



2013

ENTERTAINMENT SOFTBALL LEAGUE RULEBOOK

Updated July 8, 2013

Hello Entertainment Softball League Members,

This is the updated version of the ESL Rulebook. Please become familiar with these rules and managers please pass them along to your players and teammates as well – it will be expected that each team's players have some understanding of the rules and why certain things are allowed or not allowed. While we try to cover a lot of ground in this rulebook, it would be nearly impossible to cover every possible scenario and every aspect of the game. For all situations that arise during the game, whether it is addressed in this rulebook or not, your umpire will make the final call.

Please keep in mind that the Entertainment Softball League was first formed as a way for different companies within the entertainment industry to be able to network socially outside of the workplace. To this day the ESL is still a social networking league made up of teams from within the industry. It's meant to be a fun thing to do on Saturdays during the summer and fall without all of the seriousness and competitiveness that come with other leagues. This is why we don't currently require teams to sign their players in before games, we don't require verification of employment, and we don't crack down too hard if teams need to borrow players. It's meant to be fun and we want everyone to be able to play and have a good time.

With that being said, this still is a competitive league and there are still rules and regulations that we must have in place. First and foremost we are concerned about safety, and a majority of these rules are a direct result of trying to make these games as safe for its participants as possible. This is the main reason why it is very important for everyone who participates to be familiar with these rules and to obey them. But also there are some rules in place to try to keep things as fair as possible for all teams. We're pretty lenient when it comes to some things, such as having non-employees play and picking up players from other teams in order to avoid a forfeit, so please don't take advantage of this. We don't want to have to become a league that has to monitor its players by having sign-in sheets, requires employment verification and checks game logs when it comes to the playoffs to make sure all players played the required amount of games.

So thank you for your participation this year and good luck!

Tony Fiteni
ESL Commissioner

1. FIELDING YOUR TEAM

- Each team must have a minimum of 8 players present to begin a game, otherwise they can play up to 10 players in the field at a time. There is no limit to the number of batters a team can put into the lineup, however both female players must bat within the top 10 spots in the batting order.
- Teams should have a minimum of two female players in order to play. Two female players must play the field in order for a team to have ten (10) fielders. If a team has only one (1) female player present they can begin the game with only nine (9) fielders, however under these circumstances an OUT will be recorded in the 10th spot in the batting order. If a second female player arrives late she can be inserted into the field and into the 10th spot in the batting order. If a team has more than ten (10) players in its lineup but only one female player, an out will still be recorded in the 10th spot and a second female player will have to be inserted into the 10th spot once she arrives.
- Under no circumstances can a team begin a game with no female players.
- Teams may start a game with a minimum of eight (8) players and may add the 9th and 10th players into the field as soon as they arrive. Late players must be added to the bottom of the lineup, the only exception is if a team hasn't had their entire lineup appear at the plate yet. In these cases late players can be added in at the bottom of the lineup or ahead of a player who hasn't batted yet.
- There are no restrictions concerning field substitutions, however any players arriving late must be inserted at the bottom of the batting order.
- The batting order must always remain in the same order unless a player who was not previously in the lineup is substituted in for another. In cases of lineup substitutions, any player removed from the lineup due to a substitution will not be allowed to return to the game.
- All players on the field must appear in the batting order.
- Any team that is short players and therefore unable to begin a game will be given until ten (10) minutes after the scheduled start time to secure enough players or the game will be declared a forfeit.

2. ROSTERS

- You may borrow up to three (3) players, male or female, to make 9 players on your team. The three (3) players must bat 7th, 8th and 9th and play catcher, right field and 2nd base. You may never use a borrowed player to make a team of ten (10).
- The ESL asks for teams to limit their non-employee players to a maximum of three (3). There is no way to monitor this, so we ask that you please try to adhere to this rule. The purpose of this rule is to prevent teams from using “ringers” to give them unfair advantages over other teams. We don’t want to have to come up with checks and balances for this in the future, so please try to keep it fair out there.
- Players must appear in a minimum of two (2) regular season games in order to be eligible for the playoff roster.
- All teams must submit a playoff roster to the league commissioner prior to the first Saturday of games in September. The playoff roster should be a list of all players who have appeared in a minimum of two (2) regular season games and who that team would like to have eligible for all playoff games. Rosters will be verified prior to the start of each playoff game and any player who was not on the submitted roster will not be allowed to participate in the game.

3. FORFEITS

- If a team knows in advance that they will have to forfeit an upcoming game they must contact the league commissioner via e-mail or by phone call. If a team finds out they will need to forfeit on a game day then they should contact the commissioner by phone.
- If a team is forced to forfeit at game time due to an insufficient number of players the umpire will notify the league commissioner.
- Any team that forfeits twice during the season, including playoffs, may be subject to probation or removal from the league the following season. The league commissioner will review these situations on a case-by-case basis at the conclusion of the season.
- Any team that forfeits twice during the regular season may be ineligible for the playoffs. This will be decided on a case-by-case basis by the league commissioner.
- A **NO-SHOW** happens when no members of a team show up for a game and the league is not notified. Teams are required to contact the league commissioner ahead of time if they are unable to play. If no players, managers or captains show up at the field for a scheduled game it will count as a NO-SHOW and the team will be placed on probation. If a second NO-SHOW occurs during the season the team will become ineligible for the playoffs and will be removed from the league at the conclusion of the season.

4. GAME LENGTH

- Games will be a maximum of seven (7) complete innings if time allows it.
- Due to time constraints, no new inning will start after 60 minutes of game time. However, any inning starting prior to the 60th minute will be completed.
- If the start of a game is delayed due to an insufficient number of players, the delay time will count toward game time.
- In the event of a tie game, either at the end of 7 innings or at the end of regulation time, extra innings will be played if time permits. The umpire will make the decision on whether or not extra innings will be played.
- The umpire will make the final decision regarding game length, start times and end times.
- There is no minimum inning requirement to make a game official.

5. MERCY RULE

- Any team that is winning by 15 or more runs at the end of the 5th inning will be declared the winner and the remainder of the game will not be played. If the home team is on the winning end of a mercy rule game then only the top half of the 5th inning will be played. There is no mercy rule in effect for playoff games.

6. SCHEDULE

- Once the league schedule is set all game times and dates are final. Teams will be unable to request alternate game times or days.

7. PLAYOFFS & PLAYOFF ROSTERS

- 6 teams from each conference will make the playoffs. Division winners will get the #1 and #2 seeds, then the next 4 teams with the best records in each conference will get the 3- through 6-seeds. Any tie-breakers in the standings will be decided in the following order:
 1. Winning percentage
 2. Head-to-head record versus all teams with the same winning percentage
 3. Division winning percentage
 4. Least number of forfeits
 5. Run differential
 6. Total runs scored
 7. Coin toss

- Playoff rosters must consist of players who appeared in at least two (2) games during the regular season. This rule is in place to discourage teams from employing “ringers” at playoff time. This is not a highly competitive league, so to keep things fair for all teams involved we ask that all teams adhere to this rule.
- All teams must submit a playoff roster to the league commissioner prior to the first Saturday of games in September. The playoff roster should be a list of all players who have appeared in a minimum of two (2) regular season games and who that team would like to have eligible for all playoff games. Rosters will be verified prior to the start of each playoff game and any player who was not on the submitted roster will not be allowed to participate in the game.

8. FIELD LOCATIONS

- The field locations are set when the schedule is set and will not change. Please have your team prepared by making sure all players are aware of what the location is for any upcoming games.
- Due to past experience it is recommended that you have your team at the field at least 15 minutes prior to game time in order to have the lineup set and to minimize the possibility of being short players. Also please take any possible traffic into account.

9. UMPIRES

- Each game will have one umpire assigned to it, your umpires will make all the calls. All umpire calls are final. BALLS/STRIKES, FAIR/FOUL and SAFE/OUT are judgment calls. The umpire calls in these situations are final and are not open for debate.
- Any basic rules not addressed in this rulebook (infield fly rule, runners being hit by the ball, etc.) will be called by the umpire. Umpire calls in these situations are final as well.
- Umpires require a fee of \$15 per team per game, this is not included in your league dues. Teams **MUST** provide payment to their umpire prior to the start of the game.
- The umpire is the only person on the field who can call a timeout, and players are not allowed to call “timeout”, “out-of-play”, etc. in order to distract or confuse the opposing team. Umpires will handle these situations as they see fit. A request for “timeout” may be made by any player or coach and will be granted when all play has stopped.

10. EQUIPMENT

- The league will provide game balls, teams are not responsible for providing softballs.
- Teams will be required to provide their own bats, gloves, practice balls, jerseys, hats, etc.
- Plastic/rubber cleats or sneakers (not sandals) must be worn at all times. No metal or steel cleats are allowed. Any player found to be wearing illegal footwear will be asked to remove them immediately and the manager will be warned. Any player found to be wearing illegal footwear may be ejected from the game.
- All bats must be slow-pitch softball bats, must be ASA Certified bearing either the ASA approved 2000 certification mark or the ASA 2004 certification mark, and must not be listed on an ASA non-approved bat list. More information on this can be found online at www.teamusa.org/USA-Softball/Play-ASA/Certified-ASA-Equipment.
- Altering of bats in any way, shape or form, including “rolling”, “shaving”, “corking”, etc. is not allowed. Using, or attempting to use, an altered bat will result in the bat being removed from the game and the player being ejected from the game and subject to suspension.
- ANY equipment deemed unsafe/illegal by the umpire may be removed from the game at any time. Such removal is NOT subject to protest and players using unsafe/illegal equipment MAY be ejected from the game and subject to suspension or expulsion from the league.

11. LINEUPS

- Once a lineup is set and a game begins, batters must remain in the same order in the lineup. Any late player can be added to the end of the lineup.
- If a substitution is made, meaning if a player who was not previously in the game (not in the batting order) is substituted in for a player who was in the game, the new player will take the spot of the removed player in the batting order and the person who was removed will not be able to re-enter the game (no longer be able to bat or play in the field). Any players substituted out of the lineup will not be eligible to re-enter the game. For example, if you have 14 players show up to the game but you only put 12 batters in the lineup, only those 12 batters will be able to bat and play the field. However if halfway through the game you substitute in your 13th and 14th players, the players you substitute them in for will be considered “out of the game”. This means the players who were replaced will not be allowed to re-enter the game (not allowed to bat or play the field).
- Two female players must bat within the first 10 spots in the batting order. If a team begins a game with only one female player, that team will be given an OUT in the #10 spot in the batting order. If a second female player arrives late, she must be inserted into the batting order in the 10th position.

12. BATTING

- All players will be limited to swinging one (1) bat in the on-deck circle. Weighted bats and donuts are allowed, but players cannot swing more than one bat in the on-deck circle.
- Each batter will begin with a 1 BALL / 1 STRIKE count (1-1). Batters will be allowed only one foul ball with a two-strike count. A second foul ball with a two-strike count will result in an OUT.
- If a male batter is walked on three straight balls when a female batter is on deck, the male batter will be awarded 2nd base **but the female batter will still be required to bat**. If the pitcher throws at least one strike, or the male batter swings at at least one pitch, then the male batter walks, they will be awarded 1st base only.
- A batter may automatically be called out if he or she throws the bat. This is a safety concern so it will be up to the umpire's discretion as to whether or not a player receives a warning or is removed from the game.
- There is no bunting allowed, also batters are not allowed to intentionally chop at the ball. Doing so may result in an OUT. It is up to the umpire's discretion as to whether or not a player does this intentionally.

13. BASE RUNNING

- Stand-up collisions are not allowed, base runners are strongly encouraged to slide in order to avoid a collision. Sliding is not required, however it is the runner's responsibility to avoid contact with a fielder. Any runner who fails to avoid contact with a fielder may be called out, it is up to the umpire's discretion as to whether or not this will be warranted.
- **Runners are not allowed to intentionally break up double plays**, however they are allowed to slide into the base. If a runner does not slide it will be their responsibility to move out of the way of the fielder who is attempting to turn the double play. If a player fails to avoid contact or to make an attempt to get out of the way, a double play may be awarded to the fielding team. Once again this is up to the umpire's discretion.
- If a runner does anything to intentionally disrupt the play, he or she will automatically be called out.
- Courtesy runners will be allowed for injured players only. All courtesy runners must be the last player of the same gender to have made an out.
- There is no leading allowed, there are also no stolen bases allowed. Base runners may not leave the base until a pitched ball is hit. Any violation may result in an out.

14. PITCHING

- Pitchers may stand on the pitching rubber or up to 6 feet behind it for safety reasons.
- Once a pitcher begins pitching to a batter, each subsequent pitch must be thrown from the same spot the first pitch was thrown for at least the remainder of that at-bat.
- The arc height requirement for each pitch should fall roughly between the top of the batter's head to about 18 feet above the ground. This is a rough estimate and the umpire will make a judgment call on these pitches. If a pitch does not meet these requirements then the umpire will signal an illegal pitch (flat, high, illegal, etc.) and it will count as a BALL. If a batter swings at a pitch that is deemed illegal, the pitch will still count and the ball will be considered in play.

15. FIELDING

- Teams may have a minimum of 8 fielders in the field at one time and a maximum of 10. At least two female players must play in the field at all times in order to play with 10 fielders. Teams must have at least one female in the field to start the game, under these circumstances that team may only have a maximum of 9 players on the field at once.
- A minimum of three (3) outfielders must remain at least 160 feet away from home plate until a ball is hit. If there is no line marking 160 feet it will be up to the umpire's judgment as to where outfielders will be placed.
- A fourth outfielder (rover) may play in front of the 160 foot line, however when a female batter is up only a female outfielder may play in front of the line as the rover. If no female player is in the outfield then all outfielders must stay behind the line. When a male batter is up either a male or a female outfielder may play in front of the line as a rover.
- **Fielders may not block a bag or the base path without possession of the ball**, or without being in the act of fielding a batted or thrown ball.
- Certain fields will have different "dead ball" areas, your umpire will discuss these areas, and any associated rules regarding them, with team captains prior to the game.

16. INTERFERENCE, OBSTRUCTION & FAKE TAGS

- A fielder has the right to go into the base path when A) he/she has the ball, B) he/she is in the act of fielding the batted ball, and C) he/she is in the act of fielding a thrown ball. If a runner intentionally makes contact the runner will be called out. If contact is unintentional but is judged by the umpire to have unfairly impeded the defense an out, or outs, may be called.
- If a defensive player illegally hinders a batter or base runner, the base runner may be awarded an extra base. A fake tag to induce the runner to slide is considered obstruction and the runner will be awarded the base or base the runner would have reached had the obstruction not occurred.
- Malicious fake tags, or fake tags that are made intentionally in order to cause a runner to slide, can create an unsafe situation for the runner. These acts are not allowed and it will be up to the umpire's discretion in these instances as to whether a warning will be issued to the guilty player or if they will be ejected from the game.

Please remember this is a non-contact league and player safety is of utmost importance. Umpires will use their discretion as to whether or not certain actions are considered intentional or malicious, and it will be up to the umpires only as to whether or not a team or player is penalized for their actions. These calls are judgment calls on the part of the umpire and the umpire's decision will be final. Please make sure all players are aware that they should always keep in mind player safety and good sportsmanship when making decisions on the field.

17. OVERTHROWS & BALLS OUT OF PLAY

- If a ball is overthrown into foul territory, and the ball remains in play in foul territory, then runners may advance an unlimited amount of bases until the umpire signals that play has stopped. The ball will be considered "in-play" until that time and runners can be tagged out while advancing.
- Overthrown balls that end up in an "out-of-play" area will be signaled "out-of-play" by the umpire. Runners will be allowed to advance one, two or three bases depending on the situation. Umpires will make the final decision on how many bases runners will be allowed to advance.

18. ADDITIONAL RULES

- Any ruling or situation not covered by these rules will be subject to the rules governing Major League Baseball Inc. (MLB).
- Your umpire will make the final call on any ruling or situation whether it is addressed in this rulebook or not. This includes any basic rules, judgment calls or any other situation that is not addressed here. All umpire decisions are final.
- For any questions or concerns regarding league rules please contact your league commissioner.

Thank you for participating in the Entertainment Softball League. All teams should be reminded that the ESL is not a highly-competitive league. This is adult co-ed softball, it's a friendly league that began as a networking tool for companies in the entertainment industry. Please keep this in mind while playing and fielding your team. The safety and security of ESL players is the most important part of this league, and to have fun while playing is the main goal. Please respect your fellow league mates and let's keep the ESL the league it was intended to be.

Good luck this season!

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