

SSA Interlock End of Season Tournament Rules

Spring 2025

These Guidelines and Rules are for the Spring 2025 Sanger Softball Association Interlock end of season tournament. The interlock will schedule meetings each year to finalize or revise these guidelines and rules for each season.

The end of season tournament will be organized by hosting associations and representatives of the interlock for the purpose of playing under an established set of guidelines and rules in order to provide an organized recreational end of season tournament for softball players. The mission is to implement and develop teamwork, leadership, and sportsmanship. The objective is to provide tournament play that will be fun, safe, and competitive.

The interlock committee will determine how many teams will be entered per age division.

TEAMS

- 1) All players/coaches must have played/coached for their respective team with the association they are registered with during the spring season.
- 2) Players must participate in half of the teams' regular season games (minimum of 4 scheduled games) to be eligible for the tournament.
- 3) No guest players will be allowed for end of season tournament, unless approved by the interlock because of extraordinary circumstances.
- 4) Teams, Coaches or Players found to be in violation of any of the above rules will be subject to penalties deemed appropriate by the Committee, including but not limited to suspension and/or exclusion from any or all SSA interlock games and tournaments.
- 5) Each team can only have four (4) coaches in the dugout/field during the games.
- 6) Any exception to the above team formation rules must be approved by the Rules Committee prior to May 16th.
- 7) All teams will submit a team roster, and picture of team prior to May 16th.

ELIGIBILITY PROCESS AND PROCEDURES

- 1) Head Coaches should maintain a binder/folder with the following items:
 - a) Official Team Roster, signed by the association representative
 - b) Team Picture
 - c) Each Player's birth certificate
 - d) Insurance certificate
 - e) Copy of tournament rules
 - f) Code of Conduct form, signed by players, coaches and parents

2) Coaches must have their team binder available at all times during tournament.

TOURNAMENT FORMAT AND GAMES

1) Interlock end of season tournament will be one tournament in the month of May. The tournament will consist of the following format.

a) SSA interlock teams will play in a single elimination seeded tournament.

b) Teams will be seeded based on their performance during the regular season:

(1) Team's record.

(2) Head-to-head: win-loss between teams with identical records.

(3) Runs Scored

(4) Runs Allowed

(5) Run Differential (Runs Scored - Runs Allowed = Run Differential)

(4) Coin flip

c) 6U and 8U age groups will be split into 2 brackets.

(1) Top Seed in Gold Bracket and Bottom Seed in Silver Bracket

2) Tournament locations and dates for 2025:

a) All end of season tournaments will be played on Saturday, May 17, 2025 at the following locations:

i.) 6U – Sanger

ii.) 8U – Sanger

iii.) 10U – Justin

iv.) 12U – Argyle

v.) 14U - Ponder

TOURNAMENT COST

1) Host associations will cover the cost for end of season tournaments.

2) The host association can raise additional funds for their program through vendor rentals, concessions, etc.

3) Host associations cannot charge gate entry fees.

4) Umpires will be pay at the plate during the tournament.

5) Rings will be procured by Sanger Softball Association and coordinated with each host for delivery and payment for rings at their host sites.

TOURNAMENT RULES

1) The tournament will follow rules established by United States Specialty Sports Association (USSSA) as modified by the following supplemental rules established by the SSA Interlock Committee.

- 2) Warm-ups are only permitted where the host association allows. Hitting may only happen in batting cages or on the field.
- 3) Each team must supply 2 game balls at the beginning of the game, they must be approved by the umpires.
- 4) Home team will be the higher seeded team.
- 5) The home team will be responsible for keeping the official score of the game, using an official score book. The scorekeeper will sit behind home plate and must know how to score keep. If the team cannot provide a scorekeeper, they will forfeit the home team position.
- 6) Home team will occupy the third base dugout and the visiting team will occupy the first base dugout. Teams are responsible for cleaning up their dugouts after each game.
- 7) Bats, helmets, and catcher gear will be inspected prior to each game. Be sure your team puts all gear outside the dugout for inspection as soon as you are allowed to enter the dugout.
- 8) Players must wear batting helmets when batting, running bases, or in the on-deck circle. Do not remove helmets until inside the dugout. Batting helmets must have a face mask for 8U and up.
- 9) Catchers are required to wear full protective headgear, mask, chest protector and shin guards.
- 10) No metal cleats.
- 11) No jewelry (rings, bracelets, necklaces, etc.) will be allowed during play.
- 12) It is highly recommended that all players on defense in the infield wear a protective faceguard.
- 13) For 8U and up - Any bats labeled Tee Ball or Baseball will not be allowed during the game. Those bats will be turned over to the tournament director and will be returned after the last tournament game for that team.
- 14) All bats must have the USA/ASA or USSSA approved certification mark and must not be listed on the banned bat list. Those bats will be turned over to the tournament director and will be returned after the last tournament game for that team.
- 15) Coaches are not allowed to stand outside the dugout while their team is on defense or offense. Only the first base and third base coaches are allowed to be in the coach's box. All coaches in the dugout or on the field must be listed on the official team roster.
- 16) Game Balls
 - a) Optic yellow 11" safety ball with Level 1 core will be used for 6U games.
 - b) Optic yellow 11" hard balls with a max COR of .47 will be used for 8U and 10U games.
 - c) Optic yellow 12" hard balls with a max COR of .47 will be used for 12U and 14U games.
- 17) Batter's box will be 7' x 3' on both sides of home plate.
- 18) If there is a tie at the end of the game, the offensive team shall begin its turn at bat. Batter should start with a 0-0 count and:
 - 6U, 8U, 10U, 12U, and 14U will follow the Overtime Format:
 - a) First extra inning – start with 1 out and runner on 2nd base

- b) Second extra inning – start with 2 outs and runners on second and third base.
 - c) Third and additional extra innings – start with 2 outs and bases loaded.
 - d) This will continue until a winner is determined.
 - e) Base runners will be based on last plate appearance according to the line-up card.
- 19) Lineups will be given to the plate umpire at the plate meeting.
- 20) Teams will bat their entire roster and be allowed free defensive substitutions.
- 21) 6U and 8U teams must have at least seven (7) players to start a game. 10U-14U must have at least eight (8) players to start a game. No automatic out for not enough players.
- 22) Sliding into the base feet first is allowed. Sliding headfirst is not allowed and that player will be called out.
- 23) The run rule per half inning for 6U and 8U is five runs. The run rule per half inning for 10U and up is six runs.
- 24) Game will be called when a team is mathematically out. The run rule for fast pitch is 12 at the end of the 3rd inning, 10 at the end of the 4th inning or 8 at the end of the 5th inning.
- 25) Time outs will be allowed per the rule book for that age division.
- 26) All buckets and equipment must be inside the dugout during the game.
- 27) Game Duration for 6U and 8U games will be **60-minute**, finish the inning with tie break (see above). 10U-14U games will be 75-minutes, finish the inning with tie break (see above).
- 28) Team conference at change of half innings is not allowed. First infraction will be a warning, second infraction will be ejection of coach.
- 29) Implementing a “Mercy Rule”, if a team has not been able to bat all their players, they will be able to before game has ended. To allow all registered players the opportunity to hit in the tournament.

6 & Under – T-Ball_____

Playing Field:

- The base path will be 60 feet.
- The pitching distance is 35 feet.

Equipment:

- The home team will provide the batting tee.

Game Play:

- Only one (1) coach and three (3) assistant coaches will be allowed in the dugout during the game. The defense will be allowed to have two (2) coaches positioned in the outfield to help instruct the outfielders, and teams should provide one (1) defensive coach at the fence behind the catcher to help keep the game moving.
- All players will play the field. The pitcher must play somewhere in the back half of the pitching circle. The 4 infielders must be at least 45 feet from home plate. Teams must field the catcher's position. All remaining players must be in the outfield somewhere behind the baselines. Seven (7) players is the minimum to play a game. Any less is a forfeit.
- If a pitcher fields the ball and makes a play on a runner, the pitcher must throw the ball to a baseman or the catcher, if applicable, in an attempt to make an out. The pitcher cannot tag a player running to first, or home, or run home and touch the plate. She must throw the ball. No rolling balls to the bases. The ball must be thrown overhand. These rules help ensure fundamentals are taught.
- Each coach must bat his/her complete roster.
- **Batters will receive four (4) pitches from a coach pitcher first;** if batter does not hit any pitches, she will receive three (3) swings off the tee.
- No bunting allowed.
- Slinging the bat is a strike. The batter will receive one warning. The second offense is an out.
- No base stealing allowed, tight base running. Base runners may not lead off before the batter hits the ball. In the event of an infraction, the runner will be called out.
- A ball thrown over the fence or in the dugout will entitle the runner to advance one (1) base. If a ball is overthrown at 1st base, the batter/runner may advance (1) base at her own risk.
- Play will stop when the pitcher has possession of the ball inside the pitcher's circle. Time will be called once the runner stops on a base. Once the ball is in the pitcher's circle, the base runner must have one (1) foot across the halfway line between bases in order to advance to the next base.
- A maximum of two (2) timeouts per inning per team will be allowed. Calling "time" to prolong a game will not be allowed.
- In the event of an injury, play stops immediately.

8 & Under - Modified Coach Pitch

Playing Field:

- Bases will be 60' apart and the official pitching rubber will be 35' from home.

Game Play:

- Each team will provide their own pitching coach. The coach pitcher must be listed as a coach on the official team roster.
- Kid pitchers can pitch from 30' chalked line, or the 35' permanent rubber, but must finish inside the circle.
- Kid pitchers will pitch a total of 4 pitches to each batter, balls and strikes will be called by the umpire. The batter can strike out from 3 strikes called by the umpire, while the kid is pitching. • Kid pitchers will pitch every inning.
- Coach pitchers enters the game when the kid pitcher has pitched four (4) pitches, and will take over the count from the pitcher.

- Coach pitchers have 3 pitches max to use for a base hit, or strike out from their batter.
- The pitching rubber for the coach will be 35'. Coach pitcher must have one foot on the pitching mound at time of release and both feet must be within 24" of the mound.
- The child pitcher must be positioned on either the right or left side of the pitching rubber and be no more 3' from the rubber when a coach pitcher is pitching.
- Batters will receive a maximum of 7 pitches to put the ball in play or strike out. No foul outs, no walks, and no hit by pitch (HBP).
- A final pitch that is fouled off does not count toward the pitch count and an additional pitch(es) may be thrown. EXCEPTION: If the catcher catches a foul tip of the final pitch, the batter is out.
- Pitched ball is dead when it hits the ground prior to home plate. Batter cannot hit a ball that first touches the ground.
- If the kid pitcher hits the batter by a pitch in the air. The coach pitcher will inherit the count from the kid pitcher. No "warm-up" pitches will be allowed. For example, the kid pitcher has a 1-1 count the coach pitcher will be given up to 5 pitches, unless the batter swings and misses the first two pitches, then the batter is out. Pitches from the coach are only strikes if the batter swings at them. However, after 7 pitches the batter will be called out unless she fouls on the 7th pitch.
- If the kid pitcher hits the batter by a pitch that hits the ground first, it is considered a ball, and the kid pitcher continues to pitch, until her four (4) pitch count, or (3) strikes are reached.
- The coach pitcher cannot go to the plate and give instructions to the batter. This causes delays in the game.
- Once the ball is hit fair, the coach pitcher must move to the side of the field, the opposite direction of where the ball was hit. When the coach interferes with an offensive player, then the play stands. When the coach unintentionally interferes with a defensive player, then the umpire has the option to call a base runner out, if intentional, then the runner will be called out.
- The offense is allowed two (2) base coaches and (1) pitcher. The coaches must remain inside the circle or coaching boxes when talking to the batters.
- The defense will be allowed to have two (2) coaches positioned in the outfield (one in left field foul territory and one in right field foul territory) to help instruct the outfielders, and teams should provide one (1) defensive coach at the fence behind the catcher to help keep the game moving.
- A team must have at least seven (7) players to start a game. Ten (10) players should assume defensive positions on the field. Each team is allowed: (1) pitcher, (1) catcher, (4) infielders and (4) outfielders. If less than 7 players are present, then it is a forfeit.
- Teams playing with only eight (8) or nine (9) players shall not incur an automatic out when the ninth (9th) or tenth (10th) batting position arises. The 1st batter will then bat without penalty to the team.
- Infielders must remain at least 45' from home plate when the ball is pitched.
- Infielders must make an attempt to make the play at a base, rather than outfielders making the initial play. For example, the 1st baseman should not field the ball, then turn around and throw the ball to the right fielder who has run to 1st base to make the play.
- The umpire will declare the play over when the pitcher has possession of the ball within the pitcher's circle and a play is not being made. If the pitcher makes a motion to continue play, the umpire shall allow the play to continue. Base runners will advance to the next base if over halfway to that base or return to the previous base touched if less than halfway.
- There is no penalty for an overthrow. Runners may advance to any base including home.
- The umpire will not call a play dead just because a defensive player returns the ball to the coach pitcher. The intent of this rule is to have coaches instruct players how to properly stop runners

from advancing to the next base. To facilitate this, coach pitchers should move to foul territory near the first or third base line (away from the play) after the ball is batted into fair territory. If a defensive player gives the ball to the coach pitcher during a live play, the play will be called dead and each base runner will be awarded an additional base.

- A player's intentional contact with an opposing player will result in the immediate ejection of the offending player. Serious infractions may result in suspension from the league. Umpires will notify a board member of the hosting city in the event of any ejection.
- No Bunting Allowed.
- No stealing. Runners may not lead.
- The lookback rule will not be in effect.
- Infield fly rule will not be in use.
- Dropped 3rd strike not in effect.

10 & Under

Playing Field:

- Bases will be 60' apart and the official pitching rubber will be 35' from home plate.

Game Play:

- Nine (9) players should assume defensive positions on the field. Each team is allowed: (1) pitcher, (1) catcher, (4) infielders and (3) outfielders.
- Teams playing with only (7) seven players shall NOT incur an automatic out when the 8th batting position arises. A team must have at least (7) seven players to start a game. Any less than 7 is an automatic forfeit.
- Once the ball is returned to the pitcher in the pitcher's circle, all base runners must either advance to the next base or return to the base they just came from immediately. Any hesitation or fake moves by the runner and they will be called out by the umpire.
- Base runners are allowed to leave the base only after the pitcher has released the ball.
- A player's intentional contact with an opposing player will result in the immediate ejection of the offending player. Serious infractions may result in suspension from the tournament and/or league. Umpires will notify a tournament director in the event of any ejection.
- Bunting is allowed.
- Infield fly rule will be used.
- Dropped third strike is not in effect. In the event of a passed ball on third strike or dropped third strike, the batter is out and may not advance to first.

Fast Pitch – 12u & 14u

Playing Field:

- Bases will be 60' apart and the official pitching rubber will be 40' from home plate for 12u & 43' for 14u

Game Play:

- Nine (9) players should assume defensive positions on the field. Each team is allowed: (1) pitcher, (1) catcher, (4) infielders and (3) outfielders.
- Teams playing with only (7) seven players shall NOT incur an automatic out when the 8th batting position arises. A team must have at least (7) seven players to start a game. Any less than 7 is an automatic forfeit.
- Overthrows, whether in foul or fair territory, will be considered live, unless the ball enters the dugout or any other area deemed out of play, in which case, each runner will automatically receive (2) two bases from the time of the throw (the base you are going to, plus 1 more). Overthrows remaining in play will be considered live, and runners may advance at their own risk of being put out.
- Once the ball is returned to the pitcher in the pitcher's circle, all base runners must either advance to the next base or return to the base they just came from immediately. Any hesitation or fake moves by the runner and they will be called out by the umpire.
- Base runners are allowed to leave the base only after the pitcher has released the ball. Base runners are allowed to steal any base and may steal home on a wild pitch or passed ball.
- Bunting is allowed.
- A player's intentional contact with an opposing player will result in the immediate ejection of the offending player. Serious infractions may result in suspension from the league. Umpires will notify a board member in the event of any ejection.
- Infield fly rule will be used.
- There is a dropped third strike provision. The batter may advance to first base upon a dropped third strike, provided that 1st base is unoccupied.

Coaching Etiquette:

- Judgment calls made by the umpire are not up for appeal. Please do not argue with the umpires. This only delays the game and presents a bad image to the players and parents. However, a head coach may respectfully request an official to consult with partner to determine if he/she had a better view of the play.
- The umpires have been instructed to warn any argumentative coach, player or parent (1) one time. After that the umpire has the authority to remove said person(s) from the park. Umpires will notify a tournament director of the ejection.
- Coaches cannot touch a base runner during live ball. Penalty: 1st occurrence is a warning, 2nd time is an out.
- Zero Tolerance is in affect at all sites, and all games during the tournament.

PROTESTS

- a) There will be no protest allowed on any judgment calls.
- b) A formal protest may only be made regarding rules.

- c) Only the Head Coach, as listed on the official team roster, is allowed to notify the plate umpire of a formal protest, BEFORE the next pitch is thrown.
- d) The clock will stop and the protest committee will be called in.
- e) NO protest can be called after the completion (last official out) of the game.
- f) The Protest Committee will consist of the Tournament Director (or appointed representative), SSA Director/Assistant Director and one INTERLOCK representative.
- g) Protest Committee decisions are FINAL!

*****PLEASE READ AND BE FAMILIAR WITH THE OFFICIAL RULE BOOKS!*****

UMPIRES

- 1) All Umpires must be registered with a recognized organization of officials such as DFW Fastpitch, Over the Plate, etc.
- 2) No requests for umpires can be made. Parents and/or coaches will have NO INPUT as to the officials assigned to any game.
- 3) All 6U games will be one (1) umpire mechanics.
- 4) All 8U and up games will be two (2) umpire mechanics. If an umpire is not available or cannot continue with the game, one (1) umpire mechanics will go into effect and the game will continue.

CODE OF CONDUCT

- 1) Zero tolerance policies are in effect at every complex. Any player, manager, coach or fan ejected from a game must leave the facility immediately and not be allowed to participate that same day. During the suspension, the ejected person may not be at the facility.
- 2) In addition to the above suspension, if a coach or spectator is ejected from a game, they will not be allowed back in the dugout or field as a coach for the remainder of the tournament. The coach, player and spectator could be appealed to the Tournament Director and can be overturned, with conditions.
- 3) There will be no consumption of alcoholic beverages at any facility at any time.
- 4) Smoking, vapor or tobacco use is prohibited at any facility at any time.
- 5) Cheering words of encouragement to your team players is acceptable (we do not expect you to be meek) as long as it is NOT done in a manner that provokes.
- 6) Profane language at any game is unacceptable behavior.
- 7) Harassing or "name calling" of any softball official, players from either team, coaches from either team, etc., either at the facility or on social media, is NOT ACCEPTABLE and WILL NOT BE TOLERATED as well as by the corresponding host youth organization.

8) The parents/guardians will support the coaches' rules and decisions. As parents/guardians one realizes that this is a game for children - NOT professional athletes.

10) If the opposing team's spectators are breaking the rules, it DOES NOT mean that you are entitled to break the rules or to follow suit in unacceptable behavior. Please remember that two wrongs do not make a right.

11) Finally, the parents/guardians will always exhibit and support sportsmanship to his or her best ability.