

**2024 RUSSELL ARTHUR SENIOR SOFTBALL ASSOCIATION (RASSA)
REGULAR SEASON RULES OF PLAY THE FOR MORNING LEAGUES
(Changes effective for the 2024 season are shown in bold italics.)**

League games will be played in accordance with the Senior Softball USA Rules for the current year with the following local rules, exceptions, clarifications or points of emphasis.

Rule 1: The Playing Field:

Section 1: League games will be played at Liberty Park, on either Field #5 or #9. Game times will be determined by the RASSA Board of Directors (the Board).

Section 2: Base line length will be 70 feet; and pitching distance will be 50 feet. Pitchers may pitch from up to 6 feet directly behind the pitching rubber.

Section 3: Home Plate, for purposes of balls and strikes, will be modified by a rubber, removable plate which extends the length of the plate to 36 inches and the width to 19 inches. A second home or “scoring” plate will be placed in line with the main Home Plate, approximately **9 feet** from Home Plate. ***There also is a commitment line, which will be 30 feet from home plate and will extend 6 feet from the 3B line toward the 3B dugout.***

Section 4: The field will be marked with an arc at 180 feet from Home Plate. The four outfielders may not cross inside this arc before the ball is hit. Outfielders may not throw the batter/runner out at first base. If an infielder touches a ball before it gets to the grass, another infielder can still throw the runner out at first base, even though he or she is on the outfield grass.

Section 5: The Home Team of the first game will set up the field equipment for play, while the Home Team for the second game will dismantle and store the field equipment.

Section 6: All infielders must begin their defensive play on the infield dirt but may move anywhere after the ball is hit to make a play.

Rule 2: Equipment:

Section 1: Any bat approved by SSUSA may be used. Fast pitch bats may not be used.

Section 2: The 12-inch softball used by the league will be an optic yellow, .44 Core, 375 compression balls. One new ball will be used per game, with backup balls selected from balls used in previous games.

Section 3: Metal cleats or spikes are not allowed.

Section 4: A pitcher's net must be used. The net is to be placed approximately 3 to 5 feet in front of the pitching rubber and must cover $\frac{1}{2}$ of the pitching rubber on the glove side of the pitcher. As a guideline, there will be a marker in the middle of the pitching rubber, and a chalk line will extend out 5 feet from that point toward home plate; and there will be a chalk line crossing that line 3 feet from the pitching rubber. This Rule will be enforced by the Home Plate Umpire. Pitchers are strongly encouraged, but not required, to wear a pitcher's mask.

Rule 3: Teams, Substitutes and New Players:

Section 1: Since our objective is to give all players as much playing time as possible, we will play 11 players on defense. It is the Manager's responsibility to have at least 11 players available for each game by picking up substitutes, if necessary, in accordance with Section 3 below. A team with 11 players will be allowed to play 11 on defense, even if the other team has only 9 or 10 players. In other words, a team may play with only 9 or 10 players even though they will be at a defensive disadvantage. If one team has 12 or more players and the other has at least 9 or 10 players, the Manager can offer one or more of their players to the other team. The opposing Manager will decide if they want the additional player(s) or if they prefer to play with 9 or 10. If a team cannot field at least 9 players, it will forfeit the game. In such a situation, the players at the field are welcome to play a "pickup" game.

Section 2: When there is an 11th defensive player in the game, he or she must be placed in the outfield. This fifth outfielder, as well as the other 4 outfielders, can play anywhere the Manager wishes, as long as they are beyond the 180-foot outfield line. This means that the fifth (or extra) outfielder also will be subject to Rule 1: Section 4.

Section 3: Managers are responsible for assuring that enough players are available. All roster players attending the game who can play will be put in the batting order and given the opportunity to play relatively equal time on defense, even if it means playing them out of their normal position. ***Teams may replace any absent player with a substitute from another team. Substitutes must be from the same or lower rating group as the players they are replacing. Managers are not required to pick up substitute players if they can field a team without them but may bring their team roster up to its normal strength if they choose.*** Managers are responsible for picking up substitutes as needed well prior to the start of the game, and at least the day before if possible. The two Managers and the League Director will meet at Home Plate 5 minutes prior to each game to make sure substitutes are replacing missing players in accordance with the above stated rule. ***Managers may place substitute players anywhere in the batting order.***

Section 4: When a Manager has a need for substitutes, he must pick up only the players who play full time in his league. In other words, if a player only plays in the Tuesday League, he cannot be picked up as a sub in the Thursday League (and vice versa). ***The only exception to this rule will be if the player in the other league is listed in the official substitute pool described below.*** If the Manager's team is playing on a day when another team has a bye, his priority should be to pick up players from the team with the bye. ***When possible, RASSA will also maintain a list of potential substitute pool players who are not assigned to a team because they cannot play regularly but may sometimes be available as a substitute player for both leagues. This also may include those players who are only playing regularly in either the Tuesday or Thursday League. They may choose to be in the substitute pool for the league they are not playing in. The same rules will apply about rating groups for these players, and they will be charged a reduced fee for the opportunity to be officially in the substitute pool.***

Section 5: If a roster player arrives late, he will replace his Substitute at the start of the next half-inning and must bat in his Substitute's place in the batting order. If a team has fewer than 10 players at a given point in a game due to an injury, illness, disqualification for misconduct or any other reason, a player of equal or lower player rating group may be picked up if one is available. This player will bat in the spot occupied by the departing player. If no Substitute Player is available, an out will not be recorded when the vacant position in the lineup is due at bat.

Section 6: If players voluntarily choose to bat but not play in the field because of physical or other limitations, they may do so. If it results in the team having fewer than 11 players in the field, the manager may pick up a substitute with the same or lower player rating. Our intent is to allow players to continue to participate at whatever level they are capable of if they choose to. This must be something the player volunteers to do and must be approved by the league director prior to the game.

Section 7: If a player joins the league during the season, he or she will be temporarily assigned to a team until evaluated and assigned a rating by the Commissioner and League Directors. Once the rating is determined, he or she will be assigned to a permanent team by the Commissioner in consultation with the League Directors and Managers. New players must be approved and assigned to a team by the Commissioner and/or the League Director. Managers may not play a new player without the Commissioner's/Director's approval.

Section 8: If players commit to play as substitutes for either team that is playing the 9:00 game on Field #9, and the game is still going on at 10:30, they are expected to continue as substitutes there until the game is finished. As a result, they will not be available to play on their regular team at 10:30 on Field #5. In this case, the 10:30 game will not start until the delayed players are available.

Rule 4: The Game:

Section 1: Games will normally be 7 innings. When the offensive team has scored 5 runs in an inning, they must take the field, unless it is the 7th inning or “open inning” where the number of runs scored is unlimited.

Section 2: If the game is tied after seven innings, one extra inning will be played and runs will be limited to 5 per team. The batter who made the last out for each team in the seventh inning will start as a runner at second base in the extra inning. If the game is still tied after one extra inning, the game will be declared a tie for record purposes. If a game is limited to six innings due to extreme heat and is tied after six innings, the same rules will apply as stated above.

Section 3: Teams will flip/flop batting if the visiting team has at least an eight-run lead at the end of the sixth inning. In other words, the team behind (the Home Team) will bat twice consecutively (taking its 6th inning at-bats AND its 7th inning at-bats in succession). If the team behind should take the lead or tie, the other team (the visitors) will get its 7th inning at-bat that was skipped.

Section 4: During the hottest part of the season (typically July and August) the game may be limited to 6 innings; and all of the above referenced 6th and 7th innings will apply to the 5th and 6th innings of the shortened game.

Section 5: In the case of rain, the team winning after four or more complete innings will be declared the winner for record purposes. The one exception to this rule is as follows: If the home team is ahead after a half inning and at least four full innings have been played at the time the game is called, the home team will be declared the winner. Otherwise, the game will be declared a rainout.

Rule 5: Pitching:

Section 1: Any pitch that reaches its highest point above the playing surface at less than 6 feet or more than 12 feet is declared an ILLEGAL PITCH by the plate Umpire and will be called a “ball.” It will be at the discretion of the batter as to whether he swings at the pitch. If the ball is hit, it is in play.

Section 2: There will be no intentional walks. In other words, pitchers must pitch to each batter.

Rule 6: Batting:

Section 1: A strike is called by the Umpire for each legally pitched ball that lands on, before bouncing, any portion of the entire extended Home Plate (19 inches by 36 inches).

Section 2: A ball is called by the Umpire for each legally pitched ball that does not land on any portion of the entire extended Home Plate. The pitched ball must be thrown in an arc ranging from 6 to 12 feet. Otherwise, it is declared an illegal flat or high pitch by the umpire and is also a “ball,” unless swung at by the batter.

Section 3: Each batter will start his turn at bat with a count of 1 ball and 1 strike. If a batter has 2 strikes and then hits a foul ball, the batter gets another strike. If the batter hits another foul ball, the batter is out. The ball is dead, and the Runners may not advance, unless a fielder catches the foul ball.

Section 4: Any ball that is hit outside either foul line will be called a foul ball by the Umpire. If a fielder is attempting to catch a ball in foul territory, it is still a foul ball based on where the ball is (not the player).

Section 5: If a ball is hit and it strikes the pitcher’s net before the pitcher touches it, it will be considered a dead ball foul. If a ball is hit towards the pitcher’s net and the pitcher touches it prior to it striking the net, the ball is considered live and in play until time is called.

Section 5: Any foul tip caught by the catcher will be declared an out by the Umpire, regardless of how high in the air it goes.

Section 6: The batter is out if he carries his bat to first base.

Rule 7: Runner and Defensive Player:

Section 1: No leading off is allowed. Runners must stay on the base until the ball is hit. If the ball hits the ground without the batter swinging, or if the batter swings and misses, the Runner is allowed one (relax) step off the base.

Section 2: When overrunning first base, the batter must touch the alternate red/orange base outside the regular white base if a play is made on him, unless he utilizes the regular base to avoid a collision (Umpire’s decision).

Section 3: When running to second base, it is the Runner's responsibility to stay out of the way of the defensive player attempting a double play by ducking, sliding or running to either side of the base. Also, when a runner is approaching first, second or third base, both he and the defensive player always should make every effort to avoid a collision.

Section 4: If a runner continues beyond either 2B or 3B, he runs the risk of being tagged out. If a runner gets to second or third base and is called safe, but then falls off the base and is tagged by the defensive player, the call of out or safe will depend the umpire's view of whether or not the runner was pushed off the base by the defensive player.

Rule 8: Pinch Runners

Section 1: A Pinch Runner is in the game when announced by the offensive team Manager.

Section 2: In addition to running for him or herself, a player may only be a pinch runner *once per inning. Pinch running for a batter from home plate counts as one turn as a pinch runner even if the batter strikes out or walks.*

Section 3: If a Pinch Runner comes up to bat while he is on base, another substitute runner can pinch run for him.

Section 4: When running for a batter, the Pinch Runner will start behind a chalked line, which will be drawn parallel to and 3 feet back from the 3rd base foul line. The Pinch Runner is under the "honor system" to not step over the line until the ball is struck by the batter.

Rule 9: Home Plate:

Section 1: Defensive Players can only touch the original Home Plate (the batter's Home Plate) and Runners can only touch the second Home Plate (the scoring Home Plate).

Section 2: In order to be safe at home, runners must touch the second Home Plate located adjacent to the right-handed batter's box, located **9 feet** from the original Home Plate.

Section 3: Should a defensive player with the ball touch any portion of the original Home Plate before the Runner reaches the second Home Plate, the Runner is out.

Section 4: If the Runner touches the original Home Plate, the Runner will be out and the ball will remain live.

Strictly for the Proprietary Use of RASSA

Section 5: Once the Runner crosses the commitment line (located on the 3rd base foul line, **30 feet** from Home Plate), he or she must touch the Scoring Home Plate before the catcher touches Original Home Plate in order to score a run. The catcher must touch the Original Home Plate to make the put out and cannot do so by tagging the runner. If the runner crosses the commitment line and attempts to return to third base, he or she will be called out and the ball remains live.

Rule 10: Infield Fly Rule:

Section 1: There is no infield fly rule; however, if in the judgment of the Umpire, an infielder intentionally drops a line drive that results in a double play, he will credit that infielder with a catch/out, and the Runners will return to the bases they occupied before the play.

Rule 11: Throws to First Base:

Section 1: When a batter hits a ball that results in a throwing or fielding error at first base (including a bad throw by an infielder or any ball missed by the first baseman), the batter can advance as far as he or she dares at his/her own risk regardless of where the ball ends up on the playing field. There is no limit to how far a runner (or runners) already on base can run as long as the ball is in play.

Section 2: If the ball goes outside the playing field (e.g., inside the dugout), it is a dead ball. In that case, a batter running to first base automatically gets second base; and any other base runners get the bag they are running toward plus one more base or home plate.

Rule 12: Home Run Rule:

Section 1: Two home runs over the fence by the same team will be allowed in a game. ***These home runs can be hit by either regular or substitute players.*** Any subsequent ball hit out of the park by that team will be recorded as a ***single and runners on base will be allowed to advance one base.***

Rule 13: Yearend League Playoffs, League Championship and World Series Games:

Section 1: The standings for the Tuesday and Thursday Morning Leagues will be kept throughout the season and will be posted on the RASSA Web Site (bamaseniorsoftball.org).

Section 2: Yearend single elimination round robin League Championship Playoffs will be played for both the Tuesday and Thursday Morning Leagues with pairings based on the standings for the total season. The two winning League Champions will then play a best 2 out 3 game World Series Championship.

Section 3: A separate schedule for the yearend League Playoff and World Series Championship games will be published once the yearend standings are known in each league. Games will only be scheduled on either Tuesdays or Thursdays.

Section 4: Any special rules applying to the League Playoff and World Series Championship games which are different from regular season Rules of Play will be separately published.

Section 5: It is very important to remember that the League Playoff and World Series Championship games are intended to encourage fun competition. Therefore, it is very important for both Managers and Players to keep this in perspective and behave accordingly.