

TULARE SOFTBALL ASSOCIATION RULES

(Revised: February 2025)

Section 1 Rules

Official playing rules are as specified in the current National Softball Association (NSA) Official Fastpitch Rule Book, except as specified below.

Section 2 League Divisions

The Tulare Softball Association (TSA) is organized into four divisions based on the age of a player on January 1:

6U - Ages 4 to 6

8U - Ages 7 to 8

10U - Ages 9 to 10

14U - Age 11 to 14 AND currently enrolled in 8th grade or lower

Any player seeking to move up an age division can be no younger than one year from the low NSA age for the division they seek. All players seeking divisional moves must submit a letter of request to the board prior to the season organization and assignments of teams. All requests to move up an age division are at the discretion and approval of the TSA board.

Section 3 Official Games

- A. The field umpire will be the official timekeeper and must inform both managers and the official scorekeeper of the official starting time of the game, which must be recorded on the Official Game Standing sheet. Game starting time is after coaches meeting and when the umpire calls game time.
- B. Game time limits: 70-minute game time; finish the inning; 80 minute drop-dead (incomplete innings revert back to the last complete inning). Game time will be adjusted for playoff games.
- C. Time allowing, 8U and 10U age division games shall be five (5) innings. For the 8U division, the first three (3) innings are closed and innings 4 and 5 shall be open innings no matter how much time is left. For 10U division, the first four (4) innings are closed and inning 5 shall be open no matter how much time is left. Time allowing, 14U age division shall play six (6) innings. For 14U division, the first four (4) innings shall be closed and innings 5 and 6 will be open. A timer will be placed on each field. If time expires in the middle of the inning, the inning shall be completed. If game time is remaining when the home team is at bat and the third out is made, a new inning shall be started. A new inning shall begin immediately following the final out of the previous inning.
- D. A game called due to darkness, weather, field conditions, etc. is suspended and will be continued at a later date. For a game to be considered official, at least three (3) complete innings must be played. If the home team is at bat and leading in the score when time expires, the game shall be called complete, and the home team declared the winner. If playing six (6) innings, four (4) innings must be completed for the game to be considered official.
- E. All games must be played as scheduled. Exceptions shall only be made if a legitimate and verifiable school function would result in a loss of players to a team that would not allow for the team to field seven (7) players. If a game needs to be rescheduled, the team manager must notify the Umpire-in-Chief (UIC), a TSA Board Member, and notify the Technology Chair one week in

advance of the regularly scheduled game. The board will notify the managers of their decision. If neither team can field seven (7) players at game time, the game shall be declared a tie.

- F. A team must field at least seven (7) players to begin a game. Seven (7) players are required to continue a game.
- G. The Umpire-in-Chief (UIC), President, or Vice President of the TSA Board are the only persons authorized to cancel or reschedule a game due to weather or field conditions. Team managers or coaches do not have the authority to reschedule or cancel games. Team managers, coaches, or umpires can request the game be delayed in the event of weather or field conditions. The UIC, President, or Vice President shall make the decision to delay a game. The UIC should immediately notify the Technology Chair of any game schedule changes.
- H. TSA will play NSA recreation rules where everyone will bat. If an individual is not able to bat, they will be considered out. An injured player that leaves the game will be an out if they cannot bat in their spot in the batting order.

Section 4 Uniforms and Equipment

- A. Players must be in full uniform to play unless religion prohibits. Full uniform is defined by the Board of Directors as the uniform issued for each age division of play. This consists of a team jersey, team pants (black or gray only), and team socks. Hats or visors are optional and shall be consistent with the league team jersey in color. Apart from medical bracelets, no jewelry may be worn. Clothes for warmth should be worn under the jersey, if possible, so that numbers can be seen. If a player's number cannot be seen, the player must report their number to the umpire when batting.
- B. Batting helmets with face guard must be worn while on offense and any time a player steps on the field. Coaches will receive a warning if a player is not wearing a helmet with a face guard.
- C. Players who serve as warm-up catchers must wear a facemask.
- D. Pitchers and Catchers must wear facemasks, optional for other positions.

Section 5 Team Assignments

- A. The home team is listed last on the game schedules. The home team shall provide a scorekeeper.
- B. The visiting team is listed first on the game schedules and occupies the first base dugout.

Section 6 Maximum runs per inning

A maximum of five (5) runs per team may be scored in closed innings in all age divisions.

Section 7 Player Participation

- A. In the 8U, 10U, and 14U divisions, all players present at game time shall play three (3) defensive outs and bat if the game lasts 3 innings or less. For games that last 4 or more innings, all players present at game time shall play six (6) defensive outs and bat.
- B. Late arriving players must notify their manager prior to the official lineup being turned in and game time has been pronounced. If a player is not present at game time, the manager decides if they will be listed on the official lineup. If a player is going to arrive late, a manager can make the decision to add that player to the official lineup. If the player is not present when their turn at bat occurs, an out will be recorded. A late arriving player that is not listed on the official lineup cannot enter the game later since all players bat and substitutions to the batting order are not allowed.
- C. The manager may remove a player from a game after play starts, regardless of the innings played, if the player exhibits unsportsmanlike conduct. If that player comes up to bat, they will be considered an out. Teams must have seven (7) players to continue the game.

Section 8 Pitching

- A. Pitchers are subject to the following weekly limits:
 - 8U - 15 outs per week
 - 10U - 18 outs per week
 - 14U - 21 outs per week
- B. This applies to a normal week of two league games (Monday - Saturday). This rule is waived for any additional games in a week (e.g. third regularly scheduled game, a rainout game in the week of play, playoff, or tournament games). Pitching limits are waived during international tie breakers.
- C. Violation of this rule shall result in a forfeit of the game where the violation occurs.
- D. Makeup games (not tie breakers) will revert back to the original week game that was scheduled, and pitch count will continue.

Section 9 Protests

- A. A manager must declare his/her intention to protest a rule violation before the next pitch. The official time clock will be stopped.
- B. Protests made at the conclusion of the game shall only pertain to questions of player eligibility (includes pitcher's outs). The umpire shall inform the opposing manager and the official scorekeeper of the protest. Protests shall be made only on violation or interpretation of league or official playing rules. Judgment calls shall not be protested.
- C. The manager who is protesting a game must present a letter to the Umpire-in-Chief (UIC) or TSA Board member within 48 hours of the completion of the protested game and shall pay a \$35.00 protest fee. The UIC or Board member will form a committee to review the protest. The decision of the protest committee shall be made within 7 days after receiving the letter. The committee's decision shall not be appealed.

Section 10 Sportsmanship

- A. Managers and coaches must "lead by example" by following TSA's code of conduct. Players and parents can be quick to follow if managers and coaches display poor sportsmanship. **A manager or coach who directs abusive language or aggressive physical behavior towards a player, parent, umpire, opposing manager/coach or board member is subject to a game ejection (removal from park). The manager or coach will be automatically released from their duties for the next game and will not be allowed in the park.** Umpires have the authority to require managers and coaches to control "situations" with their own staff, parents and players. An umpire may declare a forfeit if a situation occurs in a game and control is not restored. Managers and coaches unable to conduct themselves in a sportsmanlike manner will be asked to appear before the TSA board for possible discipline or suspension.
- B. Players are expected to always conduct themselves in a sportsmanlike manner. This includes but is not limited to: cheering in a positive manner for their team members, and not trying to belittle their opponents. Example: it is not acceptable to yell "swing" when opponents are batting or to taunt an opposing pitcher. Example: "high ball, low ball, inside, outside."
- C. **No tunnels after the game due to time constraints of the next game.**

Section 11 6U Division

- A. T-Ball - no wins or losses
- B. All players play defense. Defensive alignment should promote player safety.
- C. All players bat in an inning until the entire side (lineup) has batted.
- D. During the second at bat of the game, if a player is thrown out at a base or ball is caught, the out

will count, and the player will return to the dugout.

Section 12 8U Division

- A. No more than five (5) runs will be allowed to count during any inning. After the fifth run has crossed the plate, the inning will be completed.
- B. Baserunners must be in contact with the base until a legally pitched ball reaches home plate. Base stealing is not allowed.
- C. Cold home plate (runner can only score from third on a batted ball or a bases loaded Hit by Pitch).
- D. *Overthrows: Baserunners shall be entitled to the base they are going to plus one when the ball is over-thrown into a dead ball area.*
- E. *Unsuccessful Out Rule: Runners may not advance beyond the base they were going to due to an unsuccessful out on the advancing runner.*
- F. *Advancing bases: Should a defender continue to keep the ball; the runner may advance at their own will.*
- G. *Dead Ball Rule: Defined as an attempt or controlled throw back to the pitcher. Example: if a runner is going to 2nd and the ball is attempted back to the pitcher, the runner may not advance to 3rd/next base.*
- H. Sliding is allowed but is not mandatory.
- I. Only 10 players will be allowed on the field at any one time, four of which are outfielders. Outfielders must position themselves at least 10 feet behind the baseline (umpire's discretion) until the ball is hit.
- J. No Infield Fly Rule.
- K. Free defensive substitution (batting order does not change, all players bat)
- L. No bunting allowed.
- M. Batter may not advance on a dropped third strike.
- N. *Player is hit by a direct pitch, the batter is awarded a base (does not hit the ground first, must attempt to move).*
- O. Base coaches at the time of the pitch only will coach runners. Dugout coaches are prohibited from exiting the dugout into fair territory during live ball play.
- P. Players will pitch to the opposing team. Batters will not be awarded a walk but may strike out.
 - a. After four (4) balls have been called by the umpire, the coach-pitcher will enter the circle.
 - b. The coach-pitcher will throw up to two (2) pitches from the rubber regardless of the previous count. Extra pitches may be necessary if the batter fouls the second pitch.
 - c. If a pitch is not put into play by the second pitch, the batter is out.
 - d. If the second pitch is a foul, pitching continues until the ball is hit in fair territory or the batter is called out.
- Q. The coach-pitcher must attempt to avoid any contact with a hit ball and remain in the pitching circle. If a batted ball strikes the coach-pitcher the ball is dead. Batter advances to first, baserunner(s) advances one base. At the umpire's discretion, a batter can be called out if the coach-pitcher makes no effort to avoid the batted ball.
- R. At no time shall the coach-pitcher or any other on-field coach intentionally obstruct play (umpire's discretion).
- S. The player playing the position of pitcher shall keep one or both feet within the pitching circle until the ball is hit.
- T. 11-inch NSA ball will be used.

Section 13 10U Division

- A. Stealing is allowed – Refer to NSA Rule Book
- B. Dropped third strike – Refer to NSA Rule Book

- C. Substitution is allowed – Refer to NSA Rule Book
- D. Free defensive substitution (batting order does not change, all players bat)
- E. Nine (9) players shall play on defense
- F. Infield fly rule – Refer to NSA Rule Book
- G. 11-inch ball – Refer to NSA Rule Book
- H. Other 10U rules included in regular play rules

Section 14 Playing Field

The TSA will use the following playing field dimensions:

<u>AGE GROUP</u>	<u>BASE DISTANCE</u>	<u>PITCHING DISTANCE</u>
6U	45 feet	Coach pitch
8U	60 feet	35 feet
10U	60 feet	35 feet
14U	60 feet	40 feet

Section 15 League Standings

League standings will be based on wins and losses. When two or more teams are tied, run differential will be used. The league management system will be set to display the correct division standings.

Section 16 Miscellaneous Rules

- A. Teaching base runners how and when to slide is an important part of a coach’s responsibilities. A player must slide and make every effort to avoid a collision with an opposing player (umpire discretion). If they fail to do so they may be called out (umpire discretion).
- B. An umpire’s judgment may not be protested if a player is called out or safe for avoiding contact or collision.
- C. All teams must have an adult female in attendance at all team functions (e.g. practices, parties, etc.)
- D. Team lineups shall be prepared, and copies presented to the umpire and both scorekeepers at time of coaches meeting at home plate.
- E. Player jersey numbers and last names must be on lineups prior to turning them into the scorekeeper and officials.
- F. Prior to any game, teams are allowed to warm up “outside” the infield base lines between the foul lines and the dugouts.
- G. The outfield (grass) may be utilized for warmups. Pitching and batting practice is not allowed in the dirt infield area. There will be no hitting of hard, soft, or plastic balls against any fence at the ballpark facility.
- H. EACH TEAM IS RESPONSIBLE FOR CLEANING THE DUGOUT AND THE BLEACHER AREA ON THEIR SIDE OF THE FIELD AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE GAME.
- I. Providing the official game scorekeeper is the responsibility of the Home team. The Home team manager or coach is responsible for submitting the Official Game Standing sheet to the umpire at the conclusion of the game. The Official Game Standing sheet shall include the score of the game, the signatures of BOTH managers, the NAME, NUMBER, and OUT COUNT for each pitcher participating in the game. The umpire shall validate the official game score by initialing the Official Game Standing sheet. FAILURE TO SUBMIT THE OFFICIAL GAME STANDING SHEET WILL RESULT IN A FORFEIT OF THE GAME BY THE HOME TEAM.
- J. PLAYER REGISTRATIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED AFTER THE START OF THE 10U AND 14U SKILLS EVALUATION DATE. IN THE EVENT THAT THE TSA BOARD DEEMS IT NECESSARY TO ALLOW LATE SIGN UPS AFTER THE CUT OFF DATE DUE TO LOW

ENROLLMENT, THE TSA BOARD WILL DEVELOP A PROCEDURE FOR THE ADDING OF LATE REGISTRATION PLAYERS TO A ROSTER. THERE IS NO GUARANTEE ANY LATE REGISTRATION PLAYER WILL BE ADDED TO A TEAM. The Player Agent and the TSA Board will make the assignments of late registration players to respective rosters.

- K. League insurance only allows league registered players for the home and away team and league registered volunteers on the playing field and in the dugouts during league play. Non-registered adults, children, or players from other teams or divisions are not allowed on the field or in dugouts during league play.

Section 18 Team Manager, Coach Selection and Team Assignments

- A. Any individual who desires to serve as team Manager, Coach (assistants to Manager), or Sponsor Coach must register online as a volunteer and complete an online background check.
- B. The TSA Board will approve Managers and assign teams each season for 6U, 8U, 10U and 14U divisions.
- C. All Managers, coaches, team parents in the dugout MUST be background checked and approved by the TSA board with a TSA provided identification card.
- D. In addition to the registration process, TSA team Managers and Coaches MUST attend a league coaches' meeting/clinic and the league Managers meeting prior to beginning any practices with the team.
- E. The TSA reserves the right to investigate the background of all league volunteers. This may include fingerprinting and criminal history. Volunteers may be disqualified by the TSA Board based on findings in a background check.

Section 19 Umpire Duties

- A. Be prompt in starting games as scheduled.
- B. Keep the game play moving (e.g. enforce the five-pitch warm up rule).
- C. Inform both Managers and the official scorekeeper of the official game start time after the first pitch and keep a running score up to date to always know the current score.
- D. Verify the score and sign the Official Game Standing sheet. Return all supplies and the Official Game Standing sheets to the Concession Stand Board member after each game.
- E. Inform the Umpire-in-Chief or Board member of any problems with Managers, Coaches, spectators, or players. Depending on the severity of the situation, this is to be done at the time the problem(s) occur or at the conclusion of the game. Record the names (if possible) of those involved and provide this to the Umpire-in-Chief or Board member.
- F. The TSA reserves the right to investigate the background of all league volunteers. This may include fingerprinting and criminal history. Volunteers may be disqualified by the TSA Board based on findings in a background check.

Section 20 All-Star Teams

A. Information

The TSA may field All-Star teams from three (3) age divisions of the league (12U, 10U, 8U). These teams normally participate in 4-8 weekend tournaments, depending on the level of competition and involvement demonstrated by the players, coaches, and parents. TSA will provide a tournament entry fee into one Tulare NSA tournament. Each family should anticipate incurring expenses if they have a daughter on an All-Star team. Teams often organize fundraisers and are responsible for obtaining the funding for the All-Star team uniforms, tournament fees, travel expenses and all costs associated with the All-Star team. The TSA usually hosts one

tournament during the All-Star season that helps raise funds for the TSA All-Star teams. Parents of All-Star team players are expected to volunteer their time to help run the tournament.

B. Coaching Staff

During the regular scheduled league season, the TSA will hold a mandatory meeting with the managers of each age division that will be having an All-Star team. The purpose of this meeting is to determine who is interested in serving as an All-Star team manager and coach. TSA league managers and coaches who wish to manage or coach an All-Star team must submit a letter of interest to the TSA Board of Directors forty-eight (48) hours after the scheduled meeting. Priority will be given to coaches in the age division they coached during league play. The candidates will be interviewed and selected by the TSA Board of Directors. If selection comes to a vote, the TSA Board and the respective division managers who attend the meeting may vote for the All-Star manager for each age division. Each team will only get one vote, either by the manager or by the coach and only in their respective age division. Once selected, the managers will nominate three (3) coaches as his/her assistants. These coaching nominations will be reviewed and approved by the TSA Board. If for any reason a team manager must be replaced, the TSA Board will do so from the ranks of coaches from that team and will consider adding another assistant coach with TSA Board approval. All-Star managers will coordinate their tournament schedules with the TSA Board in an attempt to have TSA teams compete in the same tournaments. If a coach has been suspended during one season they are not eligible to be a manager for two years. They may be a coach but only with TSA Board approval.

C. Player Selection

All league players will be invited to tryout for All-Star teams for their age division. Two (2) tryouts will be scheduled and players must attend at least one of these tryouts to be selected. Using a numerical rating system, the All-Star Managers and Coaches for each division will select players based on their league play and their performance at the All-Star tryouts. Each manager will determine how many players will be on the official roster, up to a maximum of fifteen (15) players. The TSA President and Player Agent or All-Star Chair must approve All-Star rosters before rosters are posted and players notified. If a player quits one of the TSA All-Star teams they are not eligible for two years to tryout or play on another TSA All-Star team.

D. All-Star & Regular League Teams

Players selected for All-Star teams will continue to play for their league team until the season is over. At no time will the All-Star team practice conflict with regular league games or practices.

E. Fundraising

Any funds raised to assist an All-Star team are subject to the same rules and regulations that govern all other TSA funds. If a team elects to raise funds, they must appoint a fundraising chairperson. The fundraising chairperson must meet with the TSA Treasurer to establish accounting procedures and be able to present a statement of income and expenses for TSA Board inspection if required. Managers must approve all fundraisers, expenses and income to be recorded by the Treasurer. Funds raised will be divided equally to all team member players.

F. Additional Teams

On occasion, requests for additional All-Star teams in an age division are presented to the TSA Board. The purpose of a second team is to provide an opportunity for more league players to compete in tournament play. The following rules shall apply if a second team is approved by the TSA Board:

- a. Team manager must have served as a Manager or Coach in our league.

- b. Any prospective Manager must attend the regular All-Star tryouts and evaluate the players with their own scoring system.
- c. Players for a second team must have attended at least one of the regular All-Star tryouts and have been passed over for selection to the first All-Star team.
- d. Players may not move from one team to another. If either team needs to “pick up” a player at a later date, they must do so from the players that attended the regular All-Star tryouts and were passed over for selection by both teams. This does not apply once one team has decided to fold for All-Star tournament play. In all cases, the TSA President or his/her designee must approve the roster changes.
- e. The TSA will not sanction a recreational (“B” level) team which attempts to form outside the process set forth in these official play rules.
- f. Any problems that may arise between teams will be dealt with immediately by calling a meeting with the TSA Board President, Vice President, All-Star Chair, and both managers.

G. Discipline of Players

The team manager shall present all player discipline requests to the TSA Board in writing. The TSA Board will review all requests and vote on the appropriate decision per Section 22 of the TSA rules and regulations.

H. Additional Costs

Field Maintenance fees will be charged to each team that uses a TSA field for practice. Prices will vary depending on the amount of travel teams.

Section 21 Field and Equipment Maintenance

- A. Fences - no side toss with any balls (hardball, softball, plastic ball, etc.).
- B. Equipment - Please take care of all league equipment. Examples of abuse: throwing or dropping batting helmets in the dugout or using gear as bases during practice.
- C. **Equipment to be returned on the appointed date; failure to do so may result in Manager/Coach to be reported to collections.**
- D. **Home team is responsible for raking home plate, pitcher's mound, 1st base, and running areas down 1st and 3rd base lines. Failure to do so will be one warning the first time, next time the team will forfeit a game.**
- E. **Both teams are responsible for cleaning up their dugouts and stands. Failure to do so will be one warning the first time, next time the team will forfeit a game.**
- F. Use of the TSA owned pitching machine for All-Star practices will be scheduled by the TSA Board. Every effort will be made to make the pitching machine available to All-Star managers on an equal basis.

Section 22 Player Disciplinary Action

- A. When a persistent or significant problem with a player exists, the team Manager’s first responsibility is to inform the parents of the player’s behavior, and attempt to work with the player and parents to correct the problem. Following this, if the problem continues, the team Manager may consult with the TSA Board. The TSA Board will determine if the player will remain in the league. The parents of this player must be notified of the TSA Board’s decision.
- B. Once a player has been placed on an All-Star Team roster, that player must stay on that team roster until the end of the All-Star season, except in cases of unsportsmanlike conduct:
 - a. Being physically aggressive or verbally abusive towards any person (teammates, opponents, umpires, officials, scorekeepers, manager, coach, TSA Board

- member, parent or spectator).
 - b. Use of profanity and/or racial, sexual, religious or disability based slurs, threats, or intimidation before, during or after a game or at practice.
 - c. Refusing to abide by an official decision.
 - d. Violation of any NSA policies and procedures.
- C. Prior to disqualification from an All-Star team, the accused must be given an opportunity for a hearing by the TSA Board. The TSA Board of Directors will decide if there is valid reasoning to dismiss a player from the All-Star team roster. The TSA Board will investigate and notify the player and parents of their decision.

Section 23 Suspension / Dismissal of Team Manager or Coach

- A. When the team Manager and/or team Coaches are not adhering to the league rules, and/or complaints have been registered with the league **in writing**, the TSA President will meet with the individual(s) to resolve all such situations.
- B. If compliance of the rules are not met by the individual(s) or additional complaints come to the attention of the TSA President **in writing**, the matter will be brought before the TSA Board to review and make a decision on the appropriate corrective action.
- C. The TSA Board has the power to suspend the individuals where they feel it necessary. The TSA Board may allow the Manager or Coach to remain in position after a warning. If the situation persists or if the TSA Board determines that the warning by itself is not sufficient to settle the violation, the TSA Board may vote for Manager/Coach dismissal.

Section 24 Draft Procedures and Team Formation

- A. All 6U and 8U players will not participate in skills evaluation or in a draft for team formation. 6U and 8U rosters will be formed by Auto Assignment of players using the computerized league management system. Teams will be balanced by age as much as possible. Before Auto Assignment occurs, protected player(s) are added to a team's roster.
- B. All players in the 10U and 14U will have a skills evaluations (tryouts) with the exception of Manager, Coach, and Sponsor Coach protected players.
- C. All returning 10U and 14U players will not return to their team from the previous year and must be drafted with the exception of the protected players.
- D. Three (3) adult team volunteers are allowed to protect their child(ren) from being drafted on a single team. These will include one (1) Manager, one (1) Coach, and one (1) Sponsor Coach (the sponsor coach provides the paid sponsorship for the team). SPONSORSHIP AND SPONSOR COACH MUST BE SUBMITTED PRIOR TO TRYOUTS. No team is allowed to protect more than three (3) players. Siblings are counted as a single save for protection from draft but not in the draft itself. The protected players will be taken in specific rounds of the draft as indicated in the draft rules. Each protected player will count as a pick in a specific round of the draft as indicated by the draft rules.
- E. Sisters in the same division will automatically be placed on the same team as their drafted sibling. If a coach drafts a player with a sibling in the same age division, the coach must take the sibling sister as their next round draft choice. The only exception to this is if the parents have requested to have the siblings on separate teams and have submitted a request for this prior to the draft.
- F. All players at the skills evaluation will be assigned a number in their age group. This number will coincide with the players registration form and will be used for both the skills evaluation and the draft.
- G. Players unable to attend the skills evaluation will be assigned to a team using the Auto Assignment function in the computerized league management system or random draw after all the other players who attended the skills evaluation have been drafted.
- H. The draft order will be established just prior to the draft by a drawing of a draft order number by

each team Manager for their respective draft position. The draft order will follow the snake style of draft. The Technology Chair will add players to teams in the computerized league management system as the draft proceeds.

- I. If late signups are allowed (after the draft is complete), the late signup players may be placed on teams at the Board of Directors discretion, if there is room available.

Effective Date: February 2025