

# FHCASA PLAYING RULES

Basic USA Rules Govern with some FHCASA Rule Exceptions

as amended January 2026

## THE PLAYERS

- Age Qualifications
  - December 31 is the official cut-off date. Any member whose birthday (50, 55, etc) occurs on or before December 31 of that current year is eligible to play with a registered team in the age bracket or a lower age bracket.
- Player Identification
  - A Player shall show proof of identity when requested to do so by an Officer, Commissioner or Director of the FHCASA
  - A Player is ineligible until he shows both his FHC Card and a picture ID to the FHCASA personnel
- Player Home Record
  - All Players on a team shall reside in the respective Area (1, 2, 3 or 4) from which the team is registered. EXCEPTION: Grandfather procedures identified in the By-Laws.
- Player Eligibility
  - A Player shall play for only one team on a tournament weekend.
- Uniforms
  - All Players on a team shall properly wear uniforms that are alike in base color, trim and style. If a shirt is required to be changed, because of the blood rules, there will be no penalty. The Site Director will make the proper decision regarding the shirts.
  - Pitchers are not permitted to wear any item on the pitching hand, wrist or thigh that could be distracting to a batter.
  - Players may wear colored undergarments beneath their uniform shirts or shorts.
  - Numbers must be worn on all uniforms. Numbers on front and back must be a minimum of 6" tall. No Players on the same team may wear the same number.
  - Ball caps or visors must be properly worn. A protective helmet is allowed.
  - Casts, prothesis and metal braces may be worn, but must be covered by a soft material and must be taped.

## THE GAME

- Time Limit
  1. A time limit of 60 minutes shall be allotted in regular game play.
    - When the 60 minutes expires, the teams shall finish that inning and one more complete inning, if necessary.
    - In the event the score is tied after regulation play, the game will immediately proceed to 2 and 2 count, with a foul to give, 5 runs per inning, for the 65 and over division, 7 runs per inning for the 50 and 60 division There will be no Texas tie breaker (a runner will NOT be placed on second base.)

- The clock is to be stopped in the event of an injury requiring medical attention.
- The clock is to be restarted when all Players are on the field and the umpire calls “Play Ball”.
- Courtesy Runners
  - Unlimited courtesy runners are allowed at any time and may be anyone on the roster.
  - A courtesy runner is in the game once the base is touched.
  - A Player can be a courtesy runner only once an inning
  - A runner may not replace a courtesy runner unless there is an injury
    - a. The injured Player must be removed from the line-up and cannot return to the game
  - Any Player replaced by a courtesy runner may not become a courtesy runner in the same inning.
  - Penalty for use of an ineligible courtesy runner shall be removal of the runner from the base and an out is recorded against the base runner for which the courtesy runner is used. **No appeal requirement, the umpires can/will make the call.**
  - If a Player is on base as a courtesy runner when it is his time to bat, he shall be declared out.
    - If this is the first or second out of the inning, the Player will bat in his regular spot.
    - If this is the third out of the inning, the Player will be the first batter in the next innings.
- A “Rabbit Runner” will start at a point 3 ft. behind the rear back left corner of the catcher's box looking out to the field of play. He may not start to run until the ball is hit by the batter. If he does, he is out, and all other runners return. If the Rabbit Runner rounds first base, and touches 2nd base in a normal play, he is out, and the other base runners advancement will be a timing play. I.E. a runner on third crosses home before the rabbit illegally touches second base and it is not the final out in the inning. The run will be awarded.
- A rabbit runner will be considered in the game as a courtesy runner once a pitch is thrown to the batter, or he is announced by the umpire. He may not be used as a courtesy runner for the rest of the inning.
- Likewise, if the batter runs up the line past 10 feet, he will be declared out. A white chalk line should be drawn 10 feet from home plate across the baseline. This will be a delayed dead ball.
- The player may choose to forgo the rabbit runner option in a game but will not be allowed to have a rabbit runner for the remainder of the game. He will be able to utilize the rabbit runner option for his next game.
  - The Rabbit Runner may proceed to second base if:
    - The batted ball is a 'ground rule double.'
    - The batted ball is a 'home run.'
    - An infielder throws the ball out of play (advance to the next base plus one).
    - An outfielder throws the ball out of play (2 bases from the time of the throw).

Bases shall be 70 feet from each other, 65 feet will be acceptable, depending on the parks/field ability to place bases.

- Offense
  - An offensive team may designate up to 15 Players in the batting order.
  - The offensive team shall have a minimum 9 Players present to start and finish a game in the 50's, 55's and 60's Divisions.
  - A minimum of 10 Players is required to start and finish a game in the 65's, 70's, 74's and 80's Divisions
- Defense
  - A defensive team shall designate 9 Players present to take the field in the 50's through 60's Divisions and may play as many as 10 Players
  - In the 65's through 80's Divisions, teams need at least 10 Players in the field and may play as many as 11 Players.
  - Defensive Players may play anywhere on the playing field in fair territory.
- Injuries
  - In the event of an injury and the Player is removed from the game and is unable to take his time at bat.
    - If there is no substitute Player to bat in his place, an out will be recorded the first time the injured Player comes up to bat.
    - After that, the line-up will compress and there will be no more outs in that spot.
    - Also, that injured Player is not allowed to play again in that game.
- Balls and Strikes
  - There shall be 4 balls and 3 strikes.
  - In a regular game, each batter starts with a 1 and 1 count.
  - On the first foul ball after reaching a 2-strike count, the batter is out and the ball is declared dead. EXCEPTION: If the foul ball is caught for the first or second out, the ball remains live and the runners may run at their own risk.
- A foul tip by the batter into the catcher's glove must go over the batter's head to record an out.
- Pitcher's Plate
  - The pitcher's plate is located 50 feet from the rear point of home plate.
  - The pitcher must be in contact with the pitcher's plate at least momentarily before releasing the ball.
  - The pitcher must have one foot on the plate (rubber) when he releases the ball.
- Strike Zone/Plate Mat
  - A strike zone mat will be used
  - From the top of the plate, including the mat, the area shall measure 19" x 34 1/2".
  - The pitching arc shall be from 6' from the ground and 12' at its highest.
  - If the ball hits any part of the plate, before striking the ground it will be called a strike.

- Catcher's Box
  - The box measures 8'1" wide by 10' deep.
  - The catcher must remain within the lines of the box until the pitched ball is batted, touches the ground, mat or reaches the catcher's box.
- Commitment Line
  - The commitment line shall be marked in foul territory thirty feet from home plate and at a 90-degree angle to third base.
  - Once the runner passes the line, he may not go back to third base. If he does, he is out.
  - Once a runner touches or goes beyond the line, the defense can only get the out by touching home plate, with the ball in hand, before the runner touches the second plate or his foot is down across the scoring line.
  - At no time is the defender to touch the runner after he crosses the commitment line
    - a. If the runner is tagged after he crosses the commitment line, the runner is safe, the run scores and the ball remains live
- Base Running
  - Base stealing is not permitted in FHCASA softball
  - A second home plate, or line, shall be placed adjacent to the left rear corner of the right-handed batter's box and in line with the first base.
    - A runner is called out if he touches the original home plate and not the extra plate.
    - The runner is called out if he slides into the second plate.
    - If the runner is called out, the ball remains live
- Safety Base
  - A safety base is mandatory for first base
  - The safety base shall be placed so that the white portion is where the first base normally would be and the colored base is located in foul territory next to the white base.
  - A batter/runner shall only touch, the colored base on the initial play, unless the throw forces the runner to run inside to avoid a collision. Then that play is up to the umpire to make the correct call
- If there is a question of touching the wrong base intentionally, the umpire will call the batter/runner out and a live ball will continue. In the case of a bobbled ball, the appeal can be made to the umpires.
  - If the ball is hit to the outfield either bag can be touched
  - If the ball is hit to the infield, only the colored base will be touched unless there is a throw that takes the runner offline.
  - If a runner slides into the safety base, that runner is called out, unless the slide is an attempt to avoid a collision with the defensive player.
  - A runner that does not discard his bat before reaching first base shall be called out.
  - If a runner walks, the ball is dead and he is not out if he carries the bat to first
- A runner at first base may use the colored bag (in the case of a left-handed batter).

- Mercy/Run Rule
  - 20 after 4 innings
  - 15 after 5 innings
  - Should a team be unable to overcome the run rule before time runs out, there will be no need to complete the inning. The game will be called by the umpires. For example, Team A (50/60 division) is the visitor and has 30 runs after their top of the 5<sup>th</sup> inning. Team B, the home team, only has 1 run and cannot make up the run difference, even if they score their allotted 7 runs, thus making the score 30-7. The game will be called after the visitors have batted and there will be no need for the home team to bat. The game will be called.
- Ejections
  - Players ejected by an umpire or FHCASA official shall sit out a minimum of that game and one more and may be suspended pending Board action.
  - The Site Director has the authority to reduce or increase the penalty to the one game
  - All ejections are subject to FHCASA Board review and possible further action.
  - If there is no player to replace the ejected player, an out will be recorded every time his position in the batting order comes up.
- Appeal of Rules
  - Procedure: Any Player or manager of the two teams playing may ask the home plate umpire for time out. Once granted, either umpire may be asked to clarify the rule in question. If the answer is not clear, the Player or Manager may ask the umpires to get together and discuss the rule or question.
  - Umpire Judgement: Decisions may not be appealed on calls involving
    - Balls and Strikes
    - Safe or Out
    - Fair or Foul ball
    - EXCEPTION: In the event of a possible pulled foot, bobbled ball or missed base, a Player or Manager may ask the umpires to convene and discuss the play.
    - The decision, after they convene, is final
- Protests
  - All disputes during tournament play must be resolved at the point of the protest.
  - The clock is stopped at that time
  - The UIC/Commissioner/Site Director will be called to hear the disagreement if it deals with “playing rules” or “personnel rules”.
  - The UIC/Commissioner/Site Director will make a final decision
  - After that is completed, the clock will be restarted again
  - All decisions may be subject to review by the FHCASA Board of Directors
- Home Runs
  - A home run over the fence, allows the hitter to “hit and sit”. There is no “four base error”.
  - A home run that leaves the field of play and over the fence is a dead ball, and if the batter-runner carries the bat to the 1<sup>st</sup> base bag, it is not an out.

- Home run limit. 14 home runs per game for 50s division, 10 home runs for 60s division and over.
- Game Balls
  - All tournament balls must be approved by the Board of Directors
- Game Bats
  - All bats must be approved by the Board of Directors
  - Bats may not be altered in any way from the manufacturer's design
  - A safety grip on the end of the bat, or tape is legal
  - Bats that are worn, but still retain the legal markings, are legal
  - Cracked or damaged bats and bats that cannot be identified (make-model) are illegal.
  - Once a bat is removed from play, by an umpire or tournament Officer, it cannot be brought back into play
  - The Player that uses an illegal bat will be treated with the same penalty as if using an altered bat.
- Runs per Inning
  - The 50's and 60's Divisions will use a limit of 7 runs per team, per inning with the last inning being declared "open" with no maximum run limit
  - The 65's through 74's Divisions will use a limit of 5 runs per team, per inning with the last inning being declared "open" with no maximum run limit.
  - Run Equalizer: This rule will apply to every team in the FHC. Going by points solely, which will be adaptive and applicable each month, each division. If a team is playing another team in the bracket and is 20 or more points behind them in the standings, the team with the lesser points will be afforded the equalizer, or the opportunity to refuse the runs, which will be 5 runs given over the course of the first five innings, one per inning. This rule will not apply to speed up games or the state championships.
- Pitching Screen
  - The pitching screen must be placed in front of the pitching plate no more than 4' in front of the plate and must cover a minimum of one half of the pitching plate
  - Once the screen is in place, it may not be moved in that half inning unless a new pitcher comes in or the screen is moved by a batted ball. If a pitcher moves the screen, mid inning, without the above exceptions being met, the batter will be awarded a "ball" in his count.
  - The pitcher may release the ball from either side of the screen but must have at least one foot in contact with the plate itself.
  - Before releasing the ball, and in contact with the plate, the pitcher must pause at least one second before he may release the ball or it is an illegal pitch.
  - If the batter hits the screen with a batted ball and there is less than 2 strikes, it becomes a dead ball immediately and runners, if any, return to their bases.
  - If there are 2 strikes on the batter and he hits the screen with a batted ball, he is out and the runners return to their bases.
  - After the pitcher releases the ball, he must immediately move behind the screen.
    - He may field the ball as soon as the ball is hit.

- If the umpire rules that the pitcher did not get behind the screen, the pitcher will receive a warning.
- If it happens a second time, the pitcher is removed as pitcher and cannot return in that position for the remainder of the game. He may play any other position
- If a ball is released by the pitcher and he is ruled not behind the screen and the batted ball is touched/caught by the pitcher, the umpire will rule the play dead, the batter will be awarded first base and any forced runners will move up one base.
- Any live ball thrown from any fielder that hits either side of the screen will remain in play
- Interference
  1. When a batter runner is called out for an illegal slide/interference at second base, or any other base, that person is out and the person closest to home is also out
    - (Example) If the bases are loaded and there is an illegal slide/interference at second base, the batter runner is out at second and the runner going to the plate is also out.
    - (Example) If there are runners at first and second and the batter runner is called out at second for illegal slide/interference, the runner going to third is also out because he is the closest to the plate. Any other runner goes back to the base they were at prior to the pitch
  2. This rule is to penalize, to the hilt, anyone who commits an illegal slide/interference at any base. It is a safety issue.

#### ALTERED BAT PROCEDURE

- A. Directors and /or umpires can confiscate any bat believed to be altered.
  - The bat may be sent to the manufacturer for testing, or be tested by a Board Officer using a bat testing device
  - If deemed to be altered, the user will immediately be suspended for five years
  - If not, it will be returned to the Player
  - If found to be altered at the site, the penalty could begin immediately
  - If a bat is confiscated, the game shall resume at that point
  - The accused player must voluntarily allow the bat for inspection by the FHCASA
  - If he refuses, he will be immediately suspended until the next Board Meeting where a final decision will be made
  - If the bat is sent for testing, the Director will remove the tape and write down the ID number and give that to the player as a receipt
  - If necessary, the FHCASA will send the bat to the manufacturer for testing
  - If the bat is not considered to be altered at the manufacturer, the player will receive a new bat purchased by the FHCASA just like the one that was tested

#### ALTERED BAT POLICY

- A. The FHCASA will take the bat when a Player is struck directly by a batted ball and the Player is injured.

- The same penalties mentioned above will prevail, if necessary
- The FHCASA reserves the right to confiscate any equipment deemed questionable for legal play.
- Anytime a bat is tested on site, and the bat fails the onsite test, the Player is to be removed for the remainder of the tournament
- Additional penalties will be determined by the FHCASA
- Any Player knowingly using an altered bat in a FHCASA tournament is subject to the following
  - If the Player refuses to hand over the bat, he will be immediately ejected from that game. He could receive a penalty from a suspension to a lifetime suspension from FHCASA tournament play
  - It is up to the Board to determine whether the bat will be sent to the manufacturer or to be checked on site
  - If the bat is sent, the player will be allowed to play until the test process is completed.
  - Even if a bat is found to be altered, the results of the game will stand
  - If the bat is found to be altered, the Player will be suspended for five years from participation in FHCASA activities

#### INCLEMENT WEATHER – SHORTENED GAMES **\*\* Now referred to as “Speed Up games”**

- In the event of inclement weather, the tournament director/commissioner may make the decision to play shortened games. All rules of the game will still be in effect, but the game times will be shortened:
  - For all age divisions, a time limit of 45 minutes shall be allotted, **unless extended by FHC staff.**
  - In the speed up game format, three full innings is considered a complete game.
- Any game started in the regular game format on Saturday will be completed utilizing the existing time remaining on the clock or 30 minutes, whichever is less.
- If a speed up game format is used on Saturday and the weather is good on Sunday, the decision could be made to return to the regular game format.
- **Should a heat advisory be given on game day, the board will have the authority to implement the speed up format for player safety.**

#### • AWARDS

At the conclusion of each tournament, the winners of each bracket shall receive an award for the sponsor and each individual, up to 15.

- Bracket winners will be determined as follows:
- Bracket record
- If there is a two-way tie, in a normal bracket, head-to-head play is used. In a 3 or 4 team bracket, all games are used to determine the least number of runs given up, or the most scored, to determine the bracket winner.
- For a 3-4-5-way tie, least runs allowed in all games played.
- Any teams still tied after 3 above, the most runs scored in all games played.

- If still tied, winner shall be determined by a coin flip.
- If a tournament cannot be completed, the awards are determined as follows:
- Win/loss record
- Head-to-head play
- Least runs allowed in all games played
- Runs scored in all games played
- Blind draw of teams in the bracket/division

\*\*\*The FHSASA Board of Directors reserves the right to add, delete, or modify the Playing Rules to make our game safer and better for our teams. We always strive to improve our Association.