightning warning announcement has been made or thunder is heard by a player or official. Lightning monitoring apps will be used during inclement weather and play will be paused when lightning is within 6 miles of the field. Play may resume 30 minutes after the pause if no more strikes are detected, the

captains agree, and time allows. In general, this means the early game will be postponed on days where two games have been scheduled to allow the late game to start on time, if possible, but the late game may pause and resume.

- b. At the Army Fields, games will be paused or postponed (or suspended in the tournament if play cannot resume) when thunder is heard by a player or official. Monitoring procedures will be the same as in the NASA fields.

XV. Protests:

The protesting team's manager must present the protest in writing to his division commissioner no later than 2:00 PM of the first working day following the protested game. For protests involving the enforcement of a rule related to game play, the home plate umpire must also be notified at the end of the game. For protests involving player participation in the game (pick-up players, eligible players, etc.), the home plate umpire DOES NOT need to be notified. The Rules Committee will then hand down a decision as determined by the President, at least one Vice President, and Division Commissioner. All decisions by the Rules Committee are final.

XVI. Restrictions for players participating in multiple MARS Divisions

1. The league currently offers recreational divisions with co-ed and non-co-ed (open) options. The league has competitive divisions and will be considered each season.
2. Players will be allowed to participate in a maximum of two (2) Divisions and listed on two (2) rosters within the league governed by the following restrictions:
 - a. Only three (3) male players from a competitive division will be allowed to play with a recreational team during any game; with a maximum of six (6) competitive players (male or woman) listed on any recreational roster.
 - i. If more than three (3) male competitive players are present for a recreational game, they may be freely substituted in the field and in the batting order with another competitive player, assuming the integrity of the batting order is maintained. The player being removed from the lineup can only re-enter the batting order in the spot he originated. Both players cannot be in the batting order or on the field at the same time.
 - ii. If more than three (3) male competitive players are in the lineup of a recreational game, the game may still be played but the result will be recorded as a forfeit by the violating team.
 - b. Recreational - There are NO restrictions to the number of players from a recreational division participating in games within another recreational division. Players may be listed on a maximum of two (2) rosters within the league.

- c. women will be allowed to participate within any two (2) divisions but may be listed on a maximum of two (2) rosters within the league.

These rules supersede all prior versions of the MARS Softball Club Rules