

Special Olympics Northern California

Softball



2024 Guidelines & Rules

Team Competition and Individual Skills Contest

(Please Review Pages 20-21 for 2024 Softball Rules Changes)

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**SPECIAL OLYMPICS
NORTHERN CALIFORNIA**

MISSION STATEMENT

To provide athletic opportunities to children and adults with intellectual disabilities which instill the confidence needed to succeed in life.

Preparing for life through sports

SONORCAL PLAYS BY THE RULES.....

All Special Olympics competitions will be conducted in accordance with the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules and the National Governing Body of rules for each sport offered in our program. These rules are designed to protect the Athletes, provide equitable conditions of competition and promote uniformity so that no competitor shall obtain an unfair advantage over another.

The International Olympics Committee (IOC) has granted its official recognition to Special Olympics International, Inc., and its accredited programs.

Special Olympics Northern California

COACHES' CODE OF CONDUCT

Special Olympics Northern California (SONorCal) volunteer coaches are models whose behavior should serve as a positive example for their athletes. Their behavior should reflect a concern that the fairest and most positive competitive experience is equally available to every Special Olympics athlete in each training or competition. The coach has the unique opportunity to influence the development and personal growth of many individuals. For this reason, it is important that the coach adhere to the standards of ethical decision making and teaching. In addition, it is the position of SONorCal that each volunteer coach shall agree to:

HAVE RESPECT FOR OTHERS

- I will respect the rights, dignity and worth of athletes, other coaches and volunteers, SONorCal staff members, and friends and spectators in Special Olympics.
- I will treat everyone equally regardless of sex, ethnic origin, religion or ability.
- I will be a positive role model for the athletes I coach.

ENSURE A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE

- I will ensure that for each athlete I coach, the time spent with Special Olympics is a positive experience.
- I will respect the talent, developmental stage and goals of each athlete.
- I will ensure each athlete competes in events that challenge that athlete's potential and are appropriate to that athlete's ability.
- I will be fair, considerate and honest with athletes and communicate with athletes using simple, clear language.
- I will ensure that accurate scores are provided for entry of an athlete into any event.
- I will instruct each athlete to perform to the best of the athlete's ability at all preliminaries/heats and finals in accordance with the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules.

ACT PROFESSIONALLY AND TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR HIS/HER ACTIONS

- My language, manner, punctuality, preparation and presentation will demonstrate high standards.
- I will dress and act in an appropriate manner at all times.
- I will display control, respect, dignity and professionalism to all involved in Special Olympics, including to the athletes, other coaches and volunteers, opponents, officials, administrators, SONorCal staff members, parents, spectators and the media.
- I will encourage athletes to demonstrate the same qualities.
- I will not drink alcohol, smoke or take illegal drugs while representing Special Olympics at training sessions or during competitions.
- I will not engage in any form of personal abuse towards, or inappropriate contact or relationship with, athletes, other coaches and volunteers, SONorCal staff members, family members, or spectators in Special Olympics, including verbal, physical or emotional abuse.
- I will be alert to any form of abuse from other sources directed toward athletes or others in my care.
- I will abide by the Special Olympics policy that prohibits coaches/volunteers from dating athletes.

PROVIDE QUALITY SERVICE TO THE ATHLETES

- I will seek continued improvement through performance evaluation and ongoing coach education.
- I will be knowledgeable about the Sports Rules and skills of the sport(s) I coach.
- I will provide a planned training program.
- I will keep copies of the registration, training, and competition records for each athlete I coach.
- I will follow the Special Olympics and National Governing Body rules for my sport(s) coached, as well as all SONorCal policies and procedures as amended.

ENSURE THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF THE ATHLETES

- I will ensure that the equipment and facilities for my sport(s) coached are safe to use.
- I will ensure that the equipment, rules, training and the environment are appropriate for the age and ability of the athletes.
- I will review each athlete's registration form and be aware of any limitations on that athlete's participation noted on that form.
- I will encourage athletes, coaches and volunteers to seek medical advice when needed.
- I will report any emergencies to the appropriate authorities after first taking immediate action to ensure the safety and well-being of those involved.
- I will maintain the same interest and support towards sick and injured athletes.
- I will allow further participation in training and competition only when appropriate.

Should the behaviors and/or abilities of any volunteer coach or other faction of a school/organization violate either the principles stated above (including the SONorCal policies and procedures as amended) or the philosophy of the Special Olympics movement, then any of the following actions may be taken by SONorCal in its sole discretion:

1. The coach may be notified by official warning of the undesirable behavior and be requested to remedy the situation immediately in order to continue his or her participation in Special Olympics;
2. The coach may be requested to withdraw personally or with his/her team from the remainder of any Special Olympics event or competition;
3. The coach or sponsoring school/organization may be suspended from participating in any or all Special Olympics activities or events for a specified period of time; and/or
4. The coach or sponsoring school/organization may be permanently prohibited from participating in any or all Special Olympics activities or events.

Special Olympics Northern California

ATHLETES' CODE OF CONDUCT

Special Olympics Northern California (SONorCal) is committed to the highest ideals of sport and expects all athletes to honor sports and Special Olympics. All SONorCal Athletes and Unified Partners agree to the following code:

SPORTSMANSHIP

- I will practice good sportsmanship.
- I will act in ways that bring respect to me, my coaches, my team, and Special Olympics.
- I will not use bad language.
- I will not swear or insult other persons.
- I will not fight with other athletes, coaches, volunteers, or staff.

TRAINING AND COMPETITION

- I will train regularly.
- I will learn and follow the rules of my sport.
- I will listen to my coaches and the official and ask questions when I do not understand
- I will always try my best during training, divisioning, and competitions.
- I will not “hold back” in preliminary competition just to get into an easier finals competition division.
- I will follow the International Federation and the National Federation/Governing Body rules for my sport(s).

RESPONSIBILITY FOR MY ACTIONS

- I will not make inappropriate or unwanted physical, verbal, or sexual advances on others.
- I will not drink alcohol, smoke or take illegal drugs while representing Special Olympics at training sessions, competition, or during Games.
- I will not take drugs for the purpose of improving my performance.
- I will obey all laws and Special Olympics rules.

Special Olympics Northern California

PARENT AND SPECTATOR CODE OF CONDUCT

Special Olympics Northern California (SONorCal) is committed to the highest ideals of sport and expects all parents and spectators to honor sport and Special Olympics. All Special Olympics parents and spectators should observe the following code:

- Remember athletes are participating for their enjoyment. Encourage participation, but do not force it.
- Applaud good performances and efforts from all individuals and teams. Congratulate all participants on their performance, regardless of the event's or game's outcome.
- Focus on the athletes' effort and performance, rather than whether they win or lose.
- Encourage athletes to play according to the rules and to settle disagreements without resorting to hostility or violence.
- Never ridicule or yell at participants for making a mistake or losing the competition.
- Remember that athletes learn best by example. Appreciate good performance and skillful plays by all participants.
- Respect the decisions of officials, Games Management Team and Staff, and teach athletes to do the same.
- Show appreciation for event volunteers, coaches, and officials and staff. (Remember, without them there would be no opportunities for athletes).
- Condemn the use of violence in any form, whether it is by spectators, coaches, officials or players.
- Show respect for your team's or individual's opponents. Without them, there would be no event or game.
- Encourage athletes and coaches to follow the rules and the officials' decisions.
- Swearing and/or inappropriate language will not be tolerated at SONC events
- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every person regardless of their gender, ability, cultural background or religion.
- Abide by all posted and written policies, including SONC's Animal Policy for Practices, Competitions and Events.

By attending an event, parents and spectators have agreed to abide by this Parent and Spectator Code of Conduct. SO NorCal reserves the right to dismiss parents and/or spectators from any SO NorCal event for violation of this Parent and Spectator Code of Conduct.

DIVISIONING CRITERIA

Softball is a team sport and teams will be divisioned based on total team composition.

USE THE CRITERIA BELOW KEEPING YOUR SIX BEST PLAYERS IN MIND.

	Understanding of Rules and Concepts	Offensive Ability	Defensive Ability	Physical Ability
Level 2 (Athlete Pitch)	High understanding of rules and concepts. Conceptual understanding of softball team play.	All players are able to hit balls into the outfield in the air, as well as to the opposite field. Players possess high level base running abilities.	Routinely makes high level plays, and some difficult defensive plays such as fielding hard grounders and tracking deep fly balls. Ability to play multiple positions. Ability to consistently make high level softball throws.	High Physical Ability. Quick reaction time. Ability to consistently run and move throughout the duration of a game.
Level 3 (Athlete Pitch)	Basic understanding of rules and concepts. Understanding of offensive/defensive situations. Basic understanding of softball team play.	Most players are able to hit balls into the outfield in the air, as well as to the opposite field. Players possess moderate to high base running abilities.	Routinely makes moderate to high level plays, and some difficult defensive plays such as fielding hard grounders and tracking deep fly balls. Ability to play multiple positions. Ability to consistently make moderate to high level softball throws.	Moderate to high Physical Ability. Moderate to quick reaction time. Ability to consistently run and move throughout the duration of a game.
Level 4 (Coach Pitch)	Limited understanding of rules and concepts, offensive/defensive situations and softball team play. Able to play in accordance with modified Special Olympics rules.	Limited numbers of athletes are able to hit balls into outfield in the air. Players possess limited base running abilities. Ability to hit pitches thrown by coach.	Limited number of athletes routinely make basic defensive plays including accurate throws, fielding ground balls and catching pop flies.	Low to moderate physical ability. Slow to moderate reaction time. Few players can run multiple bases at a time.
Level 5 (Tee Ball)	Low understanding of rules and concepts, offensive/defensive situations and softball team play. Able to play in accordance with modified Special Olympics rules under guidance of coaching staff.	Ability to hit balls off of a tee. Limited ability to run more than one base. Need constant coaching.	Plays a spot on the field rather than a position. Don't go after ball unless it comes near.	Low Physical Ability, but have mastered Individual Skills Contest events and are ready to transition to team play. Most athletes possess low mobility, severely limited range of motion, and limited ability to make softball throws.

Softball is a team sport and teams will be divisioned based on total team composition.

USE THE ABOVE CRITERIA KEEPING YOUR SIX BEST PLAYERS IN MIND.

SONORCAL SOFTBALL RULES AND REGULATIONS

The Official Special Olympics Rules shall govern all Special Olympics Softball competitions. As an international sports program, Special Olympics has created these rules based upon USA Softball rules for Softball. USA Softball rules shall be employed except when they are in conflict with the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules. In such cases, the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules shall apply.

SECTION A - GENERAL RULES

1. Each Special Olympics athlete is required to have an Application for Participation on file in order to participate. This is in accordance with Special Olympics General Rules.
2. Each team is required to play all team members in every game played. Minimum requirement: one defensive inning in the field (3 outs) and one at-bat, unless a team does not get through its entire batting line-up.
3. **SONorCal has a strict Animal Policy for Practices, Competitions and Events, which must be followed by all athletes, volunteers, parents and spectators at all times. Please visit sonc.org/resources/coach-athletes-resources/coach-resources/policies-procedures-forms for the full policy.**

SECTION B - OFFICIAL EVENTS

The following are Official Softball Events offered by SONorCal:

1. Slow Pitch Team Competition – Level 2 & 3
2. Coach Pitch Competition – Level 4
3. Tee Ball Competition – Level 5
4. Individual Skills Competition

SECTION C - DIVISIONS

1. Competitors in Softball will compete in an Open Age Group & Open Gender Group.
2. Teams will be divisioned according to:
 - a. Previous year's tournament results
 - b. Local invitational and scrimmage results

SECTION D - GAME ROSTER

1. Regional Entry Form (Registration Information due prior to tournament)
 - a. Levels 2, 3 & 4
 - i. A Regional Entry Form must contain at least 10 players and a maximum of 15 players. All coaches must also be listed on the Regional Entry Form.
 - b. Level 5 (Tee Ball)
 - i. A Regional Entry Form must contain at least eight (8) players and a maximum of 15 players. All coaches must also be listed on the Regional Entry Form.
 - c. Regional Entry Forms are considered frozen when submitted to the Games Director at the time that Registration Information is due. The Program office must approve any requests for a roster change.
2. Official Game Roster (Players from Regional Entry Form that are present for tournament)
 - a. For any given game, each team must submit the Softball Scoresheet (Line-Up Card) to the official scorekeeper. Only players who are listed on the Regional Entry Form may be listed on the Softball Scoresheet (Line-Up Card). The head coach must also be listed on the Softball Scoresheet (Line-Up Card).
 - b. Levels 2, 3 & 4

- i. Only 10 players can play in the field at any given time. However, a team may start a game with nine players. If a team starts with nine players, the ninth player must play at least one half inning (3 outs) in the field, except in the case of injury. Failure to do so will result in forfeit.
- ii. If a team starts a game with nine players, the vacant 10th spot will result in an automatic out each time that spot comes up in the batting line-up, regardless of the reason the 10th player was not listed on the game roster to start the game.
- c. Level 5 (Tee Ball)
 - i. Only **eight (8) 10** players can play in the field at any given time, **but a team can play with as few as eight (only two outfielders) in the field without penalty.**
- d. For all Levels, if, at any time, a team drops below eight players, regardless of reason, it will forfeit the game.

SECTION E - COACHES AND THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Coaches shall remain within the designated “coaches’ areas” or in the dugout while the game is in progress. Coaches are not allowed on the field during the game (except for one defensive coach in Level 5 – see Section I). For the issue of safety, coaches must wear closed-toe shoes.
2. In Levels 4 & 5, coaches are allowed to assist players to their positions prior to the start of the inning. However, coaches cannot coach baserunners from the mound (Level 4).
3. If a coach touches a runner while the ball is still in play, that runner will be declared out. Coaches are required to stay within the boundaries of the designated coaches’ boxes.
4. Coaches are responsible for knowing and understanding the rules of the game, not only the modified rules in this manual, but also the National Governing Body Rules. The National Governing Body of rules for Special Olympics Softball is the International Softball Federation (ISF) and USA Softball. To acquire your own USA Softball Rules Book, follow the link below:

<https://www.usasoftball.com/official-rulebook/>

5. Protests can only be made by the Head Coach and must be made immediately following an incident. The protest must be given to the Field Supervisor.
6. Protests are only allowed for rules interpretations and implementation issues. Protests are not allowed on judgment calls. The Softball Rules Committee will decide on all protests within 30 minutes of the completed game.
7. Protest forms will be available with the Field Supervisor.

SECTION F - OFFICIALS AND THEIR DUTIES

1. There will be at least one Umpire for all games during competition.
2. It is recommended there be two (2) Umpires for Levels 2 & 3.
3. Officials shall have the power to make all decisions on any point not specifically covered in the rules.
4. An appeal play is defined as a play in which an umpire is unable to make a decision unless he/she is requested to do so by a coach or player. The appeal can be made if a coach or player asks the umpire to make a ruling.
5. The umpires are empowered to make all decisions on the playing field. If a protest is made, it shall be brought to the Field Supervisor who will then take it to the Rules Committee for a final decision. A protest may only be made if it questions the applicability of the rules. No protest will be considered which pertains to any judgment call made by an umpire.
6. Umpires/Tournament Committee may dismiss players and/or coaches due to poor sportsmanship, excessive foul language or inappropriate behavior. This interpretation may be determined by either the umpire or Tournament Committee.

SECTION G - UNIFORMS

1. All players must wear matching uniforms (trim and style), that are of the same color. The jersey (top) must have at least a 6" number on the back, which is contrasting to the shirt color. No two players may wear the same number. Softball pants or shorts, or athletic shorts should be worn. Jeans are strongly discouraged.
2. If caps are to be worn they must all be matching.
3. Softball cleats are recommended (rubber sole). No metal cleats/spikes are allowed.

SECTION H – EQUIPMENT

1. Only bats marked by the manufacturer as “Official Softball” may be used. No double wall or titanium bats may be used. **(See Appendix A for Bat Certification information)**
2. Only the first basemen and/or catcher may wear a first baseman’s trapping style mitt.
3. The catcher must wear a chest protector and softball/baseball shin guards **(Level 5 (Tee Ball) may wear soccer shin guards instead, but must have shin protection)**, and head protection, which is either:
 - a. Facemask, skullcap (batter helmet) and throat-guard; OR
 - b. Hockey-style helmet
4. All batters and base runners must wear an approved batter’s helmet.
5. All jewelry, rings, and watches must be removed prior to entering the field. Failure to do so will result in disqualification for the player.
6. Ball
 - a. Levels 2, 3, & 4 will use the Worth 12” Hot Dot Slow Pitch Softball in Optic Yellow (0.52 COR Rating, 300 lb. Compression).
 - b. Level 5 will use the Easton Soft Touch Softball (12”).
7. **Strike Zone Mats**
 - a. **For Levels 2, 3 and 4, a white rubber (16.5-inch wide by 25-inch long (outside edges)) strike zone mat will be used. While Level 4 does not utilize called strikes or balls, the strike zone mat will be utilized to provide a visual for coach pitchers and batters. Level 5 (Tee Ball) will NOT use a strike zone mat as there are no called strikes.**

SECTION I - RULES OF COMPETITION

1. GENERAL RULES & MODIFICATIONS

- a. A field shall conform to USA Softball standards with the following exceptions:
 - i. Levels 2 & 3 – minimum 200’ fence
 - ii. Level 4 & 5 – 200’ fence (if no fence, then a line and/or cones will be used to determine the 200’ perimeter).
- b. A regulation game shall consist of:
 - i. A one-hour time limit (no new inning will start after an hour).
 - ii. A minimum of 3 full innings and maximum of 7 innings (this does not include tie-break situations).
 - iii. A minimum of 2½ innings if the home team is winning and the time limit is reached
 - If 2½ innings have been played and the home team is batting (and winning) the game will end before the completion of the inning at the one-hour time limit.
- c. Run Limits and Mercy Rule
 - i. There will be a **10-run 7-run** rule enforced per inning at all levels.
 - Should a team surpass **10 7** runs in their half inning, only **10 7** runs will be counted to its score, regardless of the nature of how any additional runs are scored. (i.e., Team A has scored 6 runs during its current at-bat and a player hits a grand slam (worth 4 runs). Team A’s score for that inning will be recorded as 7 (as opposed to 10).)
 - ii. If a team is winning by 20 or more runs after 3 full innings the game will end (regardless of time limit).
- d. Batting & Substitutions
 - i. All Levels will consist of teams using an Open Line-Up. This means that everyone listed on the Softball Scoresheet (Line-Up Card) must bat as part of the batting line-up:

- **Levels 2, 3, 4 & 5 – If a team starts with 10 players, all 10 must bat. If a team starts with 9 players, all 9 must bat.**
 - **Level 5 only – If a team starts with 8 players, all 8 must bat.**
- a. Teams may not change the batting line-up during the game.
 - b. If a batter must leave the game due to injury, then his/her position in the batting line-up will be skipped without penalty.
 - c. If a batter must leave the game due to behavior, then his/her position in the batting line-up will be called as an automatic out each time his/her position arises.
 - d. Teams may end a game with eight players if the player(s) are injured **or removed due to behavior** during the game.
 - e. If, at any time, a team drops below eight players, regardless of reason, it will forfeit the game.
- ii. **Batting Out of Order**
 - a. Batting out of order is an appeal play that may be made by the defensive team only (scorekeepers may not bring this to the attention of the umpire or team). The appeal must be made before the next pitch (legal or illegal) is made to the following batter, or before the pitcher and all infielders have vacated their normal fielding positions and have left fair territory on their way to the team area. On the last play of the game, an appeal may be made until the umpire(s) leaves the field of play.
 - b. If batting out of order is discovered:
 - (1) While the incorrect batter is at bat:
 - (a) The correct batter must take the batter's position and assume the balls and strikes count.
 - (b) Any runner advanced and runs scored while the incorrect batter was at bat shall be legal.
 - (c) There is no penalty whether discovered by the offense or defense while the incorrect batter is at bat.
 - (2) After the incorrect batter has completed a turn at bat and before a legal or illegal pitch to the following batter, or before the pitcher and all infielders have vacated their normal fielding positions and have left fair territory; or on the last play of the game, before the umpire(s) leave the field of play:
 - (a) The improper batter's time at bat is negated
 - (b) The player who should have batted is out
 - (c) Any advancement or score of a runner as a result of the improper batter is negated. Runners not called out must return to the last base occupied at the time of the pitch. Any runner, who is called out prior to the discovery of the infraction, remains out.
 - (d) The next batter is the player whose name follows that of the player called out for failing to bat.
 - (3) After a legal or illegal pitch to the next batter, or after the pitcher and all infielders have vacated their normal fielding positions and have left fair territory, or on the last play of the game, before the umpire(s) leave the field:
 - (a) The turn at bat of the incorrect player is legal
 - (b) All runs scored and runners advanced, and outs made, are legal.
 - (c) The next batter shall be that player whose name follows that of the incorrect batter.
 - (d) No out is called for failure to bat.
 - (e) Players who have not batted and who have not been called out have lost their turn at bat until their spot in the batting orders is reached again in the regular order.
 - iii. Teams may make open defensive substitutions. There is no requirement to notify the scorekeepers for this type of substitution.
 - iv. All athletes listed on the Official Game Roster must play at least one half inning (3 outs) in the field, except in the case of injury. Failure to do so will result in forfeit.
- e. There will be no Extra Player (EP) Rule for any Level.
 - f. Forfeit time is 5 minutes past game time (exception is made if tournament schedule is delayed).
 - g. No bunting at any level (this is a judgment call by the umpire).
 - h. The Infield Fly Rule will be called in Level 2, Level 3 and Level 4, per USA Softball rules.
 - i. When batting, players will take their stance within the lines of the batter's box.
 - j. The ball must be pitched in an underhand motion.
 - k. Called intentional walks (catcher stands up, puts up four fingers and calls for four balls) are not allowed in any level. The catcher must remain behind home plate and receive legal pitches from the pitcher.

- l. Courtesy baserunners may be requested during the review of the ground rules with the umpires before the game begins. The player that made the last out will be the courtesy baserunner.
 - m. **Pinch runners may be used ONLY in the case where there are two (2) outs and the catcher is on base as a baserunner. The team may (and, to help maintain the pace of the game, is highly encouraged to) substitute the last recorded out for the catcher baserunner. This will allow the catcher to go to their dugout to put on gear for the next defensive half inning. The catcher baserunner must safely reach base and be granted “time” by the umpire before the pinch runner can be inserted in their place.**
 - n. Outfielders must be positioned on the outfield grass until the ball becomes live.
 - i. The first violation by a team will result in a warning.
 - ii. Any subsequent violations will result in the batter being awarded first base.
 - a. If any baserunners are on base immediately ahead of the batter, they will advance one base. This may result in a baserunner advancing to home plate and a run being scored.
 - n. Obstruction
 - i. Fielders must not obstruct any legal baserunner or batter-runner who is legally running the bases. Fielder obstruction may, at the judgement of the umpire, be called when the fielder impedes the progress of the runner while:
 - a. not in possession of the ball, or;
 - b. not in the act of fielding a batted ball, or;
 - c. making a fake tag without the ball, or;
 - d. in possession of the ball and pushes a runner off a base, or;
 - e. in possession of the ball, but not in the act of making a play on the runner.
 - ii. Obstructed Runners, and each other runner affected by the obstruction, will be awarded the base(s) they would have reached, in the umpire’s judgment, had there not been obstruction.
 - iii. If the obstructed runner is put out prior to reaching the base they would have reached without obstruction, a dead ball is called and the obstructed runner, and each other runner affected by the obstruction, will be awarded the base(s) they would have reached had there not been obstruction.
 - o. Umpires determine when the ball is dead.
 - p. Tie Games (at the end of 3 complete innings or when time limit has elapsed):
 - i. In round-robin or pool play, all games will be declared a tie if the game is tied at the end of three complete innings and the time limit has elapsed. No Extra Innings will be used.
 - ii. In medal or final placement games, if teams are tied at the end of three complete innings, Extra Innings will be played and will use the International Extra Innings Rule of starting any extra inning with a runner on second base. The runner is the last out in the batting order from the previous inning.
 - iii. In divisioning or leveling play, the Competition Director has discretion to determine which divisions will utilize Extra Innings, based on the competition format and/or time constraints. If Extra Innings are used, again, the International Extra Innings Rule will be used.
2. **SLOW PITCH TEAM COMPETITION MODIFICATIONS – LEVELS 2 & 3**
- a. Distance from home plate to the pitcher’s rubber may be modified from the actual distance of 50 feet to the following distances:
 - i. Level 2 – 46 feet
 - ii. Level 3 – 40 feet
 - iii. Once the distance is determined, the pitcher must pitch from the designated spot for the remainder of the game.
 - b. The arc rule will be enforced, as judged by the umpire calling balls and strikes. When pitched, the ball must travel in an arc that is no less than 6 feet and no greater than 12 feet.
 - c. **Strike zone mats will be used for all games. If a pitch hits the plate and/or the strike zone mat, AND is within the 6 to 12-foot arc, it shall be called a strike.**
 - d. Four balls constitute a walk and three strikes constitute an out. Swinging and called strikes will be called as strikes. If the batter has two strikes and fouls off the third pitch, the batter shall be declared out.
 - e. Sliding is allowed.
3. **COACH PITCH COMPETITION MODIFICATIONS – LEVEL 4**
- a. Distance from home plate to the pitcher’s rubber may be modified from the actual distance of 50 feet to the following distance:

- i. Level 4 – 40 feet
 - ii. Once the distance is determined, the pitcher must pitch from the designated spot for the remainder of the game.
- b. Any coach who is registered on the Softball Team Entry Form may act as the coach pitcher for that team. An unlimited number of pitchers and substitutions are allowed, however, once a pitcher begins an inning, they must complete the inning, except in the case of injury.
 - c. Inning will consist of 3 outs or 10 runs, whichever occurs first.
 - d. Coaches are allowed to assist players to their positions prior to the start of the inning.
 - e. Arc rule will not be enforced but is recommended (6 ft. min. to 12ft. max.).
 - f. Batters will get a maximum of 7 pitches. If, after the seventh pitch, the batter has failed to reach base safely (strikes out, doesn't swing at the seventh pitch or fouls off the seventh pitch), the batter will be called out. Umpires will call strikes (defined swings and misses and foul balls – there will be NO called strikes if batter does not swing) and batters can strike out. If the batter has two strikes and fouls a pitch, the at bat will continue until the ball is put in play, the batter swings and misses (resulting in an out) OR the seventh pitch is reached (see above). No balls will be called and the batter cannot be walked.
 - g. **Strike zone mats will be used for all games even though called strikes will not be utilized. This will provide a better visual target for coach pitchers and batters.**
 - h. The coach must make every effort to move out of the way of the defensive players attempting to field the ball or make a play. If the coach interferes with the defender making the play or touches the ball, the ball will become dead and the batter will be called out.
 - i. An 8-ft diameter circle will be placed around the pitcher's mound and the defensive pitcher must be in that 8-ft circle while the ball is dead.
 - j. The defensive pitcher must keep at least one entire foot in the 8-ft circle around the pitcher's mound until the ball becomes live.
 - k. No sliding is allowed.
4. **TEE BALL COMPETITION MODIFICATIONS – LEVEL 5**
- a. Inning will consist of 3 outs or ~~10~~ **7** runs, whichever occurs first.
 - b. Coaches are allowed to assist players to their positions prior to the start of the inning.
 - c. A “neutral zone” will be marked in arc of 46’ from home plate. Any batted ball that does not cross this line and is not touched by a defensive player will be designated a foul ball.
 - d. A coaches’ circle will be located 10’ beyond second base and made with a 6’ diameter. One coach from the defensive team may be allowed to stand in this circle while his team is on the field. (If a live ball is touched by the coach in circle, then ball is declared dead). Also, he/she must make a reasonable attempt to avoid any ball that is thrown in his/her direction.
 - e. An 8-ft diameter circle will be placed around the pitcher's mound and the defensive pitcher must be in that 8-ft circle while the ball is dead.
 - f. The defensive pitcher must keep at least one entire foot in the 8-ft circle around the pitcher's mound until the ball becomes live.
 - g. Player Positions:
 - i. Pitcher – defensive position is on the rubber.
 - ii. Catcher – Defensive position is behind the plate.
 - iii. First baseman – Normal defensive position.
 - iv. Second baseman – Normal defensive position.
 - v. Third baseman – Normal defensive position.
 - vi. Shortstop – Normal defensive position.
 - vii. ~~Two~~ **Four** Outfielders (**can play with as few as two**) – must be positioned on the outfield grass until the ball becomes live.
 - h. Game play:
 - i. A batting tee will be placed directly on home plate.
 - ii. A coach from the batting team will adjust the tee to fit the batter.
 - iii. To start play, the umpire will place the ball on the tee and will say “play ball”.
 - iv. The batter will step in the batter's box and hit the ball.

- v. Batters will get a maximum of 7 attempts to hit the ball off the tee. If, after the seventh attempt, the batter has failed to reach base safely (strikes out or fouls off the seventh attempt), the batter will be called out.
- vi. If the batter misses the ball and tee completely, the attempt shall be ruled a strike. If the batter swings and hits the tee but not the ball, regardless of the motion of the ball, the attempt will be called a foul.
- vii. If the batter has 2 strikes and swings and misses, it is called an out.
- viii. If the batter has 2 strikes and fouls off the third attempt, the at bat will continue until the ball is put in play, the batter swings and misses (resulting in an out), or the seventh attempt is reached (see above).
- ix. All defensive players must stand behind the neutral zone before the ball is hit. They may come into the neutral zone after the ball is hit to field it. If any defensive player touches a ball within the neutral zone, the ball becomes live. If the ball comes to a stop in the neutral zone and is untouched by a defensive player, the ball will be called a foul ball.
- x. After a ball is hit into fair territory and the batter has left the batter's box, the umpire shall remove the tee from home plate and set it in foul territory.
- xi. No sliding is allowed.

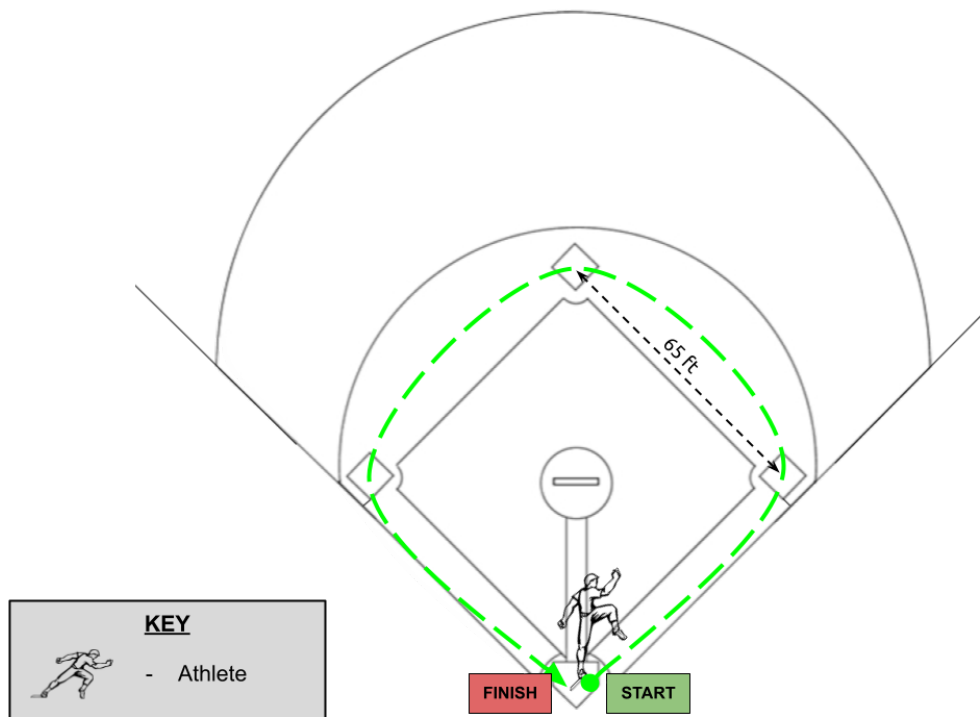
SECTION J - TIE BREAKERS

1. For divisions at a competition where, at the discretion of the Competition Director, places do not need to be determined for advancement purposes (in final division play), the following procedures will take place:
 - a) Head to Head: counting only games between the teams that are tied; if still tied, proceed to b).
 - b) The remaining tied teams will receive the same award (double, triple, etc.) and subsequent places will be skipped.
 - c) Forfeit Rule:
 - i. If any team involved in a tie has forfeited a game (not including divisioning, leveling, or play-in games), it will be placed in the lowest position of the teams involved.
 - ii. If any team involved in a tie received a win as the result of a team forfeiting to them, ALL games involving the team that forfeited will be omitted and the resulting records will be used in the foregoing tiebreaker procedures.
2. For divisions at a competition where, at the discretion of the Competition Director, places need to be determined for advancement purposes (to final divisions, medal or placement games), the following procedures will take place:
 - a) Head to Head: counting only games between the teams that are tied; if still tied proceed to b).
 - b) Lowest total defensive runs allowed, counting only games (not including divisioning, leveling, or play-in games) between the teams that are tied; if still tied, proceed to c).
 - c) Highest run differential (difference between runs scored and runs allowed in each game), counting only games (not including divisioning, leveling or play-in games) between the teams that are tied; if still tied, proceed to d)
 - d) Highest total offensive runs scored, counting only games (not including divisioning, leveling, or play-in games) between the teams that are tied; if still tied, proceed to e)
 - e) Lowest total defensive runs allowed, counting all games (not including divisioning, leveling, or play-in games) between common opponents; if still tied, proceed to f)
 - f) Highest run differential (difference between runs scored and runs allowed in each game), counting all games (not including divisioning, leveling or play-in games) between all common opponents; if still tied, proceed to g)
 - g) Highest total offensive runs scored, counting all games (not including divisioning, leveling, or play-in games) between common opponents; if still tied, proceed to h)
 - h) If all of the tiebreakers described above still do not decide the outcome of a tie, a coin flip will be used, where the winner will be given the higher placement.
 - i) Forfeit Rule:
 - i. If any team involved in a tie has forfeited a game (not including divisioning, leveling, or play-in games), it will be placed in the lowest position of the teams involved.
 - ii. If any team involved in a tie received a win as the result of a team forfeiting to them, ALL games involving the team that forfeited will be omitted and the resulting records will be used in the foregoing tiebreaker procedures.

SECTION K - INDIVIDUAL SKILLS CONTEST (ISC)

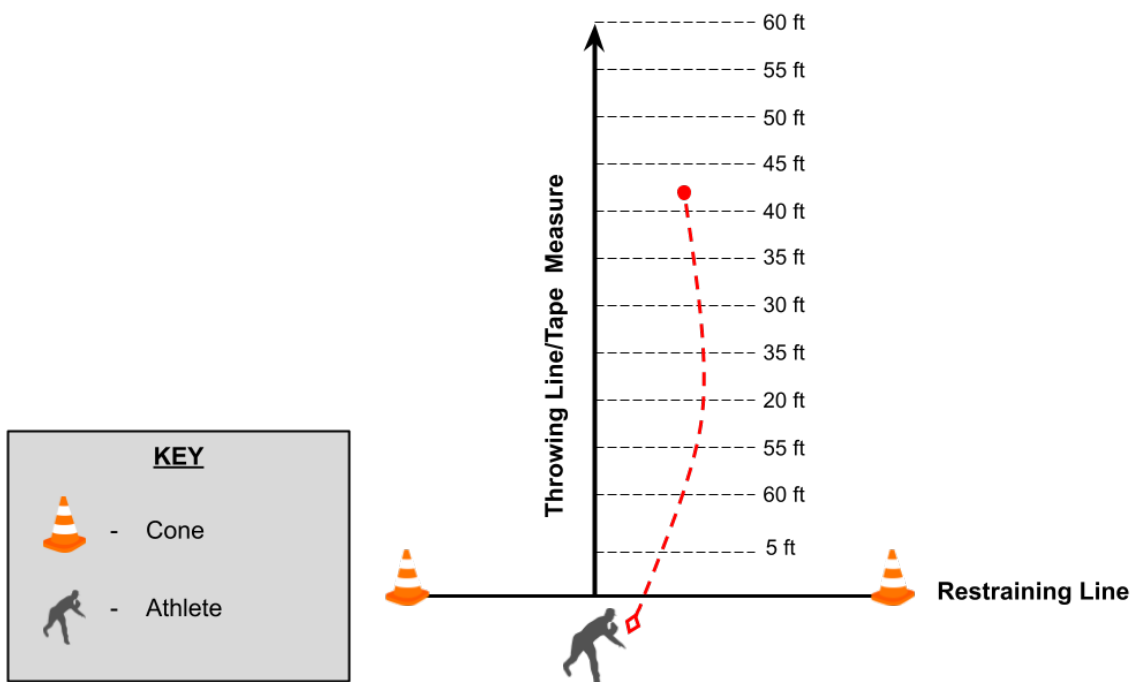
1. This event provides meaningful competition for athletes with lower ability levels and/or need to use a walking device. It is not for athletes who can already play the game.
2. Four events comprise the Individual Skills Contest: Base Running, Throwing, Fielding and Hitting.
3. The athlete's final score is determined by adding together the scores achieved in each of these four events.
4. Athletes will be pre-divisoned according to their total scores from these four events.
5. Each event is diagrammed with the suggested number and placement of volunteers who will administer them. It is also suggested that the same volunteers remain at an event throughout the competition so that consistency is provided.
6. Batting helmets are recommended for the Base Running (Event #1) and Batting (Event #4) events.

ISC Event #1: Base Running



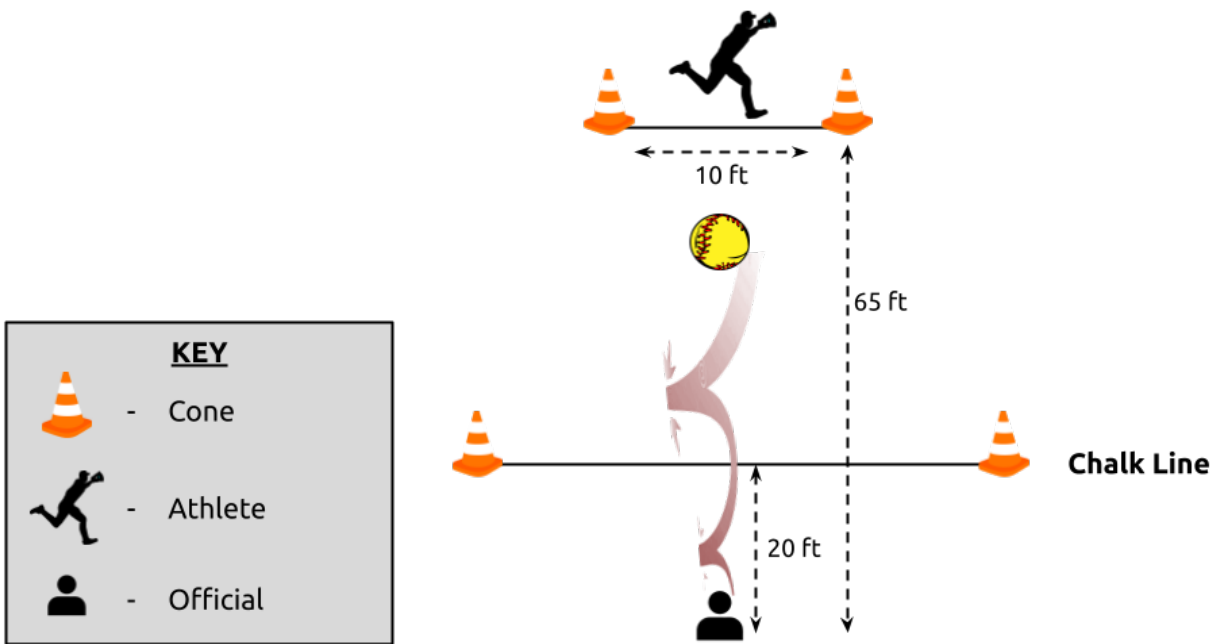
1. Purpose: To measure an athlete's base running ability.
2. Equipment
 - a) Three bases
 - b) Home plate
 - c) Stopwatch
3. Description
 - a) Bases are set up like a softball diamond and positioned 65 feet apart.
 - b) The athlete is instructed to start at home plate and run around the bases as fast as possible, touching each base en route from start to finish.
4. Scoring
 - a) The time starts when the athlete leaves home plate and stops when the athlete touches home plate after circling the bases.
 - b) The time elapsed in seconds is subtracted from 60 to determine the point score. A penalty of 5 seconds for each base missed or touched in an improper order shall be subtracted from the point score. The minimum score is zero.
 - c) The athlete is given two trials. The athlete's score will be the best score out of the two trials.

ISC Event #2: Throwing



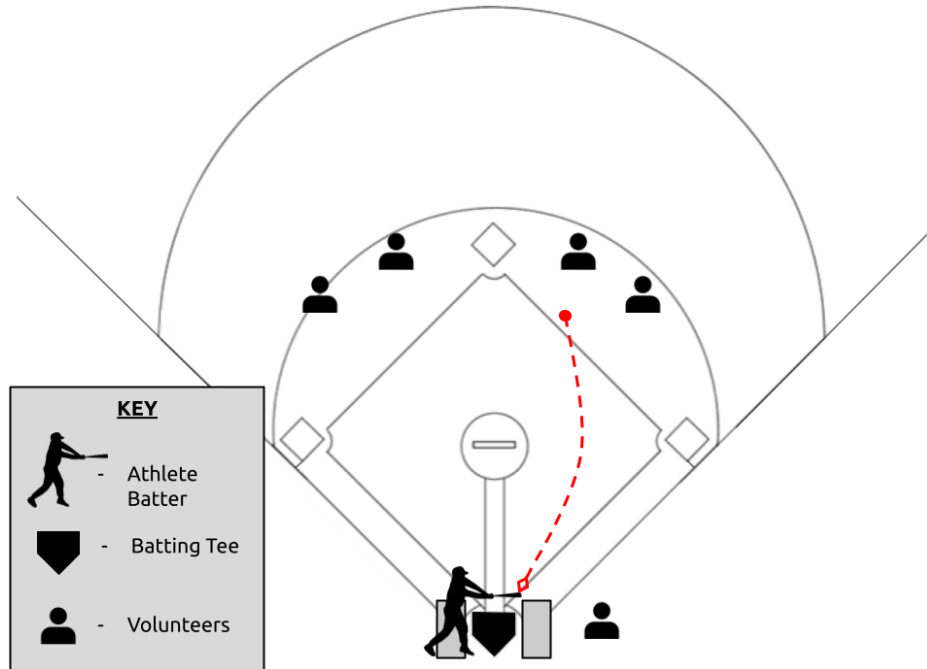
1. Purpose: To measure the athlete's ability in throwing for distance and accuracy.
2. Equipment
 - a) Regulation field
 - b) 2 measuring tapes (**meters feet**)
 - c) Softballs – Easton Soft Touch Softball (12")
 - d) 2 small cones/marketing stakes
3. Description
 - a) The player being tested stands behind the restraining line, back far enough to take one or more steps in preparation for throwing.
 - b) The player has 2 trials to throw the softball as far and as straight as possible down the throwing line, without stepping over the restraining line.
 - c) Coaches, assistants or other waiting players should be positioned in the field to indicate, using cone or marking stake, the spot where each ball first touches the ground.
 - d) If a player steps on or over the Restraining Line before releasing the ball, the trial must be repeated. There will be a maximum of two repeats.
4. Scoring
 - a) Formula: **Distance Thrown in Meters minus Meters off Throwing Line = Score**
Distance Thrown in Feet minus Feet off Throwing Line = Score
 - b) Throwing score equals the throwing distance, measured at a point on the throwing line straight across from (perpendicular to) the spot where the ball landed, minus the error distance – the number of **meters feet** the ball landed off target (distance from the throwing line).
 - c) Both error scores and distance are measured to the nearest **meter foot** (i.e., if a ball lands even with (perpendicular to) the 50-**foot** point on the measuring tape, but is 6 **feet** off to one side; the player's score is 44 points).
 - d) If score falls between **feet**, score should be rounded down (i.e., 44.73 **feet** = 44 points).
 - e) The player's score is the better of the two throws. The minimum score is zero.

ISC Event #3: Fielding



1. Purpose: To measure athlete's fielding ability.
2. Equipment
 - a) Softballs – Easton Soft Touch Softball (12")
 - b) Measuring tape
 - c) Chalk/rope
 - d) Cones
3. Description
 - a) Athlete will stand between and behind the 2 designated cones, which will be placed 10 feet apart from each other.
 - b) An official, who will be positioned 65 feet from the 2 cones, must throw the ball on the ground to the athlete between the cones. The throw to the athlete must hit the ground before the 20-foot chalk mark/line.
 - c) Athlete may move aggressively toward the ball.
 - d) If ball is thrown by official outside of the cones, the throw must be repeated.
 - e) Athlete receives 5 attempts per trial, each athlete receives 2 trials.
4. Scoring
 - a) Athlete receives 5 points for cleanly fielded ball (either caught in glove or trapped against body, but off the ground).
 - b) Athlete receives 2 points for a ball that is blocked.
 - c) Athlete receives 0 points for a missed attempt.
 - d) Maximum Score after 2 trials is 50. The minimum score is zero.

ISC Event #4: Batting



1. Purpose: To measure athlete's ability to hit for distance when hitting off a batting tee.
2. Equipment
 - a) Batting tee
 - b) Softballs – Easton Soft Touch Softball (12")
 - c) Bat
 - d) Measuring tape (feet)
 - e) Chalk
3. Description
 - a) Standing in a regulation size batter's box (7'7" by 3'3") the athlete is instructed to hit the ball off the batting tee.
 - b) The athlete receives 3 attempts.
4. Scoring
 - a) The distance of the longest hit ball shall determine the athlete's final score.
 - b) The distance of a hit ball is measured from the batting tee to the point where the ball touches the ground.
 - c) The distance measured correlates to the score given (i.e., 46 **feet** = 46 points).
 - d) If the measurement falls between **feet**, scores shall be rounded down (i.e., 46.73 **feet** = 46 points).
 - e) Foul balls and missed swings count as attempts and will receive a score of zero.
 - f) The athlete receives 3 attempts and the final score is the best of the 3 attempts. The minimum score is zero.

FINAL ISC SCORE

1. The athlete's final score for the Individual Skills Contest is determined by adding together the scores achieved in each of the four events. The maximum final score possible for one round is variable.
2. A sample of the Softball Individual Skills Contest Scorecard can be found on following page (Page 18).

SAMPLE SOFTBALL INDIVIDUAL SKILLS CONTEST SCORECARD

**Special Olympics
Northern California**
Individual Skills Contest (ISC) Scorecard
SOFTBALL

Place Athlete Label Here

Athlete Name:	Age Group:	Division:	
Delegation:	Gender:		

	TRIAL #										SCORE	
	1					2						
BASE RUNNING												<i>Best Score</i>
THROWING												<i>Best Score</i>
FIELDING <i>(Circle Points)</i>	Attempt					Attempt						<i>Sum of Points</i>
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5		
	5 2 0	5 2 0	5 2 0	5 2 0	5 2 0	5 2 0	5 2 0	5 2 0	5 2 0	5 2 0		
BATTING	Attempt											<i>Best Score</i>
	1			2			3					
Total Score												

Base Running

- Athlete is given 2 trials
- The athlete stands on home plate
- The time starts when the athlete leaves Home Plate
- The time stops when the athlete touches Home Plate after circling the bases
- **Scoring:** - The time elapsed in seconds is subtracted from 60 to determine the point score
- A penalty of 5 points is subtracted for each base missed or touched in an improper order
- **Score is 60 minus the time elapsed and any penalties - Minimum Score is 0**

Throwing

- Athlete is given 2 trials
- The athlete stands behind the Restraining Line
- The athlete attempts to throw the ball as far and as straight along the Throwing Line as possible
- If the athlete steps over the Restraining Line before releasing the ball, the trial must be repeated (maximum of 2)
- **Scoring:** - The score is the distance thrown (in feet) minus the distance (in feet) away from the Throwing Line
- Measurements shall be rounded down (i.e., 44.73 ft = 44 points)
- **Score is the best of the two trials - Minimum Score is 0; Maximum Score varies**

Fielding

- Athlete is given 5 attempts for each of the 2 trials
- The athlete will stand between and behind the two (2) designated cones
- An official must throw the ball on the ground (must first touch prior to the 20-foot line) to the athlete between the cones
- Any ball thrown outside of the cones by the official must be repeated and does not count as an attempt
- The athlete may move toward the ball once it is thrown
- **Scoring:** - 5 Points for a cleanly Fielded ball (caught in glove or trapped against body, but off the ground)
- 2 Points for a ball that is blocked/knocked down
- 0 Points for a missed ball
- **Score is the total of two trials (all attempts) - Minimum Score is 0; Maximum Score is 50 points**

Batting

- Athlete is given 3 attempts
- The athlete stands in the Batter's Box from the desired side of the plate
- The athlete hits the ball off the batting tee, which may be adjusted by a coach or official
- Each full swing (even a swing and miss) shall be considered an Attempt
- **Scoring:** - The score is the distance (in feet) of the ball hit from the batting tee to the point where the ball first hits the ground
- Foul balls and missed swings count as missed attempts and will receive a score of 0
- Measurements shall be rounded down (i.e., 36.27 feet = 36 points)
- **Score is the best of the 3 attempts - Minimum Score is 0; Maximum Score varies**

SECTION L - 2024 RULE CHANGES

1. Actual rules changes listed below are in **red font, underlined and in bold print** within the rule book.
2. General formatting and wording changes.
3. Rule Change Summary
 - a. Added SONorCal's Animal Policy for Practices, Competitions and Events.
 - b. Clarified that up to 10 players can play in the field for Level 5 (Tee Ball).
 - c. Created Bat Certification Information appendix.
 - d. Revised shin guard requirements for Level 5 (Tee Ball).
 - e. Added use of Strike Zone Mats for Level 2, 3, 4 & 5.
 - f. Revised Run Rule to 7 runs.
 - g. Clarified open batting line-up rules.
 - h. Added pinch runner for teams to substitute for the catcher if on base and two outs.
 - i. Revised outfielder rules for Level 5 (Tee Ball) to allow up to four outfielders.
 - j. Changed Individual Skills Contest Events # 2 (Throwing) and #4 (Batting).
4. Changes within the Rules & Guidelines below:

Page 8 – Section A: General Rules

SECTION A – GENERAL RULES

3. SONorCal has a strict Animal Policy for Practices, Competitions and Events, which must be followed by all athletes, volunteers, parents and spectators at all times. Please visit sonc.org/resources/coach-athletes-resources/coach-resources/policies-procedures-forms for the full policy.

Page 9 – Section D: Game Roster

SECTION E – GAME ROSTER

2. Official Game Roster (Players from Regional Entry Form that are present for tournament)
 - c. Level 5 (Tee Ball)
 - i. Only ~~eight (8)~~ **10** players can play in the field at any given time, but a team can play with as few as eight (only two outfielders) in the field without penalty.

Page 10 – Section H: Equipment

SECTION H – EQUIPMENT

1. Only bats marked by the manufacturer as “Official Softball” may be used. No double wall or titanium bats may be used. (See Appendix A for Bat Certification information.)
3. The catcher must wear a chest protector and softball/baseball shin guards (Level 5 (Tee Ball) may wear soccer shin guards instead, but must have shin protection), and head protection, which is either:
7. Strike Zone Mats
 - a. For Levels 2, 3, and 4, a white rubber (16.5-inch by 25-inch long (outside edges)) strike zone mat will be used. While Level 4 does not utilize called strikes or balls, the strike zone mat will be utilized to provide a visual for coach pitchers and batters. Level 5 (Tee Ball) will NOT use a strike zone mat as there are no called strikes or balls.

Pages 10-13 – Section I: Rules of Competition

SECTION I – RULES OF COMPETITION

1. GENERAL RULES AND MODIFICATIONS
 - c. Run Limits and Mercy Rule
 - i. There will be a ~~10-run~~ **7-run** rule enforced per inning at all levels.

- ii. Should a team surpass 10 7 runs in their half inning, only 10 7 runs will be counted to its score, regardless of the nature of how any additional runs are scored. (i.e., Team A has scored 6 runs during its current at-bat and a player hits a grand slam (worth 4 runs). Team A's score for that inning will be record as 7 (as opposed to 10).)
- d. Batting & Substitutions
 - i. All Levels will consist of teams using an Open Line-Up. This means that everyone listed on the Softball Scoresheet (Line-Up Card) must bat as part of the batting line-up:
 - Levels 2, 3, 4 & 5 – If a team starts with 10 players, all 10 must bat. If a team starts with 9 players, all 9 must bat.
 - Level 5 only – If a team starts with 8 players, all 8 must bat.
 - d. Teams may end a game with eight players if the player(s) are injured or removed due to behavior during the game.
 - m. Pinch runners may be used ONLY in the case where there are two (2) outs and the catcher is on base as a baserunner. The team may (and, to help maintain the pace of the game, is highly encouraged to) substitute the last recorded out for the catcher baserunner. This will allow the catcher to go to their dugout and put on gear for the next defensive half inning. The catcher baserunner must safely reach base and be granted “time” by the umpire before the pinch runner can be inserted in their place.
- 2. SLOW PITCH TEAM COMPETITION MODIFICATIONS – LEVELS 2 & 3
 - c. Strike zone mats will be used for all games. If a pitch hits the plate and/or the strike zone mat AND is within the 6 to 12-foot arc, it shall be called a strike.
- 3. COACH PITCH COMPETITION MODIFICATIONS – LEVEL 4
 - g. Strike zone mats will be used for all games even though called strikes will not be utilized. This will provide a better visual target for coach pitchers and batters.
- 4. TEE BALL COMPETITION MODIFICATIONS – LEVEL 5
 - a. Inning will consist of 3 outs or 10 7 runs, whichever occurs first.
 - g. Player Positions:
 - vii. Two Four Outfielders (can play with as few as two) – must be positioned on the outfield grass until the ball becomes live.

Pages 16-19 – Section K: Individual Skills Contest

SECTION K – INDIVIDUAL SKILLS CONTEST

ISC Event #2: Throwing

- 2. Equipment
 - b) 2 measuring tapes (~~meters~~ feet)
- 4. Scoring
 - a) Formula: ~~Distance Thrown in Meters minus Meters off Throwing Line = Score~~ Distance Thrown in Feet minus Feet off Throwing Line = Score
 - b) Throwing score equals the throwing distance, measured at a point on the throwing line straight across from (perpendicular to) the spot where the ball landed, minus the error distance – the number of ~~meters~~ feet the ball landed off target (distance from the throwing line).
 - c) Both error scores and distance are measured to the nearest ~~meter~~ foot (i.e., if a ball lands even with (perpendicular to) the 50-~~foot~~ point on the measuring tape, but is 6 feet off to one side; the player's score is 44 points).
 - d) If score falls between feet, score should be rounded down (i.e., 44.73 feet = 44 points).

ISC Event #4: Hitting

- 4. Scoring
 - c) The distance measured correlates to the score given (i.e., 46 feet = 46 points).
 - d) If the measurement falls between feet, scores shall be rounded down (i.e., 46.73 feet = 46 points).

APPENDIX A – BAT CERTIFICATION INFORMATION

USA Softball maintains and updates periodically a list of allowed and disallowed softball bats, which must be adhered to both at practices and competitions, for the safety of all participants.

Any bat that is used must display an original stamp or sticker of one or more of the following images:



Additionally, USA Softball has a bat look-up tool on its website at <https://www.usasoftball.com/certified-equipment/> that lists both approved and banned bats. It is recommended that coaches check all bats at the start of the season to ensure a bat is not used throughout the practice season and then disallowed at a competition.

Umpires will also check bats prior to each game starting and have final discretion of which bats are allowed or not allowed for each individual game.