

CACD Softball

Guidelines for Practice and Play

(Revised April 2014)

Thanks for coming! We enjoy your company and ideas. We try to be flexible. Your continued input to these guidelines is welcomed and appreciated. Through them we intend to provide the organizing backbone for play with a minimum of injuries and a maximum of fun.

These few points do not provide a full descriptions of how to play softball. Most guys and gals who come to our games have played before and know the rules of softball, including how to play safely. The material below only describes how we practice and our modifications to standard rules for playing in our games. Many are based on debates we had on the field or after the game last year. They will be handy if you forget, or if captains need a reference during a dispute, or especially when we welcome and instruct newcomers / guests.

Note: All these statements are important; the most important appear in **bold**.

General

- Location and Law: We primarily play at Inglenook Park, with a backup at Miller Park, both in Southfield, MI. Here is a link to see the locations on a map: <http://cacdetroit.org/LocationOfThePrimaryAndBackupFields.pdf> We are subject to the rules of the municipality and its park system. Signs with rules for the parks are posted at the locations. Here is a link to a photo montage of their rules: <http://cacdetroit.org/SignsAtInglenookPark2012.pdf>
- Pick of Fields: If it's available, let's choose field #2 for practice and for the game. (If you never noticed the field numbers on the backstops, this is the field we are usually on.) Here is the reasoning: If the sun is in the batter's eyes, no harm done. But if the sun is in a fielder's eyes they could lose the ball and take it on the head. Fields #2 and #4 (the western most) are the best for protecting players from harm--fielders would be facing East when trying to catch a fly ball during our late afternoon play. Except on cloudy days, the safety advantage is worth moving to one of these fields even if we start practice on a different field because others have already taken our first choices. Also, even though field #4 is an acceptable selection for safety reasons, field #2 is more often dry and is closer to the parking lot, making it the best of all fields.
- Non-competitive: This is a non-competitive, and hopefully argument-free event. **The solution to game-time disputes is between the team captains.** (Try not to involve the organizers, we just want to play, too!) It doesn't matter who witnessed what if they cannot persuade the captains of the value of their witness. When in doubt, the standby is "do over," with all components of the game restored to the moment designated for the start of the do-over. Note: Captains may refer the issue to "neutral" parties, like an "all-time" pitcher or "all-time" catcher. Players have an added incentive not to get worked up over a play or a call to the point where they take it personally, since we re-pick teams every week. He or she may have that person on their team in the next game.
- Rules: We play by street rules. Like pickup basketball has the rule, "no blood = no foul," we only invoke the basics of the baseball / softball game that most people generally know. If you have in depth knowledge about the game, great, but we probably won't be using anything esoteric so there is no sense in arguing over it.

- Footwear: **No metal spikes!** They chew up our bases and do worse to someone's foot in the rare instance of stepping on someone or sliding into a close tag at a base. We value good playing and hard fought games, but we aren't so competitive as to allow such an obvious source of potential injuries. All other spikes are welcomed and recommended but are not necessary for play.
- Pitching: **If you don't want to get hurt, don't pitch!** Plain and simple. All pitchers should know the basics of self-defense from a line drive; for example, (a) to stand back farther (you can pitch from anywhere between the two plates on the pitcher's mound), (b) to assume a defensive posture quickly and not still be outstretched forward from the pitch as the ball reaches the plate, (c) and to keep the glove up near the chest for ready defense of the head and neck. If you don't know what any of this is, please ask the others or vacate the position.
- Batting: Typically, batters know where they tend to hit. If you are the batter and you plan to pound one up the center, possibly low near the pitcher's mound, please judge the capability of the pitcher to defend him or herself. **Batters are encouraged to inform the pitcher if they are going to swing for the fences and might rip it low and into him or her.** This will allow the opposing team make a substitution or at least remind the pitcher of the need for defensive practices.
- Interlopers: Captains and fielders need to **watch for other parties enjoying the park who crowd too close to where the ball may be hit.** Often they are children. Please ask someone to beware of the ball, or just to move a bit farther away. Better safe than sorry.
- Other Games Besides Softball: See the document "Alternative Games Played with a Softball," for when we are short on players.
- Meeting for Dinner After the Game: Those who have the interest are welcome to go out to eat after the game. The usual location is at Big Boy Restaurant, a single but long block North of the intersection of Twelve Mile & Southfield roads.

During Batting Practice

- Starting and Ending Times: Practice starts at 4:00 PM. If you want to practice before the game, please get there in plenty of time, not just before game time. **Batting practice ends at 5 PM sharp.** We get abundant complaints when it drags on and the start of the game is delayed.
- Pace of Practice: Batting practice can sometimes take too long, for example, when players show up late and still want to practice hitting, or if the pitcher isn't enforcing a limit to the number of the pitches per batter, or when we are blessed with many players that day. **The pitcher controls the pace of practice.**
- Max Hits Per Batter: The pitcher **MUST** enforce a policy of **maximum 10 good hits** by the batter. Batters are encouraged to hit less than 10 if they are "on" or just want to speed things along. If pressed for time, the pitcher should decide when to enforce a reduced maximum policy of 5 good hits per batter in order to finish by game time. Individuals are welcome to start a second batting practice on another diamond to speed things up or take more time with their own practice.
- Prevent Standing Around: Sometimes there are too many people who still want to practice batting. There is no reason that all have to participate in the same batting practice. Grab someone willing to pitch, take a number of balls, and temporarily move to another diamond. Or, sometimes there are too many fielders just standing around bored as practice comes to an end. Those who have already batted are invited to play Catch, Pickle between the bases, Flies & Grounders, Five Hundred, Simulation, or some other diversion on another diamond until game time.
- Calling the Ball: Fielders should make a conscious effort to **practice yelling, "I got it,"** during practice even though it seems silly. Under the pressure of making a real catch during the game you don't want to

freeze up, forget to call the ball, and risk a collision with a teammate. (Note for newbies: there is no such thing as yelling “You got it!” to someone. All they hear is the second half, “got it,” and while there is no collision the ball drops, so don’t practice that.)

During the Game

- Captain’s Duties: We greatly appreciate it when people step forward to be team captains, willing to assume certain duties during that day’s game only. This way the organizers don’t have to do everything all the time. The duties of a captain are to:
 - pick teams (unless the organizer does it immediately before asking for captains),
 - swap players when necessary (as people come and go or to balance the teams when there is a runaway score),
 - negotiate with the other captain the rules for partial field play, missing positions, “all-time” positions and extra fielders,
 - decide which team is “home” and “away,”
 - assign batting order,
 - assign fielding positions (usually letting the players have their preference with the exception of first base, as described below),
 - remember who made last out in the previous inning,
 - get the next batter on deck early to prevent unnecessary delays,
 - provide a catcher quickly if the other team needs it,
 - provide first and third base coaches if desired (don’t have to use them),
 - handle game time disputes over plays with the other captain and with possible input from “all-time” positions,
 - and most importantly, to keep track of the strikes, outs, runs per inning, inning number, the score, and update the score in the dirt by the dugout or with the score keeper and the whiteboard. They will be assisted in these responsibilities by: the other team’s captain, the pitcher, the catcher, and the scorekeeper if we have one.
- “Captains’ Code”: **Captains should divide up the players into teams by such a method that no one is exposed to the embarrassment of being chosen last or next to last.** Here are two examples: (a) have people count off by 1’s and 2’s then make supplemental swaps / inclusions according to knowledge of the players’ skills from batting practice; or (b) meet privately and pick teams then announce your picks; or (c) Pick players of equal strength in pairs (if an even number of players--doesn’t work well if there is an odd number). If there is a need to make someone last in a selection that becomes publicly debated, attempt to name one of the organizers last.
- Safety Bases and Plates: The fielders and the catcher can only use the regular first base or home plate. They are not allowed to touch the safety base at first or the safety plate at home if there is one. **The runners should use the safety base or plate when set up at first base or home**, especially for close calls and overrunning the base. If they are headed to second they can use the regular first base instead because it is easier to touch on a turn. Players are not penalized for not using safety bases and plates.
- First Base: **Poor players (or good players with poor gloves that miss throws) are not allowed to play at first base no matter the reason.** The risk of a runner being hit by a missed ball is too great. Of all bases, this one has the greatest number of throws to it, the greatest number of fast throws to it, and the greatest number of long (possibly inaccurate) throws to it. The fielding team’s **captain MUST swap out infield players when there are too many overthrows or missed balls at first**, depending on who in his or her judgment is at fault--a thrower in another position or the first baseman. It also makes for a much

better game when there is a reliable glove in this particular location. Because of the importance of this rule, **the at-bat captain also has the responsibility to request such a change** from the fielding team's captain, to protect his or her runners. (See the responsibilities of the captains, above.)

- Overrunning First Base: If you overrun the base in fair territory the rule is you are judged to be heading to second. Therefore, you can be tagged out on your leisurely, inattentive, stroll back to first. Don't presume upon the charity of the other team, this is a rule everywhere! Overrunning first is only "safe" in foul territory.
- Tie Goes to the Runner: The tie goes to the runner at all bases, but we don't have an umpire so there inevitably will be debate over whether there was a tie. Questionable calls should be evenly split between teams, given first to the team which is losing.
- Co-ed Play: We are not concerned about special rules for coed play. They would complicate our non-competitive game unnecessarily (ex: walking a guy vs. walking a girl, staggered batting order, swapping out balls pitched). Exceptions may be made at game time.
- Counting Runs on the Final Out: The "last run in" counts if the runner from third gets home before the final out is made, except if the final out is made on the batter while running to first base or is a forced out caused by the batter running to first. Then, even if the person trying to score crosses home before the forced out happens, it doesn't count as a run.
- Score Keeping: This was already described as a duty of the captains, but they will be doing a lot of other tasks during the game and will appreciate the help. The pitcher and the catcher should keep track of strikes, outs, runs in that inning, inning number, and update the score written in the dirt by the dugout after each team's "at bat" is completed. If we have a dry-erase board available, the fans in the dugout are requested to keep track of batting line-ups and also use it for scoring so we don't have to write in the dirt.
- Designated Players: Designated hitters and runners can be swapped in for any player who requests them.
- Balls & Strikes: [Revised for 2014] Balls are not being called = no walks are possible. For strikes: the counting starts at zero. Three strikes and the batter is out. However, strikes are not being called unless there is a swing at the ball. Fouls count as a strike; after a combination of four total strikes and fouls the batter is out. Batters who feel they are likely to strike out are encouraged to use a batting tee if one is available. The batting mat behind home plate is to guide pitchers and batters as to what would have been a strike in a real game. It is not currently being used to call a strike on the batter. Exceptions may be made at game time.
- Bunting: Never allowed, but sometimes a full swing can result in a very short hit, which is still a fair ball.
- Overthrown Balls: Some groups play with complicated rules about how badly the ball is overthrown (if it only goes foul or if it also goes out of the playfield area / hits the obstructing fence). They sometimes award more than one base to the runner. This is too difficult for us to use and can be the source of much argument. Therefore, every overthrow outside the foul lines allows only one base for the runner. And an overthrow that has the ball remain in fair territory never awards any free bases, nor does it limit the runner to any number of bases. In this case, the runner advances at his or her own risk of being tagged out upon fielder recovery of a ball that is still in play.
- Running: Stealing bases is not allowed and neither are lead offs. Runners can't leave the base until the pitch is over the plate (notice, this can be slightly prior to the bat actually hitting the ball), and must also follow the tag up rule. Runners cannot advance once the play is over, as signaled by the pitcher having the ball back on the mound again. When the pitcher has the ball on the mound, he or she should say out

loud “Time!” to let everyone know no further running is allowed. Notice, if the pitcher is involved in the play, as in temporarily covering second base or covering home, runners can still advance.

- Sliding: Sliding into a base is allowed but is not recommended. It can be a source of injuries to oneself or others and isn’t really worth it for a non-competitive game. Do it at your own risk, and remember that we have a first aid kit in the dugout which is sufficient only for minor scrapes and scratches.
- Infield Fly Rule: From the 2005 Softball Umpire’s Handbook, www.asasoftball.com , it says:

INFIELD FLY. A fair fly ball (not including a line drive or an attempted bunt) which can be caught by an infielder, pitcher or catcher with ordinary effort when first and second bases or first, second and third bases are occupied before two are out. Any defensive player who takes a position in the infield at the start of the pitch shall be considered an infielder for the purpose of this rule. The infield fly is ruled when the ball reaches the highest point based on the position of the closest infielder regardless who makes the play. When it seems apparent that a batted ball will be an infield fly, the umpire shall immediately declare: “Infield Fly.” The ball is live and runners may advance at the risk of the ball being caught. The runners can tag up and advance once the batted ball is touched (prior to catching), the same as on any fly ball. If a declared infield fly becomes a foul ball, it is treated the same as any foul.

Summary:

- Is only invoked when there are less than two outs
 - Is only invoked when there are runners on 1st & 2nd. (There could also be runners on 1st, 2nd, and 3rd but this is covered by the initial description of there being runners on 1st & 2nd).
 - Only applies to a fair ball. (So if it actually drops foul without being touched, the batter is not out if it is not caught and it is counted as a foul ball.)
 - Only applies to a popup in the infield (the entire fair dirt area, not a smaller portion).
 - Must be obvious that someone is near it would normally be expected to catch it.
 - Doesn’t apply to outfielders moving into the infield after the pitch.
 - We decided that players and managers do not have to pre-invoke it (notifying people when the conditions make it possible) because of the hassle involved. But any such notification is appreciated, much when like the pitcher calls out “time” to end a play or calls how many outs there are to keep everyone on the same page and avoid arguments after-the-fact.
- Fair and Foul Balls: First and third bases are set inside the foul lines. They are in fair territory. When a ground ball passes over first or third base and then hits or crosses the foul line it is a fair ball. A ground ball that rolls foul before getting to first or third base and without being touched by any player is a foul ball. If a player standing in fair territory touches a ball in the air and it drops foul, it is a fair ball. This is true, no matter whether the player was in front of first or third, past first or third, or in the outfield. This is also true, no matter whether the position of the ball while in the air was thought to be inside or outside the foul line when the player touched it.
 - Running Outside the Baseline: This is a common cause of disputes during the excitement of a game. We need to define what running inside the baseline is to know what being outside the baseline is. Technically a runner gets to deviate from a straight line to the next base by up to three feet. However, many runners deviate too much when trying to avoid a tag in the middle between bases. A better way to think of it is that you get one step to either side of a direct path to the next base. So in effect, you can move your torso and that’s it, because if you take too big a first step sideways (and you are running which usually makes for big steps), you are going to be off balance and end up taking more steps which

are even farther from the direct line. Not sure? The fielder attempting the tag will be. They have a convenient crosscheck. The defensive infielder attempting the tag, when standing exactly on the straight path between the bases, can reach about as far as the runner can legally step. So if you make it past someone standing in your direct path with the ball in their glove ready to make the tag, it is nearly always ruled as being outside the baseline. However, the fielder must attempt the tag for the runner to be called out for being outside the baseline.

- Fielding within a Runner's Baseline Path: Sometimes, during the pitch and before the ball is hit, an infield player deliberately stands in the path of the runner on first or on second. It does confuse many runners and might provoke a collision as they resolve to run through you. It is a strategy for competitive play not a friendly game. For these reasons it isn't appreciated. However, neither is it prohibited since positioning oneself for a quick tag of the forced runner and a double play elsewhere is a normal part of the game. Any disputes over this aggressive strategy should be brought up to the team captains. **Runners deliberately causing a collision, hoping to knock the ball free, are out even if the ball is knocked free, as a penalty.** This isn't the major leagues, we aren't playing competitively.
- Runner Contact with a Batted or Thrown Ball: Runners aren't allowed to interfere with fielding. This includes being passively hit by a batted or thrown ball. A runner hit by a batted ball in the air or on the ground is out unless they were standing on a base or if the ball is already past any fielders who could have made a play anyway (so the accidental interference is inconsequential). The runner is out if he or she was the batter, popped it up and it dropped on himself / herself while running to first base. (Either they were out of their running lane, or they interfered with first baseman / pitcher / catcher who should have been able to field such a hit in softball!) Runners are not out if a fielded throw to put them out hits them from behind. All runners are to be alert to the location of the ball and not by act or omission interfere with the play.
- Fielding Positions: The outfielders should not move off the grass of the outfield and onto the dirt of the infield until after the ball is batted. After the ball is batted they can move anywhere. Note that according to their positions at the start of the pitch, outfielders moving to catch a pop-up in the infield can't be used for the in-field fly rule.

Optional (Up to the Captains)

- Mercy Rules: Our "mercy rule" is more of a mercy *consideration*. Nobody wants to end a game if it can be salvaged. Here are some ideas for when and how to consider the Mercy Rule. If one team is 10 or more points ahead after the third inning, the captain of the ahead team is encouraged to discuss options with the captain of the behind team, to: (a) do nothing and keep playing--thinking the teams are even and the behind team might catch up; or (b) offer to swap some player(s) with the other team, or (c) exchange the whole infield's position players with the whole outfield's position players--keeping in mind the capabilities based restrictions on the Pitcher and the First Baseman, already noted. However, whatever the ahead team captain does **MUST** have the agreement of the behind team's captain. If the game continues in the same lopsided state, the captains may decide what to do again later, after each of the behind team's at-bats. Also, captains may agree beforehand to a per-inning mercy rule, such as having a "go ahead" limit (or "go *further* ahead" limit) of five runs that ends the team's at-bat and allows the underdogs to come up to bat prior to achieving three outs.
- "All-Time" Players: Any position can be designated for an "all-time" player, provided both captains agree to it and an individual can be found to play it. (Notice, the player would be giving up the opportunity to bat.) Two common positions for this designation are catcher and pitcher. "All-time" catchers must try their best to go after foul tips and cover home plate as runners come in, unless the fielding team wants its pitcher to go in for plays at the plate. All-time players are especially useful for calling fair or foul on all

lines of play, whether full field or half-field. “All-time” pitchers have to play fairly for both teams and voice their honest opinion on all disputed plays. They are especially useful for calling fair or foul for half-field play, and close tag outs / force outs.

- Pitchers Hand (or Mound): This is only used when the fielding team doesn’t have enough players to cover First Base. Once the ball is hit, if a fielder throws it to the pitcher (or the pitcher himself recovers the ball) before the batter makes it to first base, a successful catch counts as if he were playing first base. The location of the pitcher is an option. Captains may allow pitcher’s hand anywhere in the infield, or just when they have a foot planted on the pitching plate, or on the mound (if there is an obvious mound of dirt), or within a circle drawn around the mound. The way we have been playing is: we draw a circle of radius three feet around one of the pitching plates. The size of circle is flexible as long as both teams use the same circle. As long as the pitcher has at least one foot inside the circle when they receive the throw or make the recovery, the “pitcher’s hand” rule applies.
- Ghost Runners: Only used when there is an insufficient number of players. Ghost runners are never used for the batter’s run to first base, they are only used as a substitute for runners already on base. If the batter cannot run, a real person pinch runner must be used. The speed of a ghost runner is assumed to be the speed of the at-bat person for tag out purposes. Tag outs on ghost runners must be made by physically touching a base (a force out) and cannot be presumed to have been tagged by a player fielding the ball on the runner’s baseline between the bases. Ghost runners are subject to all the rules of real runners as applicable, for example, inclusion in double and triple plays.
- Rovers: A “rover” is an extra fielder. They typically play a shallow outfield position near the center so as not to crowd existing players. Rovers in the field are admitted if the other team’s captain agrees because it will make getting on base harder. This is one way to put surplus players into the game so that no one has to sit out or alternate innings with another player.