
RULE 2

Field of Play

The following information regarding the playing facility and field specifications applies to all competition regulated by the NCAA Softball Rules. In some cases, specifications applicable to hosting NCAA Divisions I, II and III championships play may follow the most strict interpretation of a rule. Note that additional criteria also may be required. Institutions interested in submitting a bid to host championship play should consult the current NCAA Softball Championships handbook and contact the championships group at the NCAA national office.

2.1 Backstop

A backstop is required. It should be a minimum distance of 25 feet and a maximum distance of 30 feet from home plate. (See diagram.) It is recommended that the backstop be vertical and not extend over the playing field. When the backstop is wood, cement or brick, it is recommended that it be padded.

2.2 Base Distance

The official diamond shall have base lines of 60 feet. (See diagram.)

2.3 Baseline

The direct line between any two consecutive bases.

2.4 Bases—First, Second and Third

First, second and third bases shall be white canvas bags or suitable rubberized material securely fastened to the ground. Each bag shall be 15 inches square, filled with soft material to a thickness of 1-1/2 to 3-1/2 inches. Bases may have tapered edges. A release-type base may be used. The double first base may not be used.

2.5 Batter's Boxes

The batter's boxes, one on each side of home plate, shall measure 3 feet by 7 feet, including the lines. The outer edge of the lines of the batter's box shall be 6 inches from home plate. The front line of each box shall be 4 feet in

front of a line drawn through the center of home plate. The four lines must be drawn. (See diagram.)

2.6 Bullpen

It is highly recommended that all intercollegiate softball facilities have at least one regulation bullpen. It is recommended that there be separate bullpens for each team; however, if only one bullpen is available, it should be large enough to accommodate two pitchers at the same time (one pitcher from each team). In either case, the warm-up areas for the pitchers of the home team and the visiting team must be comparable. The bullpen(s) shall be equipped with regular-size home plates and pitcher's plates placed at regulation distance apart. The pitching plates should be set in dirt, and the home plates shall have a backstop if outside the field of play. It is recommended that bullpens be set up so that pitchers will be throwing in the same direction in practice as when they throw in the game.

A bullpen must be in satisfactory condition for pregame warm-up for the visiting team. If the visiting bullpen is not comparable to the home team's bullpen, the visiting team's pitcher(s) shall be allowed to warm up in the home team's bullpen for up to 20 of the final 30 minutes before game time.

2.7 Catcher's Box

The catcher's box shall be 7 feet in length from the rear outside corners of the batters' boxes and shall be 8 feet, 5 inches wide, including the lines. The lines must be drawn. (See diagram.)

2.8 Coaches' Boxes

Each coach's box shall be marked by two lines. The first is a line 15 feet long drawn parallel to and 8 feet from the first- and third-base lines extended from the back edge of the bases toward home plate. The second is a line 3 feet long drawn perpendicular to the end of the 15-foot line closest to home plate. (See diagram.)

2.9 Dugouts

It is recommended that all intercollegiate softball facilities have dugouts that are enclosed at each end and at the rear. Each dugout must be large enough to accommodate all players and team personnel (approximately 25 people). It is recommended that each dugout be covered and contain a bat rack, a helmet rack, a water cooler and an electrical outlet.

It is recommended that each dugout be located on the sideline boundary at a point of equal distance from home plate and first base, and home plate and third base, respectively.

2.10 Fences

It is highly recommended that the playing field be enclosed completely by sideline fences and a permanent home-run fence in a smooth arc of not more than 235 feet from home plate. If a 6-foot fence, it is highly recommended to be a minimum of 190 feet in left and right fields and 220 in center field. If a 4-foot fence, it is highly recommended to be a minimum of 210 feet in left and right fields and 230 in center field. If a temporary home-run fence is used, it must be secured so as not to collapse on and displace the foul pole. For an unfenced field, an out-of-bounds line shall be used to define dead-ball areas.

2.11 Foul Pole

The foul pole must be a pole that extends vertically upward from the foul line at the point it intersects the home-run fence. The pole and/or the line shall be visible connecting the ground to the top of the pole. The pole should extend at least 10 feet from the ground and shall be immediately adjacent to or attached to the outside of the home-run fence.

It is recommended that screening be attached to the fair side of the pole to enhance the visibility of a ball leaving the field of play near the pole. The screening width should be at least 6 inches and should extend from the top of the fence to the top of the pole. In addition, it is recommended that the color of the foul pole should contrast with the background so it will stand out, preferably white, yellow or optic orange.

Note: A field that does not have a home-run fence shall not have a foul pole.

2.12 Home Plate

Home plate must be a five-sided slab of whitened rubber or other suitable material. The sides shall be 8-1/2 inches long, and the edge facing the pitcher shall be 17 inches wide and parallel to the pitcher's plate. The sides of the point facing the catcher shall be 12 inches long. (See diagram.)

Home plate shall be set in fair territory with the two 12-inch edges coinciding with the foul lines extending from home plate to first base and to third base and with the 17-inch edge facing the pitcher.

The top edges of home plate shall be beveled, and the plate shall be fixed in the ground, level with the ground surface.

2.13 Infield

The infield shall be level, but to allow for natural surface drainage, it is recommended that the entire playing area be graded 1 percent from the edge of the pitcher's plate to the sideline boundaries of the field.

Note: The center of second base is one corner of the 60-foot square, and the measurement to first base and third base is to the back edge of each base. All measurements are to be made from the apex or back point of home plate. (See diagram.)

It is highly recommended that a skinned infield be used. The skinned area should be determined by measuring a 60-foot arc from the front center of the pitcher's plate. (See diagram.)

2.14 Layout

For the layout of the playing field, refer to the drawing showing official dimensions.

All new fields should be oriented with consideration to the following factors: protection of players, comfort of spectators, season of use (February-June), latitude (north to south), east-west geographical location within time zone, prevailing winds, daylight saving time, background, and obstacles or barriers. In general, those considerations will lead to home plate being located in the southwest corner of the field, and a line drawn through home plate, the center of the pitcher's plate and out to centerfield will extend to the northeast.

When constructing a softball diamond, first designate a point for the rear tip of home plate. Secondly, with the aid of the above guidelines, locate the desired direction of second base. Measure 84 feet, 10-1/4 inches in this direction. This is the center of second base. With the tape still in this position, locate the pitcher's plate 43 feet from home plate toward second base. With the tape still fastened to the rear point of home plate, measure 60 feet toward first base and scribe a short arc. Also measure 60 feet toward third base and scribe a short arc. Now fasten the tape at the center of second base and measure 60 feet toward first and third base, respectively. Scribe a short arc each time. The back edges of first and third bases are located where the respective arcs intersect. The skinned area should be determined by measuring a 60-foot arc from the front center of the pitcher's plate.

2.15 Lines (Markings)

2.15.1 Lines (foul lines, running lane, pitcher's circle and lane, dead-ball areas, coaching, batter's and catcher's boxes) denote spaces to which players or coaches are restricted. The outermost edge of each line is the restricting boundary and shall meet the dimensions defined in the rules. To be considered "within" the space, the player or coach must not have any part of the foot extend beyond the outermost edge of the line. To be considered "on the line," the foot of the player or coach may extend over the boundary as long as the foot is in contact with the line. In either case, a player or coach must not have an entire foot in contact with the ground completely outside the line that defines the space.

The outside edge of the first- and third-base lines and their extensions should correspond with the outside edge of first and third base, and the outside edge of the pitcher's lane should correspond with the outside edge of the pitcher's plate and batter's boxes.

All lines on the playing field shall be marked with chalk or material that is not injurious or irritating to the eyes or skin. Lime or caustic material of any kind is prohibited. All lines must be 2 to 4 inches in width.

2.15.2 A player shall not intentionally remove any lines on the field nor intentionally cover the pitcher's or home plate.

A.R. 2.15.2: Deliberately covering a line with infield material is considered removing the line.

EFFECT—A strike shall be called on the batter if the offense intentionally violates the rule, and a ball shall be awarded to the batter if the defense intentionally violates the rule.

Notes:

1. *Lines shall be redrawn at the discretion of the umpire. Every attempt should be made to avoid significantly delaying the game; however, if the lines can be redrawn between innings, the umpire may direct the grounds crew to do so.*
 2. *A batter may not be intentionally walked by erasing lines.*
- 2.15.3 A coach shall not intentionally remove any lines on the field nor intentionally cover the pitcher's or home plate.

EFFECT—The umpire shall issue a warning to the offending coach. Subsequent violation by the same individual shall result in ejection.

2.16 Nonregulation Field

The umpires have the responsibility to check the playing field to be sure all is legal. Every effort should be made by the umpires to obtain the correct dimensions. Any game started on a nonregulation field shall not be protested for this reason.

Note: Once a game has started, if it is discovered by or brought to the attention of the umpire that the chalked lines, or pitching or base distances, are incorrect, the error shall be corrected immediately, with no penalty, and the game shall continue from that point.

2.17 On-Deck Circle

The on-deck circles shall be two circular areas with a 2-1/2-foot radius in which the on-deck batters are restricted for warm-up swings. They are located to the side and away from home plate. (See diagram.)

2.18 Pitcher's Circle

The pitcher's circle shall be a circular area with an 8-foot radius, drawn from the center of the front edge of the pitcher's plate. (See diagram.)

2.19 Pitcher's Lane

The area to which the pitcher is restricted when delivering the pitch. The pitcher's lane shall be 8 feet in length extending along the outer edges of the pitcher's plate toward the inside edges of the inside front corners of the batter's boxes.

2.20 Pitcher's Plate

The pitcher's plate shall be a rectangular slab of whitened rubber or other suitable material, 24 inches long and 6 inches wide. (See diagram.) It shall be fixed in the ground, and the top of the plate shall be level with the ground surface. The nearer edge of the pitcher's plate shall be 43 feet from the back point of home plate. (See diagram.)

2.21 Runner's Lane

The area that is the last half of the distance between home plate and first base where a batter-runner must run to avoid interfering with a fielder's attempt to receive a thrown ball. It is bounded by a 30-foot line drawn in

foul territory parallel to and 3 feet from the first-base line, starting at a point halfway between home plate and the back edge of first base. (See diagram.) The runner's lane should be skinned.

2.22 Scoreboard

See Games Management Rule 5.14.

2.23 Sideline Territory

It is recommended that the unobstructed area between home plate and the backstop, and from the base line to the sideline boundary, be a minimum distance of 25 feet or a maximum of 30 feet extended to a point down the line as deep as the home-run fence. (See diagram.)

2.24 Tarp

Whenever possible, a tarp should be stored off the field and in dead-ball territory. If a tarp is stored in the field of play, thrown and batted balls rebounding off the tarp remain in play unless they become lodged in the tarp or its roller. A fielder attempting to catch a fly ball near the tarp may not have either foot on the tarp.

2.25 Video, Audio, LED Matrix Boards

See Games Management Rule 5.15.

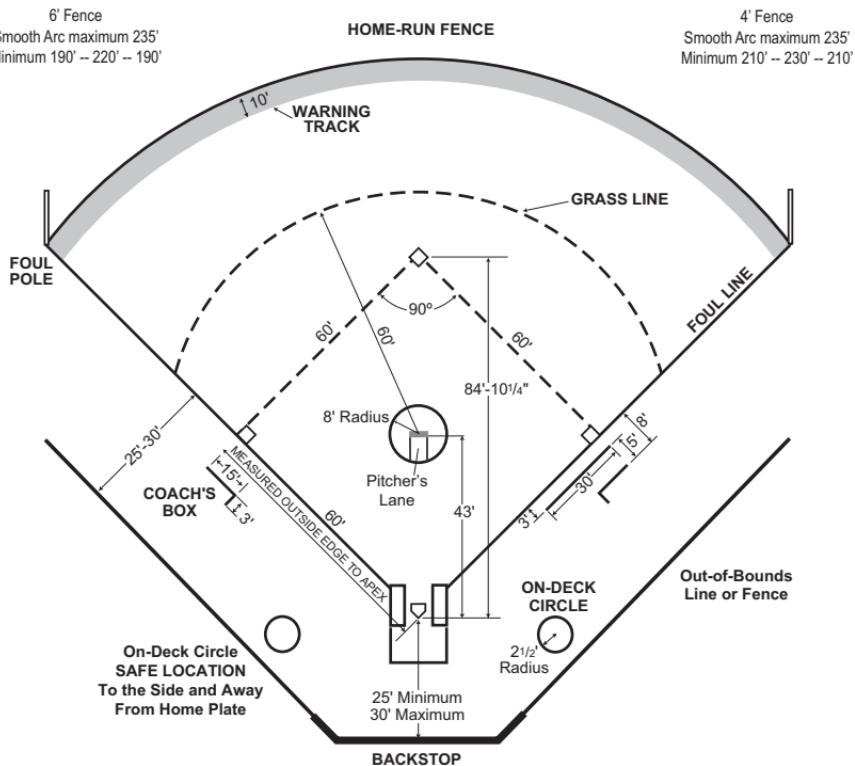
2.26 Warning Track

It is recommended that a warning track be constructed in front of the home-run fence and/or sideline fence. The warning track should be at least 10 feet in width.

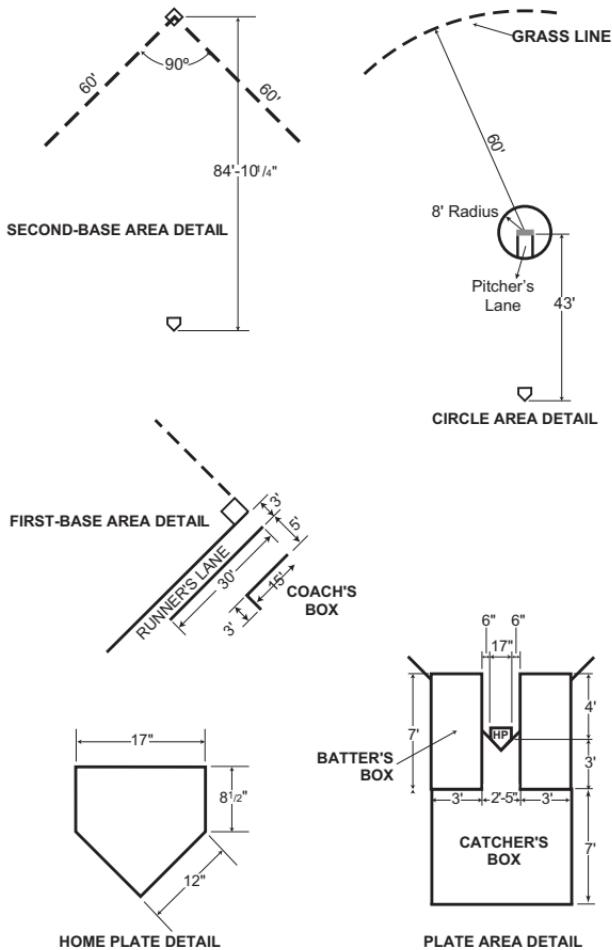
Dimension Table

Backstop	25-foot minimum and 30-foot maximum distance* from home plate
Bases	15 inches square and 1½ to 3½ inches thick
a. home plate to first/ third	a. 60 feet from back point of home plate to the back of the base
b. home plate to second	b. 84 feet 10⅓ inches from back point of home plate to the middle of the base
Batter's boxes	6 inches from home plate; 3 feet wide by 7 feet long; front lines 4 feet in front of a line drawn through the center of home plate
Catcher's box	7 feet in length from rear outside corners of the batter's boxes; 8 feet, 5 inches wide

Coaches' boxes	Marked by two lines. The first is a line 15 feet long drawn parallel to and 8 feet from the first and third base lines extended from the back edge of the bases toward home plate; the second is a line 3 feet long drawn perpendicular to the end of the 15-foot line closest to home plate (see diagram)
Fences*	Smooth arc between sideline fences of not more than 235 feet from home plate
	4-foot fence – 210 feet in right and left fields and 230 feet in center field
	6-foot fence – 190 feet in right and left fields and 220 feet in center field
Foul pole*	Extend a minimum of 10 feet* above the ground; screening* attached to fair side at least 6 inches wide*
Home plate	Front edge 17 inches wide; sides are parallel to the inside lines of batter's boxes and are 8 ½ inches long; sides of the point facing the catcher are 12 inches long
Infield	Center of second base is one corner of 60-foot square and the measurement to first and third bases is to the back edge of each base; all measurements made from the apex or back point of home plate
Skinned portion*	60-foot* arc from the front center of the pitcher's plate
Lines (markings)	2 to 4 inches wide
On-deck circle	5 feet in diameter; 2½ feet in radius
Pitcher's circle	8-foot radius, drawn from the center of the front edge of the pitcher's plate
Pitcher's lane	8-foot lines drawn from the outer edges of the pitcher's plate toward the inside edges of the inside front corners of the batter's boxes
Pitcher's plate	24 inches long by 6 inches wide; 43 feet from the back point of home plate
Runner's lane	30-foot line drawn in foul territory parallel to and 3 feet from the first base line, starting halfway between home plate and back edge of first base
Sideline territory	25-foot minimum and 30-foot minimum distance* from the foul lines extended to a point down the line as deep as the home-run fence
Warning track*	A minimum of 10 feet wide*
*Recommended	
Note 1: The umpire should make every effort to obtain the correct playing-field dimensions.	
Note 2: Once a game has started, if it is discovered by or brought to the attention of the umpire that the chalked lines, or pitching or base distances, are incorrect, the error shall be corrected immediately, with no penalty, and the game shall continue from that point.	
Note 3: It is recommended that a steel tape or other reliable form of measurement be used to measure distances.	



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