



RETURN TO PLAY GUIDELINES

VERSION #3 – JUNE 10, 2020



INTRODUCTION

The return to play information in this document is geared to protect players, coaches, umpires, and spectators with respect to not only local public health guidelines, but provincial/territorial and federal guidelines as well to return to the diamond. Please keep in mind that this is a generalized document and all material may not be relevant throughout the country. All teams, leagues, players, coaches and umpires will need to follow the recommendations based on their respective area and situation.





DISCLAIMER

The items listed in this document are recommended safeguards for restarting Softball activity in Canada. Provincial/Territorial Associations, Leagues, Tournament Hosts, Staff, Players, Coaches, Parents and Spectators should continue to follow Federal, Provincial and Local Governmental guidelines. Feel free to make your guidelines more stringent if you deem necessary. Remember that information and recommendations during the pandemic are very fluid and are subject to change.

SAFE SPORT

Provincial/Territorial Associations and Local Associations should continue to ensure a safe, welcoming, and accessible sport environment, free from all forms of maltreatment. In addition to the recommended return to play guidelines, all safe sport guidelines (ie Rule of Two, background screening, open/observable environments, coach education/training, etc) are necessary to provide a healthy and positive experience for all participants.



PRE-GAME



- 🇨🇦 Recommend that players, parents, coaches and umpires are aware of safety protocols prior to arriving (via email if possible)
- 🇨🇦 It is recommended that signage is well displayed in the entry area regarding the spreading of the virus, proper hygiene, information on physical distancing and what to do if you have any symptoms.
- 🇨🇦 Facilities should develop protocol on entry into a ballpark for the teams and umpires.
- 🇨🇦 Encourage the wearing of a mask
- 🇨🇦 It is recommended that everyone complete a Declaration Form before entering the facility.
- 🇨🇦 If the Declaration Form is not available, standard screening questions on each person's health should be asked:
 - Have you travelled out of country in the last 14 days?
 - Do you have any symptoms – cough, shortness of breath, or fever?
 - Have you been diagnosed with or waiting on test results of Covid-19?
 - Have you recently (within the last 14 days) been exposed to someone diagnosed with Covid-19?
 - If a person answers yes to any of these questions, they must be denied entry to the facility.
- 🇨🇦 If a person is denied entry because of pre-screening, a person should be encouraged to visit a medical facility or hospital immediately and ensure that persons contact information is maintained.

PRE-GAME (CONTINUED)



- ⦿ Immediately recommend that everyone wash hands or sanitize hands upon entering facility by having wash stations and/or ample sanitizer available.
- ⦿ Coaches meeting: only one coach should be allowed for each team and should stay 2 metres apart. Suggested to be the top outside corner of each batter's box when available. Hand lineups to umpire, and umpire verbally approves or asks any questions about the lineup. No players should be present.
- ⦿ Avoid handshakes and team meetings.
- ⦿ Direct spectators to a viewing area away from players – possibly behind the fence in the outfield and request that they maintain physical distancing.
- ⦿ Encourage that pregame warm up is limited to 15 minutes – any stretching or non-softball warm up should be done away from fields.
- ⦿ It is suggested that all players sanitize hands after warming up before entering the bench area and between innings.
- ⦿ Ensure diamond layout is proper for coaches' box, on deck circle, umpire/catcher area to maintain physical distancing when possible.
- ⦿ A designated smoking area far away from the playing field with proper disposable cigarette canisters/ashtrays are required. Smoking or throwing away butts near playing field is not permitted.

FIELD OF PLAY – BENCH AREA



- ⦿ Dugout / bench area should be disinfected prior to anyone stepping into the area. A disinfectant spray or wipes should be used to ensure the area is clean. The cleansing will also need to be done in between games.
- ⦿ Allow players to spread out beyond the bench either along the fence line or behind the bench to maintain distancing of 2 metres. The area can be marked with caution tape to extend the bench area.
- ⦿ Individual player bags should not be in the bench area but in the designated extended bench area to help keep the pathway to the field clear.
- ⦿ A closed garbage can (with lid) is recommended at the bench area to allow for disposing of tissues, sanitizing wipes and other refuse.
- ⦿ All players, coaches and umpires should have their own water bottles/sports drink. No community water jugs or shared plastic/paper cups.
- ⦿ Sunflower seeds, gum, chewing tobacco, candy etc. or spitting of any kind should not be allowed.
- ⦿ Each bench area is recommended to have a first aid kit with a supply of materials including masks and gloves to address any medical concerns or injuries. Teams should have a designated medical person to attend to injuries or issues.

THE GAME



- Game balls should not be shared between the teams. Each team, or the home team, should provide sanitized approved or mutually agreed upon similar game balls. Balls should be controlled by the respective benches. If a ball goes out of play, the defensive team will throw a sanitized game ball into play. The out of play ball will be returned to the bench and be sanitized. All balls should be wiped and disinfected after each half inning by the appropriate team.
- Bats – players should have their own bats. Each bat is sanitized prior to the game or if shared it needs to be wiped prior to another player using.
- Once the game begins, umpires should not handle any equipment (bats, helmets, etc.). If an umpire must handle equipment (e.g. safety check) the equipment should be sanitized prior to use.
- Equipment should not be shared amongst players, especially gloves and helmets
- The sharing of catcher's equipment between players or teams should be strongly discouraged. All catchers should have their own gear, especially a mask. If it is necessary to share catcher's equipment, the equipment will be sanitized each half inning.
- On deck batter should be limited to only 1 bat and stay in designated area until stoppage of play.
- Refrain from the use of bat boys/girls. The batter should be responsible to pick up their own bat if an out is made. If the batter reaches a base, the on-deck person should retrieve the bat by the barrel side and return it to the bench avoiding contact with the grip.

THE GAME (CONTINUED)



- ⦿ All plays at all bases should be force plays including home plate. There should be no tag plays, including catcher pick off attempts, to eliminate potential contact.
- ⦿ Conferences should be allowed at the pitching area only with the coach and pitcher/catcher while maintaining proper distancing. It is recommended the coach wears a mask when coming onto the field.
- ⦿ It is recommended that the coach wear a mask or cover their mouth while maintaining proper distancing from the umpire if there is any lineup change or coach challenge/dispute. The coach will ask for time from his current location and once granted, the umpire will go to a designated safe area to receive the change or discuss with the coach.
- ⦿ It is recommended that players and coaches are not to shake hands or high five throughout the game.
- ⦿ There should be no post game handshakes, celebrations, team meetings or cooldowns. Teams are asked to exit the bench area and facility as efficiently and safely as possible. A designated person from each team should ensure the area is clean and sanitized for the next team.
- ⦿ Players are asked not to congregate in the parking lots.
- ⦿ Players are encouraged to wash their equipment and shower once they get home.

TOURNAMENT CONSIDERATIONS



Note – All Return to Play guidelines should be taken into consideration for tournaments. These tournament consideration points serve as extra precautions that should be followed if appropriate to your event.

- Less teams with more time scheduled between games to allow for more cleaning and sanitizing of heavy traffic areas.
- Format changes with less guaranteed games.
- Registration and payment of fees needs to be completed online.
- The posting of scores and standings should be done online.
- Take everyone's temperature upon entering the facility, if possible.
- Avoid or limit what is sold at concessions to packaged items. Create 2-metre markings to maintain distancing in line.
- Ensure there is an inclement weather plan that can accommodate people while maintaining appropriate distancing. This could be as simple as telling people to go to their own vehicles.
- Eliminate vendors and souvenir sales.
- Frequent PA announcements regarding hygiene, physical distancing, and Covid-19 safety measures



UMPIRES, RULES AND MECHANICS RECOMMENDATIONS

FIELD RECOMMENDATIONS

UMPIRES

- 🇨🇦 Umpires who are not comfortable with an unsafe environment may remove themselves at any point without fear of discipline.
- 🇨🇦 Should be encouraged to wear gloves.
- 🇨🇦 Should be encouraged to wear a mask.
 - Masks, if worn, should be neutral in color.
 - Masks, if worn, should not have designs on them.
- 🇨🇦 Recommended to have their own hand sanitizer.



FIELD RECOMMENDATIONS



RULES

NOTE: Additional to current rules, not replacing

Rule 4, Section 1.c.1: Base coaches must always stay 2 metres from a runner or batter they wish to talk to, including during offensive conferences.

Rule 5 Section 9.b: Coaches holding defensive conference must stay on the home plate side of the pitcher's circle and the pitcher/catcher should be on the opposite side with all maintaining 2 metres apart. All other players should remain in position and not participate in the conference.

Rule 4, Section 9: It is recommended that only players and coaches be in the dugout. Players may also be out of the dugout in the extended bench area. The number of players and coaches in the dugout will depend on the size of the dugout, maintaining 2 metre social distance.

Rule 4, Section 9: Players should not be allowed to leave dugout area to congratulate players when scoring or after home runs.

Rule 6, Section 6.b.3 (FP), Section 5.b.3 (SP): Pitchers should not be permitted to lick fingers.



FIELD RECOMMENDATIONS

SLO-PITCH MECHANICS

- 🇨🇦 2 umpire system, BU will start on the line at 1B.
- 🇨🇦 Remove being in the slot. They can be in front, behind or to the side of the catcher keeping the 2 metres distance from the catcher.

FAST PITCH MECHANICS

- 🇨🇦 Plate umpire to position deeper than normal to call balls and strikes

FIELD RECOMMENDATIONS



PRE-GAME

- 🇨🇦 Umpires are allowed to wear gloves and a mask if they desire.
- 🇨🇦 Umpires will still check equipment before a game.
 - Bats should be placed outside the dugout away from players.
 - Umpires may wear disposable gloves.

GAME TIME

- 🇨🇦 Use of verbal exchange from safe distance when making lineup changes from the coach to scorer and opposing team is recommended.
- 🇨🇦 Umpire should maintain 2 metre distance from any player as a starting position when rotated and/or counter rotated.
- 🇨🇦 Umpires should not handle equipment on the field during play.
- 🇨🇦 Umpire to umpire and coach to umpire interaction should be 2 metres apart.
- 🇨🇦 It is recommended that the catcher be 2 metres from the plate when needing to dust of the plate.
- 🇨🇦 Huddles off the field with coaches and players should maintain 2 metres social distancing.

FIELD RECOMMENDATIONS

UMPIRES

- 🇨🇦 Recommended to wear masks in between games.
- 🇨🇦 While off the field should follow the guidelines of the tournament and wear a mask if required.
- 🇨🇦 Umpires should follow 2 metre distancing guidelines.



UMPIRE ROOM

- 🇨🇦 Should be set up for umpires to be at least 3 metres apart.
- 🇨🇦 Only umpires changing for the next game should be in the room and be done dressing and exit prior to the umpires on the field coming in to change out of their gear. Umpires should remain in a closed change room for the minimum time possible.
- 🇨🇦 Umpires should bring a disinfecting spray to spray their uniform and or gear after each game.
- 🇨🇦 Participants who fail to comply with the distancing standards will receive a warning. Subsequent failures may result in removal from the game.

TOURNAMENTS – UMPIRE MEETINGS & CLINICS



PRIOR TO MEETING

- 🇨🇦 Umpires should be instructed that if they are exhibiting symptoms of possible exposure to COVID-19, such as fever, that they should not come to events or work until such time as the participant has been tested and / or cleared.
- 🇨🇦 Check with Tournament Director/Coordinator to make sure Clinic Room is large enough to set up chairs etc. using 2 metre physical distancing guidelines.

IMPORTANT NOTE TO UICS

- 🇨🇦 Anything that is recommended as an adjustment to the 'norm' must be communicated to all umpires by letter or email prior to the tournament.

DURING MEETING

- 🇨🇦 It is recommended to set up the chairs appropriately to maintain 2 metre distancing.
- 🇨🇦 If you have handouts please follow the recommendations:
 - Place it on the table for pick-up OR use gloves to individually hand out.
- 🇨🇦 “Greetings” should not include physical contact like hugs or handshakes.
- 🇨🇦 To Umpire-in-Chief's (UICs) – Recommend ‘wiping down’ items that you may touch such as PowerPoint projector, slide clicker, etc.
- 🇨🇦 Recommend to all to wash hands after leaving the clinic.

THANK YOU TO ALL ESSENTIAL AND FRONT LINE WORKERS
STAY SAFE



VISIT [SOFTBALL.CA](https://softball.ca) FOR MORE DETAILS AND UPDATES