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## SSBL Fields Handbook

### INTRODUCTION

- First of all, THANK YOU. By reading this, you're demonstrating that you care about giving our kids a great softball and baseball experience. SSBL is a volunteer-run organization, and while the City and Board of Ed contribute to field maintenance, a large share of the work falls to parents, coaches, players, and other volunteers like you. This guide will help educate coaches and parents about our fields assets and help create standards for consistent maintenance and upkeep.
- Pre-game field work is one aspect of the coaching staff's/parent helpers' responsibility. During April and May, our Summit DCP and Board of Ed partners drag and line infields approximately once per week, and they cut the outfield grass throughout the year. SSBL engages vendors to help maintain certain high-use fields periodically during the season. Beyond that, any dragging/raking, lining, wet weather care, etc., falls to the coaches and parent helpers (and players, as appropriate).
- Each dugout has a post-game checklist with some basic items to protect our equipment and ensure the fields remain playable. **Please** budget a few minutes after your game or practice to "close up" the field. **Strongly consider** including players in age-appropriate tasks, which helps cultivate a shared sense of pride in and stewardship of our facilities. If there is a game or practice immediately after yours, please point out to the incoming coaches any close-up items that remain to be done.
- If you notice any issues with our fields, supplies running low, etc., please email [fields@summitssbl.org](mailto:fields@summitssbl.org) .

## GENERAL PRINCIPLES

### Basic Field Maintenance Tips

- Most field sheds have a tractor + drag mat or a hand-drag mat. The tractors have standard 4-cycle lawn mower engines that take regular gasoline in the gas tank. Please take the key out after use (which avoids draining battery) and stash it in a cup holder or other obvious spot. DO NOT permit children to operate the tractors.
  - If you notice a gas can running low, please email [fields@summitssbl.org](mailto:fields@summitssbl.org) .
- When dragging the infield, work in a circular pattern from outside inward, so that topdressing is gradually dragged away from the grass edges (where it tends to build up) and toward the pitcher's mound or pitcher's area, which is usually the highest part of the infield.
- When dragging, stay about 12" away from the outfield grass edge. This helps prevent buildup of a "lip" – a raised bump of soil and topdressing along the grass edge. These cause nasty bad hops, so please help avoid the buildup of material along outfield edges.
  - When raking along the edge of the infield, gently rake inward – that is, from the outfield edge toward home plate – to reduce buildup of a lip.
- If you use a nail drag (which can be helpful after rain or to help set the infield on gameday), weights can be added to achieve desired depth. But keep it shallow – nail dragging should rarely exceed about 1/4" depth.
- To repair the clay areas around home plate or the pitcher's rubber, follow these steps:
  - Sweep away loose dirt from any holes or depressions;
  - Use a metal rake to score lines in the bottom of the hole;
  - Dampen the area so that new clay binds well;
  - Use moistened new clay to fill in holes or depressions;
  - Tamp down the new clay using a tamper;
  - Use a rake to gently smooth out the edges and grade of the patched area.
- Drawing batter's box lines:
  - Rectangular metal batter's box outlines are located in sheds. Unfold and lay the rectangle flat adjacent to home plate and use a stick or stake to trace an outline on each side of home plate; then set the metal rectangle aside.
  - Fill the field liner machine with chalk and run the liner over the outlines, creating a batter's box on each side of home plate.
  - Whether you use a 2"- or 4"-wide line is a matter of personal preference (but you may need to refill the liner machine partway through if you opt for a 4" line).

- Drawing foul lines:
  - Tools needed: hammer; string line (ours are on plastic spools) with nail or stake that can be attached to the loose end; field liner machine filled with chalk.
  - First, hammer the nail/stake into the dirt at the apex of home plate (the pointed end that faces the catcher) and attach the string line.
  - Next, unspool the string line and stretch it down the foul line (remember, home plate and the bases are in fair territory, so use the outside edge of the 1B or 3B bag as your guide) and into the outfield. Ensure the string is straight and taut.
  - Finally, activate the chalk liner machine and slowly walk it along the string line, using the guide marks on the liner machine to follow the string line and draw a straight line. Begin the line at the outer edge of the batter's box and proceed down the foul line past the base and into the OF. Repeat for other foul line.
    - Coaches' boxes, catcher's box, and runner's lane can also be added but are usually not needed for youth games.
  
- Drawing softball pitcher's circle:
  - Using the string line (the same one used to paint foul lines), secure the nail/stake in front of the middle of pitcher's rubber, and attach the loose end of the string.
  - Measure 8' of string; using string as guide, trace an 8'-radius circle around pitcher's rubber using a stick or stake. Then walk the chalk lining machine slowly around the outline to create the circle.
  - A softball pitcher's lane may also be added: parallel lines from front of the rubber to the front of pitcher's circle. The lane is typically 3' 4" wide, but check rules for specific league/age group.
  
- Refer to individual field checklists regarding bases and tarps. Use the long, narrow metal scoop-out tool to clear away the area in/around a base anchor to ensure bases are anchored safely. Please replace all tarps (they protect the clay around home plate and the pitching area in sunny, dry weather as well as wet weather!) and ensure bases are installed before leaving – carrying and laying tarps are great activities for player participation at all age groups.
  
- When moving screens or tarps across infields, please partner up and carry rather than drag, which helps preserve the infield surface. Please remove screens from infields when finished.
  
- Please monitor and discourage players from spitting gum onto the ground. Please have players clean up refuse, seed shells, etc., from dugout and field areas before leaving the field.

#### Wet Weather Care:

- As an initial matter, remember that the first evaluation about whether a field is playable falls to the coaches. (The umpire will have final say about playability.) If there was rain earlier in the day, coach/parent work on the infield may make the difference between the field being playable or needing to cancel a practice or game.

- Please also remember that your actions and your decisions can have cascading positive or negative effects on field conditions for other teams later that day, week, and beyond.
- As a general rule, if an adult’s footstep leaves an obvious imprint on the dirt infield, the field is not yet dry enough to be dragged, raked, or played on.
- Wet Weather DOs and DON’Ts:
  - Please DO permit the field to dry sufficiently before working on it (see above).
  - Please DO use a field sponge to soak up and remove any puddles or noticeable water. Find black field sponges in sheds or metal equipment boxes; please dry out and return when finished. **\*\*This is the best way to remove standing water from an infield.\*\***
  - Please DON’T use a broom or rake to push standing water off the infield. It removes topdressing and creates holes and depressions.
  - And please especially DON’T push standing water across the grass edge into the outfield. This will build up the “lip” and quickly degrade the infield quality.
  - *Drying Agent / Quik-Dry*: \*Please DON’T apply drying agent to standing water. You’ll need to use so much quick-dry that it will remain on the infield for days and weeks to come, degrading the quality of the surface.
    - Rather, after using a black field sponge to remove standing water, DO apply a small amount of drying agent to wet areas, using a rake to work it into the existing topdressing. Use only a small amount on wet patches.
  - Be very careful about using tractors on wet infields, as the tires and large metal drag mats can damage a soft infield. After rain has ended, gentle raking will promote faster drying-out.
    - When raking a wet infield, DO use a “back-raking” technique: push the rake away from your body to score the infield and facilitate drying out. The standard raking motion (pulling the rake toward your body) on a wet infield will create clumping and be less effective.

## INDIVIDUAL FIELDS – BASIC INFORMATION

### Franklin Elementary School:

- 60' bases, 46' pitcher's rubber (no mound)
- Shed in RF foul territory: rakes, tamper, practice nets, assorted equipment, field liner/chalk/wire
- Please keep bases installed. If you need to remove bases for any reason, cap the anchors.
- Wet weather care: field sponge in shed (remove all standing water before raking in small amounts of quick-dry).
- Automated External Defibrillator (AED) located on fence in deep left field.

### Jefferson Elementary School:

- Base anchors at 60' and 70'. Pitcher's mound with anchor system to move rubber between 46' and 50' distances. Please cap the set of anchor holes not in use.
- Batting cage available – lock up when finished.
- Sheds behind 3B dugout: tractor with drag mat, rakes, tamper, field liner/chalk/clay
- Tarps for pitcher's mound, home plate area, and bullpens (coming in 2025). PLEASE REPLACE BEFORE LEAVING FIELD.
- Bases: Please insert bases in BOTH sets of anchors before leaving field (in other words, six bases installed). At beginning of your practice/game, remove, cap, and store whichever set of bases are not needed, and replace all six before leaving field.
- Pitcher's rubber: Please replace pitcher's rubber before tarping the mound area.
- Metal equipment trunk (next to batting cage) – first aid kit, umpire's equipment.
- A hose is available in RF foul territory for watering down a dry infield.
- Wet weather care: field sponge in shed (remove all standing water before raking in small amounts of quick-dry).
- Lights available for night games. Field lights control box in LF foul territory. Turn on field lights in "U" pattern (see printout on inside cover of box). Switches for batting cage lights, bullpen lights, and floodlights illuminating spectator area behind backstop are on pole adjacent to lights control box. Turn off all lights and lock control box before leaving field.
- Automated External Defibrillator (AED) located behind first base dugout.

### Lincoln-Hubbard Elementary School:

- 60' bases, 46' pitcher's rubber (no mound). Portable pitcher's mound in shed – can be used for baseball if desired.
- Shed in LF foul territory: rakes, tractor and drag mat, tamper, practice nets, assorted equipment, field liner/chalk/wire.
- Please keep bases installed. If you need to remove bases for any reason, cap the anchors.
- Note about dragging/raking: please drag or rake in a pattern that will gradually move material from behind SS/3B toward the 1B line. There is a gradual slope to this infield toward the 3B/LF foul line that results in buildup of runoff around and behind 3B. So please start dragging there to move material back across the infield.
- Wet weather care: field sponge in shed (remove all standing water before raking in small amounts of quick-dry)
- Metal equipment trunk behind 3B dugout – first aid kit, manual scoreboard numbers, umpire's equipment.
- Automated External Defibrillator (AED) located behind third base dugout.

### Long Field (Summit Community Center):

- Base anchors at 60' and 70'. Pitcher's mound with anchor system to move rubber between 46' and 50' distances. Please cap the set of anchor holes not in use.
- Batting cage available – lock up when finished.
- Restrooms available in concrete building in LF foul territory (REQUIRES DIFFERENT KEY).
- Shed in LF foul territory: tractor with drag mat. \*\*If using nail drag, be careful about sprinkler head behind pitcher's mound.\*\*
- Equipment closet in concrete building in LF foul territory (REQUIRES DIFFERENT KEY): rakes, tamper, field liner/chalk/clay
- Tarps for pitcher's mound and home plate area. PLEASE REPLACE BEFORE LEAVING FIELD.
  - Place pitcher's mound tarp toward the home-plate side of the mound to avoid issues with infield sprinkler heads behind the mound.
- Bases: Please insert bases in BOTH sets of anchors before leaving field (in other words, six bases installed). At beginning of your practice/game, remove, cap, and store unneeded bases and replace before leaving field.
- Pitcher's rubber: Please replace pitcher's rubber before tarping the mound area.
- Metal equipment trunk behind 3B dugout – first aid kit, umpire's equipment.
- Sprinkler system in use at this field (operated by Summit DCP).
- Wet weather care: field sponge in shed (remove all standing water before raking in small amounts of quick-dry)
- Automated External Defibrillator (AED) located on fence behind third base coach's box.

### Memorial Fields:

- Double batting cage available – lock up all doors when finished.
- Restrooms available in Cornog Fieldhouse (maintained by City).
- Portable pitcher's mound in Memorial-Myrtle shed – can be used for baseball if desired.

### *Memorial-Ashland:*

- 60' bases, pitching rubber at 43' (no mound).
- Double-base anchor at 1B
- Mini shed behind home plate with rakes, field liner/chalk/clay.
- Metal equipment trunk behind 3B dugout: first aid kit, umpire's equipment, manual scoreboard numbers
- Tarps for pitcher's mound and home plate area. PLEASE REPLACE BEFORE LEAVING FIELD.
- Wet weather care: field sponge in shed (remove all standing water before raking in small amounts of quick-dry)
- Automated External Defibrillator (AED) located in deep left field.

### *Memorial-Myrtle:*

- 60' bases, pitching rubber at 43' (no mound).
- Double-base anchor at 1B
- Shed behind home plate with rakes, tractor and drag mat, field liner/chalk/clay.
- Tarps for pitcher's mound and home plate area. PLEASE REPLACE BEFORE LEAVING FIELD.
- Metal equipment trunk behind 1B dugout: first aid kit, umpire's equipment, manual scoreboard numbers.
- Wet weather care: field sponge in shed (remove all standing water before raking in small amounts of quick-dry)
- Automated External Defibrillator (AED) located in deep right field.
  
- Large shed next to batting cages: possible future storage site for tractor; if tractor is not in shed behind home plate, look here.

### *Memorial 60/90 field:*

- 90' bases, pitcher's mound rubber at 60'. Grass infield.
- Tarps for pitcher's mound and home plate area. PLEASE REPLACE BEFORE LEAVING FIELD.
- Automated External Defibrillator (AED) located along sidewalk toward upper fields.

### Summit High School Upper Turf Field:

- Multipurpose artificial turf field includes backstop and field lines for softball/baseball. Bases and pitcher's rubbers painted on turf. Portable pitcher's mound available.
- Drop-down bases available. SSBL does not have storage on-site, so bases must be picked up in advance and returned after game. Email [fields@summitsbl.org](mailto:fields@summitsbl.org) well in advance of gameday.

### Summit High School Lower Turf Field:

- Multipurpose artificial turf field - softball field lines are painted in purple. Bases painted on turf at 60'. Pitcher's rubber painted on turf.
- Portable "BP" backstop available – must be set up and then taken down and stowed in LF foul territory before leaving field.
- \*\*NOTE: No fenced-in areas for dugouts. Coaches and parents must be extra vigilant to ensure players stay in safe locations when not in the field.
- Drop-down bases available. SSBL does not have storage on-site, so bases must be picked up in advance and returned after game. Email [fields@summitsbl.org](mailto:fields@summitsbl.org) well in advance of gameday.

### Summit Middle School Fields:

*Middle School Field #1:* Under construction and closed during 2025.

#### *Middle School Field #2:*

- Pitcher's rubber distance suitable for t-ball and coach-pitch leagues.
- Shed: near fence alongside school building with rakes, tractor and drag mat, field liner/chalk/clay.
- \*\*There are no in-ground base anchors at this field. Drop-down bases stored in the shed. Please return at conclusion of game/practice.
- Wet weather care: use "back-rake" (away from body) to scarify infield for drying out.
- Automated External Defibrillator (AED) located on fence near school building.



Wilson Primary Center Field:

- 90' bases, 60' mound. Grass infield.
- Batting cage available, lock up when finished.
- Sheds behind 1B dugout: tractor with drag mat, rakes, tamper, field liner/chalk/clay
- Metal equipment trunk behind backstop: first aid kit, umpire equipment.
- Wet weather care: field sponge in shed (remove all standing water before raking in small amounts of quick-dry)
- Automated External Defibrillator (AED) located on fence behind first base.