

Windsor Essex County Senior Sports Organization  
Slo-Pitch League  
2026 Playing Rules

1. The league will use, for the most part, the Softball Canada rule book. Any variations are contained in this document.
2. All games shall be nine innings in length.
3. In the regular season, games tied after nine innings will be called, with no extra innings.
4. No new inning will start after 1 hour and 45 minutes of play.
5. In extreme weather conditions, the Division Convener could lessen the number of innings necessary for a complete game in that division. Consideration of the health and welfare of the players should be the primary concern.
6. Rained out games will not be rescheduled.
7. All innings shall consist of three outs or a maximum of five runs scored. Exception: In the last inning, there is no limit to the number of runs scored.
8. There shall be a mercy rule in effect for all games, including playoffs. If one team is ahead by fifteen runs or more after seven innings (five innings in a 7-inning game), or if the home team is ahead by fifteen runs or more after 6 ½ innings (4 ½ innings in a 7-inning game), the game is over and the team with the lead is the winner. A team losing by fifteen runs or more in the seventh inning or later may score as many runs as necessary to eliminate the possibility of a mercy.
9. Flip/Flop Rule:           REGULAR SEASON ONLY  
In games where the visiting team is ahead by seven or more runs at the end of eight innings (in a nine-inning game) or end of six innings (in a seven-inning game), the home team will bat first in the “all you can get” inning. The visiting team will then bat only if the game has been tied or the home team has taken the lead.
10. The home team will use the 3<sup>rd</sup> base dugout and will provide one new ball and one good used ball for each game. The visiting team will wear grey shirts.
11. In all divisions, the bases will be seventy (70) feet apart. A double base will be used at first base. The white bag shall be inside the foul line and be used by the fielder. The orange bag shall be outside the foul line and be used by the runner. The purpose is to avoid collisions. If there is a play made at first base, the runner must step on the orange bag. On a hit where there is no play made at first base, the runner may touch either bag.
12. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> base line, there shall be a ‘commitment line’ perpendicular to the baseline and 21 feet from the back of home plate. A base runner, having passed the commitment line, may not return to third base. If the catcher is in contact with the mat and in possession of the ball, the runner attempting to score is out. The runner cannot be tagged out by anyone between the commitment line and home plate.
13. **A defensive line consisting of an arc 175 feet from home plate shall be used. This line will be marked by cones placed in the outfield. Any player standing on the grass at the time of the pitch must be behind this line and remain there until contact is made. All infielders must be standing on the dirt until**

**contact is made. If this is violated, the offense has the option of taking the result of the play or an award of one base to the batter and all runners.**

14. The pitching plate shall be fifty (50) feet from the back of home plate. A strike zone mat (2 feet by 3 feet) will be placed at the leading edge of home plate and extend backwards toward the catcher. Legal pitches striking any part of the mat will be strikes.
15. To be legal, the pivot foot of the pitcher must remain in contact with the pitcher's plate until the pitched ball leaves the hand. If a step is taken, it can be forward, backward or to the side, provided the step is simultaneous with the release of the ball, and the pivot foot is still in contact with the pitcher's plate or ground.
16. The pitcher cannot pitch the ball behind their back, through their legs or from the glove. The pitcher cannot pitch the ball over the screen.
17. The pitch must be released at a moderate speed. The speed is left entirely up to the judgment of the umpire.
18. To be legal, the height of the pitch must be between 6 feet and 12 feet above the ground.
19. For the safety of the pitcher, a pitching screen will be used in all divisions. For right-handed pitchers, the screen must be positioned to their left. For left-handed pitchers, the screen must be positioned to their right. The screen must be placed 5 feet in front of the pitching rubber to allow the pitcher to step behind the screen without taking a step back. The edge of the screen should be in line with the middle of the pitching rubber. For their own safety, pitchers should step behind the screen immediately after the pitch is released and remain there until the ball is contacted. If the pitcher makes no effort to get behind the screen, and is involved in the play, the ball is dead. The batter is awarded first base, and all runners advance one base, if forced. Any thrown ball that is in live play and hits the screen is considered a live ball and runners may advance at their own risk.
20. If a batted ball hits the screen, the ball is dead and a strike is called on the batter. If a batter hits the screen with two strikes, they will be called out.
21. Batting practice will begin one hour before the scheduled start of the game and last for 45 minutes. Home managers are responsible for bringing the pitching screen and the batting practice buckets to the diamond. To ensure that all players have the opportunity to have batting practice within that time period, batters will be limited to 5 swings. Teams may elect to have a brief infield practice 15 minutes before the scheduled start of the game.
22. In all divisions, no batter/runner may be thrown out at first base by a player positioned in the outfield (i.e. a player standing on the grass).  
Interpretation (for all divisions): If the ball hits the grass, the batter cannot be thrown out at first base.
23. **For the most part, it is expected that players will run for themselves. If a runner needs a courtesy runner, they (not the coach or the manager) will ask the umpire for a courtesy runner. In both the regular season and the playoffs, the number of courtesy runners in a game is unlimited, but a particular runner can only be used once in the same inning. If a runner is on base when it becomes their turn to bat, there will be no "out". Simply replace the runner with another runner.**

24. **“Runners from the screen” are not allowed. Players are required to make their way to first base by their own power. Then, a courtesy runner may be used.**
25. In any at-bat, the batter has the option of not accepting a base on balls. They may remain at bat until they receive 3 strikes, foul out or put the ball in play. Once the batter decides not to accept the base on balls, they cannot change their mind.  
Exception: The defensive team can insist on the player going to first base with the base on balls but only once per game per player.
26. Scoreboards: The manager of the home team is responsible for delivery of the scoreboard to and from the diamond, as well as setting up the scoreboard on the backstop before each game. After consultation with both managers, the umpire will enter the numbers of runs scored on the board after each half inning.
27. Any foul ball caught before touching the ground is an out.
28. Defensively, teams will field a pitcher, a catcher, a maximum of 5 infielders and a maximum of 5 outfielders.
29. **During the regular season, if it is known in advance that a team will be short-handed (less than 13), the team manager can call on (i) a player from his own division who has not yet been assigned to a team or, if none are available (ii) a player from the bye team on that day or if none are available (iii) a player from a lower division. A team should only call up sufficient players to bring their number to 13 and managers must try to call up a player of comparable ability. Those players must be identified and approved by the Division Convener prior to the game. A called-up player will bat at the bottom of the order.**
30. If one team has fewer than 12 players, the opposing team can supply a catcher. If the team with fewer than 12 players chooses not to accept a catcher, the opposing team can still use 12 players.
31. Managers shall prepare, before each game, a batting order consisting of at least 9 players, all of which must be present at the start of the game. To the bottom of this list, add any players as they arrive late. All players shall bat in this order, but a maximum of 12 will take the field defensively at any one time. Players may leave and re-enter the game defensively at any time. However, a player may not change his original batting position.
32. **Sliding is allowed.**
33. **If a “hot box” occurs, runners are put out by a tag, not a force-out.**
34. Equipment
  - a) No metal spikes will be allowed.
  - b) Only bats that have the USSSA “thumb print” logo will be considered legal.
  - c) If a player uses an illegal bat, they will be ejected from the game and suspended for the next 5 games. A second offence will result in a suspension of one year.
  - d) It is the responsibility of the player (not the manager or the umpire) to use proper equipment.
35. Ejections

If a player is ejected, for any reason, they are suspended for the balance of that game and until they have been advised by the Convener that they are eligible to return to play.

### 36. Ineligible Players

If the medical person on duty deems that a player is unfit to participate in the game, they will notify the umpire. The umpire will then declare that player to be “ineligible”. An ineligible player may no longer participate in the game as a player but may continue as a coach.

## Playoffs

1. The home team in all playoff games will be the team with the higher standing after the regular season games.  
In the event of two or more teams tied after the regular season games, the deadlock shall be broken by (in order):
  - a) results of game(s) between the tied teams.
  - b) best +/- in games between the tied teams (a maximum 7 run difference per game)
  - c) best +/- in all games
2. All playoff games must be played to completion (if possible). A game ended by the mercy rule is a complete game. If a game is halted prior to completion, for whatever reason, it will be treated as a suspended game and continued from that point later.  
Note: An eligible player who was not in the original lineup but is present and ready to participate in the continuation of the game shall be added to the lineup as a late arrival. See Rule 4.
3. In the playoffs, if a game is tied after 9 innings (or 7 innings in a Green Division game), the tie-breaker rule shall be used. The offensive team starts its turn at bat with the player scheduled to bat last in that half-inning being placed at second base with nobody out. The runner on second base may be substituted in accordance with the substitution rules.  
In the extra innings, there is no limit to the number of runs scored by either team.
4. In the playoffs, a team with fewer than 12 players may arrange for a spare player(s) of equal ability from either a bye team or an eliminated team with the approval of the Convener. Spares may be added to bring the total number of players to 12. Spare players will bat at the bottom of the order.
5. There should not be any forfeits in the playoffs. Forfeits will only occur when and if all avenues to put a team on the field have been exhausted. Once the number of available players is less than 9, the game will be forfeited.
6. The Championship game in each division will be scheduled for the day of the week on which that division plays its games during the regular season. Example: The Blue Division championship will be played on a Tuesday or a Thursday. The Red and Green Division championships would be played on a Monday or Wednesday.
7. No playoff games will be scheduled after the last Thursday of September.

### Exceptions for the Red Division

1. The 175-foot defensive arc will not be used in the Red Division.

### Exceptions for the Green Division

1. Sliding is not allowed. If a runner slides, they will be called out.
2. To avoid collisions, all outs on the bases are to be “safety/no tag required” outs. In addition, however, a base runner may be tagged out between bases.
3. If a batter hits a foul ball with two strikes, they get a courtesy “no-play”. If they hit it a second time, they are out.
4. No “hot boxes” are allowed. A runner advancing to the next base may change their mind and make a move to return to the previous base. If they do, they must return to that previous base. There is no changing their mind a second time, creating a “hot box”. Similarly, if a runner stops momentarily, then decides to continue forward (without turning back), they cannot change their mind again. They must continue forward. Should the runner stop with indecision, the fielder may throw to either base for the force out.
5. Some batters will be allowed “runners from the screen”. Those batters must be identified and approved by the Division Convener prior to the game. The batter who needs a “runner from the screen” will have the same runner throughout the game. That pairing of batter and runner must be made known to the umpire prior to the start of the game. A runner from the screen is considered a courtesy runner.

**As of April 3, 2026**