

The Villages Recreation Softball League
RULES & REGULATIONS
DIVISION #3
Revised - January 6, 2025

The Villages Recreation Softball League is designed to offer recreational play in an organized and structured format to residents of The Villages. The Recreation Department regulations, the Official Softball SSUSA Rules, and The Villages Division 3 Softball Rules govern play for all players, managers, and umpires to abide.

Participants are reminded that softball is only a game to be enjoyed. Exercise, fellowship, and friendly competition are our goals. Negative comments about fellow players, opponents or umpires are not in keeping with the spirit of the sport. Disagreements between managers and players should be expressed with respect and consideration by both parties, preferably in private. No one should be disparaged or criticized in front of teammates and/or spectators.

If the Manager deems it necessary to remove a player from the field, after warning him about his behavior (language or actions), he shall tell the Umpire of his intentions and ask for a replacement player if the team only has 11 players to start with. If the player was at bat when this occurred the replacement player would inherit the player's count at the plate. The Manager would file an incident report at the board table immediately following his game. The use of vulgar language does not require or deserve a warning. The removal of a player will follow the same rules as ejection. (Definitions #11)

The Division 3 Board Member In-Charge, in conjunction with Recreation Department Personnel will determine if games are to be cancelled due to weather conditions that would impact the safety and wellbeing of participants. The cancellation will be emailed using the league wide system.

1. When the temperatures are at or above a 104-degree Heat Index or below 40 degrees as of game time, the Board Member In-Charge will consult the managers of each team and ask them if they want to play the game. If one manager says "NO," then the game is cancelled and is recorded as a cancelled game. (No Forfeit). If one player does not want to play, then the team may get a sub. The game that player didn't play in will be charged against him as a missed game.
2. When the forecasted wind chill is below 50 degrees at 9:00am, games will be delayed to 10:00am, 11:30am and 1:00pm.

Also, when the temperature reaches a 104 heat index all umpires will mandatorily have both teams take a 5-minute break after the bottom of the fourth inning.

Prior to the start of the games, if weather conditions (i.e. rain, high heat index, cold temperature, excessive wind, lightning, etc.) are approaching an unsafe situation (or if there is an umpire-called "rain delay"), the Board Member In-Charge, with input from the groundskeeper, fellow Board members, and umpires at the fields, will make the decision of whether the games should be played or cancelled. Only games on the unplayable fields will be cancelled—all other games will restart after a rain delay. If lightning is seen by an umpire or Board Member, all games MUST stop for 20 minutes. If no lightning is seen during the 20-minute delay, all games will resume as scheduled. If lightning is seen again within the initial 20-minute delay, the umpire(s), with input from Board Members present, may either cancel ALL games or choose to restart a subsequent 20-minute delay – sound judgment must prevail. When the Board Member In-Charge makes the decision to play the games, any team who

decides not to play will incur a forfeit. If during play it starts to rain with no lightning, and one umpire delays the game by sending the players to their dugouts, all play will halt on the other fields. The Board will make a decision on whether to continue to play or to cancel games.

I. EQUIPMENT

Only the following are allowed: rubber spikes or sneakers; regulation-sized gloves; and bats that have been approved by Senior Softball-USA. Team shirts and hats that build team spirit, unity, and fun are encouraged. Any player may wear gloves or mitts. Pitchers are not allowed to wear gloves of ANY sort on their pitching hand. Players are permitted to wear any protective equipment they feel necessary. It is mandatory that Pitchers wear a NOCSAE-approved protective face mask while pitching and to wear the mask consistent with the manufacture's intended usage of their product. Pitchers may also use pitching screens, if available. It is not mandatory that both pitchers must use a screen if only one pitcher elects to do so. (also see "IV DEFINITIONS")

II. PLAYERS

A. QUALIFICATIONS

1. Players must be residents or certified renters of The Villages and must sign an application (release form) before being eligible to participate.
2. New players must attend three official evaluation practices before becoming eligible to play. The Player Evaluation Committee determines division placement. The division board determines player rating (A, B, or C).
3. A newly evaluated player may sign up for their evaluated division. If a season is already in progress, the newly evaluated player is eligible (providing application has been made) to declare that he wishes to join a team. A previous roster player who has not been drafted at the beginning of the season is eligible and may also declare that they wish to be on a team.
4. New players who indicate that they ~~are~~ want to be a Pitchers in D3 must be evaluated and certified by the Board. If pitchers are coming from a higher or lower division, they will need to be certified as well D3. The Board has the right to evaluate any pitcher coming from any division.

The Pitcher Evaluation Process is as follows:

Step 1: Players who want to pitch in D-3 must first go through a preliminary tryout which consists of pitching a simulated game from the mound to a catcher with a player standing in the batter's box while a board member (or certified umpire) acts as the umpire. The simulated game will be three innings in which the pitcher moves on to the next inning after recording three strike outs. The pitcher's base on balls (walks) will be recorded as well. The board members observing this process will decide if the applicant meets this test satisfactorily. If so, the applicant will be allowed to pitch either as a roster player or sub for the remainder of that season.

Step 2: After the initial season is complete the applicant's performance may be evaluated by the board and a decision will be made whether or not the applicant is certified as a pitcher in D-3. If so, no further evaluation is necessary. If not, the applicant will be notified he is not eligible to pitch in D-3 either as a roster player or sub.

5. To provide fairness in the division, for a team, and for players who wish to join a team, a roster player must agree to play at least four- and one-half innings (with the home team ahead or five innings with the Visitor team ahead) in the specified number of regular season games as indicated in the *Missed Games Allowance Scale below. A player who does not play in the specified number of regular scheduled games in a given season will become ineligible, removed from a team's roster, and replaced by a player wishing to join a team. Any game missed will be counted.

Note** If a game injury is after the 5th inning it would be a complete game therefore it is not considered an injury missed game.

*Missed Games Allowance Scale:

With 23 or more games, a player may miss 6 games, 7th game out.

With 19-22 games, a player may miss 5 games, 6th game out.

With 15-18 games, a player may miss 4 games, 5th game out.

With 11-14 games, a player may miss 3 games, 4th game out.

With 7-10 games, a player may miss 2 games, 3rd game out.

With 5-6 games, a player may miss 1 game, 2nd game out.

With 1-4 games, no games may be missed.

6. When a player is placed on a team from the Replacement List, he will be governed by all the rules in paragraph 5 above regarding number of games that can be missed. (Ex. 10 games left he could only miss 2 games, 3rd game out.)

7. It is each manager's duty to promptly inform the Division Board Commissioner when a player misses too many games and must be replaced or if a team member sustains an injury and informs his manager that he cannot finish the season. See Notes (1) and (2) below.

Note (1): The penalty for failing to inform the Board is as follows:

1st Offense – Warning Issued

2nd Offense – Suspended from managing the remainder of that season and the next season they manage (if chosen)

3rd Offense – Permanently removed as a manager in D3.

Note (2): When a player (who was removed from a roster due to injury or illness) returns, he will be added to a sub list of players. That player cannot sub for or against his former team and may NOT sub for any team until he misses the minimum required number of games using the table above

B. DRAFT:

1. The division Board will assign managers at the start each season. They will be chosen from a list of volunteers from the Application (sign-up) forms and must meet all manager qualifications and the manager selection process set forth in the Division 3 Bylaws. Player information will be presented to the managers prior to the draft. Managers will randomly draw for draft position. All playing managers will draft 10 players. All non-playing managers will draft 11 players. All managers will draft a team of (3) A players, (5) B players and (3) C players in any order they choose. When managers who are also board members are rated at the seasons rating

meeting, they will leave the board meeting for the amount of time the other board members need to evaluate their draft position for that season's draft.

2. Players when signing up for the draft will put down their preferred position on the draft form. They will put down what position they want to play but cannot put down "Any, IF or Rover". Players refusing to play on a team or players refusing to play where their manager assigns them, with the exception of "Pitcher", will be barred from playing or substituting for the remainder of that season. If such an event occurs after the fourteenth (14th) game of the season, they will be barred from playing or substituting for the remainder of that season plus the number of games of the next season in which they wish to play to equal 14 games.

3. Players signing up and NOT designating the position of "Pitcher" as one of their choices may not be named the "designated pitcher." Players may also refuse to play the position of "Pitcher" for their current team manager without consequence. Players refusing to pitch for their team will not be permitted to pitch for any other team for the remainder of that season.

C. LINEUPS:

1. Each team shall field a minimum of Eleven (11) players.

2. Players who know they will not be able to participate in a game must notify their manager of the reason for their absence.

3. Players should notify their manager of their presence 40 minutes prior to their own game time. Managers must submit one copy of their lineup 30 minutes prior to scheduled game time to the Board Member on duty or note the number of subs needed on the appropriate substitution sheet located outside the snack bar. Once that copy is submitted to the board member on duty it becomes the official lineup for that game. ANY TEAM MEMBER NOT IN THE LINEUP ARRIVING AFTER THE SUBMISSION OF THAT LINE UP, WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO PLAY IN THAT GAME. A team member that IS in the lineup, and does not show, the team will play with 10 players for the duration of the game, provided they have a minimum of 8 roster players in the lineup, and the opposing team will NOT provide a catcher or defensive player. Additionally, the team will incur an out each time the absent player is scheduled to bat. The Board Member In-Charge will, prior to the start of the game, have Team Managers provide "updated" line-up sheets for the score keepers and opposing manager.

4. A team with fewer than eight roster (8) players will not be allowed to select substitutes and MUST forfeit the game. If a team has eight (8) roster players present, the manager may receive a maximum of three (3) substitutes, and then play with eleven (11) players. No more than three (3) substitutes will be allowed on any team for any game, seasonal or playoffs (except in 4 a, ****Note****). Players should not start a game if they know they will not be able to complete it. Decisions regarding the batting order and defensive assignments are the exclusive responsibility of team managers

a. If a team has only 8 players and receives 3 subs prior to the game and subsequently they lose one of their roster players due to injury, ejection, illness or emergency, they may NOT receive another sub, and the team may elect to continue play with 10 players or forfeit the game. However, the opposing team will NOT supply a catcher or defensive player. The injured player will be scratched from the line-up and an out will be incurred when it is his turn to bat. (11-6-2023)

****Note**** If the team is waiting for a replacement player from the waiting list of his rating and there is none then this will not count against him when losing an additional roster player. He may get a sub at this point. This would

also allow the team to get up to 4 subs at the start of the game due to the fact that no replacement is available for one of their players. (2-19-24)

- b. If a team has only 8 players and receives 3 subs prior to the game and subsequently one of their subs is required to leave the game, the team MAY receive an injury sub.
- c. If a roster player leaves the game for other than injury, ejection, illness or emergency, leaving the team with only 7 roster players, the team would then be required to forfeit the game.
- d. If a roster player leaves the game for other than injury, ejection, illness or emergency and the team still has a minimum of 8 roster players remaining, the team may continue to play with 10 players. However, the opposing team will NOT provide a catcher or defensive player and the team will incur an out each time the absent player is scheduled to bat.
- e. No team will be allowed to play with less than 10 players under any circumstance.

D. SUBSTITUTES:

- 1. Substitute players will be selected to play when teams have between Eight (8) and ten (10) roster players. A team having only seven (7) players will forfeit.
- 2. All players who have a signed application on file to play that season as a roster player or sub only player may sign up as a substitute.
- 3. Any team needing a “pitching sub to replace their team’s designated pitcher, may recruit any certified pitcher (including sub pitchers) that season of the same or lesser rating to replace their designated pitcher. If no pitcher of the same rating is available, see #9 below, or they may have a roster player pitch and get a non-pitching sub of the same rating as the absent designated pitcher. (Note: Any player on the line-up card at any time during the game may pitch for that team, including assigned subs.)
- 4. Substitutes need to be signed up 30 minutes prior to game time for the game in which they wish to substitute. (No subs will be allowed on the sub list after this time unless there are not enough to satisfy the number required). If the Board member on duty has the chance, he may put a sub (not a late arriving team member) in the game to bring that team up to 11 players after the game has started. A player that was late arriving for his game cannot sub for another team the rest of the day.
- 5. Substitutes will be drawn 30 minutes prior to game time by the Board Member In-Charge (or other Board Member). Managers from all teams must be present at the designated area when substitutes are drawn for their game or for the opposing team requiring players. The Board Member In-Charge will then notify managers and scorekeepers of the substitute players. Managers can put their subs in the batting order anywhere they choose prior to turning in the line-up. This procedure will be done following the Line Up example given to them prior to the start of the season. A copy of the example line up sheet will be in the binder at the board table.

Division 3 softball does not condone consumption of alcohol by a player prior to the game that he will play in. This includes a game day sub or injury sub. Team managers have the right to refuse to accept an injury sub or game day sub if he has consumed alcohol prior to the game.

6. Substitutes will be assigned to teams by a random drawing of numbered pills based on their category as follows:

P1: A player that is not picked for the 9:00 game (first game of the day) who stays around to be a sub for the remaining games that day until they are picked to sub in a game.

P2: A player who is not assigned to a team.

P3: A player who is assigned to a team (roster player) and wishes to sub in a game his team is not involved in, or an injury sub who has played less than five (5) full innings in a prior game that day.

P4: A player who has already subbed that day.

Note 1: In the event a team is not scheduled to play, or his game has been cancelled on any regular season game day (and does not have Announcing duty) roster players on that team will be classified as P2's for subbing purposes.

Note 2: Substitute players refusing to play on a team or refusing to play where their manager assigns them with the exception of "Pitcher", will be barred from substituting for the remainder of that season.

7. Board Duty members will verify the level of players missing from each team and the level and priority of each sub using lists provided by the Board.

- a. Subs will be assigned in order of playing fields beginning with field 1 visitors and will continue sequentially through the fields (i.e. field 1 home, field 2 visitors, field 2 home, etc.)
- b. Draw a pill for each sub player where there are more than one at that same level and priority.
- c. Allocate "A" subs in pill draw order to open "A" roster spots in the above dugout order for P2, P3 and P4 subs in that order (A for A).
- d. Allocate "B" subs to any remaining open "A" roster spots in the same order (B for A). If a B player is required to sub for an A player, the manager may choose the B player he wishes from the list of B subs prior to drawing pills for B subs.
- e. Allocate remaining "B" subs to remaining "B" roster spots in the same order (B for B).
- f. Allocate "C" subs to any remaining open "B" roster spots in the same order (C for B). If a C player is required to sub for an B player, the manager may choose the C player he wishes from the list of C subs prior to drawing pills for C subs.
- g. Allocate remaining "C" subs to remaining "C" roster spots in the same order. (C for C)

- h. All teams will play with 11 players, unless there are not enough subs available.
 - i. No “A” player will replace a “B” or “C”
 - j. No “B” player will replace a “C”
 - k. No “C” player will replace an “A”.
8. A player may only substitute once a day unless there are not enough substitutes to fill needs.
9. If a manager has contacted all roster pitchers and sub pitchers and had no success recruiting a pitcher at the same or lower rating, he must contact the Board member in charge of pitcher recruitment. The Board member will then allow him to go up one level in rating to secure a pitcher. This is done on a game-by-game basis. If the pitcher that has agreed to pitch for a team does not show up prior to the selection of subs (30 minutes before game time) he will be governed by Rule C; Lineups, paragraph #3.
10. If a player becomes ill or injured, is ejected, or must leave due to an emergency (not a scheduled appointment), a substitute will be chosen from the injury substitute list. Once the manager of the team needing the substitute notifies the Home Plate Umpire that a substitute is needed, it becomes official and the next player of same level from the injury substitute list is in the lineup. If there are no subs on the injury list, the Board member in charge will make an announcement asking for a sub of the same ranking as the injured player. If this injury substitute is picked to play the following game, he will do so under the guidelines listed below (see paragraph 13). If no one on the substitute list is available, a substitute will be chosen from players available. If a sub is injured, ill or ejected or must leave due to an emergency, he will be replaced by a player with the same rating as the player he was subbing for. The substitute player inherits the runner stats for the player he is subbing for. The substitution and reason for said substitution will be made by the on-duty Board member.
11. After substitutes have been drawn and assigned to a team, the manager will not be able to remove the substitute to add a player that has shown up late.
12. No substitute will be allowed for a player who leaves the game for reasons other than an emergency (not a scheduled appointment), injury or ejection. When that player’s turn to bat comes up, the team will be charged with an out.
13. If there are not enough available substitutes (see paragraph 7. above), an announcement will be made over the PA soliciting additional substitutes. These substitutes (roster player or injury sub) may play on any field. However, roster players who sub before their game will not be pulled for their scheduled game until the game, they are subbing in, is finished
14. If adequate subs are available for all missing players, they will be assigned by priority of teams as per Paragraph 7, above.
15. If there are not adequate subs available, subs will be assigned as needed to bring all teams to a minimum of 10 players. In the case where a team is required to play with 10 players due to inadequate number of subs available, the opposing team will provide a catcher for the shorted team. We would hope that in this case the supplying manager and player would have the integrity to give his best effort of play for the opposing team.

16. During the division tournament, substitutions will be on a skill level basis. Players chosen first as substitutes will be roster players during the current season. If enough roster players are not available, sub-only and players evaluated during the current season by the Board based on their play during the season will be eligible to be subs for tournament play. Substitutes will be at the same player ranking as the replaced player. Note* A sub or player that has already subbed or will be playing in the second game will only be allowed to play in one game, unless there aren't enough subs of the same ranking on the list. They may still sign up for the game but will only play if there is a lack of subs. Non-Playing and Playing roster players will have priority over sub only players. (P-1 status will not be used during the tournament. (3-30-24)

Note** The order in which subs will be drawn is:

1. Non-Playing roster subs players.
2. Playing roster players.
3. Subs that played in the season prior to the tournament.

E. REPLACEMENT PLAYERS:

1. When a substitute player wishes to become a roster player, he will declare such to the current Board Member in charge of Replacement Players. The Board Member in charge of Replacement Players will keep track of all such declarations by name, skill category (A/B/C), Pitcher Only/Non-Pitcher positions, and date of declaration. A replacement player will not be considered to be put on a team unless he has been on the replacement list for at least 48 hours.

2. The Board Member in charge of Replacement Players will not divulge the names of players on the Replacement List. (Except as stated below.) The Board Member in Charge of Replacement Players will NOT answer any questions from Managers. Managers and their proxies MUST refrain from asking players to add their names to the Replacement List.

3. When a team needs a replacement (non-pitching) player to replace one that can no longer play prior to the start of the season ending tournament due to injury/health issues, family related emergencies, or other unforeseen circumstances. (i.e... change in work schedule after the season starts). The Manager will contact the Board Member in charge of Replacement Players by email indicating his need(s) as soon as he is advised by that player of the need to leave the team. All (non-pitching) replacement player ratings (A / B / C) will be handled in the same manner. When a team needs a replacement player (for example a B rated player), the manager will be provided the entire waiting list of B replacement players. The manager will select a player from this list. If only one player is on the list, that player will automatically be placed on the team requesting the replacement player. When multiple teams are requesting a replacement player of the same rating, and one becomes available, the team first requesting a player may select the player. If the player is not selected by this team, the player will next be offered to the next team requesting a player. This process will continue until a team has selected the player. If no team selects the player, the player will be placed on the first team requesting a replacement player. Note: If no replacement player is available, a team may go down one level if there are no replacement players on the A or B replacement list(s). If chosen, that player would then maintain the same rating as the player he replaced. If the original player returns and can play prior to his being replaced, he may rejoin his team until a replacement player is

available. When the replacement player is available, the original player is removed from the team immediately and put on the sub list but not put on the replacement list, and the replacement player is added to the roster.

4. When a team requires a replacement pitcher, (A, B or C rating) all available pitchers on the replacement list of the same rating (who selected Pitcher as their first or second choice on their application) will be offered to that team. If there is only one eligible pitcher on the list, they will be assigned to that team. If there are no pitchers available in the A or B skill category required, the Manager can go down “one level” to obtain a pitcher, if available. That pitcher would then maintain the same rating as the pitcher he replaced. If the manager declines to go down a level to obtain a pitcher, he will need to get a sub pitcher until a replacement pitcher of the same level becomes available.

5. When a team requires a C pitcher, all available C pitchers on the list will be offered. If no pitchers reside on that list, they will need to get a sub pitcher until a replacement becomes available.

6. In all cases of a request for a replacement player, (non-pitching or pitching) Managers will have 48 hours of receipt of the list to select an available replacement player or pitcher off that list or he will be assigned the player who has been on the list the longest.

7. Accordingly, the replacement player chosen or assigned to a team will have a time period of 2 play dates to join that team. If this doesn't occur, said player will be removed from the list. The Manager will then be given a choice of the remaining players and repeat the process again.

8. When a replacement player or pitcher has been assigned to a team, the name of that player will be provided to all board members and managers by email in a timely manner.

III GAME RULES

1. Double Bag rule - BATTER-RUNNER REACHING FIRST BASE. Each batter must reach first base without the aid of a courtesy runner. A double bag shall be used at first base, the double portion of the bag being in foul territory abutting first base. If there is a “Legitimate and Realistic” play on a batter-runner going to first base, the batter-runner must touch only the Orange Bag extending into foul territory. (This is completely umpire judgement) His touch of the White Bag or BOTH Bags will result in being called out, except in the umpire's judgment, the batter-runner is avoiding a collision. This is NOT an appeal play. Important: The defending player has only the white base, in fair territory, to make the putout; his touch of only the bag in foul territory, or both bags simultaneously (umpire judgment), during the put-out at first base, will not result in an out. After making the put-out at first base, any subsequent touch of the orange bag by the defensive player will NOT result in the batter-runner being called safe. After the batter-runner becomes a base runner, the defensive player may use either portion of the double base to record a put out. The base runner is allowed to utilize either the white bag OR the orange bag, or both, while on 1st base. The practical effect is that the two bases are ‘merged’ for both offensive and defensive purposes once the batter runner becomes solely a base runner.
2. A runner advancing to HOME will be called out if he touches or crosses over any portion of the batting platform.

3. A runner may leave his base only when a pitched ball is batted, the batter swings or the ball crosses the plate. A runner leaving the base too soon can be called out.
4. There are no rundowns for the sake of safety. A rundown is started when a play is made on the runner. **A runner is only allowed to reverse his direction one time when a play is being made on him while advancing to the next base. The runner does not have to go back and re-touch the base that he was returning to if the ball is overthrown on a subsequent play, he may turn and proceed to the next base.**
5. Each team is responsible for keeping its dugout gates closed during play. If the team at bat leaves its dugout gate open and a live ball goes into the dugout, there will be no runner advancement awarded.
6. **WHEN SLIDING IS OPTIONAL:**

A player may slide into second or third base or when returning to any base. A runner must make every effort to avoid colliding with opposing players while running the bases or sliding. If in the umpire's judgement a runner misses a base to avoid a collision, the runner will not be called out. If in the umpire's judgement the runner fails to avoid a collision with a defensive player involved in the play the ball will be declared dead and that runner called out. All base runners except the batter/runner will be returned to their previous base unless forced to advance. If in the umpire's judgement the runner's collision with the defensive player involved in the play negates a double play, the umpire may award a second out. The runner closest to home will be called out.

Sliding should only be done to legally and safely obtain a base. If the play has already been made at the base, (defensive player has made the force out), there should be no reason for the runner to slide. Going down into a slide short of the base to avoid a throw is okay. Sliding should not be done to break-up or negate any defensive play being made on another runner. When sliding the player must slide into the bag NO hook slide to either side of the bag is legal nor is sliding past the bag... If the offensive players legs/arms go into a defensive player or anywhere other than the base, (Automatic Out), ****Note****If in the umpire's judgement there was no play being made on the runner, and the runner went past the bag but there was no one tending the base then no out shall occur for an illegal slide (2-19-24). ALL PLAYS ARE STILL FORCE PLAYS! (11-26-23)
7. Runners shall be called out for contact with a defensive player if, in the umpire's judgment, the contact was deliberate or if the runner could have reasonably avoided contact and failed to do so. If a runner interferes with a defensive player making a subsequent play, the runner closest to home will be called out. If the umpire rules deliberate contact on the part of the defensive player, the runner shall be called safe. **Defenders no longer can block a base legally while waiting on a throw to arrive. Now, to avoid being called for obstruction for impeding a runner legally running the bases, a defender must have possession of the ball or be in the act of fielding a batted ball.**
8. Players are not permitted to over-run second and third base without being in jeopardy of being called out. A player may over-run first base unless the base runner attempts to advance to second base. A runner who overruns any base when returning to it is liable to be put out. **(No tag of the runner is necessary. The runner is out if the fielder is in contact with the bag.) A base runner may slide or dive when returning to any base. A runner who gives himself up at second or third base and that is in close proximity to the base and the defensive player drops or bobbles the ball and, in the umpires, judgement would have been safe then the runner shall be deemed safe.**
9. Once a runner's foot touches the ground on or past the commitment line, the runner is committed to advancing to the scoring plate. A runner will be called out if he re-crosses the commitment line and the ball will remain live.

10. A tag of the runner by a defensive player is not allowed between the commitment line and the scoring plate. The runner will be called safe and the ball remains live.
11. **Runner Rule:** Any player may be run for at any time and at any base with that runner having **NO** right to refuse a runner when his manager wants to send in a courtesy runner. A courtesy runner may enter the game only prior to the first pitch to any batter; **the umpire shall prevent entry of a courtesy runner during the at-bat. (Changed 11-6-2023)**

A player can be a courtesy runner twice a game and once an inning. A runner may not run for a player if he was replaced with a runner earlier in the inning. If a runner has already run once that inning or twice in the game and the opposing team appeals to the umpire then the umpire will check his sheet that he keeps track of the runners on and if found to be correct the ump will call the offending runner out. If it is the 3rd out in either case, then the batter that was up will come up to bat the next inning with a new count. **All runner rule violations must be an appeal play to the umpire by the opposing manager.**

If a courtesy runner is on base when it is his turn to bat, he will be called out on that base and if it is not the last out, he will then have his turn at bat. If it is the last out, he will be the leadoff batter the next inning. A runner cannot be replaced once he has taken possession of the base (unless for an injury to which the runner must leave the game.).

If all players have been used as a courtesy runner, then no courtesy runner will be allowed and all players will have to run for themselves.

When in extra innings and the international runner rule is in effect, the batter who made the last out in the previous inning must start at 2nd base and advance one base before a courtesy runner can be put in for that player.

12. Infield warm-ups are allowed while the pitcher is warming up. Once the umpire calls “ball in” all warm-ups must stop.
13. Teams are limited to five (5) runs per inning except in the 7th or later innings of the game, in which a team can score an unlimited number of runs. A team behind by more than five runs in any inning prior to the 7th inning, can score “Five runs Plus 1” run in an effort to catch up.} (Exception, a home team trailing by 21 or more runs may score enough runs to get within the “Mercy Rule” of less than 15 runs.) (3-30-24)
14. All runners on base that are forced to the next base as a result of the hit or walk that enabled the fifth, plus 1 or tying run, must reach the next base. Then time may be called and the run counted.
15. When the score is tied after seven innings, teams start each inning with a runner on second base. That base runner is the last player at bat from the previous inning. If the game is tied in the bottom of the 7th inning or later bottom innings and there are runners on base and the batter hits an “Over the Fence” homerun, all the runs will count in the stats. (Ex.) Game is tied 12-12 in the bottom of the 7th, runners on first and second, batter hits an OTF homerun. All runs crossing the plate will score Final score would be 15-12. (3-30-24)

16. If a team is leading by 15 or more runs after the 5th inning (4 and a half innings if the home team is ahead), the game will be considered complete. If the Visiting team is ahead by 15 or more runs after the 5th inning, the Home Team must bat in the bottom of the inning. } If the Visiting team is ahead by 21 or more runs, the home team will be allowed to score enough runs to get within the "Mercy Rule" of less than 15 runs. (3-30-24)

17. Field personnel changes cannot be made after the first pitch to the batter. (NO MORE calling time out and running behind the catcher or across the field to a coach's box or to get on deck!) This does not apply to changing out base coaches on the same side of the field nearest the dugout.

18. Game stoppages: All games that are stopped before the 7th inning but past the 5th inning for whatever reason, (Injury, inclement weather, managers quitting) will count as a complete game going back to the last completed inning.

IV. DEFINITIONS:

1. LEGAL PITCH: The height of a legal pitch must be from six feet to twelve feet above the playing surface.
2. LEGAL STRIKE: Legal pitches striking any part of the home plate or the strike zone mat shall be strikes.
3. INFIELD: The infield is that portion of the field in fair territory that includes areas normally covered by infielders.
4. INFIELD FLY: A fair fly ball (not including a line drive) that can be caught by any fielder with ordinary effort when first and second bases or first, second and third bases are occupied with less than two outs. Any fielder can catch an infield fly. NOTE: When it becomes apparent that a batted ball will be an infield fly, the umpire shall immediately declare, "infield fly - batter is out", to aid the runners. If the ball is near the foul lines, the umpire shall declare, "infield fly - if fair". The ball is live and runners may advance at the risk of the ball being caught, or re-touch and advance after a fielder touches the ball. If the hit ball becomes a foul ball, it is treated the same as any other foul ball. Failure of the umpire to call "infield fly," does not negate the infield fly. If the error is discovered prior to the next pitch, the infield fly rule may still be called. In this case the batter is ruled out on the Infield Fly and all runners that reached another base without being put out are safe. (runners may advance at their own risk). If an out occurs at any other base, then the runners are returned to the base they occupied prior to the "infield fly" being called. Batter is the only OUT. (ex. Bases loaded, run scores from third base with no out being made RUN SCORES, or, Bases loaded run scores from third but an out made at second or third, no run scores, runners returned to the bases previously occupied.)
5. PITCHING SCREEN: The following rules apply:
 - a. Pitchers must use the competition type protective screen (Smaller Screen). The team using the screen is responsible for the placement and removal of the screen. The screen does not negate the wearing of an approved face mask (NOCSAE approved) if the Competition type screen was not available for any reason that the larger pitcher screen would suffice.

- b. The screen will directly face home plate within one to three feet in front of the pitching box. If a pitcher chooses to use the full depth of the ten-foot pitchers' box, then the screen must be positioned in the one-to-three-foot limits of where he chooses to pitch.
- c. The screen may be positioned anywhere from the outer left side of the pitching rubber for a right-handed pitcher to the outer right side of the pitching rubber for a left-handed pitcher. These lines are extended to the rear of the pitcher's box should the pitcher want to pitch further back in the pitcher's box.
- d. The screen must be placed to the left of a right-handed pitcher, and to the right of a left-handed pitcher to maximize the pitcher's safety.
- e. Any batted ball striking any portion of the screen as observed by the umpire will be declared a dead ball, no pitch. All rules governing a dead ball no pitch will apply. All thrown balls hitting the screen are alive and play continues.
- f. Any pitch delivered with the screen not in a legal position will be declared "Illegal Pitch" (Ball). If a pitcher refuses to place the screen in the correct position, the umpire will notify the player's manager and remove the pitcher from pitching.
- g. If a pitcher chooses to use a screen, then he MUST step "completely" behind the screen by the time each pitched ball reaches the plate. Failure to do so will result in the umpire calling each pitched ball an "Illegal Pitch" (Ball).
- h. A pitcher is ineligible to field any hard driven ball that is hit up the middle (umpire judgment). Penalty for doing so will be a "dead ball single" for the batter and all runners will advance one base. A pitcher will be allowed to field a slow rolling grounder or pop-up with no penalty (umpire judgment).

6. **ILLEGALLY BATTED BALL:** Conform to SSUSA rule. An illegally batted ball occurs when the batter hits the ball fair or foul and:

- A. The entire foot is completely outside the lines of the batter's box and on the ground.
- B. Any part of the foot is touching the strike zone mat.
- C. An illegal or altered bat is used.

7. **CATCH:** A catch is valid when the fielder holds the ball long enough to prove he has complete control of it and that his release of the ball is voluntary and intentional. If a player drops the ball after reaching into his glove to remove it or while in the act of throwing, it is a valid catch. It is NOT a catch if, immediately after fielding the ball, the player falls down, or collides with another player or fence, and drops the ball as a result of the fall or collision. A ball, which strikes anything other than a defensive player while it is in flight is ruled the same as if it had struck the ground.

8. **OBSTRUCTION:** A fielder, not in possession of the ball, not in the act of fielding a batted ball, or about to receive a thrown ball, who impedes the progress of a runner.

9. **INTERFERENCE:** Interference is when a player or manager interferes, impedes, or confuses a defensive player attempting to make a play. Interference may be physical or verbal. Violation of this rule will result in an "out" applied to the person the defensive player was attempting to make a play on.

10. APPEAL PLAY:

A. A play in which an umpire may not make a decision until requested. The appeal must be made before the next pitch or before the defensive players have left fair territory. On the last play of the game, an appeal can be made until the umpires leave the field.

B. Types of appeals:

1. Missing a base
2. Leaving a base on a caught fly ball before the ball is first touched.
3. Batting out of order.

11. EJECTION: The result of an incident requiring the removal of a player from the game by the umpire. The incident will require the player or coach to leave that field and the bleacher fence surrounding that field but the ejected player may stay inside the complex at other fields. Any ejected player discovered participating constitutes a forfeit and will be subject to further review by the Recreation Department.

12. TIME OUT: "Time Out" is only called by the Umpire when the ball is held by a player in the infield area, and in the Umpire's judgment, ALL play has ceased. The umpire may call time out at any time when there is an injury on the field, or for any reason deemed necessary to ensure safety of the players. The umpire's decision to call time out is final, and play is considered dead once time out is called.

13. ANNOUNCERS: On the occasion when there is an odd number teams in a season schedule, teams will receive a "Bye Day". On the team's "Bye Day", that team will be required to announce all games. Each manager will provide their team's Announcer schedule to the duty desk one week prior to their team's bye day. If a player is scheduled, but refuses or does not show up for their duty to Announce, he will be considered absent, and will be given a One Game Suspension for their next scheduled game. This rule will also pertain when an even number of teams in the season schedule requires the Manager to assign individual team members to announce games. It is that team member's responsibility to announce his assigned game. The team member's failure to do so will result in a suspension of their next scheduled game. There will be no exceptions.

14. BATTING POSITION

A. The batter must have at least some portions of both feet on or inside of the batter's box at the start of the pitch. A batter who steps out of the batter's box or steps on the strike mat at any time during the pitch and then hits the ball, fair or foul, shall be called out. Steps out means touching the ground completely outside of the batter's box. The batter's box is the entire platform for the enforcement of this rule. Off the platform is "out of the box". The batter's box will use the inner lines. If you step completely over them and hit the ball, you are out.

B. The batter must take his position within ten seconds after being directed by the umpire. EFFECT: The umpire will call a strike. No pitch has to be thrown and the ball is dead.

C. The batter shall not step directly in front of the catcher to the other batter's box while the pitcher is in position to pitch. EFFECT: The ball is dead; the batter is out and the runners may not advance.

15. RUNNER HIT BY BATTED BALL:

- 1) If the runner is hit by a fair batted ball while on the base and before it passes the nearest infielder **(excluding the pitcher)** it is a dead ball and the batter-runner is awarded first base without liability to be put out and all runners advance one base only if forced.
- 2) If the runner is hit with a fair batted ball while on the base after it passes the nearest infielder **(excluding the pitcher)** it is a live ball. (this part would only happen if the infield was playing way in to try to stop a run from 3rd base)
- 3) If a runner is hit by a fair batted ball while off the base and before it passes an infielder (excluding the pitcher), the ball is dead and the hit runner is declared OUT. The batter-runner is awarded first base without liability to be put out and all runners advance one base only if forced.
- 4) If the runner is hit by a fair batted ball while off the base and after it passes an infielder (excluding the pitcher) it is a live ball. (this would be if a runner was running behind an infielder who misses or boots the ball) NO OUT.

Exception: A fair batted ball that deflects off a pitcher's glove, equipment, or body and then strikes a base runner, is a live ball and the base runner is NOT out due to the deflection.

V. UMPIRES:

1. Umpires are responsible for maintaining a proper demeanor and treating players with respect.
2. Only the team manager may express disagreement with an umpire's decision. Players will not engage in disputes or, in any way, badger umpires. Verbal abuse, any threat or act of physical aggression toward an umpire will result in ejection of a player and possible suspension. A player's ejection will bring disciplinary action, as described above.
3. Use of profanity by a player may result in ejection from the game, and subsequent suspension. Use of profanity by an umpire may result in suspension of the umpire. Umpires must always act in a professional manner. Umpires are reminded that they must complete the Umpire Incident Report Form with copies to The Villages Recreation Department, the Division Board and player's manager.
4. Umpires may eject any player smoking on the playing field or in the dugout, and anyone who throws equipment in a display of anger. Umpires must order any pet to be removed from the dugouts during the game.

THERE ARE NO PROTESTS. All decisions by the umpires are final.