



2026 Saguaro Cup Softball Rules

Game Rules & Guidelines

Time Limits

- Pool Play: 50 minutes, drop dead.
- Bracket Play: No new inning after 55 minutes.
- Championship & If-Game: No new inning after 60 minutes.

Home & Visitor Designation

- Determined by coin toss for pool play.
- In double elimination, the higher seed is the home team.
- Championship Game: Team without a loss is home.
- If-Game: Coin toss decides home team.

Pitching & Batting

- Pitch Count: All plate appearances start with a 1 ball, 1 strike count.
- Courtesy Foul: One (1) courtesy foul allowed after two strikes.
- Pitch Height: Must be between 6 and 12 feet (USA Softball standard).
- Batting Order: Teams may bat up to 12 players.
- No Base Stealing.

Bracket Seeding

- Determined by: Pool Play Record → Head-to-Head → Runs Allowed → Runs Against.

Courtesy Runners

- Allowed in C, D, and E Divisions (one per inning).

Player Eligibility

- All players must be registered, rated, and listed in the national iPride database.
- Players not meeting these requirements cannot be rostered for the 2026 Saguaro Cup.

PIP Accommodations

- A PIP runner can only be requested after the player completes their at-bat and reaches base.
- Must be used at the next dead ball; once a pitch is thrown, the option expires.
- The PIP runner is the last recorded out (or previous inning's last out if needed).
- If the PIP runner is due to bat, the previous out replaces them without penalty.
- PIP runners do not count toward courtesy runner limits.

Team Ratings

- Open E: Team Cap 65 | Player Cap 7 | No Question 3.
- Open D: Team Cap 95 | Player Cap 10.
- Open C: Team Cap 130 | Player Cap 14.



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- Ratings calculated by adding the top 10 rated players.

Tie Games

- Ties allowed in pool play.
- For double elimination: If tied after 7 innings or time expires, use one-pitch tiebreaker:
 - Offense starts with 1 out.
 - Last completed batter from previous inning begins on second base.
 - Courtesy runner or substitute allowed for that runner.

Run Rules

- 20 runs after 3 innings, 15 after 4 innings, 10 after 5 innings
- Mercy rule flip-flop
 - If the home team is losing by 10+ runs and it's the final inning (due to time or inning limit), the flip-flop rule kicks in. The home team bats first, temporarily becoming the "visiting" team. If they don't tie or take the lead, the game ends immediately. If they do tie or take the lead, the original visiting team bats next. The switch does not reverse—the new batting order stays in place for the rest of the game.

Uniforms

- All players must wear uniform tops with visible Arabic numbers (0-99), at least 3 inches high.
- Like-colored tops preferred but not required.
- No duplicate numbers on the same team.

Headwear & Face Coverings

- Allowed: Ball caps, non-plastic visors, headbands, sweatbands, handkerchiefs, durags, bucket hats.
- Must not be worn around the neck.
- Unsafe headwear prohibited.
- Face coverings for health/environmental reasons allowed.

Jewelry

- Umpires may require removal of any jewelry deemed unsafe.
- Failure to comply = ejection.

Cleats

- No metal cleats allowed.

Home Runs

- C Division: 1 allowed.
- D & E Divisions: 0 allowed.
- Any over-the-fence HR beyond limit = inning-ending out.

Bats

- Must have current USA Softball stamp and not be on the non-approved list.
- Senior bats prohibited.



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- Non-Approved Bat List

Ejections

- Ejected players must leave the field immediately.
- Further suspension determined by Athletic Director.
- All ejections reviewed by Protest Committee for possible sanctions.

Protests (Ratings/Eligibility)

- Fee: \$100 per question (cash only).
- Must be made before the final pitch.
- Umpire stops clock, calls Field Director for review.
- Unlimited questions allowed per player; must specify details.
- No protests allowed in pool play or trophy games.
- Valid protests = fee refunded.
- Only opposing Team Manager or Tournament/Field Director may file protests.

General Rules

- Pitchers may start up to 6 feet behind the pitching plate. Before beginning their motion, both feet must be on the ground within the 24-inch width of the pitching plate. The stride foot can be placed behind the plate before the pitcher sets. The pivot foot must either: Stay in contact with the ground or drag off the plate before stepping forward.
- All other rules follow USA Softball standards.