



Inclusive Softball Rules Guidance

The BaseballSoftballUK LGBTQ+ Committee has created this set of Inclusive Softball Rules for co-ed slowpitch softball in the hope that league and tournament organisers will adopt them, thereby making softball in the United Kingdom even more inclusive.

We recognise that these rules will continue to evolve with time, and welcome any feedback from players and organisers. Please get in touch with Luis at la@bsuk.com.

Non-Binary and Transgender Players

We recognise that trans players can identify anywhere along the gender spectrum. We also recognise that some people do not identify as male or female or use gendered pronouns, but instead identify as gender non-binary, gender fluid or use other language.

While we acknowledge that people may use a range of different terms to describe their gender, and that non-binary is not a 'third gender' as such, for the practical purposes of these rules, we are referring to using the word 'gender' to refer to female (F), male (M) and non-binary (NB).

Players identifying as "male" will hit a 12"-ball.

Players identifying as "female" will hit an 11"-ball.

Players identifying as any other gender (or non) shall indicate which ball size they opt to hit. All rules of softball that refer to male or female gender shall be understood to refer to 12"- or 11"-ball hitters, respectively.

Rule Modifications and Best Practices

This guidance was created to supplement the official WBSC Official Rules of Softball, as shown below:

RULE 3.2.2. A)

III. CO-ED: TEN (10) PLAYERS – (FIVE MALES AND FIVE FEMALES) WITH THE FOLLOWING POSITIONING REQUIREMENTS: TWO MALE AND TWO FEMALE IN BOTH THE INFIELD AND THE OUTFIELD, AND ONE MALE AND ONE FEMALE AS PITCHER AND CATCHER. THE BATTING ORDER MUST ALTERNATE THE GENDERS.

IV. CO-ED WITH EXTRA PLAYERS (EPS): TWELVE (12) PLAYERS – SIX (6) MALES AND SIX (6) FEMALES: SAME AS CO-ED SLOW PITCH PLUS TWO (2) EPS WHO BAT IN THE LINE-UP. THE BATTING ORDER MUST ALTERNATE THE GENDERS.

Under the BaseballSoftballUK Inclusive Softball Guidance, WBSC Official Rules of Softball will apply with the following adaptations:

Gender identification, line-ups and fielding positions

At the beginning of a tournament and/or game, captains should provide information to the home plate umpire about their line-up. This does not need to be done in a formal manner but will allow the umpires to apply the rules appropriately.



Communication

All communication between the umpire and team captains should be respectful. Umpires and captains should avoid stigmatising or singling out non-binary players and should not question players' gender identity.

Batting Order

The batting order must alternate between players hitting an 11" ball and players hitting a 12" ball.

Non-binary players may be substituted by any player who is hitting the same ball size as them; for example, a NB player hitting an 11" ball can only be replaced by another player eligible to hit an 11" ball.

Walks

Any player hitting the 12" ball (male player or NB player choosing to hit the 12" ball) will receive two bases on a walk.

Players hitting an 11" ball will receive one base on a walk (i.e. female or NB player choosing to hit the 11" ball).

When there are two outs, if any player hitting a 12" ball is walked, the following batter can opt to walk to first base without batting.

Fielding Positions

The defensive outfield must consist of 2 players hitting each size ball.

The defensive infield must consist of 2 players hitting each size ball.

The pitcher and catcher must be players hitting different size balls.

General advice, anticipated objections, and responses

At every level league or tournament play, players can choose to play as their identified gender (i.e., the gender they identify as in their daily life).

We recommend that leagues ask players at the time of registration, to declare which size ball they will hit for the season. This could also be considered by tournament organisers.

Umpires are not to question or challenge players' gender selection.

Possible objection/comment: Cisgender men will pretend to be trans / NB to take advantage of gendered rules.

Response: Do we really think this is likely to happen? It would require the team captain and the team themselves to be complicit, and to suggest this is offensive.

Possible objection/comment: MTF (Male to Female) transformation, AMAB (Assigned Male at Birth) non-binary people will have an unfair advantage.

Response: The benefits of promoting inclusion of a significantly marginalised and under-represented community will far outweigh the risks of perceived unfairness. It seems unlikely that this would be a widespread issue based on current levels of participation – in fact, it would be a great problem to have, but we're a long way from that!