

Lutherville-Timonium Recreational Council
Girls Softball Program
General Rules (Rev. Dec 2018)

1. Registration

The officers, directors and managers of the program will establish dates, times and fees and method of registration for the various programs to be offered each season. Flyers announcing the pertinent information will be distributed as needed.

2. Team and Player Selection

A. Player Registration

1. **Player Eligibility.** Participants in the program must have a completed and accurate registration and liability waiver on file with the league and have paid the registration fee. At no time will a player be allowed to participate in a game or be on the field without it.
2. **Reference Date.** All references to “September 1” below refer to September 1 *following* the Spring season.
3. **Clinic.** The Clinic League will consist of players who will not reach their 8th birthday as of September 1 or will reach their 5th birthday by September 1. Clinic Juniors will consist of players with a softball age of 5 or 6. Clinic Seniors will consist of players with a softball age of 7.
4. **Rookie.** The Rookie League will consist of players who will reach their 8th birthday as of September 1 but will not reach their 10th birthday as of September 1. Generally, this will be 2nd and 3rd graders.
5. **Minor.** The Minor League will consist of players who will reach their 10th birthday as of September 1 but will not reach their 12th birthday as of September 1. Generally, this will be 4th and 5th graders.
6. **Major.** The Major League will consist of players who will reach their 12th birthday as of September 1 but will not reach their 14th birthday by September 1. Generally, this will be 6th and 7th graders.
7. **Fast Pitch.** The Fast Pitch League will consist of players who will reach their 14th birthday as of September 1 but will not reach their 19th birthday by September 1. Generally, this will be 8th graders and up.
8. **Age Group Placement.** Barring any type of handicap or disability, or other extenuating circumstances as determined by the Board of Directors, players will play in their appropriate, respective age group.

B. Establishing Teams

1. **Commissioner Duties.** Each league will be directed by a Commissioner who will be responsible for overseeing the appointing of head coaches, drafting of teams, scheduling of games, league standings and any other duty assigned by the Program President.
2. **Clinic/Rookie-Specific Commissioner Duties.** Clinic and Rookie league teams and names will be established by the league commissioner.
3. **League Composition.** The Commissioner will have the authority to determine, depending on the number of teams in an age group, whether to have single or dual divisions within that League.
4. **Maximum Roster.** The teams in the Clinic, Rookie, Minor, and Major leagues will have a maximum of 13 players per team. The Fast Pitch league will have a maximum of 14 players per team.
5. **Draft.** The League Commissioners in Minor, Major, and Fast Pitch will establish a fair and equitable method of drafting team players and by utilizing player performance ratings will work to ensure that the teams are as evenly matched as possible.
6. **Player Rules—Trades, Siblings.** After drafting their respective team, commissioners, at their sole discretion, may allow the trading of players of equal ability. Siblings will be placed on the same team unless their parents request that they not be placed on the same team.
7. **Team Names.** Commissioners will coordinate with managers to select their team name prior to the draft.
8. **Monthly Program Meeting.** Team managers are required to attend the monthly softball meetings. In the event a manager is unable to attend a meeting, he or she may have a coach or other representative from the team attends in their place.

C. Rating Players

In an effort to assist in creating teams for the next season, at the conclusion of the in-house league season, all players clinic senior and above will be rated based on the skill displayed during the season. Each commissioner will provide a program approved standard evaluation form to all the team managers in all leagues. All leagues will use the same form in order to more consistently evaluate the players. It is very important to have all the player evaluation forms completed for the benefit of creating balanced teams for the next season. The managers are required to complete forms for all the team players and return them to the commissioner by the start of the playoffs. If not turned in, the coach will not be allowed to coach the playoff game.

3. Game Schedules

- A. **Clinic League.** All Clinic instruction will take place on Saturday mornings.
- B. **Game Scheduling.** The League Commissioner will establish the playing schedule for the regular season. No more than 2 regular season games will be scheduled in a week, Sunday through Saturday,

unless a make-up game is required. Postponed games and incomplete games will be rescheduled as soon as possible at the discretion of the League Commissioner.

- C. **Schedule Revisions.** The Commissioner is the only person authorized to alter the date, starting time or location of any game for reasons other than adverse weather or the poor condition of the playing field.
- D. **Game Start.** Games may commence prior to the official starting time as long as the umpire is present, each team can field the minimum number of players, and both managers agree.
- E. **Forfeit Rules.** Games will start promptly at the time indicated on the schedule. The game will be declared a forfeit in the Minor, Major, and Fast Pitch leagues, should either team be unable to field 7 eligible players 15 minutes after the official starting time. Should neither team be able to field the minimum number of players, both teams will forfeit the game.
- F. **All Star Selections.** At the conclusion of the season in the Minor, Major, and Fast Pitch Leagues, each team will select the number of "All Star" players as determined the League Commissioner. "All Star" teams will consist of a sufficient number of players to field 2 full teams from each age League. Managers will be selected by the League Commissioner. They will be assisted by other team managers and coaches as necessary. The number of All Star players per team will be determined by the number of teams in age league.

6-7 teams in a league	5 players
8-9 teams in a league	4 players
10+ teams in a league	3 players

- G. **Tournament.** At the discretion of the League Commissioner, time and funds permitting, an in-house tournament will be played at the conclusion of the regular season. In the event 2 teams' have a tie in their regular season records, the tie will be broken based on head to head, conference play if applicable, and then the team with the fewest runs allowed.

4. Rules of Conduct

A. General Conduct/Uniform Regulations

1. **Sportsmanship Expectations.** Program officials, managers, coaches, players and spectators shall remember that the purpose of the program is to develop friendship, character and promote sportsmanlike conduct. To that end, inappropriate behavior, on and off the playing field, will not be tolerated and may result in banishment from the program. Parents, managers and coaches agree to abide by the LTRC codes of conduct.
2. **Umpire Authority.** The umpire has the authority to order any person, player, manager, coach or spectator from the playing field, team bench or spectator area for conduct deemed to be unsafe, disorderly, offensive, or detrimental to the conduct of the game. Any conduct resulting in a physical altercation is cause for immediate ejection without warning.
3. **Misconduct Reporting.** Any misconduct, unsportsmanlike conduct or failure to obey the rules during the game will be reported to the League Commissioner by the umpire and/or team managers.

4. **Prohibitions.** In accordance with Baltimore County Recreation and Parks rules, and both State and County laws, alcoholic beverages and smoking will not be permitted on or near playing fields, including adjacent parking lots.
5. **Uniform.** All players must be clothed in the uniform provided, or a reasonable facsimile thereof, when taking the field. Exceptions may be granted by the umpire on approval of the opposing team manager.
6. **Cleats.** No metal cleats are allowed for in-house play.
7. **Jewelry.** Players are not permitted to wear watches, rings, earrings necklaces or any other type of jewelry during a game excluding medical alert type of identification.

B. Player Suspensions

Managers have the right to suspend players upon approval of the League Commissioner. A suspension will be for a maximum of 1 full game unless a longer suspension is warranted and approved by the Program President. A suspended player and her parents will be notified of the suspension prior to the next game by the team manager and/or the League Commissioner. The following may result in a player suspension:

1. If a player fails to attend 2 consecutive practices without notifying the manager in advance or does not have an excused absence.
2. Unsportsmanlike conduct.
3. Failure to attend a game without notifying the manager or without an excused absence.
4. It is the responsibility of the players to notify their managers in advance of a game if they are unable to attend the game. After 3 absences without prior notification, the player, at the discretion of the manager and upon approval of the League Commissioner, may be permanently dropped from the team. In the event of this dismissal, there will be no refund of any fees or part thereof.

C. Technical Out

The LTRC Girls Softball program is based on playing softball in an environment of fun, friendship, good sportsmanship and good-spirited competition. To that end, all participants, coaches, and volunteers shall act accordingly. Coaches should not argue umpire calls. Coaches are not to address or criticize the other team's players. Player cheers should be positive and directed at supporting their teammates and not at criticizing or disrupting the other team. As a sanction against those teams or individuals whose behavior is unacceptable, but the umpire judges that ejection is too severe a penalty, the umpire may invoke a technical out against the offending team.

1. **Offense:** If the coach or team at bat is guilty of unsportsmanlike conduct, the umpire may enforce an out against them. If this is the first or second out of the inning, the game continues with the batter and base runners being unaffected; an additional out is simply added to the team's total. If the technical out is the third out of the inning, the next inning will resume with the batter who would have batted had the out not been called. In this case, the batter will begin with a fresh count.

2. **Defense:** If the coach or the team in the field is guilty of unsportsmanlike conduct, the umpire may invoke the technical out rule by giving them an out when they come to bat.

3. Two consecutive technical outs may not be assessed against the same team. At least one pitch (legal or illegal) must intervene. An ejection for any unsportsmanlike behavior must be accompanied by the charging of an out against the offending team.

5. Ground Rules

- A. **Playability Determination.** The Recreation and Parks Area Leader is responsible for determining whether or not a field is playable. If the field is determined not safe for play, or if adverse weather conditions cause a postponement, the Program President and/or League Commissioner will be notified as soon as possible. They will then notify the affected team managers and the person responsible for scheduling umpires (assigner).
- B. **Clinic Play.** Clinic teams will practice for the first half of the scheduled session and then have a scrimmage against another team for the remainder of the allotted time.
- C. **Pregame Warmups.** Time permitting, each team in Minor, Major, and Fast Pitch will have the right to use the infield for a 10 minute period before the start of the game. The home team period will start 25 minutes before game time and the visitors' time will begin 15 minutes before the game time.
- D. **Pregame Umpire Meeting.** Prior to the start of the game, the umpire will discuss the ground rules for the game with a representative of each of the opposing teams. The umpire will determine how play will proceed should a natural or manmade obstruction interfere with the progress of the game.
- E. **Respectful Dugouts.** The home team will use the bench on the third base side of the field; the visiting team will use the bench on the first base side of the field. Offensive team players not at bat or on deck will remain on the bench as will defensive players not on the field.
- F. **Lineups/Scorekeeping.** Each manager shall exchange rosters and line-ups before the start of the game. Each manager will keep score of the game. The home team manager is the official scorekeeper and is responsible for reporting the final score to the League Commissioner.
- G. **Entry To Playing Field.** Managers, coaches and players will be the only persons permitted on the playing field. In Clinic and Rookie league, managers and coaches will be on the field during play to provide instructional assistance. In the Minor, Major, and Fast Pitch leagues, managers and coaches must request a "time out" and be granted "time" by the umpire before entering onto the field.
- H. **Game Suspension.** Once a game has commenced, it will be up to the umpire to determine if play will continue should there be a change in field conditions, including, but not limited to, rain, lightning, thunder, and excessive heat. If the umpire or another adult at the field sees lightning or hears thunder, the game will stopped and all fields at the site will be cleared. The game may only resume if no thunder or lightning is observed by the umpire after a 30 minute wait from the last occurrence. If thunder or lightning occurs more than 10 minutes after the time the game was initially suspended, the game will be over since the maximum amount of time to wait for the conditions to clear is 40 minutes. In the event the game is not allowed to continue, it will be considered a completed game if it meets the criteria for an official game is met or will be scheduled for completion at a later date.

- I. **Protests.** Disputes arising over the infraction or interpretation of the rules will be made known to the umpire and the opposing manager immediately. Every attempt will be made to resolve the dispute at the time of occurrence. If an official protest cannot be avoided, it must be submitted in writing to the respective League Commissioner within 24 hours after completion of the game. A bond of \$20.00 must accompany the written protest. The League Commissioner will render a decision after hearing from both managers and the umpire within 48 hours of receiving the protest. The decision will be final. If the protest is upheld, the bond will be returned. If the protest is rejected, the bond will be forfeited. The Program President will be notified of the dispute and the decision. A judgment call of an umpire is not subject to protest.

6. Field Regulations:

- A. **Clinic-Specific Rules.** Clinic fields will be laid out with informal base distances at the discretion of the coaches.

- B. **Pitching Distance.** The pitcher must pitch from the distance specified for that league. The distance from home plate to the pitcher's plate (pitching rubber) will be as follows:

Rookie	30 feet
Minor	35 feet
Major	40 feet
Fast Pitch	43 feet

- C. **Basepath Dimensions.** The distance between the bases:

Rookie	50 feet
Minor	55 feet
Major	60 feet
Fast Pitch	60 feet

- D. **Out of Play.** A white line parallel to the base line will begin at each end of the backstop and continue to infinity. All areas outside of the line will be considered out of play. The out of play/dead ball territory will determine the application of various rules contained in ASA Official Rules of Softball.

7. Game Rules

Unless otherwise specified herein, games will governed by the Official rules of Softball of the Amateur Softball Association (ASA)

- A. **Regulation Game:**

Minor	6 innings
Major	7 innings
Fast Pitch	7 innings

B. Official Game:

Minor	4 innings
Major	5 innings
Fast Pitch	5 innings

C. Batting Lineups. All leagues will observe a “bat through the order” rule. Accordingly, all players who are present are to be placed in the batting line-up whether or not they played a field position. If a player arrives after the start of the game, she will be added to the bottom of the batting order. In the event a player leaves the field before the end of the game, the player will be removed from the batting order with no penalty or out called. The batting order will remain the same excluding the absent player. All changes to the batting order will be communicated to the opposing score keeper prior to the next player coming to bat.

D. Fielding Positions. In Clinic league, all players will be positioned in the field. Multiple infield positions such as a left and right side pitcher, multiple shortstops and second basemen are expected. In the Rookie league, a full team would consist of the 6 infield positions, with outfielders as necessary; no players should be on the bench. All players in Rookie league will be expected to rotate positions every inning. In the Minor, Major, and Fast Pitch leagues, a full field team will consist of 10 positions, pitcher, catcher, first base, second base, third base, shortstop, and four outfielders. The outfielders must be positioned on the outfield grass at the start of each pitch and cannot be the primary coverer of a base.

E. Callup Provisions. In order to avoid a forfeit, or to field a full team, a manager may call up a player from a younger league at any time, including after the game has started. The call up player must be a registered player in the next youngest league and may play any position with the exception of pitcher. If using call ups, the starting line-up, including call ups, may not exceed 10 players. The manager of the opposing team must be advised of the use of any call up player once the player enters the game. In the event a regular team member arrives late, the called up player will continue to remain in the batting order. Once the call up player has played 3 innings in the field, a rostered player on the team may not sit on the bench to allow the call up to play additional innings.

F. Player Sit Limits. No player will sit out more than 2 innings during a game with the exception of injury or illness. This includes all playoff games.

G. Player Substitutions.

1. All leagues will allow free substitution of defensive players during the game as long as the substitute completes the inning in which they have been placed.
2. Although all substitutions are to be brought to the attention of the opposing team manager, there will be no penalty for an unannounced substitution of a defensive player.
3. In the event that the catcher is on base with 2 outs, a courtesy runner will be substituted. The substitute runner must be the player who made the last batted out. If a player-runner is to be the new pitcher in the next inning, she can be substituted for a courtesy runner (last batted out) in order to warm up

H. Re-Entry Rights. Players leaving the game, for any reason other than ejection, may return to any position on the field.

- I. **End of Inning/Run Limits.** In the Clinic leagues, an inning will end when all batters have batted. No outs are charged to a base runner in clinic juniors. In clinic seniors, a base runner would be removed in the event of an out. For the Rookie league, base runners will be removed in the event of an out; for the first half of the season, the lineup will bat through the order regardless of outs to give the pitchers and batters practice; in the second half of the season, innings will end with 3 outs. In the Minor, Major, and Fast Pitch leagues, an inning will end when there are 3 outs. In the Minor league an inning will also end when the team at bat has scored 4 runs. In the Major and Fast Pitch leagues an inning will also end when the team at bat has scored 5 runs. In the Minor, Major, and Fast Pitch leagues the maximum run rule will be waived and the last scheduled inning will be unlimited runs.
- J. **New Inning Limitation.** A new inning may not start in any game regardless of circumstances past the start time of a previously scheduled in-house game that follows on the same field.
- K. **Last (Unlimited) Inning Determination.** In the event that it appears that the last scheduled inning may not occur because of time, the umpire shall designate, at his sole discretion, another inning to be the final inning of the game with unlimited runs. Once an inning has started, under no circumstances may it be deemed the unlimited run inning. For weeknight games, it will be the umpire's discretion to make a determination of the last inning due to the approach of darkness. If the last inning cannot be completed, the game will only be rescheduled and continued in the event that there were not enough completed innings to be considered an "official game. If enough innings have been completed to make the game "official" the final score will revert back to the last completed full inning (unless the home team is batting and ahead in the interrupted inning) and the game will be over. The umpire always has the right, at his discretion, to stop play based on safety conditions. For Saturday games, the time window should be sufficient to complete a game without time conditions.
- L. **Extra Inning Provisions.** Time permitting, in a tie game, extra innings may be played. Extra innings will be played via "international rules," in which each half-inning will start with a runner on 2nd base (the last out of the prior inning).
- M. **Mercy Rule.** The mercy rule will be in effect when a team is ahead by 12 runs at the end of the 4th inning or later in the Minor league and the end of the 5th inning or later in the Major and Fast Pitch leagues.
- N. **Resumption of Suspended Game.** An interrupted or suspended game is one that has been terminated prior to becoming an official game. Any such interrupted game will be continued from the point of termination as scheduled by the League Commissioner. The game will resume play using the same line-up. Team members not present for the first game will be added to the end of the batting order. The number of times that a player sat out for an inning will carry over.

8. Rules of Play

Unless otherwise stated, the rules of play apply to all age leagues

A. Batting

- 1. **Helmets.** All batters and base runners must wear a NOCSAE approved batting helmet while on the playing field. These will include a face guard, double ear flaps.

2. **Bat Throwing.** Any batter who flagrantly throws a bat in such a manner that could cause injury to a player or any other person on the field, in the opinion of the umpire, will be called out immediately. The ball is dead and the runners may not advance.
3. **Bunting.** Bunting is allowed in the Minor, Major, and Fast Pitch leagues. A missed bunt attempt with 2 strikes is an out.
4. **Foul Ball.** An uncaught foul ball that is hit after 2 strikes is not an out. A caught fouled tip on the 3rd strike is an out. In the Major and Fast Pitch leagues, that caught foul tip is still a live ball and runners may attempt to advance as indicated in their respective league rules.
5. **Hit By Pitch.** In the Major and Fast Pitch leagues, if a pitch hits the batter, regardless of whether it hits the ground first, and in the umpire's judgment the batter made an effort to avoid being hit, the batter will be awarded first base. In the Minor league, if a pitch in the air hits a batter and in the umpire's judgment the batter made an effort to avoid being hit, the batter will be awarded first base. If the pitch hits the ground prior to hitting the batter, the pitch is called a ball on the batter and the ball is considered a dead ball. The batter will continue her at bat and no base will be awarded.

B. Pitching

1. **General.** The pitchers will follow the National Federation rules for pitching.
2. **Pitching Mask.** All pitchers (Rookie, Minor, Major, Fast Pitch) must wear a pitching mask.
3. **Regulation Ball.** Clinic leagues will use the 11 inch SoftStitch Incrediball (Clinic Junior) and SoftTouch Incrediball (Clinic Senior). Rookie league will use the 11 inch SoftTouch Incrediball. Minor league will use the 11 inch regular softball. Major and Fast Pitch will use the 12 inch regular softball.
4. **Clinic-Specific Rules.** Clinic league will be tee hitting in clinic juniors and coach pitch in clinic seniors.
5. **Rookie-Specific Rules.** A pitcher in the Rookie league may only pitch a maximum of 1 inning. The emphasis is on learning to get the ball over the plate via slow pitch, no windmill is allowed. Once a pitcher has thrown a fourth ball, the batter will remain at the plate and a batting team's coach will pitch until the ball is put in play or a strike three is called.
6. **Pitching Limits.** A Minors or Majors league pitcher may only pitch a maximum of 3 innings. A pitcher in the Fast Pitch league may only pitch a maximum of 4 innings, one of which must include the 7th inning (or a later inning in the event of an extra inning game). A single pitch thrown in an inning constitutes a pitched inning. If a pitcher pitches more than the maximum number of innings in a game, the game will be forfeited.
7. **Hit By Pitch.** If a pitcher hits 2 batters in an inning, she is removed for the remainder of the inning. If she hits three batters over the course of the game, she is removed as a pitcher for the remainder of the game.
8. **Intentional Walk Disallowed.** No intentional walks will be allowed during in-house play, in any league.

C. Catching

1. **Required Equipment.** All catchers in Rookie, Minor, Major, and Fast Pitch leagues are required to wear a face mask, helmet, throat protector and shin guards when they are behind the plate.
2. **Dropped Third Strike.** A batter or runner may advance on a dropped third strike in the Major and Fast Pitch leagues. In the Major league, the dropped third strike rule is modified such that the batter is out with no opportunity to go to first when first base is occupied, including with 2 outs.

D. Base Running

1. **Leaving The Base.** In the Rookie and Minor league, a runner may not leave the base until after the pitched ball has crossed home plate. If the ball is not put in play, the runner must return to the base. In the Major and Fast Pitch league, the runner may leave the base when the ball leaves the pitcher's hand.
2. **Stealing.** In the Major league, runners can steal second and third bases, only if the next base is not occupied. However, they may not steal home. Runners can only steal one base at a time. Catcher can "pick off" a runner at third, but runner cannot advance to home on overthrow (a runner on first or second can advance on overthrow, but only the lead runner can advance).
3. **Rookie-Specific Rules.** In the Rookie League, runners can advance base(s) until a fielder has thrown a ball to a base or the pitcher. The runners cannot advance further on an errant throw. We want to encourage all fielders to make throws to the correct base and not penalize them for errant throws. A runner should only score from second on a ball that reaches the outfield.
4. **Minor-Specific Rules.** In the Minor League, the games will be conducted in an appropriate manner that reflects the spirit of girls softball, fair play and the skill level and knowledge of the players. Given the learning environment, it is not in the best interests of LTRC Girls Softball to have Minor league girls continuously running the bases in situations that would normally call for the runners to remain at a base. **To that end, umpires will call time when the ball is in possession of any infielder after a play has been made on a runner or play has stopped.** If runners are between bases, the umpire will place them at the base that he or she believes is proper given the circumstances of the play. This will be a judgment call by the umpire. If a runner is more than half way to the next base when time is called, the umpire will award the runner the base to which she was heading.
5. **Infield Fly Rule.** The infield fly rule applies in the Major and Fast Pitch leagues. The batter is out. Base runners may advance at their own risk.