



SOFTBALL LEINSTER

RULES OF PLAY

2026

The Softball Leinster leagues follow the rules set out by the World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) and within the Softball Ireland (SI) guidelines and Rules of Play for slow pitch softball except where they are contradicted below.

These rules of play and bye-laws are set out in addition to the Softball Leinster Constitution.

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RULES OF PLAY

The rules of play are those of the WBSC (World Baseball Softball Confederation) as contained in the current WBSC rulebook specific to co-ed slowpitch softball and SI regulations with the following adjustments. Where there is a contradiction between the WBSC rules, SI Rules or these rules, these playing rules have precedence.

Section I: Softball Leinster League

Premier league

- Games normally played on Tuesday nights

Recreational league

- Division 1: Games normally played on Wednesday nights
- Division 2: Games normally played on Thursday nights
- Division 3: Games normally played on Monday nights

Section II: Team fees and Umpire fees

1. A new team must be made up of at least 50% players that have not been registered with SI or SL within the past 3 years. The committee may waive fees for a new team if this criterion is fulfilled but is at the discretion of the incumbent committee and the budget in place for the season ahead.
2. Annual team fees and all associated costs are decided by the incumbent SL committee, affected by the year's budget, and notified to all teams at least 6 weeks before the start of the season.
3. Umpire fees are set each year by SL and are split by both teams, unless a team forfeits without notifying Softball Leinster at least 2 hours before the game. If they do not provide the appropriate notification (2 hours) to SL then the forfeiting team pays the entire fee. If notified, Softball Leinster will notify the opposing team and scheduled umpire at least 90 mins before the game. If SL allocates two umpires at a game, SL will pay the 2nd umpire.

Section III: Line-ups and Game Play

1. Gender in Line-up and Fielding Positions

1.1. **Inclusivity** - SL is an inclusive softball association and as such we strive to keep inclusivity at the forefront of our sport. SL adopts the **SI Gender Inclusion Policy** in all matters of inclusivity. This document contains guidelines for gender inclusion within games, with guidelines for umpires and roster.

1.1.1. **Ball-size** - A big-ball player/hitter is a player batting a 12" ball. A small-ball player/hitter is a player batting an 11" ball. In accordance with the SI Gender Inclusion Policy, players registered as male bat big balls (12"), players registered as female play bat small balls (11") and players registered as

non-binary must be featured as batting one OR the other ball size on any given lineup.

- 1.2. **For all divisions**, the standard lineup is **5 players of each ball size** when playing a 10-player lineup; 6 of each ball size for a 12-player lineup under the WBSC extra player rule.

- 1.2.1 For the 2026 season, teams in the recreational league are permitted to play one extra batter of one ball size (6:5) or two extra players of one ball size (7:5). The established rules for alternating players by ball size apply accordingly. Fielding shall remain 5 players of each ball size.

- 1.3. When fielding there must be at least two small-ball players in the outfield and two small-ball players in the infield, unless a team plays under the Shorthanded Rule and the missing player is a small-ball player. In this case the team must play with two small-ball players in the infield, one small-ball player in the outfield and one vacant position in the outfield. A pitcher counts as an infield position. Any substitute must be hitting the same size ball as the substituted player.
- 1.4. If a team is playing under the Shorthanded Rule, then the missing player becomes an automatic out in the last position for that ball size in the batting order. If both teams are playing shorthanded they can choose to play with no automatic out.
- 1.5. A team must complete the game with the same ball-size split it started with.

2. **Further Rules of Play**

- 2.1. **“The Shorthanded Rule”** - Teams can begin OR complete games shorthanded with 9 players. If an additional player arrives after the start of the game, they can enter the game as long as they conform to the necessary ball-size split as indicated in these bye-laws.
 - 2.1.1. When playing under the shorthanded rule, teams can play extra players hitting the opposite ball size to the ball size hit by the “player” represented by the automatic out.
- 2.2. **Base Award at Walks** - A big-ball hitter who is walked will be awarded 2 bases if the next batter is a small-ball hitter, but only 1 base if another big-ball hitter follows them in the batting order.
 - 2.2.1. When playing under the Shorthanded Rule, a big-ball hitter who is walked will be awarded only 1 base if they are followed by an automatic out (even if the automatic out should have been a small-ball hitter).
- 2.3. **“Continued Play Rule”** - If gameplay is suspended, a game is considered complete once 5 full innings have been played, or 4 ½ innings if the home team has the lead. If a game is stopped prior to the 5th inning being completed by the umpire due to inclement weather or another valid reason, the game will resume from the point at which the game was stopped, and continue as normal through the completion of 7 innings or more if extra innings are necessary. No penalty will be given to teams for substitutions but returning players should bat in the same order they appeared previously. The same ball-size split should also be maintained.

- 2.4. **“Run Ahead Rule”** – While in the WBSC a “run ahead” rule exists, we have extended its application to begin in the 5th inning rather than the 4th. After 5 innings, a team ahead by 20 runs will be declared the winner, and after 6 innings a team ahead by 15 runs will be declared the winner. Teams may continue to play on as a friendly if they choose but the umpire should log the win if either of those run ahead scores are achieved.
- 2.5. **Courtesy Runner** - A courtesy runner is allowed for an injured batter-runner or runner at the discretion of the umpire who may also choose to consult/agree with both captains.
 - 2.5.1. A courtesy runner of the same ball size is allowed on any base if the batter-runner or runner is injured in that play.
 - 2.5.2. An injured player who requests a courtesy runner at their first at-bat must take a courtesy runner for all subsequent at-bats in that game.
 - 2.5.3. A courtesy runner of the same ball size is only allowed on 1st base, unless the runner is awarded 2nd base with a walk or a ground rule double.
 - 2.5.4. The courtesy runner must be the last batter of the same ball size due up in the order.
- 2.6. **Roster and Match Report**
 - 2.6.1. Captains shall fill in their line-up for a game in the online form provided by SL before the game and also provide a paper-based line-up for both umpire and the captain of the opposing team at the pitch.
 - 2.6.2. Umpires shall fill in the match report in the relevant online form provided by SL after the game.
- 2.7. **Field set-up**
 - 2.7.1. Ground rules will be set by the umpire, after consultation with both team captains. The ground rules should be recorded in the match report and forwarded to SL.
 - 2.7.2. Bases do not need to be spiked.
 - 2.7.3. The distance between bases shall be 65 feet (19.81m). The distance to the pitcher’s plate from the back of the home plate shall be 50 feet (15.24m).
- 2.8. **Balls** - The standard softballs for all Softball Leinster Premier League, Recreation League and Men’s League games, as well as SL official tournaments, follow the specifications of the Softball Ireland Rules of Play.

Section IV: The Field of Play

1. Every team must ensure that their home ground is suitable, safe and that they have all the necessary permits to play there. If there is any doubt about suitability and safety, the club representative should request an inspection by SL or the SL umpiring chief.
2. If a team’s home ground is continually unavailable, SL can instruct them to make alternative arrangements. The team in question may be instructed to play games away at an alternate

venue for their home field if alternative arrangements cannot be made.

Section V: Equipment and Safety

1. Each home team is required to have the minimum following list of equipment for each SL competition game. Failure to have the below equipment will result in a forfeit.
 - 1.1. One full set of softball bases including one dual-coloured safety base at first base, two single bases, a home plate and a pitcher's plate.
 - 1.2. At least two legal 12" softballs and at least two legal 11" softballs.
2. All Teams must have:
 - 2.1. At least one legal softball bat.
 - 2.2. At least 10 softball gloves (9 if playing the Shorthanded Rule).
3. Any other gear as deemed necessary by Softball Ireland, the national governing body, including helmets that are National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment (NOCSAE) approved softball batting helmets.
4. A full, in-date First Aid Kit including assorted plasters/bandages, saline solution, and two instant ice packs. This may be inspected by the umpire before the game starts.
5. If a team attends a fixture without a full uniform, then the minimum acceptable standard will be tops of similar colour. This will be based upon the judgement of the assigned umpire.
 - 5.1. Players may wear outer garments due to adverse weather conditions.
6. Bats must fall into the parameters of approved bats set out by Softball Ireland.
 - 6.1. An umpire has the right to stop a player or team from using a specific bat that they feel is an altered or banned bat. The player or team can appeal this decision to SL. SL will then determine if the bat is banned or has been tampered with. If the bat is banned or has been tampered with, then the bat will not be allowed to be used in any SL-organised event. The team will not be allowed to appeal the result of the game.
7. It is the responsibility solely of the umpire to call a game off due to adverse weather conditions. If necessary, the umpire will make this decision at the field of play. The only exception is where the ranger or park/pitch keeper has called off the venue.

Section VI: Player Eligibility

1. Players must be registered with Softball Leinster by their team captain, or directly by themselves, and designate their team within Softball Leinster. Teams must be registered with SI, and pay their fees directly to SI. The Softball Ireland (SI) player registration fee is designated annually by SI.
 - 1.1. For the 2026 season, players may still be registered to play on two different teams, so long as one team is in the Premier League and one team is in the Recreational League (Division 1 and Division 2 only).
 - 1.1.1. Players are required to declare a primary team upon registration.

- 1.2. An umpire or any other SL official is entitled to ask for proof of identity of any player. In the absence of satisfactory proof of identity, the player may be asked for a signature, and allowed to play under caution. SL may require the team or player to substantiate this identification at a later date.
- 1.3. Impersonation of another member is a category 3 offence by the player and the team.
2. The lower age limit for participation in any SL competition is 18 years with the following exception listed below:
 - 2.1. A team may apply to SL or SI for a skills exception for players aged 16 and 17 years of age. An exception may be granted subject to agreement by the SL committee or the SI council. Under 18 players must conform to the SI underage player requirements.
 - 2.2. All players aged under 18 must wear an approved softball batting helmet when batting and running the bases.
 - 2.3. All players aged under 18 must use a mouthguard when playing the infield.
 - 2.4. The club the player registers with must meet all Safeguarding requirements and comply with the Children First Legislation.
3. SL does not accept any liability in cases where the player's condition renders them excluded from SI's insurance policy.
4. A player may not play for more than one club in SL competitions in a season (except in VI.1.1. above) without applying for a cross team/club exemption as described in section VI.4.4 or applying for and being granted a transfer of registration under the conditions listed below.
 - 4.1. SL will transfer a registration within seven days, provided:
 - 4.1.1. The player is not subject to any disciplinary penalties or proceedings at the time.
 - 4.1.2. There are at least three games (excluding playoffs) still to be played by the destination club.
 - 4.1.3. No fees are owed to the club the player is leaving.
 - 4.2. Players can transfer between teams within a club once during the season with these conditions:
 - 4.2.1. The player is not subject to any disciplinary penalties or proceedings at the time.
 - 4.3. Exemptions used previous to the transfer are carried with the player to his new team regardless of whether the transfer is between teams in their own club or with a new club.
 - 4.4. **Exemptions** - SL allows exempted players in exceptional circumstances. No exemption should keep a rostered player of the same ball size present at the game out of the lineup. Exemptions exist to ensure teams start with 5 players of each ball size.
 - 4.4.1. The number of players allowed to play as exemption for each league game is either 2 small-ball players or 1 player of each ball size.

- 4.4.2. All exemptions must be registered with SL in the online form before the game starts, and notified to the umpire and on the lineup sheet.
- 4.4.3. **An exempted big-ball player can only play catcher, right field or pitcher.**
An exempted small-ball player can avail of any position.
- 4.4.4. **Exempted players must bat at the bottom of the order.**
- 4.4.5. Players may play as an exemption in a lower division 5 times ONLY.
- 4.4.6. Players may play as an exemption in a higher division 5 times ONLY - except as specified in 4.4.6.1
 - 4.4.6.1. There is no limit to the number of games small-ball Division 3 players may play UP into Division 2.
- 4.4.7. No Prem players of any ball size are allowed to play in Division 3.
- 4.4.8. No exemptions are needed to play on a SL-designated All Star Team and do not count towards their overall club exemptions.
- 4.4.9. Exemptions cannot be used to play an extra player of that ball-size. When using an exemption, no more than 5 players of that ball size can be played.
 - 4.4.9.1. Extra players of the opposite ball size to that of the exempted player can be played in accordance with III.1.2.1 in the 2026 season.
 - 4.4.9.2. A new team (see II.1) in its first season may request a special derogation to play a pitcher from a higher division (Div 1 or Div 2) as an exemption for the season. The special derogation pitcher may be fielded in addition to substitute players. However, if substitutes are available, the pitcher must play defense only, i.e. not bat; their batting position may be filled by a substitute of equivalent ball size.
- 4.4.10. It is not permitted to get an exemption for a player whose primary team is in the Prem league to play for another team in the Prem league.

Section VII: Fixtures

1. All fixtures are the property of SL. No club may rearrange a fixture without the express consent of SL. This consent can be given by phone, email or text.
2. In exceptional circumstances a club may make a written request for postponement. SL has the complete discretion to grant or refuse a postponement and where granted, will reschedule the fixture. All written requests must be submitted to SL. Postponements will only be granted in extreme circumstances, with the following exceptions:
 - 2.1. SL will grant postponements or reschedule games upon written request prior to the 15th of May and no less than 30 days prior to the date the game is scheduled to take place if 2 or more members of the team have been selected to represent Ireland in a playing or coaching capacity and will be away during the time the scheduled game is set to take place. No more than 2 days travel time within Europe and 3 days travel time outside of Europe will be considered.
3. Where a field appears unsafe for play and in the absence of an umpire, either club captain

can refuse to play and seek retrospective permission for a postponement without incurring a forfeit.

4. A game suspended for reason of light, safety or any other reason determined by an umpire (or agreed by the captains in absence of an umpire) will need to be completed. Both teams and umpire should notify SL, letting them know the game was not completed and the need for the game to be scheduled.
5. All postponed and suspended games must be concluded by the end of the nearest appropriate free week in the schedule, or two weeks, if there are no free weeks. If both clubs are unable to agree on a date, SL may set the date of the fixture at its discretion. Failure to play any re-arranged fixture by a date set by SL where reasonable notice was given may result in one or both teams forfeiting the game in accordance with rule VIII.1.

Section VIII: Forfeits/Adverse Weather Conditions

1. A forfeit is awarded against any team that does not have enough registered players available to begin within 20 minutes of the designated start time. A double forfeit applies if both teams are short of players.
 - 1.1. **If both teams have at least nine registered and eligible players to commence the game under the Shorthanded Rule before 20 minutes have elapsed from the designated start time, then the game should begin.**
 - 1.2. It is the responsibility solely of the umpire to call a game off due to adverse weather conditions. The umpire will make this decision at the field of play. The only exception is where the ranger or park/pitch keeper has called off the venue. The sequence is: Park Ranger – Umpires – Team Captains (in absence of umpire).
 - 1.3. If one team does not have a legal team, and the game is called off by the umpire due to numbers and/ or weather conditions, the game is forfeited and the win is awarded to the team with the legal requirement present.
2. A forfeit is not awarded against a team that is unable to continue with the minimum numbers of players due to an injury that happened during that game. However, a seven-nil loss will be awarded.
3. A team will forfeit any game where it is found that they have used a player who has not been registered prior with SL prior to the start of that game.
4. A club found to play a player from another team within their club without an exemption will be in breach of rule Section VI.4.3 and relevant subsections found within that rule and will forfeit all points for all games in which the player(s) breached the same byelaws. The opposing team will be awarded the win and the appropriate points for a win.
5. In the event of a forfeit, SL will determine who will pay any applicable fees.

Section IX: League, Championship & Tournament Structures

1. The structure and any applicable playing rules for SL league matches will be issued to all competing clubs at least 2 weeks before commencement of each season.

2. Softball Leinster leagues will be scheduled based on the number of teams entering those leagues. Teams will play an equal number of home and away fixtures, or as close to equal as possible depending on whether there is an even or odd number of games played.
3. The home team will be designated according to the schedule as issued by SL and the home team will be listed first.
4. In the event of a gap developing in the league schedule due to the non-participation of a team, SL may fill the scheduling gap with interleague matches, All Star team or any other competition it sees fit.
5. In the event of a team withdrawing or being expelled from the league, all of their fixtures will be removed from the schedule and any league points gained in fixtures against them will be deducted from the other teams in the division.
6. Points for all league games will be 5 points for a win or walkover, 2 for a loss and 0 for a forfeit or conceding a walkover.
 - 6.1. For interleague or non-divisional games teams will not be awarded any points.
7. SL will nominate the highest ranked eligible team(s) in the Softball Leinster Premier Division at the completion of the full league season to represent Softball Leinster at the Softball Ireland National Club Championships (SINCC).

Section X: Tied League Standings

1. In the event of teams being tied on the number of league points, the following criteria will be applied.
2. Tied teams will be ranked in the following order
 - 2.1. First, teams will be ranked by the inverse number of walkovers.
 - 2.2. Second, by the results of games amongst the tied teams themselves, maintaining the points designated for wins, losses and walkovers. (This is creating a new mini table with the tied teams.)
 - 2.3. Third, if all or some teams are still tied then remaining tied teams will be ranked by their runs conceded record in the games amongst the tied teams; the team(s) with the lowest runs conceded will be placed ahead of the others.
 - 2.4. Lastly, if all or some teams are still tied then a tie-breaker game or games will be organised.
3. Resolution of any circumstances with regard to a tied league standing not foreseen here will be decided by the Softball Leinster Committee.

Section XI: Team League Standings

1. A team's league standing (TLS) is based on its final league position at the end of the preceding season (after promotion and relegations and taking account of any relevant disciplinary penalties in force). Each team is given a seeding corresponding to its TLS, so that "1" represents the seeding of the highest placed team.

2. At completion of the league season, the team last in each division is deemed relegated, and the team top of each division is deemed promoted for the next season ahead. If teams wish to agree a variance to this, they must approach SL for a decision in advance of the new season.
3. The TLS and seeding are the joint property of the majority of registered players on the team from the seeding season.
4. Any team registered before the last day of registration will be offered a league position in accordance with their TLS.
5. A newly merged team must choose the TLS of one of its "parent" teams. A TLS may be assigned by SL based on the registered players from the player's previous season.
6. All other TLS's revert to SL for re-allocation and teams will move up within their division to leave any vacancies at the bottom.
7. After the final closing date for team registration, any vacant league position may be filled by a team from the division below. The position will be first offered to the team with the highest TLS, then the next team, and so on.
8. Resolution of any circumstances with regard to Team League Standing not foreseen here will be decided by the Softball Leinster Committee