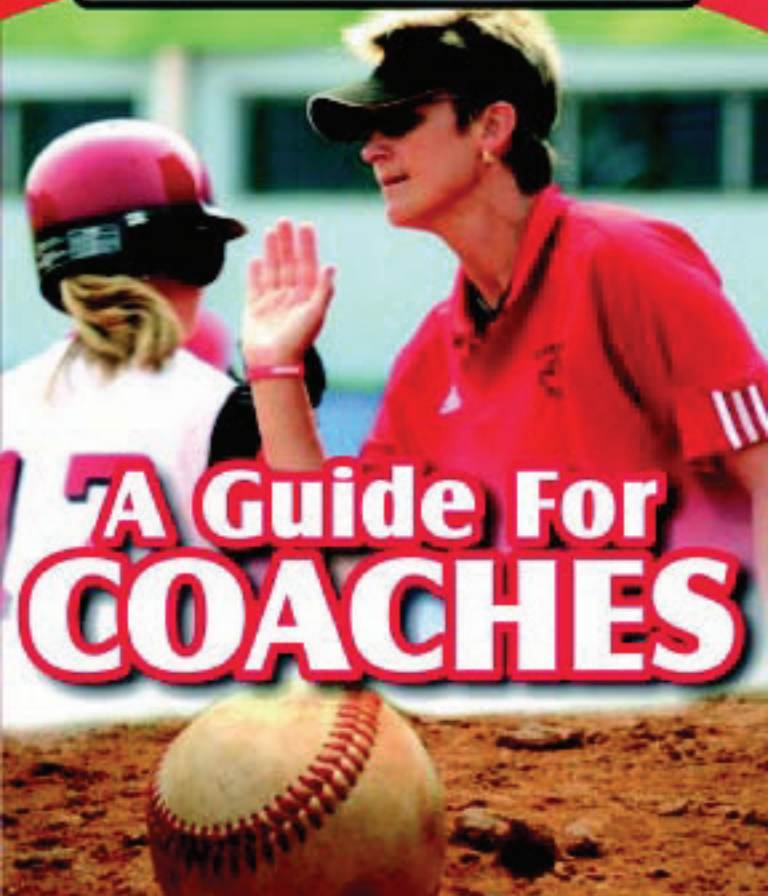




**RESPECT**

*My Game*



# A Guide For **COACHES**



## RESPECT MY GAME PROGRAM

How it came to be?

The Respect My Game program was created by Softball Ontario to raise awareness of abuses in softball and encourage fair play and respect.

The main objective is to encourage mutual respect among participants to reduce abusive situations.

The program has been adopted in Alberta and is endorsed by Softball Alberta and the Alberta Softball Umpires Association.



## Mission Statement

"To educate stakeholders in softball, thereby creating awareness of abuses in the game and building mutual respect amongst participants, while introducing no tolerance policies to reduce abusive situations at all levels in all components of the game, thus reversing the decline in leadership roles within the sport."

## RESPECT MY GAME-VALUES

### Respect My Game Philosophy

We stand alongside all stakeholders of Softball as partners on the same side, working in concert with them to provide a positive Softball experience. This philosophy encompasses a belief that, by working together with Athletes, Coaches, Officials and spectators, we can impact our sport's experience in a positive way.

### The Respect My Game Program believes:

- That competition should demonstrate high standards of ethics and sportsmanship, and promote the development of good character and other important life skills
- That the highest potential of Softball is achieved when all the participants are committed to the following core principles:
  - Trustworthiness involves Integrity and Honesty
  - Respect is what we show each other through sportsmanship
  - Responsibility is being accountable and prepared
  - Fairness is making sure everyone competes honourably
  - Caring is showing compassion for each person's role
  - Civility is considering others while playing
- That by setting high standards of excellence for our own performance on the athletic stage, our sport can model the same pillars of character that we ask others to model



## Definitions FOR Different Types of Abuse

Behaviour by any person towards another, which a person knows or should have reasonably known, is unwelcome. This behaviour includes comments, conduct or gestures which are insulting, intimidating, humiliating, hurtful, degrading, or offensive to an individual which creates an

uncomfortable environment, or which might be expected to cause embarrassment, insecurity, discomfort, offence, or humiliation to another person including, but not limited to:

**Threats:** Declaration of an intention or a determination to inflict harm on another.

**Physical:** Abuse involving contact intended to cause feelings of intimidation, pain, injury, or other physical suffering or harm.

**Intimidation:** A deterrent usually a communication that makes you afraid to try or do something.

**Verbal:** Unwelcome remarks, jokes, innuendoes, or taunting about a person's body, sexual orientation, age, marital status, ethnic or racial origin, religion, etc.

**Gestures:** Leering or other suggestive/obscene gestures.

**Patronizing:** Behaviour which undermines self-respect or working conditions.

## Definitions for Different Types of Abuse



**Visual:** Displaying of sexually explicit, racist or other offensive or derogatory material, sexual, racial, ethnic or religious graffiti.

**Practical jokes:** Which cause awkwardness or embarrassment, endangering a person's safety or negatively affecting performance.

**Harassment:** False accusations of harassment motivated by malice or mischief, and meant to cause other harm, is considered harassment;

**Sexual harassment:** Conduct, comments, gestures or contact of a sexual nature that is likely to cause offence or humiliation or that might, on reasonable grounds, be perceived as placing a condition of a sexual nature on employment or any opportunity for selection, training or advancement.



# Promoting and Teaching Compliance

## Top 20 Rules to Cover with Coaches and Parents

These ten rules have been selected as rules about which there are many common misconceptions. These misconceptions then lead to many forms of abuse whether it be heckling from the fans who misunderstand (or don't agree with) the rule, verbal abuse from coaches and/or players, etc.

### 1. Left hand turn from first.

A runner forfeits exemption from liability to be put out if, after overrunning first base, makes an attempt to run to second base. The key to this is the runner continues to second base. There must be at least an attempt towards advancing to second base. It does not matter which direction the batter-runner turns after reaching first base if they are coming back to first base without attempting to advance to second base.

### 2. Check swing.

If it is the plate umpire's judgement that the batter made an attempt to swing at the ball (but not a full swing), the plate umpire shall call the pitched ball a strike. This call CANNOT be appealed to the base umpire - use the guiding principle that the plate umpire does not call it a strike unless he/she saw the attempted swing - therefore no need for an appeal.

However, if the batter attempted to swing at the ball but the plate umpire did not see the attempt (perhaps blocked out by the catcher) then a ball shall be called. With this call, the plate umpire does have the opportunity to check with the base umpire(s) following the request from the defensive team. The base umpire shall only answer a check swing request made by the plate umpire – the base umpire shall only respond to a request made directly to them by a plate umpire. (The base umpire does not respond to a request made directly to them by a defensive player)

Should the base umpire see the attempt that the plate umpire did not see, they shall respond to the plate umpires request by calling “Yes” and the call shall be changed from ball to strike by the plate umpire.



### 3. Award of bases on overthrow.

When a thrown ball goes out of play (beyond the established boundary lines of the playing field):

- ✓ all runners, including the batter-runner shall be awarded two bases from the last base legally touched at the time that the thrown ball left the fielder's hand
- ✓ If there are two runners between the same bases, the award is based on the position of the lead runner

Keys to remember with this rule:

- the award is based on the position of the runner(s) at the time the ball left the fielders hand, not at the time that the ball went out of play – that is important to remember on a long overthrow from the outfield
- the award is two bases from the last base legally touched - if a runner has rounded second base and is returning to first base to tag up on a fly ball, they will be awarded third base as the last base that they had legally touched was first base

#### 4. Batted ball hitting home plate, first, second or third base.

##### Home Plate

- ✓ a batted ball remains alive and in play when it strikes home plate
- ✓ in the event that a batted ball comes to rest on home plate, it shall be ruled a fair ball and the plate umpire shall signal accordingly

Remember, the fair/foul lines come to the back point of home plate so the plate is completely in fair territory

##### First, Second or Third Base

- ✓ When properly installed, first and third base are positioned on the diamond completely in fair territory (see #10)
- ✓ Once a batted ball strikes first, second or third base without having been first touched by a player, the batted ball shall be ruled a fair ball regardless of where the ball comes to rest or is touched
- ✓ Once the ball touches first, second or third base it does not have to pass the base nor remain in fair territory -touching the base is all that is required to make the ball fair
- ✓ The plate umpire should signal fair ball immediately once the batted ball strikes the base

#### 5. Batter stepping on or directly in front of home plate

##### Stepping on Home Plate:

- ✓ the batter is out if any part of their foot is touching home plate when the bat contacts the ball
- ✓ the ball is dead and runners may not advance on the play

##### Stepping directly in front of Home Plate or Mat:

- ✓ the batter is out if their foot is completely outside the lines of the batter's box and touching the ground when the bat contacts the ball
- ✓ the ball is dead and runners may not advance on the play

##### Points of Emphasis:

- ✓ there is no penalty unless the batter makes contact with the ball
- ✓ position of the foot is judged when the bat makes contact with the ball - if the foot is in the air and then comes down on the ground after the ball is hit, there is no penalty
- ✓ with the exception of the foot touching home plate, the



foot must be completely outside the lines of the batter's box - touching any part of the lines is acceptable as the lines are part of the box

- ✓ the same penalty applies whether the batted ball is fair or foul - "Dead Ball" is called as soon as the batter makes contact with the ball

✓

#### 6. Fair ball bouncing out of play or off a defensive player.

When a fair ball bounces out of play, including if it deflects off a defensive player, the umpire shall declare "Dead Ball" as soon as the ball goes out of play.

- ✓ All runners shall be awarded two bases
  - the award is based on their position at the time of the pitch - not at the time the ball went out of play
  - the award is the same regardless of where the ball actually goes out of play

#### 7. Infield Fly

Requirements for an Infield Fly:

- ✓ runners on first and second base OR first, second and third base
  - less than 2 out
  - not a bunt
  - not a line drive
  - can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort - this includes the pitcher, catcher or any outfielder positioned in the infield

Once an Infield Fly is declared:

- ✓ if the hit becomes a foul ball, no penalty - treat like any other foul ball
- ✓ if the hit remains a fair ball:
  - the batter is out regardless of whether the ball is caught or not
  - the ball remains alive
  - the runners may advance at their own risk
  - if the fly ball is caught, the runners must tag up
  - if the fly ball is not caught, the runner can choose to advance but as the batter has already been declared out there is no force play.

#### 8. Lead-off (Pitchers Circle)

The Pitcher's Circle is the area within a 8' radius of the pitcher's plate - the lines are considered within the circle.

Even though the ball may be in the pitcher's possession in the pitcher's circle, the batter-runner:

- ✓ may continue past first base and is entitled to run towards second base, as long as the batter runner does not stop at first base
- ✓ once the batter runner makes a stop, the batter runner must immediately proceed to the next base or return to the base legally obtained UNLESS the pitcher makes a play (including a fake throw) on the batter runner or another runner.

If the runner stops and simply stands there off the base while the pitcher has possession of the ball in the pitcher's circle and no play is made - "DEAD BALL - RUNNER IS OUT - LEAD-OFF"

If the runner stops and then makes a move in more than one direction immediately after the stop while the pitcher has possession of the ball in the pitcher's circle and no play is made "DEAD BALL - RUNNER IS OUT - LEAD OFF"

Key to remember with this rule:

- the pitcher cannot force the first stop by a runner merely by having possession of the ball in the pitcher's circle. The runner is allowed one stop. As soon as the runner stops runner must make a decision immediately to either advance or return
- A play on the runner (including a fake throw) nullifies any penalty. Every fake throw allows the runner one more stop

## 9. Difference between interference and obstruction

Interference

- ✓ typically an act by an offensive player
- ✓ possible to have umpire interference and spectator interference

Results:

- "Dead Ball" being called (exception - umpire interference)
- Always have an out if by an offensive player

Obstruction

- ✓ is an act by a defensive player (typically being in the way of a runner)

Results:

- in a delayed dead ball (play continues)

Award of bases:

- determined at the end of the play, in the umpire's judgement as to where the offensive player would have gotten without the Obstruction
- if the obstructed player is called out, "Dead Ball", and bases awarded
- if runner advance past the base they would have achieved (in the judgement of the umpire), the runner is in jeopardy of being put out. An obstruction call does not entitle the obstructed runner to keep attempting to advance until played upon

#### 10. Stepping back toward home

After hitting a fair batted ball the batter runner shall proceed directly to first base. The batter runner cannot take a step back toward home to avoid being put out.

- ✓ The batter is out for stopping and taking a step back toward first base. If in the judgement of the umpire this was an act to prevent another out, the runner closest to home is out
- ✓ When the batter runner stops between first base and home the plate umpire signals and calls "Dead Ball" and all runners return to the base they occupied at the time of the pitch
- ✓ ☐ When a batter runner / runner stops after legally obtaining first base, between first & second base, second & third, third and home the runner is in jeopardy of being put out

#### 11. Double Base

The Double Base is used at first base with the orange portion in foul territory and the white portion in fair territory. A batted ball striking the white/fair portion is declared a fair ball.

The defensive player uses the white/fair portion of the base at all times. Exception: if the thrown ball comes from foul territory, on the first base side, then the defensive player can use the orange/foul portion of the double base.

The offensive player uses the orange/foul portion of the base on his/her first attempt at first base when a play is being made on him/her. This includes when the batter-runner runs on a dropped third strike. Exception: If the ball is thrown from foul territory, on the first base side, the offensive player must use the white/fair portion of

the double base.

On a ball hit to the outfield with no play being made at first base, the offensive player may touch either portion of the base on his/her first attempt at first base.

Once an offensive player has touched the orange/foul portion of the base on his/her first attempt at first base, the runner must then use the white/fair portion of the base:

- ✓ when returning to the base after overrunning first base
- ✓ when taking his/her position prior to the next pitch
- ✓ when tagging up on a fly ball

Points of Emphasis:

- defensive player - provided any portion of the runners foot is touching any portion of the white/fair portion of the base, the runner is considered to be in contact with the base
- offensive player - when he/she is required to use the orange/foul portion, provided any portion of his/her foot is touching any portion of the orange/foul portion of the base, he/she is considered to be in contact with the base
- once the offensive player has made their first attempt at first base, the orange/foul portion of the base no longer exists

## 12. Runners passing each other

A runner cannot pass another runner on the diamond.

- ✓ Runner that physically passes a preceding runner before that runner has been called out is out, the umpire will point at the passing runner as say "passing" and the ball remain live. No call or signal will be given until the status of the ball is determined. If the status for the ball is determined to be live, then the out call is made and signaled.

Exception

- When the runner is assisted on a home run or an award of bases, the ball remains dead
- The runner passes a preceding runner during a dead ball play, the ball will remain dead
- a batted ball becomes a dead ball foul ball, the runner is not out for passing a runner prior to the dead ball declaration

## 13. Coaches Assistance

When a coach is in the way of the runner, as the runner is

approaching or rounding the base or touches the runner to hold up or send the runner, the runner is out.

- ✓ Coaches need to be aware of where they position themselves to ensure they are not preventing the forward progress of the runner
- ✓ Coaches cannot touch the runner in any way to tell them to go or to stop
- ✓ Coaches cannot push or catch the runner

#### 14. Hands -Not Part of the Bat

When a pitched ball hits any part of the batter's body, the umpire will call "dead ball". It does not matter if the ball strikes the ground before hitting the batter.

EXCEPTION: If no attempt is made to avoid being hit, the umpire shall call a "ball" if it's a ball. If a batter is hit with a pitch that is "strike" - it's a strike, whether they try and avoid being hit.

- ✓ If the batter swings at the pitch, it is a dead ball and a strike, the at bat continues.
- ✓ If the batter doesn't swing, it would be a dead ball, batter goes to first base.

#### 15. Leaving the Bat over the Plate

If the batter does not pull the bat out of the strike zone while in the bunting position, is it an automatic strike?

NO –

The batter can leave the bat over the plate during the wind up and through the actual pitch. A strike is an attempt to hit the ball!

- ✓ In the judgement of the umpire, if it is deemed the batter made an attempt at the ball the umpire will call "SWING", point at the plate with their open hand and then single the strike call with their Right hand.
- ✓ If the batter does not move the bat in an attempt to hit the ball, in the judgement of the umpire, the umpire will call "BALL" (if not in the strike zone), the at bat continues.

#### 16. Batting Out of Order

**The PROPER batter is the one called out!**

Any hit or advance by the batter or any runners due to the hit, walk, error or other reason is nullified. The next batter is the one who

follows the batter who was called out.

- ✓ This happens: the improper batter hits the ball advances to first... the umpire calls the proper batter out and it just so happens the improper batter removed from first base hits again because they actually follow the proper batter in the line up.
- ✓ There are other things that can happen, but this is the one most folks get most confused about.

#### 17. Dropped Third Strike – Run?

The batter runner can only advance if there are less than two out when first is not occupied.

- ✓ The batter runner can run if there are two out & first is occupied.
- ✓ A batter runner who is out and advances toward first base can create a form of interference by drawing the throw to first base resulting in the runner closest to home being called out.
- ✓ Coaches at first need to be keenly aware of the count, the number of outs and where runners are to communicate effectively with the batter runner to avoid the interference call. YES even over all the noise created by the fans and players to run on the dropped third strike.

#### 18. Catcher Obstruction

When the catcher or any other defensive player obstructs, hinders, or prevents the batter from striking at, or hitting a pitched ball.

- ✓ The umpire signals delayed dead ball as play continues,
- ✓ If the batter hits the ball and reaches first base safely, and if all other runners have advanced at least one base on the batted ball "catcher obstruction" is cancelled.
  - All action as a result of the batted ball stands
  - No option is given to the coach.
- ✓ If the batter and all runners do not advance safely the offensive coach has the option:
  - Taking the result of the play
  - Having the batter advance to first and if a runner is already standing on first the runner is forced to second.
  - All runners can only advance if forced – by being pushed to the next base by a preceding runner advancing to the base they have legally obtained before the "catcher obstruction".

## 19. Established Base Path

We all know what a base path is – the imaginary line between two bases. The established base path is the imaginary line between the runner and the base they are running toward when a player with the ball is attempting to put them out.

- ✓ The batter runner does not have to run within the 3 foot line if they are avoiding a player making a play on the ball they can establish a base path,
- ✓ The runners do not have to run on the base path they can round the base for example and once the player in front of them has the ball, the base path is established by their location and a direct line to the base they are attempting to obtain.
- ✓ The runner can stop and turn, (not the batter runner heading from home to first) and then run toward the base establishing a new base path and then turn again and establish a new base path.
- ✓ In the judgement of the umpire the runner / batter runner cannot leave the established base path when a play is being made on them by the defensive player with the ball.
  - Rule of thumb is the offensive player cannot take more than one or two steps perpendicular to the established base path (three feet or one meter)
- ✓ Deviations in the application / judgement - clearly the level of play, the skill of the players, and the skill of the umpires effect the application of this rule as with many other rules. The key is to understand the base path is create when the defensive player has the ball and is making an attempt to get an out.

## 20. UMPIRE/ARBITER -JUDGEMENT

Good judgement means being able to weigh your options accurately, under pressure, in a matter of seconds.

- ✓ The first step of the process is to gather information and learn everything you possibly can about the rules and the game. Figure out all the intimate pros and cons of your choices. Imagine the possible consequences, both good and bad. Be prudent and use your common sense.
- ✓ And then, when the time comes, you must choose the best option without hesitation.
  - What is good judgement VS bad Judgement – become an umpire this demonstrates a desire to

develop “good judgement”





## Working Positively with Umpires

Umpires and coaches (athletes) have diametrically opposed jobs. An umpire's job is to keep the playing field level and ensure the best team wins. A coach's job is to help his/her team win whether s/he has the best team or not. Both parties should embrace these roles and try to make the best of a bad situation. The key for a coach is to make sure the lines of communication remain open with the umpire.

### Tips on Approaching Umpires

- Be proactive. Establish a rapport at the plate conference. Let the official know that you respect their role in the game
- If you want to question a call use a neutral voice. Nobody likes to be yelled at!
- Make sure you ask and receive time or a break in play before stepping on the field.
- Take a deep breath before you approach the official. We get caught up in the heat of the game and appear more aggressive than we actually are.
- Don't let fans or athletes know you are upset. Coaches are leaders and if they are upset it often leads to others following suit. If you are very upset, take out your lineup card when you talk to the official so people who are out of earshot think you are making a change and the umpire can save face.
- Don't argue face-to-face with an umpire as that leads to increased confrontation. Approach the umpire slowly, using your neutral voice and stand shoulder to shoulder when you are having your discussion. This is far less confrontational and allows the umpire an opportunity to walk away when they have finished their explanation.
- Don't overstay your welcome. Know when the conversation is over and return to the bench.
- Be polite. Look the umpire in the eye and take off your sunglasses when you are talking.
- Know when to hold them, know when to fold them. Arguing every call is not going to get you anywhere. Umpires respect coaches who know the rules.
- LISTEN. You have two ears and one mouth and should use them in that proportion.

## Codes of Conduct

### Coach

As a Coach, I will:

- teach my players that rules of the game of softball are mutual agreements that no one should evade or break.
- develop team respect for the ability of opponents as well as for the judgment of umpires and opposing coaches.
- be professional in my manner and accept responsibility for my actions by displaying high standards in language.
- display control, respect dignity and professionalism to all involved with softball including opponents, coaches, officials, umpires, scorekeepers, administrators and spectators and encourage team players to do the same.
- operate within the rules and the spirit of the game. Abide by and respect the regulations governing softball and the organizations and individuals administering those regulations.
- be a positive role model for softball and your athlete

### Umpire

As an Umpire, I will:

- make sure that every athlete has a reasonable opportunity to perform to the best of his/her abilities, within the limit of the rules.
- avoid or put to an end to any situation that threatens the safety of participants.
- maintain a healthy atmosphere and environment for competition.
- be impartial, consistent, objective and courteous when making decisions.
- foster the spirit of sportsmanship and fair play.
- be consistent and objective in making all decisions.
- handle all conflicts firmly but with dignity and respect
- manage the game in a positive, calm and confident manner
- foster the spirit of sportsmanship and fair play
- prepare physically and mentally for my duties.

I will not:

- permit the intimidation of anyone by either word or action.
- tolerate unacceptable conduct toward myself, other officials, athletes, coaches, or spectators.
- tolerate offensive, insulting or abusive language or behaviour.
- in any way act to reward, to demonstrate personally, nor to condone in others unfair play.

## Codes of Conduct

### Player

As a Player, I will:

- play by the rules.
- never argue with the officials but will comply with umpires' decisions with dignity.
- control my temper, be a good sport.
- treat all players as I would like to be treated.
- co-operate with my coach, teammates, opponents, and umpires, for without them we don't have a game.
- be a positive role model for softball at all times.
- accept responsibility for my actions.
- participate within the competition conditions and rules, and in the spirit of fair play.
- refrain from offensive or abusive language or gestures.
- refrain from making derogatory or demeaning remarks about any athlete, coach, umpire or participant.
- not tolerate, participate in or respond to acts of abuse, disrespect or aggression.
- remember that, as humans, we all make mistakes.

### Spectator

As a Spectator, I will:

- be on my best behavior and use appropriate language when communicating with players, coaches and/or game officials.
- respect the officials' decisions and teach young people to do the same.
- encourage players to always play according to the rules.
- support all efforts to remove verbal and physical abuse from softball.
- condemn the use of violence in any form, whether it is by spectators, coaches, officials or players.
- respect the rights of every participant in softball regardless of their gender, ability, cultural background or religion.

I will not:

- publicly question the officials' judgment and/or honesty.
- use violence, harassment or abuse.

