

FREDERICK COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

SPRING TRAINING LEAGUE RULES

(All rules not outlined below will reference the USSSA rulebook)

<https://cms.ussa.net/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/01/USSSA-SP-rulebook.pdf>

Revised 3/4/24

A. PLAYERS/TEAMS/ROSTERS

1. **All Participants must be at least 18 years old to play in the league.**
2. Players must have photo identification with them during all FCPRD games.
3. Each team must complete a roster with each player's full legal name, address, and phone number. Coaches/Managers must be included on the team's roster. **Failure to turn in your team's roster before your third game will result in a forfeit!**
4. Only managers, coaches and sponsors are allowed in the dugouts.
5. It is the responsibility of the team's representative to manage their team's roster.
6. Maximum of 25 players per team.
7. **Spring (March-April):** A player can play for 1 county softball team.
8. If a team withdraws from competition or is dropped from the league, all contests will stand as scheduled. There are no refunds.

B. SCHEDULES

1. League schedule will be produced by FCPRD.
2. All contests must be played according to the schedule. **No games will be rescheduled due to vacations, other league conflicts, etc.**
3. Home team will be the second team listed on the schedule.
4. FCPRD will attempt to re-schedule any missed games due to inclement weather. All rescheduled games are subject to be played outside of the normal playing nights. Games that have not been completed due to weather related issues (Example- canceled game in the bottom of the 2nd inning) will be rescheduled as a new game. In cases of weather-related issues, a game will be considered complete after 5 innings of play, or 4 ½ innings if the home team is ahead.
5. FCPRD reserves the right to reassign any team based upon past record and other considerations for the best interest of the league.
6. **Cancellation Line – 540-665-5678 after 3:30 p.m. daily.** Field conditions after 5 p.m. are left to the decision of the park ranger and the cancellation line will be updated once they decide.
7. **The first scheduled game will begin on time. All other games will begin 5 minutes after the conclusion of the previous game.**

C. GENERAL RULES

1. Softballs must have an optic yellow and clearly marked **12 inch, USSSA Classic M or USSSA Pro M.** Teams will hit their own ball. All balls entering the field of play must be inspected by the umpire before they can be used in the game. If the umpire cannot determine if the ball is clearly marked and optic yellow (example: Classic M, Pro M), it will not be allowed. Both

teams should have extra playable balls on hand in case replacements are needed for balls that are lost or damaged during game play.

2. Bats must meet the new or old USSSA bat stamped standards. A list of approved bats can be found at <https://www.ussa.com/slowpitch/slowpitch-licensed-softball-bat-ball-manufacturers>. Bats that are considered to be “Senior Bats” or wood bats are not allowed to be used in this league. If you are found using a bat that is altered or not on the approved bat list, you will be removed from the league and subject to stiffer punishments by FCPRD.
3. **Time Limit: When 55 minutes have been reached during the game, the next full inning will be the last inning of the game. No matter what part of the inning the game is in (top, middle, end) the umpire will make this announcement.** Please note the game starting time in your respective scorebook. All players should be encouraged to hustle between innings. The game will not conclude until each team has batted in their half of the inning. **In the case of a mercy rule, when 55 minutes has been reached during the game, the next full inning will be the last inning of the game no matter what inning the game is in (Example- bottom of 3rd).** However, in cases of weather-related issues a game will be considered complete after 4 ½ innings have been played.
4. In the event a game is tied and the full inning after the 55-minute mark has been played **or** 7 innings have been played, teams will receive 1 inning to break the tie using the International Tiebreaker Rule. Teams will start the next inning with the **player of their choice** on 2nd base. There will be zero outs and each team will get a chance to score. If the game is still tied after the extra inning, the game will end as a tie.
5. Base stealing is not permitted in this league.
6. Mercy Rule – 10 runs after 5 innings of play.

7. **Flip/Flop Rule**

****FCPRD League Flip/Flop Rule EXCEPTION to the USSSA rule below- the winning visiting team must be winning by 15 or more runs in or after the 4th inning. ****

- Flip/Flop Rule—All Programs: In the inning when the run rule for that particular program is exceeded and the home team is losing, the home team will remain at bat and become the visiting team. If the team (new visiting team) does not score enough runs to reduce the run difference below the run rule, the game is over. If they reduce the run difference to below the run rule then the new home team will bat. If they subsequently score enough runs to exceed the run rule, the game will be over; if they do not, the game will continue under that format. If the situation reverses, the teams would flip/flop again.
8. A pitcher may have a total of three warm up pitches prior to the start of all innings.
 9. The league will use a 3 ball, 2 strike count (3-2), **No Courtesy Foul**.
Three balls = walk, two strikes = Out
- If first pitch is called strike, next foul is an out- **NO COURTESY FOUL BALL**
 10. The pitch must be underhanded at slow speed and with an arc that must have a minimum height of **3 feet from the pitcher release and a maximum of 10 feet** from the ground, in the umpire’s judgment. Pitchers can pump fake in ALL DIVISIONS. Pitchers must **release the ball within 5 seconds** of the start of their wind-up. Any time after 5 seconds, a “ball” will be called by the umpire.
 11. Teams must furnish scorebooks for their team. Team representatives must sign a scorecard after each game to verify the correct final game score with the umpire. Once a scorecard is signed by a team representative the game is considered final.
 12. Teams must have a minimum of 9 players to start a game. Teams unable to field nine eligible players at the scheduled starting time will have to forfeit that game. If at any point your team falls below 9 players the game will be considered a forfeit.

13. Teams that start with 9 players may ONLY add a 10th player to their line-up (scorebook) after the game has started without penalty. Any player added will be placed at the bottom of the line-up.
14. Teams with more than 10 players present have the option of batting up to 12 players or using 2 Extra Hitters (EH). The EH(s) must be declared prior to the start of the game. These players may enter the game on defense but must remain in the same batting position the entire game. The EH can be substituted by a player not yet in the game. The starting EH is eligible to re-enter.
15. If a team falls below the total number of players that started the game and no legal substitute players are available, that players position in the line-up will continually receive an out every time throughout the remainder of the game.
16. The bases will be positioned at 70 feet.

D. COURTESY RUNNER

Any player (on the team's roster) can run for another player once per inning (one runner per inning). If the courtesy runner is stranded on any base and it is their turn to bat, they will remain on the base and be considered out at the plate. The next batter in the line-up will then go to bat.

E. HOME RUN RULE

1. Home run rule: 3 home runs per game. Any home run that exceeds the league max will be ruled an out.
2. The team that hits an over the fence home run is responsible for retrieving the ball or supplying a clearly marked replacement ball.
3. After a player hits a homerun over the fence, they **Do Not** need to touch 1st base or any other base.

F. EQUIPMENT

1. Cast, splints and braces must be padded. Any of this equipment judged by the umpire to be dangerous is illegal and you will not be permitted to play with them.
2. No exposed jewelry will be permitted. If it is unable to be removed, it must be taped to the body before that player is allowed to play. If a player refuses to remove or tape item to his/her body, that player will be removed from the game. (**Note: medical alert bracelets and necklaces are not considered jewelry, but, if worn, must be tapped to the body.**)
3. Rubber sole footwear and metal cleats are not allowed.

G. PROTEST

1. Judgment calls by the umpire may not be protested (**Example- balls/strikes, safe calls, etc**).
2. Protests regarding rule interpretations must be made aware to the umpire and noted in both scorebooks and on the scorecard prior to the next pitch of the game.
3. Notice of the protest must be submitted in writing by the team representative to FCPRD within 24 hours of the incident. No phone calls will be taken regarding a protest.
4. FCPRD will review the protest and notify teams of the decision regarding the protest within 48 hours.

H. EJECTIONS

1. A coach or player who is ejected from a game is automatically suspended for that night, plus he or she will be suspended for the next **game night**.
2. **In addition to the suspension**, the player ejected will also be fined \$40.
3. The fine must be paid to FCPRD before that player can be reinstated. No onsite payments will be received. That player's team will also forfeit all games until the fine is paid. The team may drop the player from their roster to avoid any forfeits. The player is considered ineligible and may not play on any other team(s).
4. However, if a player is ejected twice in a season, they are automatically removed from the league.
5. All ejections must be reported on the scorecard by the umpire and coaches.
6. The following offenses will be considered grounds for ejection:
 - i. Foul language
 - ii. Verbal/Physical abuse of umpire or FCPRD staff member
 - iii. Fighting
 - iv. Unnecessary poor sportsmanship

ALL EJECTIONS ARE SUBJECT TO A 2-YEAR BAN FROM ALL FCPRD PROGRAMS AND FACILITIES.

WEATHER

Thunder/Lightning

- **Removal of all players from the field (go to your cars) for a duration of 30 minutes each time lightning is seen or thunder is heard (no exceptions)**
- **Games can resume after thunder and or lightning has stopped for 30 minutes not to exceed 40 minutes. If thunder/lightning continues for 10 minutes or more the current game (example 6:30 game) will be canceled. If the storm clears, potentially the 7:30 & 8:30 games can be played (if the fields are deemed playable).**

Inclement Weather Check:

- Cancellation line 540-665-5678 cancellations will be updated after 3:30 p.m. during the week or as needed during games.
- <https://statusfy.com/5405006003>

NO ALCOHOL is permitted in FCPRD Parks.

NO SMOKING within 50 feet of the softball complex.

NO DOGS within 200 feet of the softball complex.

Anyone who does not adhere to these rules is subject to being banned from the Parks and ejected from the league for a period of two years.