

2026 CHICO SENIOR SOFTBALL RULES

(Revised Nov 11, 2025)

([Summary of Rule Changes](#) available at end of document)

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2026 CHICO SENIOR SOFTBALL RULES

1. PLAYING RULES:

Chico Senior Softball will use current **SSUSA** and **NCSSA** playing rules except as modified in this document.

SSUSA rules can be found at: <https://seniorsoftball.com/?page=7>

NCSSA rules can be viewed at: <http://ncssa.club/ncssa-rules/>

2. PITCHERS RUBBER:

The pitching rubber will be extended back 6 feet. Pitcher must start his delivery from anywhere within this area.

3. BANNED BATS:

Any bat that is more than 50% composite, any titanium, or tournament bats may not be used. In addition, any bat that has a composite or titanium barrel may not be used. The result of doing so will be ejection of the player. Any questionable bat must be approved by the Board of Directors prior to use.

There is **one exception** to this rule: Players whose league age is 78 years or older in **ANY DIVISION** may use these bats. If that bat is used by a non-authorized batter, less than 78, that batter will automatically be called out after the 1st pitch, whether the ball/pitch was put into play or not.

4. STRIKE MAT:

An extended home plate measuring 19" wide by 34.5" deep will be used. Only legal pitches (6' – 12' high) hitting the mat will be called a strike. The entire strike mat is considered home plate for force outs.

5. TREES:

Any batted ball that hits a tree before coming into contact with the ground or a fielder will be treated like any other fly ball. The umpire shall determine fair, foul, or out of play, based on where the ball first made contact with the tree, and all runners advance at their own risk based on the umpires' ruling.

Any batted ball that hits a tree, and is called fair or foul, and is then caught by a fielder, positioned in fair or foul territory, before coming into contact with the ground is a fly ball out and all other rules pertaining to caught fly balls apply.

Any batted ball that hits a tree, and is called foul or out of play, and then comes into contact with the ground will be ruled as a foul ball to the batter.

6. LINE-UPS:

Managers must play all team players who are present and not injured. All players that are on the line up for the day must bat and must play at least 3 innings on defense, regardless of whether the game goes all 7 innings. If a player does not play at least 3 innings on defense, then the opposing team will receive 2 runs for every inning not played (max 6 runs per player). If a player is not able to bat or play defense, the player may courtesy run once per inning, max of three times in the Masters.

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7. PLAYER LEAVING GAME:

If a player must leave the game for any reason other than by ejection, his place in the batting order will be bypassed without penalty. If a pool player is picked up, that team will be assessed a 1 run penalty. A pool player may be added at the end of the batting order to replace him. That spot in the line-up will not be penalized. In the case of an ejected player, the next time his spot comes up in the batting order he will be out but then all other times his spot will be skipped. Rule #28 still applies.

8. RUN LIMIT:

Teams may score up to 5 runs per inning except for the last or open inning in which unlimited runs may be scored. The umpire will announce the last inning unless it is the seventh (open) inning.

9. TIME LIMIT & PITCH COUNT:

A time limit will be enforced for all games except for tournament Championship games.

STARTING TIMES & PITCH COUNTS:

5:30 & 6:30 (Open & Vets) – 1st game will start at exactly **5:30** whether teams are ready or not. Umpire will call for open inning at **6:20 (50 minutes)**. 2nd game will start as close to **6:30** as possible. If started on time, umpire will call for open inning at **7:20 (50 minutes)**. Batters will start each at-bat with a **1 and 1 count**. Any foul ball hit after batter has 2 strikes is an out.

5:30 & 6:45 (Open & Vets) – 1st game will start at exactly **5:30** whether teams are ready or not. Umpire will call for open inning at **6:30 (60 minutes)**. 2nd game will start as close to **6:45** as possible. If started on time, umpire will call for open inning at **7:45 (60 minutes)**. Batters will start each at-bat with a **1 and 1 count**. Any foul ball hit after batter has 2 strikes is an out.

10:00 & 11:30 (Masters) – Weeks (ALL). 1st game will start at exactly **10:00** whether teams are ready or not. Umpire will call open inning at **11:15 (75 minutes)**. 2nd game will begin as close to **11:30** as possible. If started on time, umpire will call for open inning at **12:45 (75 minutes)**. Batters will start each at-bat with **1 and 1 count**. 1 additional foul ball or hitting the pitching screen is allowed after 2 strikes, any foul ball or hit screen after that is an out.

10. TIE GAMES:

Tie games will not be played off, even if time permits.

11. FLIP FLOP RULE:

If in the last inning of play the home team is behind by **8 or more runs**, then the home team will bat first during the last inning.

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12. ENCROACHMENT LINE:

Masters: A line will be drawn behind the infield in an arc 175' from home plate.

Open & Veterans: A line will be drawn behind the infield in an arc 200' from home plate. Encroachment across this line before the ball is hit will result in the umpire awarding 1st base to the batter. Infielders must be on the infield dirt and outfielders must be behind the line when the ball is hit.

13. THROW TO FIRST FROM THE OUTFIELD:

If a ball hit to the outfield (the grass) is first touched by an Outfielder, the batter cannot be thrown out at first base.

14. SCORING LINE:

A scoring line shall extend from the corner of home plate closest to 3rd base into foul territory at a 90-degree angle from the 3rd base line. Runners attempting to score must make contact with the ground **on or over** this line before a force out is made at home plate mat.

15. SLIDING (Open & Veterans Divisions):

Sliding is permitted, however sliding into a base that endangers or interferes with the fielder will be an out. (Best bet - stop on the base without sliding.)

16. OVER RUNNING (Open & Veterans Divisions):

Over Running is not allowed at 2nd & 3rd base. Any runner not on a base when tagged will be called out.

17. VEERING (Open & Veterans Divisions):

When advancing, the runner must veer in or out to avoid contact with the defensive player if a play is being made at that base. He must attempt to veer away from where throw is coming from. Failure to veer will result in the runner being called out. The defensive player must stand clear of the base and the runner's base path when no play is imminent.

18. SLIDING (Masters Division):

A runner will be called out if he slides or dives into a base, however he may slide or dive returning to a base.

19. OVER RUNNING (Masters Division):

Base runners, when advancing, are permitted to over-run a base without liability of being called out. If the base runner makes an obvious move to advance, he is subject to being tagged out. If a base runner runs through without intent to advance, and then wants to advance, he must re-touch the base before advancing. Violations result in runner being called out.

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20. VEERING (Masters Division):

When advancing, the runner must veer in or out to avoid contact with the defensive player if a play is being made at that base. He must attempt to veer away from where throw is coming from. Failure to veer will result in the runner being called out. The defensive player must stand clear of the base and the runner's base path when no play is imminent.

21. FORCE OUTS (Masters Division):

We will use force outs at **all** bases. Runner must have his foot down **on or over** the base or line before force is made to be considered safe. If a runner is returning to a base, the defensive player must tag him to be out.

22. FIRST BASE DOUBLE BAG:

A double bag will be used at 1st base. On all initial plays at 1st, the runner must use the outside (orange) bag **ONLY** and the defensive player the inside (white) bag **ONLY**. The runner may use the inside (white) bag if rounding to advance or returning to the base or if the outside (orange) bag is blocked by the fielder.

23. COMMITMENT LINE:

Base runners crossing a commitment line drawn 30' from home plate must continue to the plate and cannot return to 3rd base. Runner will be called out if he does so.

24. COURTESY RUNNERS:

A courtesy runner may only enter prior to the first pitch to any batter. Any team member may run, but only **once per inning**. If you are run for in any given inning, you may not be a courtesy runner during that inning. If you are a courtesy runner for a teammate and your spot in the batting order comes up, that spot will be considered an **out**.

There is no limitation on the number of times per game you may Courtesy Run except as stated above.

25. COURTESY RUNNERS FROM THE BACKSTOP:

The courtesy runner must start from the center pole of the backstop and not start running until the batter hits the ball. Players in any division that are injured and cannot play offense or defense can still be a courtesy runner.

- In the **Masters'** Division, you may use a courtesy runner from home plate if necessary due to an injury for any player during any game.
- In the **Veterans** Division, you may use a maximum of 2 courtesy runners per game from home plate if necessary due to an injury. The players that a courtesy runner will be used for must be declared before the game begins with the umpire.
- In the **Open** Division, no courtesy runner from home plate will be used.

26. ILLEGAL COURTESY RUNNERS:

Illegal Courtesy Runners will be considered a correctable error with no penalty to the offending team if corrected prior to the 1st pitch of the next batter. After the first pitch to the next batter an Illegal Courtesy Runner will be called out when identified.

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27. WALKS:

All walks will be single base walks only. All players in all divisions are only awarded 1st base for all walks.

28. FORFEITS:

Each team must have **6 team members** at the start of the game. If a team is short of this number, the umpire shall call the game a forfeit and the team with the required number will win. If both teams are short players, the umpire will call a **double forfeit** and a tie game with the score recorded as 0-0.

29. GAME CANCELLATION / RAINOUTS:

CARD (via the rain line) will determine if fields are playable and cancel when appropriate. A Board Member may override CARD's determination; however, the Board Member must contact CARD and any Team that is affected by the change. Only a Board Member of each division can cancel a game(s) because of **HEAT HEALTH CONCERNS**. Each player is still responsible for making their own decision to play or not to play. If a team cannot field enough players (minimum 6) then the team will forfeit the game.

Chico Senior Softball Heat Index Guidelines:

The CSS Heat Index was established at the July 17, 2025, board meeting for possible game cancellations/reschedules due to excessive heat. The CSS guide shall be,

- a. CSS will use the "Heat Index" rather than the actual outside temperature.
- b. The "Heat Index" is defined as the "Feels Like" temperature.
- c. The CSS Board may reschedule games if the Heat Index reaches 110°.
- d. Best efforts will be made by CSS to monitor conditions and notify players when needed.

CARD's Heat Index guidelines can be found here, but are separate from the CSS guidelines,

<https://www.chicorec.gov/files/1e22ae249/Heat+Index+%26+Air+Quality+Guidelines.pdf>

Mornings after Rainouts:

If Veteran's evening games (Monday & Wednesday) are Rainouts, then all Masters games the following mornings (Tuesday & Thursday) will also be considered Rainouts.

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30. POOL PLAYERS:

All teams must field 10 players if possible. Master's Division will field 11 players. To ensure all games are played with 10 or 11, a player pool will be established. Pool players will be drawn/determined by 1 of 2 ways, either.

- a. **BALLS:** Sign up onto a numbered sheet, the corresponding numbers will be on ping pong balls placed into a container, each coach (starting with the home team) will alternately pick a ball to select a player until each team is full.
- b. **CARDS:** The visiting team representative defines whether the high or low card holders are the pool players before cards are drawn, Aces are always low or one (1). Each pool player draws a card from a shuffled deck of playing cards of the same suit to eliminate ties. The first designated pool player goes to the home team, the next to the visiting team, alternating until both teams are able to field a full team.

Example (if low is agreed to): Ace goes to home team, 2 goes to visiting team, 3 goes to home team, continuing in order until all teams are filled.

- **In the Open and Veteran's Division the pool player can only pitch if the team needing a player does not have a primary pitcher available to play.**

For each pool player added, the team will be penalized **1 run**. Penalized runs will be added **1 per inning** until all have been credited to the opposing team. Pool players must bat at the **end of the order**.

PRIORITY LIST:

- 1) division players on waiting list, fully registered with fees paid. (Only 1 game per night. For the 2nd game they are considered the same as #3 division players.)
- 2) non-scheduled division players. (Only 1 game per night. For the 2nd game they are considered the same as #3 division players.)
- 3) division players.
- 4) players from older division.
- 5) age-appropriate players from any division.

If both teams have only 9 players, 10 if Masters, and only 1 pool player is available, the pool player will catch for both teams and not bat. If, after the game begins, another pool player becomes available, drawing will continue. If, after the game begins a roster player arrives late, the roster player will be replaced that the end of the batting roster and pool player(s) will have the option to continue to play. You may play with 9 players if no pool players are available.

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Selecting pool players (Masters Only)

The umpire will oversee pool player selection. Prospective pool players will draw cards from a deck and the highest cardholders will be assigned to the teams by the managers. Managers will alternate selections with the lowest league standing team's manager going first.

For example, if Team A needs 2 players and Team B needs 3 players, the prospective pool players that draw the 5 highest cards are in the game.

If the manager of Team A is in third place and Team B in first place then Team A will be selected first, Team B second, Team A third, Team B fourth and fifth.

SPECIAL NOTE: During the Year End Tournament pool players may **not** courtesy run.

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31. LATE REGISTRANTS:

A Late Registrant (New Player) is a person who has completed the league registration and paid the registration fee after the league has completed the seasons draft.

New Players are guaranteed to be placed on a team if there are roster spots available (as defined in the NOTES below). Until a New Player is assigned to a team they can participate as a pool player.

New Players shall be assigned using the following criteria:

- a) Start of Season to April 30th: Continuation of the draft night selection order (usually Serpentine) until each team has the same number of players.
- b) May 1st to July 4th: Continuation of the draft night draft order until each team has the same number of players. After that time the Division Managers will work together to place the New Player on a team. This process may include trading players. If the Managers cannot reach agreement, the CSS Board will be the final arbiter.
- c) After July 5th (Close of Registration): Any team with a roster opening will have priority for the new player but is not guaranteed the new player. The CSS Board will make the team assignment based on the number of players on a team and keeping the league's competitive parity.

Any team with a full roster of 13 player must declare a current player out for the season to be considered in receiving the new player (See NOTE 1). Only then will the new player be considered for placement on that team.

NOTE 1: A team is considered to have an open roster spot if the team does not have 13 players or the Manager has informed the league that a player is out for the season and requests to have the player dropped from the team roster. Dropped players must agree to be dropped before they are actually dropped from any team roster.

NOTE 2: If a dropped player returns before the end of the year, they will be considered a New Player. Any league issued refund must be re-paid in full or any credits issued be revoked for that dropped player to return.

If the dropped player returns and there are no roster openings, they will be given the following options,

- i. Be placed on a waiting list for their originally registered division.
- ii. Become a new player in another division where they are age appropriate to play.

NOTE 3: Hardships may be considered by the CSS Board, and the CSS Board will be the final arbiter in all circumstances.

32. 11th DEFENSIVE PLAYER (Master's Division):

Masters' Division teams may use an 11th defender in those cases where the team has 11 of its rostered players present and ready to play. The 11th defender may play anywhere in the field except the zone between the infield dirt and the outfield encroachment line.

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33. PITCHING MASK OR PITCHING SCREEN:

A pitching mask is mandatory in all divisions, however in the Masters' Division the pitcher may choose to use the screen instead of a mask. If a screen is used it will be used by that pitcher for all batters and must be actively used by the stepping behind the screen after releasing the ball.

The pitching screen shall be placed parallel to and within 10 feet of the pitcher's rubber. The edge of the screen will be placed on the line or within the line to home base. A batted ball that hits the screen is a foul ball. If the foul ball is on the third strike the batter gets one more pitch, but if the screen is hit again in the same at bat the batter is out. The pitcher may move from behind the screen to make a play after the ball is hit. If the pitcher makes no attempt to go behind the screen and fields the ball, the play is dead, the batter and all runners will advance one base. A thrown ball that hits the screen is a dead ball and runner(s) advance to next base.

34. ON-DECK BATTTER (Master's Division):

In the Masters' Division a player who is not present in the on-deck circle when the batter immediately ahead of them in the lineup completes his at-bat will be assessed strike one before stepping into the batter's box.

35. TIE BREAKER RULES (SEASON):

The Season Ending Standings/Seeding are determined by each team's Winning Percentage based on their WON/LOSS/TIE record.

If the season ends with any teams tied, then ties will be resolved in the following manner:

1. HEAD-to-HEAD competition Winning Percentage.
2. LEAST RUNS SCORED AGAINST in HEAD-to-HEAD competition.
3. RUN DIFFERENTIAL – All Games of the Season.
4. FLIP OF COIN.

NOTE: Forfeits are used/included/calculated into all tie-breaker scenarios above.

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Summary of 2026 Rule Changes:

Previous Version: 2025 CHICO SENIOR SOFTBALL RULES (Revised May 8, 2025)

Updated Version: 2026 CHICO SENIOR SOFTBALL RULES (Revised Nov 11, 2025)

Rule 9 - STARTING TIMES & PITCH COUNTS:

Previous Rule:

10:00 & 11:30 (Masters) – Weeks (ALL). 1st game will start at exactly **10:00** whether teams are ready or not. Umpire will call open inning at **11:15** (75 minutes). 2nd game will begin as close to **11:30** as possible. If started on time, umpire will call for open inning at **12:45** (75 minutes). Batters will start each at-bat with **0 and 0 count**. 1 addition foul ball or hitting the pitching screen is allowed after 2 strikes, any foul ball or hit screen after that is an out.

Updated Rule 9:

10:00 & 11:30 (Masters) – Weeks (ALL). 1st game will start at exactly **10:00** whether teams are ready or not. Umpire will call open inning at **11:15** (75 minutes). 2nd game will begin as close to **11:30** as possible. If started on time, umpire will call for open inning at **12:45** (75 minutes). Batters will start each at-bat with **1 and 1 count**. 1 addition foul ball or hitting the pitching screen is allowed after 2 strikes, any foul ball or hit screen after that is an out.

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Rule 29 - GAME CANCELLATION / RAINOUTS:

Previous Rule:

CARD (via the rain line) will determine if fields are playable and cancel when appropriate. A Board Member may override CARD's determination; however, the Board Member must contact CARD and any Team that is affected by the change. Only a Board Member of each division can cancel a game(s) because of **HEAT HEALTH CONCERNS**. Each player is still responsible for making their own decision to play or not to play. If a team cannot field enough players (minimum 6) then the team will forfeit the game.

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Rule 31 - GAME CANCELLATION / RAINOUTS:

Previous Rule:

NEW PLAYERS TRYING OUT:

Any new player who is not assigned to a team will be temporarily placed on a team each night **without penalty** as a pool player. He may bat anywhere in the batting order. Any players signing up for the league after the draft will be placed in the following order:

- 1) In draft order until each team has 13 players.
- 2) If all teams have 13 players, then a player can play as a pool player with 1st priority until a team has a roster opening. The team with roster opening must declare a current player out for the year and then the new player will be placed on that team. If the injured player returns before the end of the year, they will be placed on waiting list.
- 3) Teams will not be forced to take more than 13 players.

Placement will be done **ASAP**. Placement will be conditional. Player may be moved to another team to better balance that division but only by vote of the Board of Directors.

New Players (Masters Only)

The ENTIRE Rule 31 has been re-written by the CSS Board of Directors. Please see that rule in this document as Rule [31. LATE REGISTRANTS](#): on Page [9](#).