

**HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT
OF RECREATION AND PARKS
7120 OAKLAND MILLS ROAD
COLUMBIA, MD 21046-1677**

2025 HOWARD COUNTY SOFTBALL LEAGUE RULES

1. ROSTERS

Rostering:

- Each individual player must complete a registration on our counties Sports Engine website. Each player must add themselves to their team's roster. Links will be sent to all team managers for each League/Division. No players rolls over from the previous season. Each player must re-roster for each team they play on. It only takes a few minutes at most.
- If you are a returning player, you will be prompted to log in to your SportsEngine account. You still must roster yourself under the current season and choose your team(s).
- If you are a new player, you will need to create a SportsEngine account.
- After logging in/creating an account you will select who you are registering, select your team name from the dropdown menu, and proceed to complete the required information. Upon completion, please review the inputted information for accuracy and submit.
- After submitting you will not automatically see you name on your team's roster located on your team page. We will manually place you on your roster, which will be done every few nights until registration closes.

REMINDER: The completion of the registration does not immediately place you on your team's public roster on the website. Upon your completion, please give up to 24 to 48 hours for your name to appear on the public roster. If you know your registration was completed, you will be rostered, and should not worry.

- (see sec. 2 - Player eligibility below).

2. PLAYER ELIGIBILITY

- Players may play on as many teams as desired as long as they are on the roster. Players may be on only one roster per night. (Example: A player may play for a team on Monday night and for another team on Wednesday night. He/she may not be on two Monday night Men's teams or on a Monday night Men's team and a Co-Rec team, etc.)
- All players must be at least 18 years of age.
- Any team using an ineligible player shall automatically forfeit each game in which the player participated. If a team uses **a suspended player** or a player under an assumed name, that team shall automatically be dropped from the League. Each game played with that player and all scheduled games not played shall be forfeited to the opponents.
- Protests as to the use of an ineligible player must be made within 48 hours of game time and no protest fee is required. The protest must be submitted in writing to the Department.

3. PLAYING RULES

- Unless modified by this set of rules, all games shall be played in accordance with the current USA slow pitch or the United States Slow-Pitch Softball Association (U.S.S.S.A.) rules.
- The pitchers no longer need to be on the pitching rubber. Pitchers must be within the 24" of the rubber but are allowed to deliver the pitch from up to 6' behind the rubber.
- When each batter enters the batter's box, he/she shall have the count of one ball and one strike. **After the batter has reached two strikes, he/she will be declared out when he/she hits a foul ball. There will not be a courtesy (extra) foul.** Technical Outs: 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 the technical out against the offending team.
 - a. Offense: If the 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 batters and base runners 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 one-and-one count.
 - b. Defense: If 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.
 - c. 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.
- A game may start and/or be played with a minimum of 9 players. There will be no automatic out for the vacant spot in the line-up (**Men's only**).

- If a 10th player arrives after the start of a game, he/she shall bat in the 10th position.
- A team forfeits a game when it fails to have the minimum number of players to start a game or maintain the minimum number of players to continue playing. Teams participating in a double header with the same team will forfeit each game separately. Double header teams that forfeit their first game of the day due to insufficient number of players must begin the second game of the double header as soon as they have the minimum number of eligible players present but no later than the scheduled starting time of the second game.
- Teams starting with 12, 11 or 10 players and having to drop to 9, 10 or 11 players with no substitutes available:
 - a. If a player has to leave the game and the player is a base runner, the runner is declared out.
 - b. When a team plays shorthanded because a player leaves the game, the player cannot return to the line-up.
 - c. If there is an eligible substitute at the game, or if an eligible substitute arrives before the game is over, the substitute must enter the game.
 - d. In all leagues a team can drop to as few as 9 players regardless of how many they start with. An automatic out will be taken for all vacated spots in the batting order.
 - e. A Co-Rec team dropping players must still be able to field 9 defensive players and have no more than 5 of any one sex.
 - f. If a player is ejected with no substitute available, the game is declared a forfeit.
- An ejected player may be replaced in the line-up with an eligible substitute.
- Additional Hitter(s) (or Extra Players) Rule (optional in ALL LEAGUES) A team may insert up to two additional hitters (or extra player), (two hitters in Co-Rec: one male and one female), into its line-up at the start of a game only. The batting order must remain constant, however, any 10 of the 11 or 12 players (Men's and Women's); or 10 (5 men and 5 women in Co-Rec) of the 12 can take a defensive position throughout the game.
- A limit of over-fence home runs will be used in all divisions. All balls hit over the fence by a team in excess of the following limitations per game will be ruled an out: **Co-Rec Leagues- (Two Home Runs, 1 for a male and 1 for a female), Men's D1 (three Home runs) Men's D2 or D3 (one Home Run)**. There will be no limit to the number of inside-the-park home runs. **Players no longer have to run out over the fence home runs. The batter and all runners on base can now go straight to the bench.**
- No player(s) shall be ejected for hitting an over-the-fence home run more than the home run limit.
- There shall be a 60-minute time limit for all games regardless of the number of innings played. No new inning may start after the 60 minutes have elapsed. In the event of a tie game, the game will not be continued into the next inning once the time limit has expired: The game will remain a tie. Games that are not considered regulation (five or more innings unless stopped due to the time limit) shall be resumed at the point of interruption with the same identical situations as when the game was stopped. Exception: Curfew, darkness, light failure, or rain shall supersede the 60-minute time limit if 5 innings have been completed. If this occurs the game shall be considered a legal game. For league standings, teams shall receive 2 points for a win, 1 point for a tie, and 0 points for a loss.
- When one team has enough players at game time and the other team is short, the game will begin with the team that has less than 9 players being the visitors. If the team gets to the 9th spot in the batting order or has to take the field for defense before the 9th player arrives, the game will be a forfeit. If both teams have less than 9 players at game time the game will be declared a double forfeit.
- Any team leading by 15 or more runs after 4 innings (3-1/2 if the home team is ahead) or 10 or more runs after 5 innings (4-1/2 if the home team is ahead) or any complete inning thereafter will be declared the winner, and the game will be complete.
- A player or coach who is bleeding or who has blood on his uniform shall be prohibited from participating further in the game until appropriate treatment can be administered. If medical care or treatment can be administered in a reasonable length of time, the individual would not have to leave the game. An athlete shall not continue competition unless the bleeding is controlled, and the wound is covered.
- If no official umpire arrives for a game, the game may be played if both team managers agree and there is a qualified person present to umpire said game. If the game starts with a volunteer umpire, it must be completed. Payments to volunteers or unauthorized umpires is at the risk of the teams and Howard County will not reimburse such payment. The Department should be notified when an umpire does not show or is late.
- Complaints concerning umpires, other teams, etc. must be made in writing and there is no fee requirement for these.
- The Co-Rec Division will play USA. Co-Ed rules. Exception: Defensive position rule does not apply.
- COURTESTY RUNNERS: Teams will be allowed courtesy runners. We follow the Rules for USA Softball (Co-Ed League) and USSSA for (Men's League).

How to Protest Rule Interpretations (USA) rule 9, U.S.S.S.A. rule 4, section 11)

1. All protests pertaining to the playing of a game shall be submitted to the umpire and the opposing team manager at the time of the alleged infraction and prior to the next pitch. Both teams should be aware the game is under protest; both team's scorebooks shall be signed by the umpire to confirm the game is being played under protest.

2. Protests shall be submitted in writing with a \$25 protest fee and must be in the possession of the League Director or postmarked within 48 hours after game time. If the protest is denied, the fee shall go into the League's Treasury.
3. Any protest decision on rules interpretation by the League Director may be appealed by either team manager. This appeal shall be submitted in writing with a \$50 appeal fee and shall be in the possession of the League Director or postmarked within 6 days of the date of the protest decision. This appeal shall be acted upon by a protest board made up of Department staff and the local Umpire-in-Chief and their decision shall be final. If the appeal is denied, the fee shall go into the League Treasury.

4. CO-REC PLAYING RULE EXCEPTIONS (ALL)

- A team shall consist of 5 men and 5 women (or six men and six women when using the USA. "EP".) If the game is started with 12 players, it may end with 11 players only if a substitute of the proper sex is not available. When using 12 players, 5 males and 5 female players must play on defense.
- If two males bat back-to-back in the order because of dropping from 12 to 11 players and the first of the two is walked, he is awarded 2nd base on the walk and the next batter (the vacant spot) is an automatic out. The 2nd of the two does not have the option of taking an automatic walk.
- The offensive line-up may begin with either a man or a woman. Thereafter, the sexes shall alternate.
- The USA defensive position rule is not in effect.
- The home team will provide 1-11 inch and 1-12-inch ball for each game.

Teams playing with 9 players.

- A team may play with 9 players (only if 10 of the proper sex ratios are not present). An automatic out will be taken for the vacant spot in the line-up.
- If a team is playing with 9 players, there must always be at least 4 of each sex in the line-up. If a 10th player arrives after the start of a game, he/she shall bat in the 10th position. The line-up must begin with the sex which has 5 players present.
- If the male batting 9th in the order is walked and the 10th batter is not present, the 9th batter is awarded 2nd base on the walk and the next batter (the vacant spot) is an automatic out. The 1st batter (a male) does not have the option of taking an automatic walk.

Teams Starting with 11 players.

- A team may play with 11 players (only if 12 of the proper sex ratios are not present). An automatic out will be taken for the vacant spot in the line-up.
- If a team is playing with 11th players, there must be at least 5 of each sex in the line up and play on defense at all times.
- If the 12th player arrives after the start of the game, he/she shall bat in the 12th spot in the batting order. The line-up must begin with the sex which has 6 players present.
- If the male batting 11 in the order is walked and the 12th batter is not present, the 11th batter is awarded 2nd base on the walk and the next batter (the vacant spot) is an automatic out. The 1st batter (a male) does not have the option of taking an automatic walk.

5. GAME POSTPONEMENT AND RESCHEDULING PROCEDURES

In case of rain on the day of the game, the team manager should call the following Recreation Department recorded messages after 3pm on weekdays or after 7am on weekends to check on the playability of the fields:

Cedar Lane	410-313-4453
Centennial	410-313-4454
Rockburn	410-313-4455
Meadowbrook	410-313-2727

- Should there be an unplayable field due to inclement weather occurring after 4pm (or 7am), the decision of field playability will be left to the discretion of the umpire.
- All games must be played as scheduled (unless canceled due to inclement weather). In the event a team has extenuating circumstances (wedding, funeral, company event, or tournament) which necessitates postponing a game(s), permission must be granted by the League Director at least 1 week prior to the postponement date (except funerals). Games postponed under these circumstances will be rescheduled by the Department and must be played as rescheduled or be forfeited. A team may request only 1 rescheduling per season for playing in a tournament. Exception: Teams will be allowed to reschedule games that fall on religious holidays without having to pay the rescheduling fee. Teams will not be assessed a forfeit when they are unable to play due to religious reasons.

Reschedule Game(s)

- On any given night when games have been canceled due to inclement weather only the Department will automatically reschedule all games and notify teams.
- Any games scheduled by the League Director must be played as scheduled or be forfeited.

6. SCORE REPORTING

- The home team shall provide one official scorer.
- Both teams are responsible for reporting the final score regardless of the outcome of the game. If a team does not report game results within 7 days, then that team will take a Loss. Please email scores to apatton@howardcountymd.gov within 48 hours of the game ending.

7. MISCELLANEOUS

ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES ARE PROHIBITED IN THE PARKS. Action will be taken against any individual or team in violation of this policy.

No smoking is allowed in Howard County Park.

- The franchise fee shall be the amount to cover all umpire fees, USA or U.S.S.S.A sanction fees, field reservation fee, light fees, game balls, awards, printing and administrative costs.
- No person under the age of 18 years old are allowed on the playing field or in the dugout. Teams who violate this rule may forfeit their game.
- **Curfew: Please be aware of the early curfew on Cedar Lane Park #4. No New Inning may start after 10:15pm. Lights must be turned off by 10:30pm.**
- **Lightning Policy: **If thunder/lightning can be heard and/or seen, YOUR GAME WILL STOPPED IMIDEATELY. SEEK PROTECTIVE SHELTER IMMEDIATELY. ****
- **In the event that either situation occurs, no game will resume until 30 minutes after the last sound of thunder and /or lightning has occurred. Games will be resumed from where they were stopped.**
- The **official game ball** for all USA sanctioned leagues shall be the League provided **.52COR/300 compression** USA approved ball. The **official game ball** for all U.S.S.S.A. sanctioned leagues shall be the League provided **Class M** ball with the U.S.S.S.A stamp. The Department should provide balls to the teams for each game. The Home team shall furnish 1 new ball at the start of the game. The visiting team shall furnish a league approved playable ball. If additional balls are needed, the team at bat shall furnish as many Leagues approved playable balls as needed to complete their turn at bat. EXCEPTION: The home team listed on the schedule will provide 1-11-inch ball and 1-12-inch ball for each Co-Rec Division game.
- ALL Howard County Recreation & Parks sponsored leagues will follow the bat rule posted on the web site. **For USA sanctioned leagues we will follow the USA Bat rule. For USSSA sanctioned leagues we will follow the USSSA Bat rule. The 2013 stamp is required on bats used in the Howard County sponsored USSSA leagues.**
- Use of an illegal bat will result in the following:

USSSA Leagues: 1st offence is an out and bat will be removed. A 2nd occurrence will result in an Offensive ejection. The player may continue to play in the field. They are removed for the batting order and an automatic out will be issued in their spot in the batting order.

USA League: In USA we have 3 different classifications of bats that aren't allowed in games: Altered, Non-Approved, Illegal. The USA penalties are:

- a. **Altered or Non-Approved: Batter is out and ejected. Bat is removed.**
- b. **Illegal: Batter is out, and bat removed**

- **Uniforms** - All players should wear a shirt. Appropriate softball shoes must be worn. **Metal cleats are ILLEGAL at all levels in ALL LEAGUE GAMES.**
- **Helmets and Face Mask/Guards** may be worn by any defensive or offensive player in accordance with USA/USSA rules.
- **Awards** shall be as follows: 1 sponsor trophy and 16 T-Shirts for 1st place in each division. 16 T-shirts for runner-up in each division.

- In the event of a **tie in League standings**, the win-loss record of involved teams; in their head-to-head League competition play will be used to break the tie. If the teams are tied in head-to-head competition, a one game play-off will be used to break the tie.

Adult Sports League Standard Rules

Player Eligibility

All players should complete the online rostering process through sports engine. Players that are not on their team rosters by the given deadline are ineligible.

1. Any individual who has been subject to disciplinary action(s) by the Department may be placed on a public on-line ineligibility list maintained by the Department of Recreation and Parks. The list shall include the name of the individual suspended and the release date.
2. Managers must check the on-line ineligibility list prior to the start of the season. Any team using an ineligible player shall automatically forfeit each game in which the player participated. If a team uses a suspended player or a player under an assumed name, that team shall automatically be dropped from the League without refund and or be subject to disciplinary actions as deemed necessary by the department Each game played with that player and all scheduled games not played shall be forfeited to the opponents.
3. Protests as to the use of an ineligible player must be made within 48 hours of game time and no protest fee is required. The protest must be submitted in writing to the Department.

DISCIPLINARY ACTION

1. A player, coach or manager who is ejected from a game by an official shall be suspended from any participation for at least 1 game (not including the game from which he/she was ejected). Any further ejection during the current season shall be dealt with more severely by the League Director.
2. Anyone who strikes, shoves, pushes, bumps or otherwise physically or verbally threatens an official or a member of his/her team or any other team or spectators shall automatically be suspended from all Department sponsored activities for at least 1 year from the date of the incident.
3. The use of vulgar or profane language may result in the ejection of that player from the game.
4. The team manager is responsible for the conduct of their team and spectators.
5. A team member and or spectator may be removed from the immediate field area when deemed necessary by the game official or HCRP staff. Failure to leave the area when requested may result in immediate forfeiture of the game.
6. The Howard County Employee Manual requires the Department to take action against anyone who harasses any Department of Recreation and Parks staff.
7. Substance abuse by player personnel during the game shall be subject to ejection by game officials and/or disciplinary action to be taken by the League Director.
8. Any player, coach or manager suspended from play from another program or jurisdiction shall also be suspended from participating in any program operated by the Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks.
9. An individual player disciplinary protest must be made in writing to the league director within 48 hours of the disciplinary action. An individual player protest can only be received through the team manager. All team or individual disciplinary actions are communicated to the team manager. It is the team managers' responsibility to notify their team/player of disciplinary action taken by the department.

Miscellaneous

1. **ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES ARE PROHIBITED IN THE PARKS.** Action will be taken against any individual or team in violation of this policy.

2. No smoking or the use of Tobacco products is allowed on the playing field or Bench area.
3. A player who is bleeding or who has blood on his/her uniform shall be prohibited from participating further in the game until appropriate treatment can be administered. An athlete shall not continue competition unless the bleeding is controlled, and the wound covered.

Forfeit Policy

1. Teams who forfeit a game within 24 hours of that game will be required to pay the officials fee for that game. The fee will be based on the per game fee the game officials are paid. If a team forfeits 4 games (doubleheaders for adult softball) they may be dropped from the league without refund. Teams who participate in a league where a forfeit bond is required must repay the forfeit bond before there next scheduled game.

IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

League Director 410-313-4718

Email Scores / Questions and comments..... apatton@howardcountymd.gov