SOFTBALL COACHING GUIDE
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Advancing the public well-being through improved communication

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Special Olympics welcomes your ideas and comments for future revisions of this guide. We apologize if, for any reason, an acknowledgement has been inadvertently omitted.

Contributing Authors

Doug Liebman, Softball Sport Resource Team Member
Laurie Gouthro, Softball Sport Resource Team Member
Pamela Mest, Softball Sport Resource Team Member
Patricia (Trish) McLean, Softball Sport Resource Team Member, October 16, 1958 - February 22, 2012
Andy Dooley, Softball Sport Resource Team Member
Robert Stanton, Softball Sport Resource Team Member
Alex Maldonado, Softball Sport Resource Team Member
Raymond Houck, Softball Sport Resource Team Member

Special Thanks To the Following for All of Your Help and Support

Carl Bakemeier, Head Coach, Deer Valley High School Softball Team
Joe Lane, Former ASA Metro Phoenix and Central Arizona Junior Olympic Commissioner
Christopher Seivard, Videography
Paul Whichard, Special Olympics, Inc.
Kelli Britt, Senior Coach Education and Program Manager, Special Olympics Georgia
Special Olympics Arizona
Special Olympics Georgia
Video Clips Starring Athletes from Special Olympics Arizona
Vanessa Robles
Robert Clark
Casey Bagley
Dakota Bedard
Josh Rodgers
Brock Riddle
Fileberto Escobedo
Devin Fetterhoff
Angie Kubiak
Mark Horne
Daulton Diguardi
Natalie Jarrett
Dani Miller
Justin Monaco
Nathan Slankard
Sean Lawson
Ryan D'Andrea
Amy Remfrey – Coach

Additional Coaches from the Arizona Video Shoot
Karen Damico
Lindsey Hall

Deer Valley High School Softball Players
Sara Sterkenburg
Jessee Gresly

Video Clips Starring Athletes from Special Olympics Georgia – Gwinnett Braves
Thomas Hickman
William Joel
Sammy Quinones
Joni Baker
Jena Springer
Joshua Bonds
Rashaad Scott
Christopher Held
Sammy Baker
Barrington Newton
Gary Bonds – Coach
Sam Quinones – Coach
Elmo Victorio – Coach
Eryn Bonds – Coach
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Planning a Softball Training & Competition Season
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Goals
Realistic yet challenging goals for each athlete are important to the motivation of the athlete both at training and during competition. Goals establish and drive the action of both training and competition plans. Sport confidence in athletes helps to make participation fun and is critical to the athlete’s motivation. Please see the Principles of Coaching section for additional information and exercises on goal setting.

Benefits of Goal Setting
- Increases athlete’s level of physical fitness
- Teaches self-discipline
- Teaches the athlete sports skills that are essential to a variety of other activities
- Provides the athlete with a means for self-expression and social interaction

Goal Setting and Motivation
Developing Self-Confidence through Goal Setting
Accomplishing goals at practice through repetition in settings similar to the competition environment will instill confidence. Setting goals is a joint effort between athletes and coaches. The main features of goal setting include:

1. Goals must be structured as short-term, intermediate and long-term.
2. Goals should be viewed as stepping stones to success.
3. Goals must be accepted by the athlete.
4. Goals should vary in difficulty — from easily attainable to challenging.
5. Goals must be measurable.
6. Goals should be used to establish the athlete’s training and competition plan.

Athletes with or without an intellectual disability may be more motivated by accomplishing short-term goals than long-term goals; however, do not be afraid to challenge athletes. Include athletes in setting their personal goals. For example, ask the athlete, "How many fair ball contacts will you make today? Let's see how many fair ball contacts you made last practice. What is your personal best? What do you think you can do?" Awareness of why the athlete is participating is also important when setting goals. There are participation factors which may influence motivation and goal setting:
- Age appropriateness
- Ability level
- Readiness level
- Athlete performance
- Family influence
- Peer influence
- Athlete preference

Performance Goals versus Outcome Goals
Effective goals focus on performance, not outcome. Performance is what the athlete controls. Outcomes are frequently controlled by others. An athlete may have an outstanding performance and not win a game because other athletes have performed even better. Conversely, an athlete may perform poorly and still win if all other athletes perform at a lower level. If an athlete's goal is to hit the ball out of the infield, the athlete has greater control in achieving this goal than winning. However, the athlete has even greater control of achieving a goal if the goal is to hit using the correct form. This performance goal ultimately gives the athlete more control over his/her performance.
Motivation Through Goal Setting

Goal setting has proved to be one of the most simple and effective motivational devices developed for sport within the past three decades. While the concept is not new, today the techniques for effective goal setting have been refined and clarified. Motivation is all about having needs and striving to have those needs met. How can you enhance an athlete's motivation?

1. Provide more time and attention to an athlete when he/she is having difficulty learning a skill.
2. Reward small gains of achievement in skill level.
3. Develop other measures of achievement outside of winning.
4. Show your athletes that they are important to you.
5. Show your athletes that you are proud of them and excited about what they are doing.
6. Remind your athletes that there is no ‘I’ in TEAM.

Goals give direction. They tell us what needs to be accomplished. They increase effort, persistence and the quality of performance. Establishing goals also requires that the athlete and coach determine techniques for how to achieve those goals.

Measurable and Specific

Effective goals are very specific and measurable. Goals stated in the form of "I want to be the best that I can be!" or "I want to improve my performance!" are vague and difficult to measure. They may sound positive, but it can be difficult, if not impossible, to assess whether they have been reached. To be realistic, measurable goals must reflect a baseline of performance recorded during the past one or two weeks.

Difficult, but Realistic

Effective goals are perceived as challenging, not threatening. A challenging goal is one perceived as difficult but attainable within a reasonable amount of time and with a reasonable amount of effort or ability. A threatening goal is one perceived as being beyond one's current capacity. Realistic implies that judgment is involved. Goals based upon a baseline of performance recorded during the past one or two weeks are likely to be realistic.

Long- versus Short-Term Goals

Both long- and short-term goals provide direction, but short-term goals appear to have the greatest motivational effects. Short-term goals are more readily attainable and are stepping stones to more distant long-term goals. Unrealistic short-term goals are easier to recognize than unrealistic long-term goals. Once they are identified, unrealistic goals can then be modified before valuable practice time has been lost.

Positive versus Negative Goal Setting

Positive goals direct what to do rather than what not to do, whereas negative goals direct our attention too heavily to the errors we wish to avoid or eliminate. Positive goals also require coaches and athletes to decide how they will reach those specific goals. Once the goal is decided upon, the athlete and coach must determine specific strategies and techniques which allow that goal to be successfully attained.

Set Priorities

Effective goals are limited in number and meaningful to the athlete. Setting a limited number of goals requires that athletes and coaches decide what is important and fundamental for continued development. Establishing a few carefully selected goals also allows athletes and coaches to keep accurate records without becoming overwhelmed with record keeping.

Mutual Goal Setting

Goal setting becomes an effective motivational device when athletes are committed to achieving those goals. When goals are imposed or established without significant input from the athletes, motivation is unlikely to be enhanced.
Set Specific Timelines
Target dates provide urgency to an athlete's efforts. Specific target dates tend to eliminate wishful thinking and clarify which goals are realistic and which are not. Timelines are especially valuable in high-risk sports where fear often promotes procrastination in learning new skills.

Formal versus Informal Goal Setting
Some coaches and athletes think that goals must be set in formal meetings outside of practice and require long periods of thoughtful evaluation before they are decided upon. Goals are literally progressions that coaches have been using for years but are now expressed in measurable performance terms rather than as vague, generalized outcomes.

Team versus Individual Goals
While team goals appear to have great importance for team sports, the reality is that most team goals can be broken down into individual roles or responsibilities. Each player must achieve these individual roles or responsibilities for the team to function effectively. For example, a team goal may emphasize ‘one less error than last game’, ‘one more hit than last game’, etc.

Goal Setting Domains
When asked to set goals, athletes typically focus on the learning of new skills or performances in competitions. A major role of the coach is to broaden the athlete's perception of those areas, and goal setting can be an effective tool. Goals can be set to enhance fitness, improve attendance, increase intensity, promote sportsmanship, develop team spirit, find more free time or establish consistency.

Goal Setting Summary
Setting goals is a joint effort between the athlete and coach. Following are the main features of goal setting:

Structured into short-term and long-term
  • Stepping stones to success
  • Must be accepted by the athlete
  • Vary in difficulty from easily attainable to challenging
  • Must be measurable

Short-Term Objective
  • Learning softball in a fun environment

Long-Term Goal
The athlete will acquire basic softball skills, appropriate social behavior and functional knowledge of the rules necessary to participate successfully in softball competitions.
Assessing Goals Checklist

1. Write a goal statement.
2. Does the goal sufficiently meet the athlete’s needs?
3. Is the goal positively stated?
4. Is the goal under the athlete’s control?
5. Is what you have set a goal and not a result?
6. Is the goal important enough to the athlete that he/she will want to work toward achieving it?
7. What barriers might the athlete encounter in working toward this goal?
8. What does the athlete need to learn?
9. What risks does the athlete need to take?
Special Olympics Softball Coaching Guide
Planning a Softball Training & Competition Season

Essential Components of a Softball Training Session
Special Olympics athletes respond well to a simple, well-structured training routine with which they can become familiar. An organized plan, prepared before you get to the facility, will help establish such a routine and help make the best use of your limited time. A basic training plan is outlined below:

Warming Up
- Every athlete warms up
- Stretch each muscle group.
- Have athletes lead the stretching while coaches assist individual athletes when necessary.

Skills Instruction
- Quickly review previously taught skills.
- Introduce the theme of the skills activity.
- Demonstrate skills simply and with enthusiasm.
- Divide into smaller groups, if possible.
- Physically assist and prompt lower ability athletes when necessary.
- Introduce and practice new skills early in the training session.

Competition Experience
- Athletes learn a lot by simply playing the game.
- Use drills to teach basic skills.
- Use scrimmages to teach game mechanics and teamwork.
- Try to end the training with a fun competitive activity.

Cooling Down
- Slow run/walk/stretch.
- As the athletes cool down, comment on the session and the next training session and/or competition.
- Finish with a team cheer.
Considerations for Training

- When designing trainings, exercises and drills, consider the strengths and weaknesses of each athlete and your team as a whole. Choose activities that allow your athletes to improve.

- Make trainings fun. Design trainings that hold the athletes’ attention. Use exercises and drills that your athletes enjoy. Use these exercises to lighten the load of hard work and to establish positive team attitude. When practicing drills, do enough to improve technique, yet not so much as to bore your athletes.

- Keep your talking to a minimum. Short, concise instructions are better than long explanations.

- Be willing to create or adapt drills to meet unique needs of your team. Skilled athletes master drills fairly quickly, so add some new twists to challenge these athletes.

- As you introduce new skills and techniques, you also need to review fundamental ones. Drills are a good way to improve your athletes’ skills.

- Introduce new skills early in the training session, when athletes are fresh and attentive. Practice new skills for several sessions before incorporating them into more complex drills and game scenarios.

- Use drills and scrimmages that encourage communication and teamwork among athletes.

- Above all, be organized.
## Principles of Effective Training Sessions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keep all athletes active</td>
<td>Athlete needs to be an active listener</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create clear, concise goals</td>
<td>Learning improves when athletes know what is expected of them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give clear, concise instructions</td>
<td>Demonstrate – increase accuracy of instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Record progress</td>
<td>You and your athletes chart progress together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give positive feedback</td>
<td>Emphasize and reward things the athlete is doing well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide variety</td>
<td>Vary exercises – prevent boredom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage enjoyment</td>
<td>Training and competition is fun, help keep it this way for you and your athletes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create progressions</td>
<td>Learning is increased when information progresses from:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Known to unknown – discovering new things successfully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Simple to complex – seeing that “I” can do it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• General to specific – this is why I am working so hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan maximum use of resources</td>
<td>Use what you have and improvise for equipment that you do not have – think creatively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow for individual differences</td>
<td>Different athletes, different learning rates, different capacities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Tips for Conducting Successful Training Sessions**

- Assign assistant coaches their roles and responsibilities in accordance with your training plan.
- When possible, have all equipment and stations prepared before the athletes arrive.
- Introduce and acknowledge coaches and athletes.
- Review intended program with everyone. Keep athletes informed of changes in schedule or activities.
- Alter the plan according to weather or changes in the facility, and to accommodate the needs of the athletes.
- Change activities before the athletes become bored and lose interest.
- Keep drills and activities brief to hold athletes’ attention.
- Devote the end of the training to a group activity that can incorporate challenge and fun, always giving the athletes something to look forward to at the end of training.
- If an activity is going well, it is often useful to stop the activity while interest is high.
- Summarize the session and announce arrangements for next session.
- Keep the fun in fundamentals.
Tips for Conducting Safe Training Sessions

Though the risks can be few, coaches have a responsibility to ensure that athletes know, understand and appreciate the risks of softball. The safety and well-being of athletes are the coaches’ primary concerns. Softball is typically not a dangerous sport, but injuries do occur. It is the head coach’s responsibility to minimize the occurrence of injuries by providing safe conditions.

1. Establish clear rules for behavior at your first training and enforce them:
   - Keep your hands to yourself.
   - Listen to the coach.
   - When you hear the whistle, “Stop, look, and listen.”
   - Ask the coach before you leave a field/facility.
2. When threatened by inclement weather, have a plan to move athletes to a safe location.
3. Encourage the athletes to bring water to each training session.
4. Keep a fully stocked first-aid kit with equipment; restock supplies as necessary.
5. Train all athletes and coaches on emergency procedures.
6. Review and post your first aid and emergency procedures. It is recommended to have someone who is trained in first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) on or very near to the facility during trainings and games.
7. Check the facility and remove unsafe objects. Be particularly vigilant when you are playing when forced to move inside into a cluttered indoor gym. Remove anything that an athlete might run into.
8. Warm-up and stretch properly at the beginning of each training session to prevent muscle injuries. Cool-down at the end of each training session.
9. Train to improve the general fitness level of your athletes. Physically fit athletes are less likely to get injured.
   Make your trainings active.
10. Make sure that athletes are of equal ability in games where they play against each other.
11. Require all your athletes to wear protective and legal equipment. The use of approved helmets, athletic supporters, chest protectors, shin guards and fitted mouth guards is recommended.
Selecting Team Members
The key to the successful development of a traditional Special Olympics or Special Olympics Unified Sports® team is the proper selection of team members. We have provided some primary considerations below.

Ability Grouping
Traditional or Unified Sports Softball teams work best when all team members have similar sports skills. Softball teams ideally are composed of athletes with similar skills and abilities. One such assessment tool available to coaches is the Special Olympics - Softball Skills Assessment for Individuals, that can be used to determining appropriate ability groupings. Athletes or Unified Sports partners with abilities that are far superior to other teammates will control competition. In both situations, the goals of interaction and teamwork are diminished and a true competitive experience is not achieved.

Age Grouping
All team members ideally are closely matched in age when possible:

- Within 3-5 years of age for athletes 21 years of age and under
- Within 10-15 years for athletes 22 years of age and over

Creating Meaningful Involvement in Unified Sports
Unified Sports embraces the philosophy and principles of Special Olympics. Unified Sports teams are organized to provide meaningful involvement for both athletes and partners. Every teammate should play a role and have the opportunity to contribute to the team. Meaningful involvement also refers to the quality of interaction and competition within a Unified Sports team. Achieving meaningful involvement by all teammates on the team ensures a positive and rewarding experience for everyone.

Indicators of Meaningful Involvement

- Teammates compete without causing undue risk of injury to themselves or others.
- Teammates compete according to the rules of competition.
- Teammates have the ability and opportunity to contribute to the performance of the team.
- Teammates understand how to blend their skills with those of other athletes, resulting in improved performance by athletes with lesser ability.

Meaningful Involvement Is Not Achieved When Team Members…

- Have superior sports skills in comparison to their fellow team members.
- Act as on-field coaches rather than teammates.
- Control most aspects of the competition during critical periods of the game.
- Do not train regularly and only show up on the day of competition.
- Lower their level of ability dramatically, so that they do not hurt others or control the entire game.
Softball Skills Assessment for Individuals

The Softball Skills Assessment for Individuals is a systematic method useful to determine the skill ability of an athlete. The Softball Skills Assessment for Individuals is designed to assist coaches in determining athletes’ ability level before they begin participation. Coaches will find this assessment a useful tool for several reasons:

1. Helps coach and athlete determine which positions the athlete is best suited to play, e.g., infield, outfield, pitcher etc.
2. Establishes the baseline training areas of athlete
3. Assists coaches to group athletes of similar ability in training teams
4. Measures the athlete’s progression
5. Helps determine the athlete’s daily training schedule

Before administering the assessment, coaches need to perform the following analysis when observing the athlete:

- Become familiar with each of the tasks listed under the major skills
- Have an accurate visual picture of each task
- Have observed a skilled performer executing the skill

When administering the Softball Skills Assessment for Individuals, coaches will have a better opportunity to get the best possible analysis of their athletes. Always begin by explaining the skill you would like to observe. When possible, demonstrate the skill.

A. Hitting and Baserunning

Score: 1=never 2=rarely 3=sometimes 4=frequently 5=always

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enters batter’s box</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assumes proper batting stance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tracks pitches to bat</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes good pitch selections to swing at</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knows pitch count and situations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Has good bat control</td>
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<tr>
<td>Can hit the ball with power</td>
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<tr>
<td>Can place the hit to all fields</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drops or carries the bat after the ball is hit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can run with speed (rate 1 as slow and 5 as fast)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(To determine base speed a timer should be used and charted. Fast, slow and average times should be based upon the base distance and field conditions. Softer sand infields will be considerably slower than artificial surfaces or cement. Objectivity is important as fast in younger athletes is NOT fast by adult athletic standards!)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoids fielders while running</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rounds a base without breaking stride</td>
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<tr>
<td>Slides into a base when needed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reacts to coach’s signs, signals or directions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Looks for the ball and decides to stop or continue</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tags up on caught fly balls</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B. Fielding, Throwing and Catching

Score: 1=never  2=rarely  3=sometimes  4=frequently  5=always

Cleanly fields a grounded ball hit directly at them
Moves laterally to a grounded ball and fields it cleanly
Catches a fly ball hit to them
Catches a fly ball on the run
Can leap to catch a fly or thrown ball
Can dive to field a hit or thrown ball
Can position himself/herself at a base to catch a thrown ball
Can properly grip a ball
Can throw a ball accurately
Can throw a ball with velocity
Knows where to throw the ball without coaching
Has a quick release

C. Pitching (must have a minimum of two pitchers submitted)

Score: 1=never  2=rarely  3=sometimes  4=frequently  5=always

Remains in contact with the pitching rubber
Pauses on the pitcher’s plate prior to the pitch
Can maintain a legal arc (6-12’)
Pitches with accuracy
Knows the count and makes appropriate pitch selection
Finishes the pitch in fielding-ready position
Makes sure team is ready prior to each pitch
Is a team leader

D. Coaching (Overall team grades for all coaches from GMT and/or Competition Committee with input from HOD)

Score: 1=never  2=rarely  3=sometimes  4=frequently  5=always

Has good control of team
Communicates well with athletes & partners
Has knowledge of rules
Has a positive attitude
Is prepared (line-up cards, equipment, etc.)
Can direct runners from coach’s box
Softball Eight-Week Training Plan (One or Two One-Hour Practices)

Week One – Emphasis on introduction, review and evaluation

Warm-ups and Stretching: 10-15 minutes

Introduction to Catching: 5 minutes
- Description and demonstration
- Catching thrown balls – Around the Clock
- Catching ground balls – body and hand positions
- Catching fly balls – drop step, glove position

Throwing: 10 minutes
- Introduction to throwing (describe and demonstrate)
  - Grip, Body Position, Arm Action, Release and Follow-through
- Drills
  - Release and Spin – emphasize proper wrist snap
  - Bent Knee – emphasize proper arm action
  - Quick Feet and Hands – emphasize proper body positioning
  - Catch – putting all elements together and working on longer throws

Introduction to Hitting: 5 minutes
- Bat selection; grip; hand position; stance; stride, hip rotation and pivot; swing; contact and follow-through

Stations: 20 minutes
- Divide athletes into three groups; rotate stations every 5 minutes.
- Hitting – Hitting from a Tee
- Infield
  - Review technique for gathering the ball
  - Drills
    - Soft Hands
    - Fielding Tossed Ground Balls
- Outfield
  - Review footwork and glove work for playing fly balls
  - Drill
    - Catching Tossed Fly Balls
- Pitching – Pull one pitcher and catcher at a time from a station to work on pitching
  - Review proper mechanics of the underhand throw (SSP, page 18)
  - Drills
    - Pitch and Catch

Cool Down and Review: 5 minutes
- Stretch, review practice and distribute any necessary information to athletes.
Week Two – Emphasis on review, correction and introduction of additional aspects of each skill

Warm-ups and Stretching: 10-15 minutes

Throwing: 5 minutes
- Drills
  - Release and Spin – emphasize proper wrist snap
  - Bent Knee – emphasize proper arm action
  - Quick Feet and Hands – emphasize proper body positioning
  - Catch – putting all elements together and working on longer throws

Stations: 30 minutes
  Divide athletes into three groups; rotate stations every 10 minutes (3 minutes for first drill at station as review, then 7 minutes on second drill to teach and perform)
- Hitting
  - Drills
    - Hitting from a Tee
    - Soft Toss – picking up movement of the ball, keeping eye on the ball
- Infield
  - Drills
    - Soft Hands
    - Fielding tossed ground balls – thrown directly to them
    - Cone Rolls – introducing motion to fielding skills; moving left and right, footwork
- Outfield
  - Drills
    - Review footwork and glove work for playing fly balls
    - Catching tossed fly balls thrown directly to them
    - Killers – introducing movement and associated footwork into catching fly balls
- Pitching – Pull one pitcher and catcher at a time from a station to work on pitching
  - Drills
    - Pitch and Catch
    - Target Practice – emphasis on hitting a spot behind home plate and getting arc on the ball

Introduction to Fielding Basics: 5-10 minutes
- Playing the bases – footwork around bases, where to stand to field throws at different positions in the infield, who covers second base in different scenarios
- Outfielders backing up throws
- Relays – second base and shortstop

Cool Down and Review: 5 minutes
- Stretch, review practice and distribute any necessary information to athletes.
Week Three – Emphasis on review, correction and introduction of game concepts

Warm-ups and Stretching: 10-15 minutes

Throwing: 5 minutes

- Drills
  - Release and Spin – emphasize proper wrist snap
  - Bent Knee – emphasize proper arm action
  - Triangle Catch and Throw
  - Catch – putting all elements together and working on longer throws

Stations: 10 or 20 minutes

Divide athletes into two equal groups (or infielders and outfielders). Rotate stations after 10 minutes (unless you have designated infielders & outfielders; then do stations for 10 minutes total instead of 20, with three minutes for first drill at station as review and seven minutes to teach and perform new drill).

- Infield
  - Discuss charging slow rolling ground balls, proper process
  - Review fielding basics from week two practice
  - Drills
    - Line Scoops – emphasize charging the ball or slow-rolling ground balls
    - Field batted ground balls; throw to first baseman; first baseman throws to catcher

- Outfield
  - Review fielding basics from Week Two practice
  - Drill
    - Killers
    - Catching batted fly balls at 60 feet from batter and making strong throw back to coach or “catcher”

- Pitching
  - Drills (Target Practice and Jump the Fence can be done while Cone Rolls and Line Scoops are being done in infield)
    - Target Practice
    - Jump the Fence – emphasize proper arc on the ball and focus on the target
    - Include in infield drills once you go to batted balls

Introduction to Base Running: 5 minutes

- Running through first base – use of orange safety base
- Rounding first base, picking up coach’s signs to stay or go
- Sliding

Simulated Game: 15 minutes (25 minutes, if station work is only done for 10 minutes)

- Position 10 players in the field on defense; have remaining players prepare to bat
- Each batter gets five batted balls. The first four hits, if the ball is fielded by an infielder, have the player throw to the first baseman, who will put the ball in a bucket. If fielded in the outfield, have the appropriate cut-off player retrieve the throw from the outfielder and relay the ball to the first baseman. This will reinforce where the ball should be thrown in a game.
- The fifth batted ball will be “live”, and the batter will run and attempt to reach base safely. The fielders will play the ball and attempt to throw the runner out. The runner will stay on base for the next hitter if the runner should reach base safely.
- Before the fifth batted ball for the next player, talk to the defensive players about how they are going to play the ball if it is hit to them (based on any runners on base, number of outs, etc.)
- This simulated game will allow pitchers, hitters and fielders to prepare for game situations and decision-making processes.
Cool Down and Review: 5 minutes
- Stretch, review practice and distribute any necessary information to athletes

**Week Four – Scrimmage (exposure to real game situations at controlled speed)**

Warm-ups and Stretching: 10 minutes

Throwing: 5 minutes
- Drills
  - Play catch – short distance apart to start, then spread out

- Infield: 5 minutes (at same time as outfield)
  Hit three balls to players at each infield position.
  - The player fields the first ball and throws to first base.
  - The player fields the second ball and throws to second base (coach determines who is covering second base, shortstop or second baseman) – who relays the throw to first.
  - The player fields the third ball and throws to the catcher.
  - The first baseman always throws the ball to the catcher after receiving a throw from another position.
  - The first baseman, upon fielding his first ball, runs over and touches first base.

- Outfield: 5 minutes (at same time as infield)
  Hit fly balls to each outfielder.
  - The fielding players make strong throws to a “catcher” (make sure catcher starts out behind coach to avoid getting hit by a batted ball, and then move out in front to make the catch from the fielding athlete).
  - Keep infielders in place, then hit one fly ball to each outfielder from home plate area (or pitcher’s mound) and have the outfielder throw the ball to the appropriate cut-off person as if there were a runner on first base.

Scrimmage: 35 minutes
- Find another team to scrimmage or divide your team into two teams to scrimmage.
- If necessary, have coaches serve as pitcher and catcher in order to field two teams.
- While keeping score is not necessary, it is best to follow all other rules as closely as possible to expose the athletes to the decision-making involved in real game situations. You may want to limit the number of batters allowed in an inning to allow each team the maximum number of opportunities to be on offense and defense and experience different situations.
- Don’t be afraid to set up situations that allow you to practice certain skills or decision-making abilities for your athletes.

Cool Down and Review: 5 minutes
- Stretch, review practice and distribute any necessary information to athletes.
Week Five – Continued emphasis on real game situations and applying skills

Warm-ups and Stretching: 10 minutes

Throwing: 5 minutes
  - Drills
    - Release and Spin
    - Bent Knee
    - Triangle Catch and Throw – emphasize turning body toward target
    - Catch

Infield: 10 minutes (at same time as outfield)
  - Hit three balls to players at each infield position.
    - The player fields the first ball and throws to first base.
    - The player fields the second ball and throws to second base (coach determines who is covering second base, shortstop or second baseman) who relays the throw to first.
    - The player fields the third ball and throws to the catcher.
    - The first baseman always throws the ball to the catcher after receiving a throw from another position.
    - The first baseman, upon fielding his first ball, runs over and touches first base.

Outfield: 10 minutes (at same time as infield)
  - Hit fly balls and ground balls to outfielders.
    - Vary where the balls are hit, and if possible, how hard they are hit, making the outfielders move to catch the ball or charge the ball to play a ground ball.
    - The fielding players make strong throws to a “catcher” (make sure catcher starts out behind coach to avoid getting hit by a batted ball, and then move out in front to make the catch from the fielding athlete).
    - Keep infielders in place, then hit one fly ball to each outfielder from home plate area (or pitchers mound) and have the outfielder throw the ball to the appropriate cut-off man as if there were a runner on first base.

Drill Work: 35 minutes
  - Pick drills based on evaluation of scrimmage and identified areas for improvement.
  - Drills may be broken down into stations or athletes may participate in drills together as a team (just remember to keep everyone active to keep their attention).
  - As emphasis in previous weeks has been on fielding skills, the coach may want to allow more time for individual hitting work (while athletes are facing live pitching, others may be hitting off a tee or doing soft toss work).

Cool Down and Review: 5 minutes
  - Stretch, review practice and distribute any necessary information to athletes.
Week Six – Address areas for improvement from Week Four scrimmage(s)

Warm-ups and Stretching: 10 minutes

Throwing: 5 minutes
- Drills
  - Play catch – short distance apart at first, then spread out

Infield: 5 minutes (at same time as outfield)
- Hit three balls to players at each infield position.
  - The player fields the first ball and throws to first base.
  - The player fields the second ball and throws to second base (coach determines who is covering second base, shortstop or second baseman) who relays the throw to first
  - The player fields the third ball and throws to the catcher.
  - The first baseman always throws the ball in to the catcher after receiving a throw from another position.
  - The first baseman, upon fielding his first ball, runs over and touches first base.

Outfield: 5 minutes (at same time as infield)
- Hit fly balls and ground balls to outfielders.
  - Vary where the balls are hit, and if possible, how hard they are hit, making the outfielders move to catch the ball or charge the ball to play a ground ball.
  - The fielding players make strong throws to a “catcher” (start catcher behind coach to avoid getting hit by a batted ball, then move out in front of coach to make the catch from the fielding athlete).
  - Keep infielders in place, then hit one fly ball to each outfielder from home plate area (or pitcher’s mound) and have the outfielder throw the ball to the appropriate cut-off person as if there were a runner on first base.

Hitting: 20 minutes
- 10 athletes assume positions in the field with your regular pitcher on the mound.
- The remaining athletes hit against live pitching; give each athlete five hits, and then rotate; have athletes run out their last batted balls with fielders reacting to the live balls.
- Other athletes work on hitting off a tee or from a soft toss while waiting their turn against live pitching.
- Rotation should be: hitting from tee or soft toss, to hitting against live pitching, to playing in the field. The replaced fielder assumes a spot in the batting rotation.
- The goal is to keep as many athletes busy as possible while maximizing their training.

Simulated Game: 15 minutes – focus on skill areas identified for improvement in scrimmage in Week Four
- Position 10 players in the field on defense.
- The remaining players prepare to be base runners.
- Set up game situations by putting runners on bases, determining how many outs there are, the score of the “game”, etc.
- A coach serves as a batter and hits balls to different fielders or areas of the field depending on what skills need to be improved upon. The runner stands behind the coach and runs for first base when the ball is hit to simulate the batter trying to reach first base. The fielders make plays, as appropriate for the situation that has been set up.

Cool Down and Review: 5 minutes
- Stretch, review practice and distribute any necessary information to athletes.
Week Seven – Emphasis on hitting and advanced fielding skills

Warm-ups and Stretching: 10 minutes

Throwing: 5 minutes
- Drills
  - Play catch – short distance apart at first, then spread out
  - Have pitcher and catcher work on pitching drills during this time (Target Practice or Jump the Fence)

Hitting: 25 minutes (same as week six)

Simulated Game: 15 minutes
- Same as Week Six, but set up situations to work on more advanced skills such as outfield relays, cut-offs, rundown, infield relays, throws to home plate, outfielders backing up throws, etc.

Cool Down and Review: 5 minutes
- Stretch, review practice and distribute any necessary information to athletes.

Week Eight – Scrimmage at full game speed

Warm-ups and Stretching: 10 minutes

Throwing: 5 minutes
- Drills
  - Play catch – short distance apart at first, then spread out
  - Have pitcher and catcher work on pitching drills during this time (Target Practice or Jump the Fence)

Scrimmage: 45 minutes
- Divide team into two groups or scrimmage another team (preferably another team).
- Play the game according to all the rules; do not set up any situations, but let the game unfold naturally.
- Allow the players to get the feel for the flow and the speed of the game.

Review
- Provide athletes with any information they need for upcoming competition including what time to meet to leave for the competition, how uniforms will be handled and what time they will be arriving home from the competition, etc.
**Softball Attire**

For competition uniforms refer to the ‘Equipment’ reference in the International Softball Federation Rules which can be found at: [www.isfsoftball.org](http://www.isfsoftball.org)

For training, appropriate softball attire is required for all competitors. As the coach, discuss the types of sport clothes that are acceptable and not acceptable for training and competition. Discuss the importance of wearing properly fitted, weather appropriate, clothing along with the advantages and disadvantages of certain types of clothing worn during training and competitions. For example, long pant jeans to blue jean shorts are not proper softball attire for any event. Explain that they cannot perform while wearing jeans that restrict movement. Take athletes to high school or collegiate games while training or during competitions and point out the attire being worn. You can even set the example, by wearing appropriate attire to training and competitions and not rewarding athletes that do not come properly dressed to train and/or compete.

**Shirts**

Shirts should be comfortable and non-confining with short or long sleeves such as (T-shirts, sweatshirts or warm-up jackets etc.).

**Shorts**

Shorts with waistbands that fit snugly around the waist are recommended. Shorts should be long enough to provide protection to the thighs when sliding. Shorts should provide the athlete with comfort and a good appearance. An elastic waistband will help keep the shirt in place.

Sliding shorts, though optional, can be worn under the athlete’s shorts and may help reduce injuries from sliding.

**Socks**

Athletic socks are recommended for softball training.

**Shoes**

Probably the most important piece of clothing a player wears are shoes. Shoes that are ill-fitting can cause the athlete discomfort that will impede the athlete’s play and concentration. Molded rubber softball cleats or sturdy sneaker/ tennis shoes are recommended. Metal cleats are not allowed.

**Cap or Visor**

Caps, visors and headbands are optional for players, but can be mixed. If more than one type is worn, they must all be of the same color and style. Plastic or hard visors are not allowed.
Special Olympics Softball Coaching Guide
Planning a Softball Training & Competition Season

Softball Equipment
For legal softball equipment refer to the ‘Equipment’ reference in the International Softball Federation Rules which can be found at: www.isfsoftball.org. The sport of softball requires the type of sporting equipment below. It is important for athletes to be able to recognize and understand how equipment for the specific events works and impacts their performance. Have your athletes name each piece of equipment as you show it and give the use for each. Equipment must be safe for athletic use. Use proper equipment at all times and teach athletes to use equipment and perform all activities the “right” way, first time and every time. For safety’s sake, keep playing areas free of clutter, like loose equipment and clothing. Be alert to safety hazards and problem areas and do whatever is necessary to avoid them.

Softballs
The red-stitch 30.5cm (12 inch) ball with a COR of .52 shall be used in all divisions and must have a marking of MSP-52 in addition to the Special Olympics, ISF or National Governing Body logo.

Gloves
Any player may wear a glove, but only the catcher, pitcher, and first baseman may use mitts.

Bats
Bats included on the ISF and ASA Bat Lists that continue to meet the provisions of Section B.1 are approved for use. Should a bat no longer meet the requirements of Section B.1 it shall be considered an illegal bat and not approved for use.
Catcher’s Equipment
Catcher’s masks are required. A chest protector and shin guards are recommended for all catchers.

Helmets
Helmets are mandatory on offense for batters, on-deck batters, batter-runners, runners, players who coach in the first and third base coaches box, and youth age representatives that participate as a bat boy or girl while on the field or in the dugout.

Coaching Aids
Coaching aids are vital to the success of every softball program. Use cones, batting tees, and reversible jerseys during your training sessions. A tethered softball is excellent for developing batting skills. It allows the athlete to practice hitting without the need to chase the ball. The tethered softball is also adaptable to wheelchair activities. In addition, there are many videotapes available that break down each skill into small components; or ask someone to videotape a practice session for later review.
SOFTBALL COACHING GUIDE

Teaching Softball Skills
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Warm-Up
A warm-up period is the first part of every training session or preparation for competition. The warm-up starts slowly and gradually involves all muscles and body parts. In addition to preparing the athlete mentally, warming up also has several physiological benefits.

The importance of a warm-up prior to exercise cannot be overstressed. Warming up raises the body temperature and prepares the muscles, nervous system, tendons, ligaments and the cardiovascular system for upcoming stretches and exercises. The chances of injury are greatly reduced by increasing muscle elasticity.

Warming Up:
- Raises body temperature
- Increases metabolic rate
- Increases heart and respiratory rate
- Prepares the muscles and nervous system for exercise

The warm-up is tailored for the activity to follow. Warm-ups consist of active motion leading up to more vigorous motion to elevate heart, respiratory and metabolic rates. The total warm-up period takes at least 25 minutes and immediately precedes the training or competition. A warm-up period will include the following basic sequence and components.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Time (minimum)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slow aerobic walk/ fast</td>
<td>Heat muscles</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>walk/ run</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stretching</td>
<td>Increase range of movement</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event Specific Drills</td>
<td>Coordination preparation for training/competition</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Aerobic Warm-Up
Activities such as walking, light jogging, walking while doing arm circles, jumping jacks.

Walking
Walking is the first exercise of an athlete’s routine. Athletes begin warming the muscles by walking slowly for 3-5 minutes. This circulates the blood through all the muscles, thus providing them greater flexibility for stretching. The sole objective of the warm up is to circulate the blood and warm the muscles in preparation for more strenuous activity.
Running
Running is the next exercise in an athlete’s routine. Athletes begin warming the muscles by running slowly for 3-5 minutes. This circulates the blood through all the muscles, thus providing them greater flexibility for stretching. The run starts out slowly, and then gradually increases in speed; however, the athlete never reaches even 50 percent of their maximum effort by the end of the run. Remember, the sole objective of this phase of the warm up is circulating the blood and warming the muscles in preparation for more strenuous activity.

Stretching
Stretching is one of the most critical parts of the Warm Up and an athlete’s performance. A more flexible muscle is a stronger and healthier muscle. A stronger and healthier muscle responds better to exercise and activities and helps prevent injury. Please refer to the Stretching section for more in depth information.

Event Specific Drills
Drills are activities designed to teach sport skills. Progressions of learning start at a low ability level, advance to an intermediate level, and finally, reach a high ability level. Encourage each athlete to advance to their highest possible level. Drills can be combined with warm-up and lead into specific skill development.

Skills are taught and reinforced through repetition of a small segment of the skill to be performed. Many times, the actions are exaggerated in order to strengthen the muscles that perform the skill. Each coaching session should take the athlete through the entire progression so that he/she is exposed to all of the skills that make up an event.

Specific Warm-up Activities
- Swing arms back and forth simulating the pendulum swing.
- Walking through the techniques without the ball.
- Using 10 to 15 min. warm-up period on the field.
Stretching

Flexibility is critical to an athlete’s optimal performance in both training and competition. Flexibility is achieved through stretching. Stretching follows an easy aerobic jog at the start of a training session or competition.

Begin with an easy stretch to the point of tension, and hold this position for 15-30 seconds until the pull lessens. When the tension eases, slowly move further into the stretch until tension is again felt. Hold this new position for an additional 15 seconds. Each stretch should be repeated 4-5 times on each side of the body.

It is also important to continue to breathe while stretching. As you lean into the stretch, exhale. Once the stretching point is reached, keep inhaling and exhaling while holding the stretch. Stretching should be a part of everyone’s daily life. Regular, daily stretching has been demonstrated to have the following effects:

1. Increase the length of the muscle-tendon unit
2. Increase joint range of motion
3. Reduce muscle tension
4. Develop body awareness
5. Promote increased circulation
6. Make you feel good

Some athletes, like those with Down Syndrome, may have low muscle tone that makes them appear more flexible. Be careful to not allow these athletes to stretch beyond a normal, safe range. Several stretches are dangerous to perform for all athletes, and should never be part of a safe stretching program. These unsafe stretches include the following:

- Neck Backward Bending
- Trunk Backward Bending
- Spinal Roll

Stretching is effective only if the stretch is performed accurately. Athletes need to focus on correct body positioning and alignment. Take the calf stretch for example. Many athletes do not keep the feet forward, in the direction that they are running.
Another common fault in stretching is bending the back in an attempt to get a better stretch from the hips. An example is a simple sitting forward leg stretch.

Incorrect

![Incorrect Stretch Image]

Correct

![Correct Stretch Image]

In this guide, we will focus on some basic stretches for major muscle groups. Along the way we will also point out some common faults, illustrate corrections and identify stretches that are more event specific. We will start at the top of the body and work our way to the legs and feet.
Upper Body

**Chest Opener**
- Clasp hands behind back
- Palms facing in
- Push hands towards sky

**Side Stretch**
- Raise arms over head
- Clasp forearms
- Bend to one side
**Side Arm Stretch**

Raise arms over head  
Clasp hands, palms up  
Push hands toward sky

If the athlete is unable to clasp their hands, they can still get a good stretch by pushing their hands to the sky, like the athlete in the middle.

**Trunk Twist**

Stand with back to wall  
Turn, reach palms to wall

**Triceps Stretch**

Raise both arms over head  
Bend right arm, bring hand to back  
Grasp elbow of bent arm and pull gently toward the middle of the back  
Repeat with other arm

**Shoulder Triceps Stretch**

Take elbow into hand  
Pull to opposite shoulder  
Arm may be straight or bent
Chest Stretch

Clasp hands behind neck
Push elbows back
Keep the back straight and tall

This is a simple stretch, that the athletes may not feel a lot when stretching. However, it opens up the chest and inner shoulder areas, preparing the chest and arms for the workout.
Trunk

Deep Hip Stretch
Kneel, cross left knee over right
Sit between heels
Hold knees, lean forward

Crossed Ankle Stretch
Sit, legs outstretched, crossed at ankles
Reach extended arms in front of body

Groin Stretch
Sit, bottoms of feet touching
Hold feet/ankles
Bend forward from hips
Ensure that the athlete is pulling up in his lower back

Here, the back and shoulders are rounded. The athlete is not bending from his hips and not getting the maximum benefit of the stretch

Here, the athlete is correctly bringing his chest to his feet and not pulling his toes towards his body
**Hip Rolls**

- Lie on back, arms outstretched
- Bring knees to chest
- Slowly drop knees to left (exhale)
- Bring knees back to chest (inhale)
- Slowly drop knees to right (exhale)

- Work on keeping the knees together to get the full stretch through the buttocks

**Supine Hamstring Stretch**

- Lay on back, legs outstretched
- Alternate legs bringing legs to chest
- Bring both legs

**Spine Curl**

- Lay on back
- Bring left knee to chest
- Lift head and shoulders to knee
- Alternate legs

**Downward Facing Dog – Toes**

- Kneel, hands directly under shoulders, knees under hips
- Lift heels until standing on toes
- Slowly lower heels to ground
- Continue alternating up and down slowly

**Downward Facing Dog – Flat Footed**

- Drop heels to ground
- Excellent stretch for the lower back

**Downward Facing Dog – Alternating Legs**

- Alternate raising to toes on one leg up, while keeping one foot flat on ground
- Excellent stretch to prevent and help shin splints
Lower Body

Calf Stretch

Stand facing wall/fence, Bend forward leg slightly Bend ankle of back leg

Calf Stretch w/Bent Knee

Bend both knees to ease strain

Hamstring Stretch

Legs straight out and together Legs are not locked Bend at hips, reach toward ankles As flexibility increases, reach for feet Push out through the heels, forcing toes to the sky

Seated Straddle Stretch

Legs straddled, bend at hips Reach out toward the middle Keep the back straight
Correct alignment of the lead leg is important in a hurdle stretch. The foot must be aligned in the forward direction of running.

- Bend knee, touch bottom of foot to opposite thigh
- Straight leg, toes are toward sky
- Push out through the heel, forcing toes to the sky
- Bend at hips in nice easy stretch, reaching toward the feet or ankles
- Bring chest to knee
**Step Ups**

Step onto support, with bent leg
Push hips in, toward support

**Standing Hamstring Stretch**

Rest heel of foot
Push chest-shoulders in and up

**Forward Bend**

Stand, arms outstretched overhead
Slowly bend at waist
Bring hands to ankle or level without strain
Point toward feet
**Stretching - Quick Reference Guidelines**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instruction</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Start Relaxed</strong></td>
<td>Do not begin until athletes are relaxed and muscles are warm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Be Systematic</strong></td>
<td>Start at the top of body and work your way down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Progress from General to Specific</strong></td>
<td>Start general, and then move into event-specific exercises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Easy Stretching before Developmental</strong></td>
<td>Make slow, progressive stretches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do not bounce or jerk to stretch farther</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use Variety</strong></td>
<td>Make it fun. Use different exercises to work the same muscles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Breathe Naturally</strong></td>
<td>Do not hold your breath, stay calm and relaxed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Allow for Individual Differences</strong></td>
<td>Athletes start and progress at different levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stretch Regularly</strong></td>
<td>Always include time for warm-up and cool-down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stretch at home too!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Throwing**

*to propel or project through the air by a forward motion of the hand and arm*

The skill of throwing in softball is an integral part of a team’s defense. Throwing is how defensive players get the ball from one player to another. They “throw” the ball through the air to a teammate in order to try and get one of the offensive players (batter/runners) “out”.

Grip – The athlete should grip the ball with 3 fingers across the seam of the ball when possible, with the little finger riding loosely on the ball. The knuckle lines under the fingertips should rest on the seam. This is so the fingers can pull down on the seams during release. (Athletes with smaller hands may need to use 4 fingers. Extra-large hands may be able to use two fingers.) The thumb is located under the ball beneath the index finger. The ball should not be in the palm of the hand.

**Grip**

**Skill Progression – Demonstrate the correct grip**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Athlete Can</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify a softball</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hold the ball with the index, middle, and ring fingers spread on top, thumb under the ball, and pinky (smallest finger) on the side of the ball</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place fingertips across seams with knuckle lines resting on seams</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave space between web of thumb and ball</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Squeeze the ball lightly with finger tips</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Totals**
Teaching Points – Demonstrate the correct grip

A common problem:

1. Variation: Athletes with small hands may place all four fingers on top of the ball, with thumb underneath.
2. Athletes with very large hands may try a two-fingered grip with thumb underneath.
3. A too tight grip can prevent proper spin on the ball. The grip should be firm but not too tight, thus allowing the wrist to be flexible which creates backspin.
4. Touch the athlete’s fingertips with your hands. Place the athlete’s fingers in the correct position.
5. The finger pressure on the ball should be evenly distributed.
Faults & Fixes Chart – Demonstrate the correct grip

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error</th>
<th>Correction</th>
<th>Drill Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athlete holds the grip too tight</td>
<td>Make sure ball is not in the palm of the hand.</td>
<td>Wrist Snap Drill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make sure athlete has finger pressure evenly spaced</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete holds the grip too loose</td>
<td>Make sure the athlete is holding the ball with a tighter and even grip</td>
<td>Wrist Snap Drill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete does not grip the ball with the finger tips</td>
<td>Ask the athlete to pick up the ball with their finger tips</td>
<td>Finger Tips Drill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manually adjust the athlete’s fingers so that they are using their finger tips and not the palm of their hand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Underhand Throw**

While the majority of throws will be an overhand throw, there are many game situations when an underhand throw is more appropriate. A few examples of when you would use an underhand throw in softball are as follows:

1. Ball is fielded by the shortstop with a force out at second. If the ball is fairly close to second base, it might be better for the shortstop to toss the ball to the second baseman underhanded.

2. Ball is hit to the pitcher as he/she moves toward first base. An underhand toss might be a safer throw to ensure the force out at first base.

**Skill Progression – Throw the ball underhand**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Athlete Can</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Position feet parallel, at shoulders width apart, pointing towards the target</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place weight on right foot/(dominant foot) or (throwing arm side)</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bring the throwing hand and arm back in a pendulum-style swing with the palm facing forward</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At top of the backswing, take a step forward with the left foot, while bending the knees</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swing arm forward, releasing ball when fingers are pointing at target</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow back foot to step up parallel to forward foot, a bit more than shoulder width apart</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Teaching Points – Throw the ball underhand**

1. Demonstrate the proper techniques for throwing.
2. Physically guide athletes through the throwing motion.
3. Place footprints on the ground and have athletes follow the pattern for throwing.
4. Have athletes practice throwing the ball, making any necessary corrections in throwing force.
5. Throw the ball at a target two meters away.
6. Increase the throwing distance at target in increments of 1.5 meters until athletes can accurately hit at a target 18 meters away.
7. Point out the advantage of finishing the underhand throw in a defensive ready position.
## Faults & Fixes Chart – Underhand Throw

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error</th>
<th>Correction</th>
<th>Drill Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athlete releases the ball too early and the ball falls short of target</td>
<td>Encourage athlete to hold ball longer to ensure a higher release point</td>
<td>The Star Drill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete releases the ball too late and the ball misses the target</td>
<td>Encourage athlete to release ball sooner to ensure a lower release point. Demonstrate the correct release point</td>
<td>The Star Drill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete steps with the wrong foot forward</td>
<td>Place a piece of tape on the correct foot. Re-emphasize the proper technique with demonstration and physical prompt if necessary</td>
<td>The Star Drill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete has improper weight transfer and the ball lands wide of target</td>
<td>Provide varying targets from left to right to reinforce bringing ball across body (or to prevent across body weight transfer)</td>
<td>The Star Drill</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overhand Throw

Demonstrate the proper overhand throwing technique (right-handed)
The overhand throw is used by infielders and outfielders as they attempt to make outs by properly throwing the softball to the desired target. Quickness, velocity, and accuracy are desired components of a properly thrown softball. This is achieved through proper grip, arm circle & release, and lower body drive.

Using proper grip of the softball, keep hand on top of ball as you reach the position where the palm is facing away from target above the shoulder (do not lock elbow). The back foot starts to pivot and turns the body sideways. The elbow should be at the same level as the shoulder and the hand is above the head. The transfer of weight from back to front begins as the elbow leads the arm into the release position (above the head in line with the shoulder). The arm circle path from start to release point is on line to the target. As the ball is released, the fingers will pull down with force across the seams. The thumb leads the hand downward towards the ground upon release.

The follow-through: The hand follows through down and towards the glove-side. The back leg should continue following through (as if stepping). The goal at time of release is to create complete vertical backspin on the ball.

Skill Progression – Demonstrate the proper overhand throwing technique (right-handed)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Athlete Can</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grip the ball correctly</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stand relaxed with feet at shoulders width apart, facing the target</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your glove hand, throwing hand, and the ball should be together at your mid-section.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rotate hips and pivot on left foot, while stepping back with your right foot.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left shoulder now faces the target</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start the ball back in a downward motion with the ball facing away from the player. As you turn your throwing side your glove side and hips should turn and point toward the target.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ball continues in a circular motion back keeping the weight over the back foot.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The player’s glove side will start to turn back away from the target (the same direction it started in) as the ball and throwing hand start upward. The glove side elbow will lead the ball up and be near the player’s ear.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The player’s weight will now be moving toward the front foot and the player will start to lead with the ball by straightening the elbow, snapping the wrist and fingers, and releasing the ball toward the target out in front of the player’s head. The player should try to throw the ball by using his/her fingers instead of pushing with the hand.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After releasing the ball the player’s throwing arm should continue down across the player’s body in the follow through. (wrist snap)</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals
Teaching Points – Demonstrate the proper overhand throwing technique (right-handed)

1. Stand beside the athlete. Place softball in the athlete’s hand and move his/her arm through a throwing motion.

2. Emphasize form. Stress one aspect of form at a time, work on it for a few minutes or for a certain number of throws and then move on to another aspect of form. Include a sufficient number of form throws at increasing distances in preparation for all-out throws in practice or competition.

3. Practice throwing over objects placed at different distances from a line to get proper release angle and throwing arc. Use football goal posts, improvised targets made from bamboo poles, wooden dowels, broomsticks and string or adapt other devices to practice releasing the ball.

4. **Lower Body Drive**
   - Open instep of the throwing foot slightly toward the target. (45 degrees). This is the pivot foot. The pivot foot turns out toward the target to begin the throwing sequence (picture insert) see Ace guide
   - The foot on the glove-side should land at a 45 degree angle when transfer begins.
   - Weight should be balanced on the balls of the feet.
   - Lower body transfer begins as the front foot (glove-side) steps on line to the target, with the arm in the “fingers to the sky” position.
   - Weight transfer begins as the glove-side arm pulls down and into the chest, as the throwing arm comes forward into the release position.
   - Lower body weight transfer completes as the ball is released and follow through occurs. The ball-side leg (back leg) continues forward (drag of the foot).

5. Tell your athletes that the ball will go where their hand is pointing when they let go of it.

6. “Flipping” the wrist is another word for emphasizing “snapping” the wrist.

7. Use a striped ball when executing throwing drills.

---

**Wrist Snap**

**Trunk Rotation**

**Pivot, Step, Turn, Throw**

**Step, Throw, Follow Through**

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**Faults & Fixes Chart – Demonstrate the proper overhand throwing technique (right-handed)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error</th>
<th>Correction</th>
<th>Drill Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athlete releases the ball too early and the ball falls short of target</td>
<td>Adjust release point</td>
<td>The Star Drill – shorter distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete releases the ball too late and the ball misses the target</td>
<td>Adjust release point</td>
<td>The Star Drill – shorter distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete has lack of velocity and accuracy on their throw</td>
<td>Correct follow through of athlete</td>
<td>The Star Drill – shorter distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete throws wide left or wide right</td>
<td>Make sure their feet are and glove hand are pointing at their target and the follow through ends facing the target</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Throwing Drills**

**The Star Drill**

The Star Drill is a drill that will help athletes improve their throwing skills.

1. Players get in the basic infield positions: (first, second, third base, shortstop, and catcher. The distances do not have to be regulation. Use varying distances and progression towards actual distance.
2. Catcher starts by throwing the ball to second base.
4. Third base throws to first base.
5. First base throws to shortstop.
6. Shortstop throws to catcher. This completes the “star” pattern.
7. To make the drill more game-like, time how quickly your infielders can make a star vs. your outfielders.
8. Add runners (with helmets) and have them run around the bases before the players can complete the star.
Catching

Catching is the act of receiving the thrown, hit or pitched ball in the air. (firmly held in the athletes’ hands or glove)

The skill of catching a thrown ball is often difficult for our athletes, as it requires good hand-eye coordination. Sometimes our athletes are afraid of the ball. They may even close their eyes and turn away from the ball.

When teaching athletes how to catch a thrown ball, focus on the following:

Ready Position:
• Feet shoulder-width apart with knees slightly bent,
• Weight on balls of feet
• Shoulders, hips, and knees are square to the target
• Hands start in “neutral” position ~ approximately waist high, thumbs up, palms facing each other
• Receive ball with hands in front of the body, palms facing the ball
• Catch the ball in the middle of the body
• When the ball is coming in above the waist, catch the ball with fingers towards the sky “high to the sky”
• When the ball is coming in below the waist, catch the ball with fingers towards the ground: “down to the ground”
Below The Waist Position

Skill Progression – Correct positioning for catching the ball below the waist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Athlete Can</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stand, with your feet shoulder width apart, in a relaxed position</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hold hands in front of body with arms slightly extended at waist height</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place little fingers side by side, palms up, thumbs out, and fingers pointing</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>down</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cup the palms slightly to form a pocket for catching a ball</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeat sequence until athlete correctly positions his/her hands in this manner</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teaching Points – Correct positioning for catching the ball below the waist

1. Demonstrate the proper position of hands.
2. Point out the similarity between the below-the-waist catch position in softball and trying to hold water in one’s hands.
3. This is the ‘Below the waist’ catching position.
4. If your athletes are struggling to play catch with each other, there are many progressive steps you can use to lead up to catching a regular softball.
   a) Use rag balls, rubber balls, or whiffle balls to decrease hardness of a regulation softball.
   b) Use larger balls such as playground balls, soccer balls, or beach balls. This also helps to encourage the use of two hands.
   c) Deflate balls slightly to soften impact. This helps diffuse fearful tendencies and decrease chance of hurting fingers.
   d) Use bean bags to encourage “flexible fingers”
   e) Start closer together and slowly increase distance between
   f) If still having difficulty, use balloons to alleviate fear and emphasize “tracking the balloon with your eyes”
Above The Waist Position

Skill Progression – Correct positioning for catching the ball above the waist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Athlete Can</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stand, with your feet shoulder width apart, in a relaxed position</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hold hands in front of body, with arms slightly extended at chin height</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be able to peer over the top of the hands</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place thumbs side by side, palms facing forward, fingers pointing up</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flex wrists back slightly to make palms face slightly skyward</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cup hands form a pocket for catching a ball</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeat sequence until athlete correctly positions his/her hands</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teaching Points – Correct positioning for catching the ball above the waist

1. Demonstrate the proper position of hands.
2. Have the athlete switch catching position from the below the waist position to the above the waist position and so forth. NOTE: This is used to combine the two catching ready positions.
3. This is the ‘Above the waist’ catching position.
4. If your athletes are struggling to play catch with each other, there are many progressive steps you can use to lead up to catching a regular softball.
   - Use rag balls, rubber balls, tennis balls, or whiffle balls to decrease hardness of a regulation softball.
   - Use larger balls such as playground balls, soccer balls, or beach balls. This also helps to encourage the use of two hands.
   - Deflate balls slightly to soften impact. This helps diffuse fearful tendencies and decrease chance of hurting fingers.
   - Use bean bags to encourage “flexible fingers”
   - Start closer together and slowly increase distance between
   - If still having difficulty, use balloons to alleviate fear and emphasize “tracking the balloon with your eyes”
Catch a ball below the waist

Skill Progression – Catch a thrown ball below the waist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Athlete Can</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stand, with your feet shoulder width apart, in a relaxed position facing thrower, while wearing a softball glove</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assume correct “below-the-waist” catch position</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep eyes on ball as it leaves the thrower’s hand</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relax fingers and arms</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue to watch the ball all the way into the glove</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catch the ball in the pocket of the glove, giving slightly with impact of the ball. Immediately cover the ball with the free hand</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals

Teaching Points – Catch a thrown ball below the waist
1. Explain the technique of catching with a glove (e.g., using bare hand to hold onto the ball).
2. Explain to the athlete that it may be necessary to adjust their feet to receive the ball in front of the body.
3. Practice getting the hands under the ball to catch it.
4. Reduce the size of the ball as the athlete’s skill improves.
5. As skill improves, gradually increase the distance of the throw.
6. Demonstrate how to drop a ball (a bouncy ball) and catch it after it rebounds back into the air.
7. Have the athlete practice throwing the ball straight up and catching it before it hits the ground.

Faults & Fixes Chart – Catch a thrown ball below the waist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error</th>
<th>Correction</th>
<th>Drill Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athlete does not track the ball into the glove.</td>
<td>Use lighter, softer balls that are easier to track</td>
<td>Ball Color Drill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete cannot keep the glove open to receive the ball.</td>
<td>Try using other objects without glove such as beanbags</td>
<td>Self-toss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete drops the ball once it hits the glove.</td>
<td>Encourage the non-glove hand to cover ball in the glove</td>
<td>Self-toss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete moves hands out of proper position for a ‘below the waist’ catch.</td>
<td>Use whiffle balls or safety balls Have them catch from a seated position</td>
<td>Above and Below Catching Drill</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Catch a ball above the waist

Skill Progression – Catch a thrown ball above the waist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Athlete Can</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stand, with your feet shoulder width apart, in relaxed position facing thrower, while wearing a softball glove</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assume correct “above-the-waist” catch position</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep eyes on the ball as it leaves the thrower’s hand</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place hands in line with flight of ball. The athlete must be able to see under, through or above hands as ball approaches</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relax fingers and arms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue to watch the ball all the way into the glove</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catch the ball in the pocket of the glove, giving slightly with impact of the ball. Immediately cover the ball with the free hand</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Totals |

Teaching Points – Catch a thrown ball above the waist

1. Explain the technique of catching with a glove (e.g., using bare hand to cover the ball; looking through the webbing; etc.).
2. Practice positioning the athlete’s entire body under the catch. Explain to the athlete that it may be necessary to adjust their feet to receive the ball in front of the body.
3. Emphasize the importance of catching the ball with the glove, not with the body.
4. Demonstrate the many heights at which this type of catch can be made (e.g., in a crouch, leaping, running, etc.).
5. Practice all of the catching skills with a variety of low impact balls, i.e. tennis ball, rag ball, foam ball etc., before progressing to a regulation softball. These low impact balls serve three main purposes: they bounce, they don’t hurt bare hands, and they are highly visible.

Faults & Fixes Chart – Catch a thrown ball above the waist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error</th>
<th>Correction</th>
<th>Drill Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athlete does not track the ball into the glove.</td>
<td>Use lighter, softer balls that are easier to track</td>
<td>Self-toss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete cannot keep the glove open to receive the ball.</td>
<td>Try using other objects without glove such as beanbags</td>
<td>Self-toss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete drops the ball once it hits the glove.</td>
<td>Encourage the non-glove hand to cover ball in the glove</td>
<td>Self-toss Above and Below Catching Drill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete moves hands out of proper position for a ‘above the waist’ catch.</td>
<td>Use whiffle balls or safety balls Have them catch from a seated position</td>
<td>Above and Below Catching Drill</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Catching Drills

Above and Below Catching Drill
Designed to improve basic skill of catching

**Drill Focus:** hand position

1. Have athlete remove their glove
2. Using a larger ball (volleyball, soccer ball), stand about 4-6 feet in front of the athlete.
3. Gently toss the ball to the athlete. You can vary the toss to be above or below their waist.
4. Athlete has to say “high to the sky” or “down to the ground”, depending upon where the ball is when they catch it.
5. Gradually add the glove for the athlete, and then begin using a softball
6. Other variations of this drill include change distance (closer or further apart), ball type (large, soft, whiffle, bean bag), and position of athletes (standing, kneeling, sitting)

Self-Toss Catching Drill

**Drill Focus:** confidence in catching a thrown ball

1. Each athlete has their own ball and glove
2. They toss the ball up in the air and catch it
3. As they gain confidence, have them toss the ball higher
4. Use safety balls if necessary to alleviate fear of being hurt by the ball
5. Add a competitive component by seeing who can toss the ball the highest to make the catch
**Fielding**

Field a ground ball, Catch a fly ball, Perform the “sure-stop” technique of fielding a ground ball, Learn fielding strategy, Learn fielders’ positions and learn positional strategy.

Fielding is the ability to stop a hit/batted ball by receiving the ball into the glove, which is traveling on the ground or in the air.

Assume the correct ready-to-field position,

**Ready Position:**
- Feet shoulder-width apart with knees slightly bent,
- Weight on balls of feet, with balance slightly forward
- Shoulders, hips, and knees are square to the ball
- Bend at knees, not at waist, to lower the body into good fielding position
**Ready-to-Field Position**

**Skill Progression – Assume the correct ready-to-field position**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Athlete Can</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Take an assigned spot on field</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position legs shoulder-width apart</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bend knees slightly</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place hands on knees or in front of body</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep weight forward and even on both feet</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep head up, and eyes on batter and ball</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Totals**

**Teaching Points – Assume the correct ready-to-field position**

1. Demonstrate correct position.
2. Point out the key body joints.
3. Have athlete assume correct ready-to-field position from a relaxed standing position repeatedly.

---

**Faults & Fixes Chart – Assume the correct ready-to-field position**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error</th>
<th>Correction</th>
<th>Drill Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standing upright, knees locked</td>
<td>Review ready- position</td>
<td>Getting ready for the pepper drill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feet too wide apart</td>
<td>Review ready- position</td>
<td>Getting ready for the pepper drill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight back on heels</td>
<td>Review ready- position</td>
<td>Getting ready for the pepper drill</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Field a Hit Ground Ball

- Assume ready position
- Hands start in “neutral position” – approximately waist high, thumbs up, palms facing each other
- Just before to receiving the ball into the glove, make sure the tip of the glove is touching the ground. (It’s quicker to have glove on ground and come up with the ball, rather than trying to go down for the ball)
- Field the ball with hands in front of the body, palms facing the ball, elbows in front of knees, with elbows slightly bent.
- Field the ball on glove hand side of body.
- Gather the ball using “soft” hands (arms/hands need to be pliant and “give” a little as ball comes into glove). Gather the ball through the middle of your body to the throwing side as you move your feet to a throwing position, stepping toward the target.

Skill Progression – Field a hit ground ball

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Athlete Can</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assume correct fielding position</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch ball as it makes contact with bat</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move sideways to get body in line with the path of ball</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep glove open, palm up, and fingers on the ground</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch the ball into glove, “giving” slightly to bring ball in close to body</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smother ball in glove with bare hand</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals

Teaching Points – Field a hit ground ball

1. Demonstrate the correct fielding technique.
2. If necessary, physically assist the athlete by standing behind and over him/her.
3. Run drills to make athlete practice moving sideways with glove down.
4. Have athletes practice fielding by playing Pepper drill.
5. Emphasize fielding is like landing an airplane—not a helicopter. We want to stay low as we go for the ball, not plop down on it like a helicopter.
Faults & Fixes Chart – Field a hit ground ball

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error</th>
<th>Correction</th>
<th>Drill Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ball goes under glove</td>
<td>Have athlete keep glove tip touching the ground before receiving the ball. Use safety balls, tennis balls, or whiffle balls</td>
<td>Pepper drill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ball goes past on the glove side</td>
<td>Practice moving to the left</td>
<td>Pepper drill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ball goes past on the hand side</td>
<td>Practice moving to the right</td>
<td>Pepper drill</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Catch a Hit Fly Ball

Catching a fly ball is one of the most difficult skills for your athletes to master. Hand-eye coordination is needed, along with not being fearful, in order to achieve this task. While all players will have to catch fly balls at some point, it is mainly a skill performed by outfielders. But it is a skill that every athlete needs to learn.

Fly Ball Basics:
- Line your throwing side up with the ball
- Get your glove up in-line with the ball with your fingers pointing to the sky
- Elbows are bent and relaxed (do not extend arms straight to catch ball
- Position glove close to top of head on throwing shoulder
- Catch the ball in front of your head off the throwing side of your body
- Catch the ball with glove hand and then immediately cover the ball with your bare hand

Skill Progression – Catch a hit fly ball

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Athlete Can</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assume correct fielding position</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch ball as it makes contact with bat</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move to spot where ball will land</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Point fingers of glove downward to make below-the-waist catch; fingers upward to make above-the-waist catch</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch the ball into glove, “giving” slightly to bring ball in close to body</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cover the ball in glove with bare hand</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals

Teaching Points – Catch a hit fly ball

1. Demonstrate the correct catching technique.
2. Emphasize moving the body to get under the ball.
3. Remind athletes to use two hands by covering the ball once caught inside the glove.
4. Repeat “high to the sky” and “down to the ground” to reinforce correct glove position
5. Use softer, larger balls to help eliminate fear of being hurt by ball.
6. Run drills to make athlete practice moving in all directions with glove in above-the-waist position.
7. Demonstrate the different heights/positions at which this type of catch can be made (in a crouch, leaping, running sideways, running backwards, running forward etc.)
8. Practice first using a tennis ball before progressing to a regulation softball.
9. Emphasize the importance of catching the ball with the hands and not the body.
10. Practice positioning the athlete’s entire body under the catch.

Faults & Fixes Chart – Catch a hit fly ball

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error</th>
<th>Correction</th>
<th>Drill Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using one hand without covering ball in glove</td>
<td>Re-emphasize covering the ball in the glove</td>
<td>Fly Ball Drills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing glove before impact</td>
<td>Re-emphasize tracking the ball all the way into the glove. Close and cover after ball gets into the glove</td>
<td>Fly Ball Drills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arms straight and knees locked</td>
<td>Review ready position and have athlete flex their knees and elbows</td>
<td>Ready position – Fly Ball Drill</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Learn fielding strategy

Skill Progression – Learn fielding strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Athlete Can</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Throw to base ahead of runner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tag base of forced runner to get runner out</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tag runner when he is not forced to advance to get him out</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know where to throw before each batter hits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow the general rule, “get the sure out”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not allow the ball to get by one’s body, i.e., “keep the ball in front of the body”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always throw the ball in order to move it around the field. The ball will travel faster from one place to another if it is thrown rather than carried by a player</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not throw the ball to a base which is not covered by a teammate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals

Teaching Points – Learn fielding strategy

1. Read rules of strategy to the athlete.
2. Analyze each throwing and fielding tactic. Discuss the purpose for each tactic.
3. Take athlete to a softball game, and ask athlete to identify various fielding tactics.
Fielders’ Positions

Skill Progression – Learn fielders’ positions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Athlete Can</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Study diagram of fielders’ positions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draw a diagram of a softball field and write in the position number at the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>correct spot on the field</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play every position at least once during practice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visualize each fielder’s position and memorize the corresponding number for</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that position</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals

1. Pitcher – pitches from the pitcher’s rubber.
2. Catcher – assumes a crouch in line with the center of the plate and behind the back line of the batter’s box.
3. First Baseman – plays about ten feet to the second base side of first base and about five feet behind the first to second base line.
4. Second Baseman – plays about fifteen feet to the first base side of second base and about ten feet behind the base line.
5. Third Baseman – plays about eight feet to the second base side of third base and about five feet behind the second to third base line.
6. Shortstop – plays about fifteen feet to the third base side of second base and about twelve feet behind the base line.
7. Left fielder – plays between the third baseman and shortstop, halfway to the outfield fence.
8. Left center fielder – plays between shortstop and second base, two-thirds of the way to outfield fence.
9. Right center fielder – plays between second base and second baseman, two-thirds of the way to outfield fence.
10. Right fielder – plays between second baseman and first baseman, halfway to the outfield fence.
Teaching Points – Learn fielders’ positions

1. Use a poster or magnetic board and have the athlete place figures which represent each fielder on the board in their respective positions.
2. Give a quiz about the various positions to the athletes.
3. Play Work-Up, where each player plays at every position at least once.
Positional Strategy

Skill Progression – Learn positional strategy

Your Athlete Can | Never | Sometimes | Often
---|---|---|---
Understand the responsibilities of each position | | | |
Learn the standard methods of making an out at each base | | | |

Follow these tips for playing each position

1. Pitcher – covers the territory around the pitcher’s mound; takes the throw at first base when the first baseman fields a ground ball deep behind the base; backs up third base and home on throws to these bases from the outfield.

2. Catcher – covers the territory around home plate, including foul ground; direct infield on pop ups and foul fly balls; shifts all fielders according to the strength and stance of the batter.

3. First Baseman – covers the territory around first base; including foul ground and shallow right field; takes throws from other infielders to get batters out at first base; receives throws by placing throwing-side foot on the base and stretching toward the throw with catching side leg in order to catch the ball early; becomes cut-off man on throws from all outfielders to home by moving to a spot near or on the pitcher’s mound that is in line with the outfielder and home plate.

4. Second Baseman – covers territory to the first base side of second base, including shallow right field; takes throws at second base when the ball has been hit to the left side of the infield; makes double plays by stepping on second base while receiving throw from other infielder and throwing to first base for the second out; becomes relay man on throws from deep right field.

5. Third Baseman – covers territory around third base, including foul ground and shallow left field; takes throws at third base for force outs or tag plays on non-forced runners; makes force out by stretching to receive the throw, and makes tag out by straddling the base.

6. Shortstop – covers territory to the third base side of second base, including shallow left field; takes throws at second base when the ball has been hit to the right side of the infield; makes double plays by stepping on second base while receiving throw, then throwing to first base for the second out; becomes relay man on throws to third from deep center or left field, and on throws to home from deep left field.

7. Outfielders – cover their respective fields; back up plays at the various bases in their areas; back up fellow outfielders and infielders in their areas on all plays; throw to base ahead of lead runner to prevent the runner from advancing; throw to relay man or cut off man on throws to third and home; shift to left or right and in or out depending on the wind, batter’s strength and stance, score, and the location of base runners.

Teaching Points – Learn positional strategy

1. Instruct the catcher to tell the cut-off man to intercept the throw if there is no chance for a play at home, or to let the throw go through if there is a chance for a play at home.

2. It is standard theory that the second baseman, third baseman and short-stop be right-handed throwers, because it takes them one less step to make a throw to first or second base.
Fielding Drills

WATCH VIDEO 1  WATCH VIDEO 2  WATCH VIDEO 3  WATCH VIDEO 4  WATCH VIDEO 5  WATCH VIDEO 6

WATCH VIDEO 7  WATCH VIDEO 8  WATCH VIDEO 9  WATCH VIDEO 10
Pitching
At the beginning of each play the pitcher, while in contact with the pitcher’s plate, will pause and then with a continuous underhand motion, deliver a pitch with an arc of between 1.83m (6ft.) and 3.05m (10ft.) from the ground and towards home plate. The object of the pitcher is to get either: three strikes on the batter, in which case the batter is called out and the next batter takes their place in the batter’s box, OR the batter hits the ball in play and the fielders on the pitcher’s team can make a defensive play in order to get an out. Four balls by the pitcher would result in the awarding of first base with no liability to be put out.

Pitch the softball underhand through the strike zone

Skill Progression – Pitch the softball underhand through the strike zone

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Athlete Can</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Find the pitchers plate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wait for the catcher, batter and/or umpire to take their positions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position one foot in contact with the pitcher’s plate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Come to a complete stop with the ball in one or both hands in front of their body</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pause for 1-10 seconds while simulating taking a signal from the catcher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep head up and eyes focused on target (i.e., strike zone) at all times during the pitch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assume ready-to-field position</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals

Teaching Points – Pitch the softball underhand through the strike zone

1. Demonstrate the correct position of the pivot foot on the pitcher’s plate. From a complete stop, show the pitcher how to maintain one foot in contact while delivering a pitch. Make sure knees are bent and balance is maintained. (If a step is taken, it can be in any direction, as long as the pivot foot remains in contact until the ball is released.
2. Have the catcher make a target for the pitcher. Tell the pitcher not to aim, but to release the ball with moderate speed towards the catcher.
3. Practice throwing the distance between the pitcher’s plate and home plate. Learn how much momentum is necessary for the pitch to pass through the strike zone.
4. Practice throwing at different arc levels to compensate for wind conditions and to keep batters from always seeing the same pitch.
5. Discuss the rules with the pitchers and demonstrate the correct way to follow the rules.
6. Keep the grip on the ball consistent by asking the pitcher to lay the ball in their glove (if possible) and picking it out of the glove with the same grip every time. A proper grip should utilize the stitching of the softball. The ball should not be squeezed too hard nor held too loosely.
Faults & Fixes Chart – Pitch the softball underhand through the strike zone

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error</th>
<th>Correction</th>
<th>Drill Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does not pause</td>
<td>Have catcher stand and hold up a stop sign</td>
<td>Basket target drill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loses contact with pitcher’s plate</td>
<td>Start with front toe of pivot foot on the back of the pitcher’s plate</td>
<td>Basket Target Drill or Basketball Arc Drill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much arc on pitch</td>
<td>Release the ball sooner</td>
<td>Basket Target Drill or Basketball Arc Drill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excessive speed on pitch</td>
<td>Slow down arm speed and hold the ball a little longer prior to release</td>
<td>Basket Target Drill or Basketball Arc Drill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitch is too deep</td>
<td>Adjust pitcher’s plate or reduce arm speed or add more arc to pitch</td>
<td>Basket Target Drill or Basketball Arc Drill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitch does not reach the strike zone</td>
<td>Adjust pitcher’s plate or add arm speed or reduce arc</td>
<td>Basket Target Drill or Basketball Arc Drill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitch is wide right or left</td>
<td>Adjust the pitcher’s hips to compensate</td>
<td>Basket Target Drill or Basketball Arc Drill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is off balance after the pitch is released</td>
<td>Demonstrate landing the non-pivot foot solid and then stepping with the pivot foot to be in balance</td>
<td>Combine Basket Target Drill with Ready to Field Drill</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Pitching Rules

**Skill Progression – Understand and follow the pitching rules at all times**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Athlete Can</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pitch underhand</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Must pitch once the arm starts forward</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Must wait for umpire to be ready before pitching</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Must keep contact foot on pitcher’s rubber until the ball leaves the hand</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Must pitch with a moderate speed within the legal pitching arc</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn rules for pitcher substitution, adjustment of pitching distance</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Totals**

**Teaching Points – Understand and follow the pitching rules at all times**

1. Explain to the athlete the reasons for the different pitching rules.
2. Discuss the problems of not following those rules.
3. Advise the pitcher to think of one thing, throwing the ball to the catcher’s mitt.
Pitching Drills

1. Have the pitcher stand with legs at shoulder width and knees slightly bent. Have a catcher stand at 2m and ask the pitcher to throw 5 pitches at a slow speed with some arc and NO step. Keep their feet balanced and in place! Ask the catcher to step back to 3m and have the pitcher pitch another 5 pitches while adjusting their delivery to keep the arc legal. Continue with the progression to a comfortable legal pitching distance of between 12.19m (40ft.) and 15.24m (50ft). (As the distance is increased, a legal step can be incorporated into the pitch if the pitches are falling short). Adjust the placement of the feet slightly forward or backward in order to get the best pendulum motion from the pitching arm. It is likely that the shoulders will not be in line with the catcher in order to achieve the best stance for balance and accuracy. Make adjustments at each progression to ensure the maximum consistency.

2. INDOORS: Tape a rectangular strike zone to a wall simulating the strike zone of an average size batter and ask the pitcher to release 5 pitches from distances beginning at 3.05m (10ft) and keep a consistent arc while moving back to a comfortable pitching distance of between 12.19m (40ft) and 15.24m (50ft). You can also set bars or poles at 1.83m (6ft) and 3.65m (12ft) to help visually keep the height of the pitches consistent. OUTDOORS: A similar drill can be conducted on a softball field by placing a bucket behind home plate.
Batting/Hitting
Batting/Hitting skills allow a team to get runners on base and get in position to score runs. The ability to visually track a pitched ball (hand-eye coordination) while also demonstrating correct timing of swinging the bat, will hopefully result in good contact between bat and ball.

For right-handed batters: the left hand will be gripping the bat near the knob, with the right hand immediately above (stacked on top) the left hand.

For left-handed batters: the right hand will be gripping the bat near the knob, with the left hand immediately above (stacked on top) the right hand.

Before proper grip, stance, and swing can be achieved, it’s important to know some basic bat facts. As a coach, you need to make sure that your athletes are using bats that are the appropriate size and weight for their ability.

Bat Types:
- Barrel Bat
- Bottle Bat
A Barrel bat is the shape of a traditional baseball bat, while the Bottle bat is the more traditional softball bat. Both types are used in the game of softball, but beginners usually do better with the Bottle bat because it has a larger hitting area.

Bat parts:
- Knob – The knob is designed to keep the athlete’s hand from slipping off the end of the bat
- Handle – This is the area where the athlete grips the bat
- Barrel – This is the “fat” part of the bat. This is the part of the bat designed for hitting the ball.
- Sweet spot – This is the area on the barrel that is the ideal part for hitting the ball. It is usually a few inches from the end of the bat
- End – This is the end of the barrel. It is not designed for hitting the ball, sometimes if a batter swings too early, they may contact the ball with the end of the bat.

Grip and Stance
Grip
- Grip the bat just above the knob, wrapping fingers and thumbs around the handle.
- Right-handed batter-grip the bat with right hand above the left hand (hands touching)
- Left-handed batter-grip the bat with left hand above the right hand (hands touching)
- Line up knuckles, adjust slightly for a comfortable grip
- Hands and wrists are relaxed in stance; the grip will tighten slightly as the swing starts
Stance

- Batter’s Box- identify the batter’s box to your athletes on both sides of home plate.
- Right-handed batter will line up in the Batter’s Box on the left side of home plate
- Left-handed batter will line up in the Batter’s Box on the right side of home plate
- Stand in batter’s box with feet pointing at the plate with feet about shoulder-width apart
- Initial position – stand even with the center of home plate
- To make sure you are proper distance away from the plate, reach out with bat and tap the outside corner of the plate with holding only with the bottom hand on the bat
- Bend knees slightly, with knees inside of feet
- Slight bend at waist. Hips and shoulders face the plate.
- Proper stance will allow the hitter to have a two-eyed look at the pitcher
- Hold bat upright and positioned at the back shoulder, away from the body with the hands chest high
- Keep rear elbow away from the body
- Note: Proper stance will vary slightly from athlete to athlete. Some may prefer a little wider stance, or some may like to hold the bat a little higher or a little lower. Allow for personal adjustments
- Weight should be on the inside balls of feet, and centered in the stance
Batting/Hitting Stance

Skill Progression – Demonstrate the proper batting/hitting stance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Athlete Can</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hold the bat in the base of your fingers and not in your palm.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The bat should be held in a relaxed position in an area near the back shoulder.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The batter’s elbows should be relaxed and down. If a batter’s elbows are up it will cause the hitter to have a slow and upper cut swing thus making it almost impossible to hit the ball.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both feet should be in the batter’s box. The feet should be comfortably spread apart with good body balance. The feet should be pointed toward home plate.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The knees should be slightly bent and the player’s weight should be on the balls of both feet.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The shoulders should be level and parallel to home plate and the head should be facing the pitcher.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The batter’s elbows should be relaxed and pointing downward.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The bat should be held in a relaxed and tension free position, near the back shoulder.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The wrists should be cocked.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals

Teaching Points – Demonstrate the proper batting/hitting stance

1. The batter does not have to “line up the knuckles” when gripping the bat, but if he/she decides to do this; the knuckles that should be lined up are the knocking knuckles (the knuckles that a player would use to knock on a door). Lining up the knuckles is a personal preference and should not be insisted on by the coach.

2. The strength to which the athlete grips the bat should not be any tighter than a comfortable handshake.

3. Make sure the batter is not using too heavy or too long of a bat. To check this, have your batter swing the bat first with his/her top hand keeping the elbow at 90 degrees against his/her body. Then check the bottom hand, again keeping the elbow close to the body. If he/she can’t keep the bat level when swinging one handed like this then the bat is too heavy.

4. To ensure good plate coverage with the swing, have the player reach across the plate with their bat. There should be at least two inches of the bat extended over the plate.

5. If a player’s elbows are up it will cause the hitter to have a slow and upper cut swing thus making it almost impossible to hit the ball.
Faults & Fixes Chart – Demonstrate the proper batting/hitting stance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error</th>
<th>Correction</th>
<th>Drill Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athlete stands on home plate.</td>
<td>Draw line in dirt in front of plate and have athlete place their toes on the line</td>
<td>No Drill References just demonstration of proper form and athlete can mimic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete has hands in the wrong position on the bat.</td>
<td>Switch the top hand to the bottom, and the bottom hand to the top</td>
<td>No Drill References just demonstration of proper form and athlete can mimic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete has the bat in the wrong position.</td>
<td>Demonstrate correct bat position. Physically move the athlete’s bat into the proper position</td>
<td>No Drill References just demonstration of proper form and athlete can mimic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete’s feet are in the wrong position.</td>
<td>Draw a reference point in the dirt to help with proper foot placement Physically adjust athlete’s feet to the desired position</td>
<td>No Drill References just demonstration of proper form and athlete can mimic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Batting/Hitting Swing
Assume proper batting stance

Loading or Triggering Phase – slight movement away from the pitcher as batter prepares for pitch
- Slight weight shift to inside of back leg (knee inside of feet)
- Hand movement slow and continuous (on time with the pitcher)
- No twisting of upper body

Stride – movement toward the pitcher to establish a strong hitting position
- Small step toward pitcher with front foot

Swing
- Rotate hips and shoulders in same direction
- Lead the swing with the forward elbow
- As lead elbow passes the body, hands are leading the bat
- End of the bat arcs down and around to a point where the bat is parallel to the ground, directly over the plate, pointing across the plate
- Finish the swing by rolling hands and following through with the bat.
- Focus eyes on point of contact
- As back foot pivots, toes stay on ground and heel finishes up
Skill Progression – Demonstrate the proper batting/hitting swing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Athlete Can</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assume proper Batting/Hitting stance and grip</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To begin swing, start with weight evenly placed on both feet.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The initial movements in hitting are the gather or coil of the hands in a slight backward motion (staying in-line with the starting point of the hands) and a small stride step toward the pitcher.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The backside hip starts to rotate as the hands come forward.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As the bat comes through the hitting zone the backside hip starts to rotate. As this rotation starts, the rear heel must leave the ground. The heel leaving the ground is called a pivot or turn. This back foot pivot has to happen in order for the rear hip to finish its turn and give the player maximum power in the swing.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When the swing is completed, the player’s belly button should be facing in the direction of where the ball would be hit.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The hitter’s chin goes from the front shoulder to the rear shoulder during the swing by the movement of the arms and shoulders and not by rotating the head.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The player should swing through the hitting zone and finish high. The bat should finish across near the hitter’s back shoulder – this is called the follow-through.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals

Teaching Points – Demonstrate the proper batting/hitting swing

1. The hands are kept relaxed and should bring the bat into the hitting area in the fastest and most direct route. This will happen by the hitter pulling the bat across his/her chest with his/her bottom hand and the top hand driving the bat forward. The handle of the bat should stay out of the strike zone.
2. Demonstrate the proper swing.
3. Suggest the athlete use a count of four to keep a rhythm to the swing: one, step; two, lead with elbow; three, extend arms and roll hands at point of contact; four, swing all the way through. Following swing, batter should not be off balance.
4. Have athlete practice swing all the way through.
5. Have athlete practice swing in front of a mirror, without the bat.
6. For training purposes you may have your athlete swing a legal weighted training softball bat to strengthen arm, shoulder and torso muscles.
### Faults & Fixes Chart – Demonstrate the proper batting/hitting swing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error</th>
<th>Correction</th>
<th>Drill Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athlete does not maintain proper grip on the bat.</td>
<td>Make sure athlete is maintaining a grip equal to a handshake</td>
<td>Hitting off a Tee Drill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involuntary release of bat on swing.</td>
<td>Have athlete grip the bat tighter</td>
<td>Hitting off a Tee Drill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete loses balance during swing.</td>
<td>Have athlete distribute weight evenly in stance with weight more on the balls of the feet</td>
<td>Hitting off a Tee Drill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete does not follow through with swing properly.</td>
<td>Have athlete practice swinging without the ball, encouraging a complete follow through</td>
<td>Hitting off a Tee Drill</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hit a softball off a batting/hitting tee

Skill Progression – Hit a softball off a batting/hitting tee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Athlete Can</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assume proper batting/ hitting stance</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perform the proper batting/ hitting swing</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hit the ball from the tee into the playing area</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep eyes focused on point of contact</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch the bat strike the ball</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bat is somewhat level to the ground at point of contact</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals

Teaching Points – Hit a softball off a batting/hitting tee

1. Start athlete with a bat which he/she can swing easily. Let the athlete swing at the tee which has no ball on it in order to figure out exactly where his/her swing should be.
2. Ask athlete to hit the ball using a controlled swing. Emphasize watching the bat hit the ball.
3. Gradually let the athlete progress to a bat size which will be always right for him/her.
4. Instruct the athlete to drop the bat after batting/ hitting the ball.
5. Discuss the possibilities for injury if the bat is thrown instead of dropped.
Faults & Fixes Chart – Hit a softball off a batting/ hitting tee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error</th>
<th>Correction</th>
<th>Drill Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bat hits the tee below the ball.</td>
<td>Keep your eye on the ball. Lower tee if necessary</td>
<td>Hitting off a Tee Drill with Marked Softballs for striking reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bat hits the air above the ball.</td>
<td>Keep your eye on the ball. Raise tee if necessary</td>
<td>Hitting off a Tee Drill with Marked Softballs for striking reference</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hit a pitched ball

Skill Progression – Hit a pitched ball

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Athlete Can</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assume correct batting/ hitting stance</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus eyes on pitcher</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch the ball, even before it leaves the pitcher’s hand, all the way to the plate</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As ball approaches the plate, decide to hit it or let it pass</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To hit the ball, perform batting/ hitting swing</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch the ball hit the bat</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact with the ball is made near the front of the plate, unless it’s an outside pitch and then the ball is contacted in line with the player’s back hip.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swing through the ball with the ‘follow through’ motion.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals

Teaching Points – Hit a pitched ball

1. Begin practice of making contact by using a light bat and a large ball. Gradually change size of equipment as athlete progresses.
2. Emphasize the importance of making contact.
3. The player’s eyes should never leave the ball. He/she should track the ball from the pitcher to the bat and try and see the ball at contact.
5. Instruct the athlete to swing through the ball, with smooth, even swing.
6. A good method for teaching an athlete to swing through the ball is to have the athlete swing at a pitched ball with a string less tennis racquet. The point is to make the ball pass cleanly through the racquet.
Faults & Fixes Chart – Hit a pitched ball

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error</th>
<th>Correction</th>
<th>Drill Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athlete misses the ball, too high.</td>
<td>Tracking the ball.</td>
<td>Soft Toss or Pitched Ball with Marked Softballs for striking reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete misses the ball, too low.</td>
<td>Tracking the ball.</td>
<td>Soft Toss or Pitched Ball with Marked Softballs for striking reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete does not time the ball correctly. (early or late swing)</td>
<td>Work on timing. Use soft rag balls and toss to athlete from a close distance. Have them tap the ball with the bat, reinforcing hand-eye coordination</td>
<td>Soft Toss or Pitched Ball with Marked Softballs for striking reference</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Learn the Batting/Hitting order

Skill Progression – Learn the Batting/Hitting order

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Athlete Can</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read line-up card</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize position in Batting/ Hitting order</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize teammates’ position in Batting/ Hitting order</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize who is the Extra Player (EP) in the line-up is</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn rules for batter substitution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals

Teaching Points – Learn the Batting/Hitting order

1. Demonstrate filling out the line-up card.
2. Discuss the purpose for putting a player in a particular spot in the Batting/ Hitting order.

Faults & Fixes Chart – Learn the Batting/Hitting order

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error</th>
<th>Correction</th>
<th>Drill Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athletes bats out of order</td>
<td>Coach must direct on-deck batters into the on-deck position in order to keep athlete batting/ hitting order.</td>
<td>No Drill References just demonstration of proper action and athlete can mimic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Batting/Hitting Drills

WATCH VIDEO 1

WATCH VIDEO 2

WATCH VIDEO 3
Base Running
Base-running is what a player does after they’ve hit the ball and started to “run” around the bases. Players always run in a counterclockwise direction around the bases. Base-runners should only run as far toward the next base as they think they can go before being tagged with the ball by the defense. Base-runners must always wear a helmet to protect their head in case they are hit by a thrown or batted ball.

Running to first base

Skill Progression – Properly run to first base

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Athlete Can</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stand at home plate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assume proper Batting/ Hitting stance without a bat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simulate a swing and run towards first base</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the 1 meter line (half way down the first base line, see diagram) athlete</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>must run within the running lane</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run through first base while tagging the orange base</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals

Teaching Points – Properly run to first base
1. Demonstrate running to first base.
2. Hold athlete’s hand and run with the athlete to first base.
3. Have athlete run to first base as fast as possible.
4. Have athlete run beyond first base to avoid slowing down too early.
5. Practice running to the right of first base after tagging it, while staying in foul territory.
6. Explain the reason for running into foul territory after touching first base (i.e., stay safe at first).
Faults & Fixes Chart – Properly run to first base

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error</th>
<th>Correction</th>
<th>Drill Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athlete runs through first base while tagging the white base.</td>
<td>Identify the incorrect action and demonstrate the correct base to tag</td>
<td>No Drill References just demonstration of proper form and athlete can mimic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete runs outside of the 1 meter line.</td>
<td>Identify the incorrect action and demonstrate the proper area the athlete is allowed to run in</td>
<td>No Drill References just demonstration of proper form and athlete can mimic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete runs in the wrong direction (towards third base.</td>
<td>Identify the incorrect action and demonstrate the correct direction the athlete must run</td>
<td>No Drill References just demonstration of proper form and athlete can mimic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Run around the bases

Skill Progression – Run around the bases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Athlete Can</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify the bases</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stand at home plate</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assume proper Batting/ Hitting stance without a bat</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simulate a swing and run towards first base</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run to first base and tag the inside corner of base with foot without breaking stride</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue running to second, then third base, making sure each base is touched on the inside corner</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run through and step on home plate</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals

Teaching Points – Run around the bases

1. Practice rounding first base toward second base.
2. Explain the reason for rounding first base (i.e., in case there is a chance to reach second base before the fielder can get ball there).
3. Discuss the importance of good base running.
4. Walk athlete around bases in correct order, touching each base. Have athlete run around bases by himself/herself.
5. Emphasize that a runner cannot run more than 1 meter from a direct line between bases to avoid being tagged out.
6. Demonstrate the method of the wide approach to each base (on an extra base hit) in order to cut down the angle of the turn.
Running to first base after Batting/Hitting the ball

Skill Progression – Correctly run to first base after Batting/Hitting the ball

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Athlete Can</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assume correct batting/hitting stance</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swing bat and hit ball into fair territory</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drop bat (do not throw it)</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run to first base (as fast as possible)</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run past first base after tagging it</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Either bear off into foul territory to stay safe at first, or round first toward second if there is a chance for extra bases</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teaching Points – Correctly run to first base after Batting/Hitting the ball

1. Demonstrate batting/hitting the ball, dropping the bat and running to first base.
2. Emphasize safety importance of dropping the bat in a game-like situation; penalize players for throwing a bat.
3. Once ball is hit, instruct the athlete to listen or watch for coaches’ signals or directions.

Faults & Fixes Chart – Correctly run to first base after Batting/Hitting the ball

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error</th>
<th>Correction</th>
<th>Drill Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athlete throws the bat, instead of dropping it.</td>
<td>Identify the incorrect action and demonstrate the correct way to release the bat</td>
<td>Baserunning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete stops at first base without running through.</td>
<td>Identify the incorrect action and demonstrate the correct way to run the base and under what circumstances you would run through the base</td>
<td>Baserunning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Base Runner

**Skill Progression – Base Runner**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Athlete Can</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintain contact with base until the ball is hit or crosses home plate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If ball is hit, may advance to next base</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Totals**
Tag up on fly ball

Skill Progression – Tag up on fly ball

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Athlete Can</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintain position on base</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch teammate bat</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If teammate hits fly ball with less than two outs, stay on base</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch fly ball</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have foot on base when ball is caught</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to the first or third base coach for directions</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run to next base (when possible) before the fielder’s throw gets there</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals

Teaching Points – Tag up on fly ball

1. Demonstrate tagging up technique.
2. Explain the reasons for tagging up.
### Demonstrate knowledge of base running rules and strategy

#### Skill Progression – Demonstrate knowledge of base running rules and strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Athlete Can</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understand one player is on a base at one time. (First player to it is entitled to stay, other player must move back one base or be put out)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run within base paths</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not pass teammates on base paths</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid being struck by ball hit by teammate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advance to next base without interfering with the fielders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone runs when there are two, outs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand there is no leading off, or stealing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Totals**

#### Teaching Points – Demonstrate knowledge of base running rules and strategy

1. Practice variety of game situations on base paths.
2. Explain reasons for base running rules.
3. Emphasize the importance of thinking while on the bases and the need to listen to the base coaches.
4. Emphasize that a runner cannot run more than 1 meter from a direct line between bases to avoid being tagged out.
Advanced Skills

Relay Throws
Throwing accurately to the cut-off person is vital for preventing too many runners from advancing/scoring. Proper positioning of the cut-off person is important so appropriate throwing distances of the fielders are gauged correctly. The cut-off person is the key for controlling the defense; proper positioning for receiving throws, deciding when and where to throw, or whether to hold the ball when no play can be made.

NOTE: When playing in the outfield, use the cut-off person for relaying the throw into the infield.

Skill Progression – Relay Throws

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Athlete Can</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On balls hit to the outfield, the shortstop or second baseman will align themselves between the outfielder and second base</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For balls hit to the 3rd base side of 2nd base, the shortstop is the cut-off person. For balls hit to the 1st base side of 2nd base, the second baseman is the cut-off person.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The baseman covering the base must help align the cut-off man by shouting directions. In addition, the baseman covering the base is usually the player responsible for directing the play, should “cut,” if there is no play at the base</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On short hits to the outfield, the cut-off man may still want to take the relay position, although the outfielder will probably throw directly to the base. The cut-off person will present a directional target and a possible option for the outfielder</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throws from the outfielder are thrown to the cut-off person. Even when there will be a play at the base, the throw should be within reach of the cut-off person. However, the key to the play is for the outfielder to return the ball to the cut-off person immediately.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals

Teaching Points – Relay Throws
1. Diagram relay throws on paper or a blackboard. Discuss the reason for using relay throws: i.e., to get the ball back into the infield as quickly as possible.
2. If there is to be play at the base, no verbal direction is needed. Shouting any command other than “cut,” may be confusing and misinterpreted.
3. On a very short ball to the outfield, the cut-off person can back up the base. Positioned as a cut-off person, they may be in the way of the throw.
4. Have cut-off person offer a target, with their glove, to the outfielder.
5. On possible plays at home plate, the pitcher or first-baseman would serve as the cut-off person, and the catcher would be the baseman. Be sure to designate which player will be the cut-off person.
6. Note: if the shortstop has the stronger, more accurate throwing arm, he/she could take all outfield relays
### Faults & Fixes Chart – Relay Throws

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error</th>
<th>Correction</th>
<th>Drill Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outfielder throws over the cut-off person’s head</td>
<td>Cut-off person adjusts distance for better throwing arms</td>
<td>Outfield Throwing Drill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outfielder throws way short in front of the cut-off</td>
<td>Cut-off person adjusts distance for weaker throwing arms</td>
<td>Outfield Throwing Drill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut-off person is hindering the throw coming into the base</td>
<td>Cut-off person goes behind base to back up throw when not needed for the play</td>
<td>Outfield Throwing Drill</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Relay Throws Drills

1. Hit Cut-Off
   - Align several players equally across the outfield, each with a ball
   - Have pitcher at their position, catcher at home plate, 3rd baseman, and Cut-off person
   - The player closest to the foul line in left field, tosses the ball a short distance deeper into the outfield, runs to
     pick it up, turns and make the throw to the Cut-off person
   - The Cut-off person is lining up the outfielder to the desired base (2nd, 3rd, or home)
   - Pitcher instructs Cut-off person where to throw the incoming relay throw
   - Alternate players around the outfield, which changes the angle of the Cut-off person
   - Vary the distance they start at in order to allow the Cut-off person to adjust their distance

2. Throw Home
   - Align several players equally across the outfield, each with a ball
   - Have pitcher at their position, catcher at home plate, 2nd baseman
   - The player closest to the foul line in left field, tosses the ball a short distance in front of themselves, runs to pick
     it up and makes the throw home (encourage a crow hop)
   - The catcher judges the throw, if it is on line to the plate, they say nothing; letting the ball come home and
     makes the tag on the virtual runner. If the throw is off, the catcher yells “Cut 2”, the pitcher cuts off the ball
     and throws it to 2nd base.

Outfield Throwing Drill
Advanced Pitching

Once a pitcher is able to throw strikes consistently, they are ready to vary their pitches by changing the height and depth, as well as inside or outside placement. Also adding spin is another advanced skill.

NOTE: Good placement of pitches can keep a hitter at a disadvantage.

Skill Progression – Advanced Pitching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Athlete Can</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High- inside pitches (near the batters elbows or front shoulder) prevent many</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☒</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>batters from fully extending their arms, resulting in poor placement and/or</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>less power</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is better to work from a strong position than a weak disadvantage.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☒</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throwing the first pitch for a strike will keep the pitcher ahead of the batter,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>allowing for better strategy and placement of pitches</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When the pitcher has a large advantage (two strikes and either not or one ball</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☒</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>court) the next pitch should be away from the strike zone, either high and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deep, low and short, or outside. This may entice the batter into swinging at</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the “bad” pitch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different types of pitches will keep the hitter from establishing their timing.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☒</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differing heights, “long” short” pitches, inside and outside pitches will throw</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the timing off a batter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The positions of the defense may dictate the placement of the pitch. If the</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☒</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>defense is pulled towards left field, the pitch must be inside to a right handed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>batter. A pitch on the outside portion of the plate could be hit to the opposite</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>field</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals

Teaching Points – Advanced Pitching

1. Place buckets just outside the four corners of the strike zone, in front of, and behind the plate. Practice pitching. Into these areas to develop accuracy as well as strategy.

2. Many hitters “take” (do not swing the bat) until the first strike is thrown. If the first pitch is a strike, it is a distinct advantage to the pitcher. The next pitch they wouldn’t want to throw a perfect strike, thus making the batter swing at a less desirable pitch, hopefully resulting in a poorly hit ball.

3. Pitchers need to make sure all players are in their ready positions before beginning to pitch. The pitcher may help other defensive players with their positioning, if they know batters’ tendencies or if they know they are going to try to keep it inside etc.

4. If a pitcher is able to learn the other teams’ batting abilities, as well as their own teams’ fielding capabilities, then he/she can change their pitching style based on who is coming to the plate. For instance, if the right fielder is a weaker outfielder and a big strong left-handed batter is coming to bat, the pitcher may want to pitch the ball outside, hoping to achieve a ball placement that won’t go deep to right field.
Faults & Fixes Chart – Advanced Pitching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error</th>
<th>Correction</th>
<th>Drill Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pitches are all the same height and depth</td>
<td>Try altering your release point to change the height of the pitch</td>
<td>Arc Drill, Ladder Drill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitches don’t vary with the ball/strike count</td>
<td>Try throwing balls to specific locations</td>
<td>Bucket Drill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitcher doesn’t alter pitches based on the batter</td>
<td>Study batters’ tendencies and pitch accordingly</td>
<td>Ground ball Drill, Bucket Drill</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Advanced Pitching Drills

Pitches to induce Ground balls
A common grip used to induce grounders is the over-the-top grip. For this grip, hold your palm facing down, the back of your hand facing directly up. Place the ball in the palm of your hand and then grip it with all four fingers facing forwards with your thumb behind the ball. Use the same pitching motion, but flick your hand and wrist forward when you release the ball. Practice this pitch to several batters to establish consistency.

Arc Drill
Practice releasing the ball at different points to achieve high arc pitches as well as shorter flatter pitches. This will help to throw off the batter’s timing.

Ladder Drill
Use different height step ladders to create a visual pitching height you wish to achieve. Place the ladder between the pitcher’s mound and home plate. Practice pitching over the ladder with the ball landing on home plate. Vary the ladder height to achieve arc variation.

Bucket Drill
Place a small bucket just behind home plate. Move the bucket to the corners and try to pitch the ball into the bucket from the pitcher’s mound. This helps with accuracy as well as arc level.

Also, vary the bucket in front of and behind the plate to vary short and deep pitches.
Double Plays
A double play occurs when two outs are made for one batted ball. There must be at least one runner on base and less than two outs for a double play situation. There are several ways this can occur. The two most common are:

**FLYBALL** - When there is at least one runner on base, the defense catches the batted ball in the air for the first out, and then throws to or tags the base before the runner tags up.

**GROUND BALL** - On a hit ground ball, the fielder throws to the lead baseman for the first out. The lead baseman then turns and throws to the preceding base for the second force out.

NOTE: With a runner on first and less than two outs, a ground ball to the infield presents a good opportunity to record two outs

Skill Progression – Double Plays ~ Grounders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Athlete Can</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On ground balls hit to the 3rd base side of the infield, the second baseman will be the pivot man taking the throw at second base, tagging the base, and then throwing to first base. On ground balls to the 1st base side, the shortstop will be the pivot man</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The fielder should throw the ball quickly and accurately, but not as hard as possible. The throw should be at the target (glove), in front of and on the glove side of the pivot man</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The pivot man should approach the base in a straight line with his/her glove near his/her non-throwing shoulder</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After catching the throw, the pivot man should step on the base, then step across the base and throw the ball to first base</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After the throw to first base, the pivot man should continue away from the base to avoid a collision with the runner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the fielder is close to second base after fielding a ground ball, he/she may choose to step on the base and make the throw to first base unassisted</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals
Teaching Points – Double Plays

1. The pivot man should catch the throw with both hands. This will allow the throwing hand to smother the catch quickly, and make the throw to first base.

2. Have the pivot man look for the hitter running to first base before making the throw. Do not attempt a throw if there is not a chance of it beating the runner to first base.

3. The pivot man should get to the base as quickly as possible. This will prevent the fielder from trying to throw to a moving target. Also, make sure the pivot man touches the base while holding the ball to record the first out.

Faults & Fixes Chart – Double Plays

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error</th>
<th>Correction</th>
<th>Drill Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2nd baseman covers the bag when the pitcher fields a grounder</td>
<td>Shortstop should take throws from the pitcher at second base when trying to turn a double play at first</td>
<td>Part V – Pitcher Execution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd baseman pivots incorrectly</td>
<td>Practice footwork and timing of receiving thrown ball, tagging bag and turning to throw to first</td>
<td>Part II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS pivots incorrectly</td>
<td>Practice footwork and timing of receiving thrown ball, tagging bag and turning to throw to first.</td>
<td>Part I, III, IV, V</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Double Plays Drills
As softball coaches, we know that game momentum can easily be changed by a double play ball ending a scoring threat. It’s very exciting to witness the execution of getting two outs off a single ground ball. The following drills are based on turning the double play from 2nd base to 1st base. Many various double play situations can be implemented into the drill format. Ex. If there are runners on 1st and 2nd, or if bases are loaded, do you want to try to stop the runs from scoring if there are no outs by throwing from home to first?

Part I ~ Shortstop Execution
- On the field: Shortstop, 2nd baseman, 1rst baseman
- 2 base runners: Runner at home going to 1st base, and a runner at 1st base going to 2nd base (extra runners nearby to alternate in)
- Coach stands at home plate with bucket of balls.
- The coach will hit ground balls to Shortstop.
- On contact, the base runners will advance to 1st base and 2nd base at full speed.
- The shortstop will execute the double play with the 2nd baseman.
- The 2nd baseman will practice their footwork on catch/throw situation and throwing through the advancing runner.
- REPETITION REPETITION REPETITION!!

Variation: “take-it-yourself-shortstop” Repeat the drill with the Shortstop executing all the parts of the double play: fielding, tagging 2nd base, and throwing the ball to first.

Part II ~ 3rd Baseman Execution
- Same format as above except coach will hit grounders to the 3rd baseman
- The 3rd baseman will execute the double play with the 2nd baseman
- Throws will be from 3rd to 2nd to 1st

Part III ~ 2nd Baseman Execution
- Same format as above except coach will hit grounders to the 2nd baseman
- The 2nd baseman will execute the double play with the shortstop (who will receive the throw at 2ndbase from the 2nd baseman)
- Throws will be from 2nd to SS to 1st

Part IV ~ 1st Baseman Execution
- Same as above except coach will hit grounders to the 1st baseman
- The 1st baseman will execute the double play with the shortstop
- Throw will be from 1st to 2nd to 1st

Note: The 1st baseman fields the grounder, throws to 2nd, and then goes to 1st to record the second out. If they tag their base first, then the runner going to 2nd, must be tagged out since there is no longer a force play there. A variation of this situation is having the 2nd baseman cover the bag for the 1st baseman.

Part V ~ Pitcher Execution
- Same as above except coach will hit grounders to the Pitcher
- Throw will be from pitcher to 2nd to 1st
- Usually the Shortstop will receive the ball at 2nd base.
**Place Batting/Hitting**

The ability of the batter to be able to choose where he/she wants to hit the ball, based on the runners’ positions, the gaps in the field, and the type of pitch being pitched.

NOTE: A hitter should always be aggressive, but should not try to “pull” every pitch. Being able to “go with the pitch” allows the batter to hit to:

- open areas
- down foul lines
- between fielders
- behind runners
- unprepared fielders

**Skill Progression – Place Batting/Hitting**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Athlete Can</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assume Batting/ Hitting stance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch pitcher release ball</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize location of pitch (inside, middle, outside)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delay swing to hit ball in middle of field, longer to hit to opposite field</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step towards direction of hit for proper balance and hip rotation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lock wrist of lead arm to hit opposite field</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Teaching Points – Place Batting/Hitting**

1. Choking up,” or moving hands away from knob of bat, will give the batter better control.
2. Consider game situation when Batting/ Hitting ball to middle or opposite field; with runner on first base, ground ball to pitcher can be an easy double play.
3. If runners are on 2nd and 3rd with first base open, it is advantageous to hit behind the runners if an outside pitch is delivered.
4. Emphasize the importance of timing along with waiting longer for the pitch to come in.

**Faults & Fixes Chart – Place Batting/Hitting**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error</th>
<th>Correction</th>
<th>Drill Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pops ball up – swings too soon</td>
<td>Watch the ball and wait longer</td>
<td>Outside Pitch drill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fouls ball off to opposite foul line – swings too late</td>
<td>Swing sooner and rotate hips through the swing</td>
<td>Pull Drill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hits off the handle- wrong pitch selection</td>
<td>Make sure you don’t try to force an inside pitch to the opposite field</td>
<td>Go with the Pitch Drill</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Place Batting/Hitting Drills

The term “opposite field” can be confusing since right-handed batters aim for right field when attempting to hit to opposite field. The reason is because the normal tendency for a right handed batter in slow-pitch softball is to hit on the left side of the field (between 2nd and 3rd base). It can also be said that the normal tendency is to “pull” the ball.

Outside Pitch Drill ~ (for Opposite-field Hits)

- Pitcher has bucket of balls – 10 -15 pitches per batter
- Batter gets in ready position in batter’s box at home plate
- Pitcher aims for the outside side of home plate for all pitches
- Batter intentionally attempts to hit ball to opposite field
- (Right handed batters aim for Right field, left handed batters aim for Left field)
- Encourage the batter to wait a little longer before making contact with the ball.
- They may need to back away from the plate a little, or even open up their batting stance
- A slight step towards the opposite field may be needed for desired results
- Avoid stepping on home plate as this would be an out in a game
- Eventually, the batter should be able to hit the ball accurately and with force to the opposite field if they are able to wait for the pitch to come in.
- Start with center field as the target, and slowly move the target of aim further and further to the right side of the field.

Pull Hits

- Pitcher has bucket of balls – 10 -15 pitches per batter
- Batter gets in ready position in batter’s box at home plate
- Pitcher aims for the inside side of home plate for all pitches
- Batter intentionally attempts to hit ball to the same side of home plate where their feet are. Right-handed batters are attempting to pull the ball down the 3rd base line
- Left-handed batters are trying to pull the ball down the first base line.
- Encourage the batter to go after the ball, getting their bat around quickly with a strong follow-through
- (If they are fouling off balls, then they will need to wait a little longer to make contact)

Going-with-the Pitch Drill

- Pitcher has bucket of balls – 10-20 pitches per batter
- Batter gets in ready position in batter’s box at home plate
- Pitcher varies all pitches – some inside, some outside
- Batter attempts to hit ball to the field of choice, based on the position of the pitch
- Inside – pull hit
- Middle – up the center hit
- Outside – opposite field hit
**Cool-Down**

The cool down is as important as the warm up, however is often ignored. Stopping an activity abruptly may cause pooling of the blood and slow the removal of waste products in the athlete's body. It may also cause cramps, soreness, and other problems for Special Olympics athletes. The cool down gradually reduces the body temperature and heart rate and speeds the recovery process before the next training session or competitive experience. The cool down is also a good time for the coach and athlete to talk about the session or competition. Note that cool down is also a good time to do stretching. Muscles are warm and receptive to stretching movements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Time (minimum)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slow aerobic jog</td>
<td>Lowers body temperature</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gradually lowers heart rate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light stretching</td>
<td>Removes waste from muscles</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Modifications and Adaptations
In competition, it is important that the rules not be changed to suit athletes’ special needs. However, coaches can modify the training exercises, the athlete’s special needs, their communication and sport equipment to assist athletes in achieving success.

Modifying Exercises
Modify the skills involved in an exercise so that all athletes can participate.

Accommodating an Athlete’s Special Needs
Use the sound of a bell for visually impaired athletes.

Modifying Your Communication Method
Different athletes require different communications systems. For example, some athletes learn and respond better to demonstrated exercises, whereas others require greater verbal communication. Some athletes may need a combination – to see, hear and even read a description of the exercise or skill.

Modifying Equipment
Successful participation for some athletes requires equipment modifications to suit their particular need.

Adaptations
More specific adaptations for Softball are listed below. These are just to get you started, please add accordingly.

Orthopedic Impairments
1. Use a target in the softball throw
2. Use obstacle courses marked by flags and/or gates

Auditory Impairments
Use flag or hand signals for start

Visual Impairments
1. Use a shorter approach in the high jump
2. Use brightly colored equipment
Mental Preparation and Training

Mental training is important for the athlete, whether striving to do his or her personal best or competing against others. Mental imagery, what Bruce D. Hale of Penn State calls "No Sweat Practice," is very effective. The mind cannot tell the difference between what is real and what is imagined. Practice is practice, regardless of whether it is mental or physical.

Ask the athlete to sit in a relaxed position, in a quiet place with few distractions. Tell the athlete to close their eyes and picture performing a particular skill. Each is seeing himself or herself on a large movie screen on a softball field. Walk them through the skill step by step. Use as much detail as possible, using words to elicit all the senses - sight, hearing, touch, and smell. Ask the athlete to repeat the image, picture rehearsing the skill successfully – even to the point of seeing the ball going out of the park.

Some athletes need help to start the process. Others will learn to practice this way on their own. The link between performing the skills in the mind and performing the skills on the field may be hard to explain. However, the athlete who repeatedly imagines himself or herself correctly completing a skill and believing it to be true is more likely to make it happen. Whatever goes into one’s mind and one’s heart comes out in their actions.
Cross Training in Softball

Cross training is a modern day term which refers to the substitution of skills other than the skills directly involved in the performance of an event. Cross training came about as a result of injury rehabilitation and is now also used in injury prevention. When runners sustain injuries in the legs or feet that keeps them from running, other activities can be substituted so that the athlete can keep up his/her aerobic and muscular strength.

There is a limited value and cross over to the specific exercise. A reason to "cross train" is to avoid injury and maintain muscular balance during a period of intense sport specific training. One of the keys to success in sport is staying healthy and training over the long haul. Cross training allows athletes to do event-specific training workouts with greater enthusiasm and intensity, or less risk of injury.
SOFTBALL COACHING GUIDE

Softball Rules, Protocol & Etiquette
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Teaching Softball Rules

The best time to teach the rules of softball is during practice. For example, when during a practice game a player runs out of the baseline it is a good time to stop the game and explain that you cannot run out of the baseline and then demonstrate the appropriate boundaries a runner can occupy and stay within the rules. As an international sports program, Special Olympics has both adopted and modified the International Softball Federation (ISF) Rules. Please refer to the official Special Olympics Sports Rules, which can be found at www.specialolympics.org for the complete listing of softball rules as modified and approved by Special Olympics Inc. As a coach, it is your responsibility to know and understand the rules of the game and to teach these rules to your players and other coaches.

What is Softball

There are two teams in softball; one team is on offense and the other team is on defense. This is common with most team sports where the attacking team is on offense and the team defending the goal is on defense. In softball like in many other games, a team can only score when it is on offense, however, unlike many games each team is given an equal number of times to be on offense and defense. In a fast pitch game there are normally 9 players on a team and in slow pitch there are 10. In many situations with younger players and in some of the games in the Lead-Up games section of this manual more players can be used on each team.

Offense:

A team is considered on offense when they are “at bat.” To determine which team is at bat first, there should be a coin toss prior to the game and the winner of the toss may declare whether they would like to play offense or defense first. The first team to bat is considered the “Visiting Team” and the team batting second is the “Home Team.” The Visiting Team bats in the “Top Half” of the inning (see inning description below) and the second team bats in the “Bottom Half” of the inning.

Each team will determine its “Batting Order.” This is the order in which each player will take his or her turn at bat. All 10 players on the team must have a chance to bat and the batting order cannot be changed once the game has started.

Note: If you are playing with younger players and are using more than 10 players on a team, make sure all of the players on a team are listed in the batting order.

Goals for the Offensive Team:

☆ The offensive team sends one player at a time “up to bat.” This player stands next to home plate and tries to hit the ball thrown underhand by the defensive player known as “the pitcher” to the catcher over home plate. In the beginning, you may want the batter to hit the ball off a batting tee or from a pitch thrown by you or another adult.

☆ The batter’s objective is to hit the ball as far as possible.

☆ Once the ball is hit, the batter runs to first base or advances to as many bases as possible without being put out. A player may stop at any base where they are safe and wait until the next batter hits the ball to advance them to the next base. If the next batter hits the ball and runs to the same base, the previous runner cannot remain on that base and must advance; there can’t be more than one runner on a base.

☆ A batter may also get on base by a “Walk.” A walk happens when the pitcher pitches 4 balls to the batter which do not go in the “strike zone.”

☆ A runner advances safely (another way of saying the runner is not “put out”) by not being touched by a defensive player holding the ball or by getting to the next base before the defense can get the ball to that same base.

☆ Once an offensive player touches all three bases and home plate without the defensive team putting them “out”, that team scores one “run” (softball term for a point).
Only the offensive team, which is the one referred to as “up to bat”, is able to score runs.

The team with the most runs at the end of seven innings wins the game.

**What’s a “Strike”?**

A Strike is any of the following:

- A pitch that goes through the “strike zone” without being hit or swung at,
- A pitch the batter swings at and completely misses, or,
- A pitch that the batter swings at and hits into “foul” territory.

The “Strike Zone” is the area shown in the box in the above picture – it is the area between the batter’s knees and armpits directly over homeplate. The strike zone is not anything that actually sits above homeplate, but rather an imagined or envisioned rectangle, directly over homeplate between the knees and armpits of the batter. It’s the umpire’s or teacher’s (who is positioned directly behind the catcher) job to determine if the pitch passed through this imaginary area.

Each team’s offensive part of the inning ends when three of its batters have been ruled out. An inning is complete when each team has had an opportunity to be on both offense and defense.

Defense:

When a team is on defense, each of the players is assigned a specific “position” to play (like soccer “forward”, “midfield”, “goalie” or basketball “forward”, “guard”, “center”). The diagram below shows where these defensive players are positioned.
Goals for the Defensive Team:

The defending team’s objective is to get three outs and not allow the offensive team to score. To prevent them from scoring the defense must get the batters “Out.” After three outs the defense becomes the offensive team.

The defense gets an offensive player OUT in one of the following ways:

a. A ball that is hit by the batter (offensive player) is caught in the air by any defensive player before it bounces or hits the ground.

b. If the ball bounces before it gets to a defensive player and that player fields the ball and throws it to first base before the runner gets there or to a base ahead of a runner that must run (forced to run) because a runner behind him or her is running to the base they occupy – this is a FORCE OUT.

c. A defensive team may make multiple outs on one play – a Double or a Triple play – if they can field a ball and throw it to second base and then first base after a hit before the two runners reach those bases. These happen with more experienced players – the same thing would happen with a Triple play.

d. A defensive player with the ball touches a baserunner with the ball while the runner is not standing on any of the bases (they are TAGGED OUT)

e. The batter gets three “strikes” (see strike description above) without hitting a “fair ball” (a “fair ball” is any ball hit in the portion of the field where the defense plays – the infield or the outfield – see the diagram below)

f. An offensive player is also “out” if they are hit by a batted ball while not standing on a base.

Note: If you are playing with very young players you may want to alter the rule and let all players on the offensive team bat before switching from offense to defense.

A “Fair Ball” is any ball hit into the playing field between the two white lines along the sides of the field that are also known as “foul lines.”

A “Foul Ball” is any ball hit that:

- Goes backwards.
- Stops moving outside the “fair ball” territory.
- After being hit in the air (called a “fly ball”) the ball does not land in “fair ball” territory or is touched by the defense while outside of the “fair ball” area.
- Is a ground ball (a ball that’s hit on the ground) that is either touched by the defense while it’s in the “foul ball” area or stops rolling in foul territory.
Unified Sports® Rules

There are a few differences in the rules for Unified Sports® competition as stipulated in the Official Special Olympics Softball Rules and modifications outlined in the rules. The additions are highlighted below:

Unified Sports Team Competition
1. The roster shall contain a proportionate number of athletes and partners.
2. During competition, the lineup shall never exceed five athletes and five partners (six athletes and six partners if the EP is used) at any time.
3. Each team shall have an adult non-playing coach responsible for the lineup and conduct of the team during competition.
4. The batting order shall be an alternation of athletes and partners.
5. During competition, the position requirements are as follows: two athletes and two partners in both the infield and the outfield, and one athlete and one partner as pitcher and catcher.
6. A team may never play with more Partners than Athletes and can never substitute an Athlete in a Partners spot in the line-up.

Protest Procedures

Protest procedures are governed by the rules of competition and may change from competition to competition. Only rules violations can be protested. Judgment calls made by officials or divisioning decisions cannot be protested. The protest must cite specific violations from the rulebook and a clear definition of why the coach feels the rule was not followed.

The role of the competition management team is to enforce the rules. As a coach, your duty to your athletes and team is to protest any action or events while your athlete is competing that you think violated the Official Special Olympics Softball Rules. It is extremely important that you do not make protests because you and your athlete did not get your desired outcome of an event. Protests are serious matters that impact a competition’s schedule. Check with the competition team prior to competition to learn the protest procedures for that competition.

Protest Procedures

1. Protests That Will Not Be Received

Protests shall not be received, or considered, if they are based solely on a decision involving the accuracy of judgment on the part of an umpire, or if the team lodging the protest won the game.

Examples of protests that will not be considered are:

a. Whether a batted ball was fair, or foul.
b. Whether a runner was safe, or out.
c. Whether a pitched ball was a strike, or a ball.
d. Whether a pitch was legal, or illegal.
e. Whether a runner did, or did not, touch a base.
f. Whether a runner left the base too soon on a caught fly ball.
g. Whether a fly ball was, or was not, caught legally.
h. Whether it was, or was not, an infield fly.
i. Whether there was, or was not, an interference.
j. Whether there was, or was not, an obstruction.
k. Whether a player, or live ball, did or did not, enter a dead ball area, or touch some object or person in a dead ball area.
l. Whether a batted ball did, or did not, clear the fence in flight.
m. Whether the field is fit to continue, or resume, play.
n. Whether there is sufficient light to continue play.
o. Any other matter involving only the accuracy of the umpire's judgment.

2. Protests That Will be Received

Protests that shall be received and considered include matters of the following types:

a. Misinterpretation of a playing rule.

b. Failure of an umpire to apply the correct rule to a given situation or failure to impose the correct penalty for a given violation.

Note:
1. Protests for the above must be made before the next pitch, or before all infielders have left fair territory or, if on the last play of the game, before the umpires leave the playing field.
2. After one pitch has been thrown (legal or illegal), no change can be made on any umpire’s ruling

c. Eligibility of a team roster member.

Note: Protests for the above are to be submitted to the appropriate authority (not the umpires) and may be made at any time, subject to the provisions of Rule 11 Section 5.

3. Protests Involving Judgment and Interpretation of Rule

Protests may involve both a matter of judgment and the interpretations of a rule.

a. An example of a situation of this type follows:

1. With one out and the runners on second and third bases, the batter flied out. The runner on third tagged up after the catch, the player on second did not. The runner on third crossed the plate before the ball was played at second base for the third out. The umpire did not allow the run to score. The questions -- whether the runners left their bases before the catch and whether the play at second was made before the player on third crossed the plate -- are solely matters of judgment and are not grounds for protest. But the failure of the umpire to allow the run to score was a misinterpretation of a playing rule and was a proper subject for protest.

4. Notification of Intent to Lodge Protest

The notification of intent to protest must be made immediately before the next pitch. (EXCEPTION: Player ineligibility.)

a. The manager or acting manager of the protesting team shall immediately notify the plate umpire that the game is being continued under protest. The plate umpire shall, in turn, notify the opposing manager and official scorekeeper.

b. All interested parties shall take notice of the conditions surrounding the making of the decision that will aid in the correct determination of the issue.

Note: On appeal plays, the appeal must be made before the next pitch, legal or illegal or before the defensive team has left the field. For the purpose of this rule, the defensive team has "left the field" when the pitcher and all players have left fair territory, on the way to the bench or dugout area.
5. Time to Lodge an Official Protest

The official written protest must be filed within a reasonable time.

a. In the absence of a league or tournament rule fixing the time limit for filing a protest, a protest should be considered if filed within a reasonable time, depending upon the nature of the case and the difficulty for obtaining the information on which to base the protest.

b. Within 30 minutes after the umpires have left the playing field is generally considered a reasonable time.

6. Information Required for Written Protest

The formal written protest should contain the following information:

a. The date, time and place of the game.

b. The names of the umpires and scorers.

c. The rule and section of the Official Rules, or local rules, under which the protest is made.

d. The decision and conditions surrounding the making of the decision.

e. All essential facts involved in the matter protested.

7. Result of Protest

The decision made on a protested game must result in one of the following:

a. The protest is found invalid and the game score stands as played.

b. When a protest is allowed for misinterpretation of a playing rule, the game is replayed from the point at which the incorrect decision was made, with the decision corrected.

c. When a protest for ineligibility of a team roster member is allowed, the game shall be forfeited by the offending team.
Softball Protocol & Etiquette

During Training

For Coaches

- Arrive at training facility 15 minutes before the scheduled start time.
- Come prepared to coach; know and understand the rules.
- Ensure that athletes are wearing proper and legal equipment before training begins.
- Ensure that athletes participate in warm-ups, stretching and drills.
- Have a copy of an up-to-date medical form for every athlete.
- Treat all athletes in the same manner.
- Speak calmly when giving instructions or corrections.
- Call players by their first names.
- Maintain a calm and pleasant demeanor.
- Listen to both athletes and parents when they have concerns.
- Answer the athletes’ questions in a respectful and reassuring tone.
- Treat others as you would wish to be treated.
- Set rules and expectations for all athletes and coaches.
- Ensure that each of your athletes has a way home or wait with them until they have been picked up.

For Athletes

- Come prepared with proper and legal equipment and be on time to training.
- Notify coach if not able to attended training.
- Wear proper clothing for training -- athletic shoes and properly fitted clothing.
- Give your best effort during training.
- Notify coach of illness or injury.
During Competition

For Coaches

- Ensure that you bring enough legal equipment.
- Know where athletes are during the competition.
- Get paperwork done on time or early (lineups, etc.)
- Review all competition rules and procedures.
- Attend all coaches meetings.
- Encourage your athletes to play to the best of their ability at all times.
- Ensure athletes are wearing proper equipment and attire before competition begins.
- Have a copy of an up-to-date medical form for every athlete.
- Treat all competition staff with respect; remember, they are also volunteers.
- Maintain a calm demeanor throughout the competition.
- Never use foul language or raise your voice in an angry tone.
- Thank the competition staff, umpires and officials.
- Set rules and expectations for all athletes and coaches.

For Athletes

- Come prepared with proper and legal equipment and on time to the competition.
- Notify coach if not able to attend competition.
- Wear proper clothing to compete in – athletic shoes and properly fitted clothing.
- Give your best effort during the competition.
- Thank the competition staff, umpires and officials.

Coaching Tips

- Use positive reinforcement when speaking to athletes.
- Teach waiting one’s turn during drills.
- Teach good sportsmanship at all times.
- Teach shaking hands at the end of all competitions.
- Encourage athletes to cheer on teammates during training and competition.
Sportsmanship

Good sportsmanship is both the coaches’ and athletes’ commitment to fair play, ethical behavior and integrity. In perception and practice, sportsmanship is defined as fairness, respect for one's opponent and graciousness in winning or losing. It is those qualities that are characterized by generosity and genuine concern for others. Below we highlight a few focus points and ideas on how to teach and coach sportsmanship to your athletes. Lead by example.

Competitive Effort

- Put forth maximum effort during each event (especially divisioning games).
- Practice the skills with the same intensity as you would perform them in competition.
- Always compete at your best level during a competition, whether you are winning or losing: Never quit.

Fair Play at All Times

- Always comply with the rules.
- Demonstrate sportsmanship and fair play at all times.
- Respect the decision of the umpires at all times.

Expectations of Coaches

- Always set a good example for athletes and fans to follow.
- Instruct athletes in proper sportsmanship responsibilities and demand that they make sportsmanship and ethics the top priorities.
- Respect judgment of umpires, abide by rules of the event and display no behavior that could incite fans.
- Treat opposing coaches, directors, athletes and fans with respect.
- Develop and enforce penalties for athletes who do not abide by sportsmanship standards.
- Ensure that the team is divisioned properly to ensure fair competition.

Expectations of Athletes & Partners in Unified Sports®

- Treat teammates with respect.
- Encourage teammates when they make a mistake.
- Treat opponents with respect.
- Respect judgment of umpires, abide by rules of the contest and display no behavior that could incite fans.
- Cooperate with umpires, coaches or directors and fellow athletes to conduct a fair contest.
- Do not retaliate (verbally or physically) if the other team demonstrates poor behavior.
- Accept seriously the responsibility and privilege of representing Special Olympics.
- Define winning as doing your personal best.
- Live up to the high standard of sportsmanship established by your coach.

Coaching Tips

- Discuss softball sportsmanship, controlling temper and behavior at all times.
- Give sportsmanship awards or recognition after each competition or training.
- Always commend the athletes when they demonstrate sportsmanship.
- Respect other teams by not running up the score.
- Teach your athletes to respect their opponents and themselves.
- Teach your athletes to always stay under control, especially if they are feeling mad or angry.
- Teach your athletes to celebrate their accomplishments, but never in a taunting manner.
- Teach your athletes to always congratulate their opponents, win or lose.
**Softball Glossary**

**Altered Bat:**

a. A bat is altered when the physical structure of a legal bat has been changed. Examples of altering a bat are: replacing the handle of a metal bat with a wooden or other type handle, inserting material inside the bat, applying excessive tape (more than two layers) to the bat grip, or painting a bat at the top or bottom for other than identification purposes. Replacing the grip with another legal grip is not considered altering the bat. A "flare" or "cone" grip attached to the bat is considered an altered bat.

b. Engraved identification “ID” marking on the knob end only of a metal bat is not considered an altered bat. Engraved “ID” marking on the barrel end of a metal bat is considered an altered bat. Laser marking for “ID” purposes anywhere on the bat is not considered an altered bat.

**Appeal Play:**

A live or dead ball appeal is a play or situation on which an umpire cannot make a decision unless requested by a manager, coach or player of the non-offending team. A coach or manager may only make a dead ball appeal and only after stepping onto the playing field.

If made by a fielder, the fielder must be in the infield when making the appeal. The appeal may not be made after any one of the following has occurred.

a. A legal pitch has been thrown or an illegal pitch has been called.

   Exception:
   
   1. An appeal for the use of an Illegal Substitute, Illegal Re-entry, a Replacement Player or Withdrawn Player (either leaving or returning to the lineup under the Replacement Player Rule) and not reporting to the umpire can be made anytime while such player is still in the game.
   
   2. An appeal for runners switching positions on the bases they occupied may be made at any time until all such runners are in the dugout or the half-inning is over.

b. The pitcher and all defensive players have left fair territory; or

c. The umpires have left the field of play following the last play of the game.

These are the types of appeals:

1. Missing a base
2. Leaving a base on a caught fly ball before the ball is first touched
3. Batting out-of-order
4. Attempting to advance to second base after making a turn at first base
5. Illegal substitutions
6. The use of unannounced players under the Replacement Player Rule
7. Illegal re-entry
8. Runners switching positions on the bases they occupied.

**Ball Compression:**

Ball compression is the “Load force” in kilograms (pounds) required to compress a softball 6.5mm (0.25 inches) when measured in accordance with the ASTM (American Society for Testing Measurements) test method for measuring compression-displacement of softballs.
Ball Cor.:
The Coefficient of Restitution of a softball when measured with the ASTM (American Society for Testing Measurements) test method for measuring the Coefficient of Restitution of softballs.

Base Line:
A base line is a direct line between bases.

Base on Balls:
A base on balls occurs when four pitches are judged by the plate umpire to be balls, including illegal pitches. The batter is awarded first base. This is sometimes referred to as a Walk. Effect: The ball is dead.

Base Path:
A base path is a direct line between a base and the runner’s position at the time a defensive player is attempting (or about to attempt) to tag a runner.

Batted Ball:
A batted ball is any ball that hits the bat, or is hit by the bat, and lands either in fair or foul territory. No intention to hit the ball is necessary.

Batter:
A batter is an offensive player who enters the batter’s box with the intention of aiding his team to score runs. He continues to be a batter until he is either declared out by the umpire or he becomes a batter-runner.

Batter’s Box:
The batter's box is the area to which the batter is restricted while in position with the intention of helping his team to obtain runs. The lines are considered as being within the batter's box.

Batter-Runner:
A batter-runner is a player who has finished a turn at bat but has not yet been put out or touched first base.

Batting Order:
The batting order is the official listing of offensive players in the order in which members of that team must come to bat. When the lineup card is submitted, it shall also include each player's position.

Blocked Ball:
A blocked ball is a batted, thrown or pitched ball that:
1. Becomes lodged in the fencing, or
2. Is touched, stopped or handled by a person not engaged in the game, or
3. Touches any object that is not part of the official equipment or playing area, or
4. Is a ground ball that is touched by a defensive player who is in contact with the ground that is not part of the playing area.

Bunt:
A bunt is a batted ball not swung at, but intentionally met with the bat and tapped slowly within the infield.
Catch:

A catch is a legally caught ball, which occurs when the fielder catches a batted or thrown ball with his or her hand(s) or glove.

1. In establishing a valid catch, the fielder shall hold the ball long enough to prove the ball is securely held and/or that the release of the ball is voluntary and intentional. If the player drops the ball after reaching into the glove to remove it or while in the act of throwing, it is a valid catch.

2. If the ball is merely held in the fielder’s arm(s) or prevented from dropping to the ground by some part of the fielder’s body, equipment, or clothing, the catch is not completed until the ball is in the grasp of the fielder’s hand(s) or glove.

3. A fielder’s feet must:
   I. When moving toward the out-of-play line, the feet must either: (a) be within the playing area, (b) touching the ‘out-of-play’ line or (c) both feet in the air after leaving the playing area, in order to have a valid catch.
   II. A player, who is in dead ball territory and returns to the playing area, must have both feet touching the playable area in order to have a legally caught ball.

4. It is not a catch, if a fielder (while gaining control), collides with another player, umpire or a fence, or falls to the ground and drops the ball as a result of the collision or fall.

5. A batted ball striking anything other than a defensive player while it is in flight is ruled the same as if it struck the ground.

Catcher’s Box:

The catcher’s box is that area within which the catcher must remain until the pitched ball is batted, touches the ground, plate, or batter, or reaches the catcher’s box. The lines are to be considered within the catcher’s box. The catcher is considered within the box except when touching the ground outside the catcher’s box.

Charged Conference:

A charged conference can be one of the following:

1. Offensive Conference: The offensive team requests a suspension of play to allow the manager, or other team representative, to confer with any member of their team.

2. Defensive Conference: The defensive team requests a suspension of play to allow
   I. A representative of the defensive team to enter the playing field to communicate with any defensive player
   II. A fielder leaves his position and goes to the dugout and gives the umpire reason to believe that he received instruction.

   Note: It is not a charged conference if the coach/manager notifies the plate umpire of a change of pitchers before or after crossing the foul line.

Chopped Ball:

A chopped hit ball is one at which the batter strikes downward with a chopping motion of the bat so that the ball bounces high into the air.

Coach:

a. A coach is a person who is responsible for the team’s actions on the field and represents the team in communications with the umpire and opposing team.

b. For the purpose of these rules, the manager of a team is considered to be the Head Coach.
Coach’s Box:
The area in which the two base coaches (one per box) are restricted to prior to the pitch.

Courtesy Runner:
A courtesy runner is any player who runs for a runner without a charged substitution.

Dead Ball:
A dead ball is one that
1. Touches any object that is not part of the official equipment or official playing area or a player/person not engaged in the game,
2. Lodges in the umpire’s gear or in an offensive player’s clothing, or
3. The umpire has ruled dead.

Defensive Team:
The defensive team is the team in the field.

Delayed Dead Ball:
A delayed dead ball is a game situation in which the ball remains alive until the conclusion of a play. When the entire play is completed, the umpire shall rule a dead ball, and enforce the appropriate ruling. (Refer to Rule 9, Sec. 3)

Dislodged Base:
A dislodged base is a base dislodged from its proper position.

Double Play:
A double play is a play by the defense in which two offensive players are legally put out as a result of continuous action.

Dugout:
An area in dead ball territory designated for players, coaches, bat boys or girls, and official representatives of the team only. There shall be no smoking in this area.

Ejection From the Game:
Ejection is the act of any umpire ordering a player, official or any team member to leave the game and the grounds for the duration of the game. An athlete or minor partner is allowed to remain in the dugout ONLY if there is no team representative or delegate to assist them away from the grounds.

Fair Ball:
A fair ball is a legally batted ball which
1. Settles or is touched on or over fair territory between home and first base or between home and third base.
2. Bounds past first or third base on or over fair territory, regardless of where the ball hits after going over the base.

3. Touches first, second or third base.

4. While on or over fair territory touches the body or clothing of an umpire or player.

5. First falls on fair territory beyond first and third base.

6. While over fair territory, passes out of the playing field beyond the outfield fence.

7. Hits the foul line pole on the fly.

Note:
1. A fair fly shall be judged according to the relative position of the ball and the foul line, including the foul pole, and not as to whether the fielder is on fair or foul territory at the time of touching the ball. It does not matter whether the ball first touches fair or foul territory, as long as it does not touch anything foreign to the natural ground in foul territory and complies with all other aspects of a fair ball.

2. The position of the ball at the time of interference determines whether the ball is fair or foul, regardless of whether the ball rolls untouched into foul or fair territory.

**Fair Territory:**
Fair territory is that part of the playing field within, and including, the first and third base foul lines from home base to the bottom of the extreme playing field fence and perpendicularly upwards.

**Fake Tag:**
A ‘fake tag’ is a form of obstruction on a runner, while advancing or returning to a base, by a fielder who is not in possession of the ball, and that impedes the progress of the runner. The runner does not have to stop or slide. Merely slowing down when a fake tag is simulated would constitute obstruction.

**Fielder:**
A fielder is any defensive player of the team on the field.

**Fly Ball:**
A fly ball is any ball batted into the air.
Force Out:
A force-out is an out which can be made only when a runner loses the right to the base which he is occupying because the batter becomes a batter-runner, and before the batter-runner or a succeeding runner has been put out. On an appeal play the force out is determined at the time the appeal is made; not at the time of the infraction.

Forfeit:
A forfeit is the act of the plate umpire ruling that the game is over by declaring the non-offending team the winner.

Foul Ball:
A foul ball is a legally batted ball which:
1. Settles on foul territory between home and first base or between home and third base.

2. Bounds past first or third on or over foul territory.

3. First touches on foul territory beyond first or third base.

4. While on or over foul territory touches the body, attached or detached equipment or clothing of an umpire or player, or any object foreign to the natural ground.

5. Touches the batter or the bat in the batter’s hand(s) a second time while the batter is within the batter's box.

6. Goes directly from the bat, not higher than the batter’s head, to any part of the catcher’s body or equipment and is caught by another fielder.

7. Hits the pitcher’s plate and rolls untouched to foul territory before reaching first or third base.

Note:
1. A foul fly shall be judged according to the relative position of the ball and the foul line, including the foul pole, and not as to whether the fielder is on fair or foul territory at the time of touching the ball.

2. The position of the ball at the time of interference determines whether the ball is fair or foul, regardless if the ball rolls untouched to foul or fair territory.

Foul Territory:
Foul territory is any part of the playing field that is not included in fair territory.
Foul Tip:
A foul tip is a batted ball which
1. Goes directly from the bat to the catcher's hands.
2. Goes not higher than the batter's head, and
3. Is legally caught by the catcher.

Note: It is not a foul tip unless caught; and any foul tip that is caught is a strike. The ball is dead. It is not a catch if it is a rebound, unless the ball first touched the catcher's hand(s) or glove.

Helmet:
a. A helmet must have two ear flaps (one on each side) and shall be the type that has safety features equal to or greater than those provided by the full plastic cap with padding on the inside. A liner covering the ears only does not meet the rule specifications.
b. A helmet worn by a catcher may be the skull type without the earflaps.
c. A helmet worn by a defensive player, other than the catcher does not need earflaps.
d. Any helmet that is cracked, broken, dented or altered shall be declared an illegal helmet and removed from the game.

Home Team:
The home team is the team on whose grounds the game is played, or if the game is played on neutral ground, the home team shall be designated by mutual agreement or by a flip of a coin.

Illegal Bat:
An illegal bat is one that does not meet the requirements of Rule 3. Sec. 1. (ISF Official Rules of Softball)

Illegal Extra Player:
An illegal extra player is one who violates any of the provisions of Rule 4, Sec. 6. (ISF Official Rules of Softball)

Illegal Pitcher:
An illegal pitcher is a player legally in the game, but one who may not pitch as a result of
1. Being removed from the pitching position, by the umpire or the manager, as a result of the defensive charged conference limit being exceeded, or
2. Being removed from the pitching position by the umpire, as a result of pitching with excessive speed after a warning.

Illegal Player:
An illegal player is a player who takes a position in the lineup, either on offensive or defense, who has not been reported to the plate umpire, including: These are the types of “Illegal Players”
1. A REPLACEMENT PLAYER entering the game (under the Replacement Player rule) without reporting to the plate umpire.
2. A WITHDRAWN PLAYER (under the Replacement Player rule) returning to the game without reporting to the plate umpire.
Illegal Re-Entry:
An illegal re-entry occurs when:
1. A starting player returns to the game a second time after twice being substituted.
2. A starting player returns to the game after being substituted but not in his or her original position in the offensive lineup.
3. A substitute who has legally been in the game returns to the game after being replaced by either the original starting player or another substitute.

Illegal Substitute:
An illegal substitute is a player who has entered the game without being announced to the umpire. He or she may be:
1. A substitute who has not previously been in the game;
2. An illegal player;
3. A declared ineligible player;
4. An illegal re-entry; or
5. An illegal EP.
6. A replacement player who remains in the game as an unannounced substitute for a withdrawn player who has not returned to the game within the time permitted under the provisions of the replacement player rule.

Illegally Batted Ball:
An illegally batted ball occurs when the batter hits the ball fair or foul:
1. While the batter’s entire foot is completely out of the batter’s box, on the ground, when he or she makes contact with the ball.
2. While any part of the batter’s foot is touching home plate, when he or she makes contact with the ball.
3. While contacting the ball with an illegal, non-approved, or altered bat.
4. After he or she steps with an entire foot out of the batter’s box, and returns to contact the ball while inside the batter’s box.

Illegally Caught Ball:
An illegally caught ball occurs when a fielder catches a batted, thrown, or pitched ball with his or her cap, mask, glove, or any part of the uniform while it is detached from its proper place.

Ineligible Player:
An ineligible player is a player who may no longer legally participate in the game, because the umpire has removed him.

Ineligible Replacement Player:
An ineligible replacement player is a player who may NOT enter the game to replace a player who must leave the game to attend to an injury that has caused bleeding. An ineligible replacement player is one who:
1. Has been either removed or ejected from the game by the umpire for a violation of the rules.
2. Is in the current lineup.
In Flight:

In flight describes any batted, thrown, or pitched ball that has not yet touched the ground or some object other than a fielder.

In Jeopardy:

In jeopardy is a term indicating that the ball is in play and an offensive player may be put out.

Infield:

The infield is that portion of the field in fair territory that includes areas normally covered by infielders.

Infielder:

An infielder is a defensive player, including the pitcher and catcher, who is generally positioned anywhere near or within the lines of the base paths forming fair territory. A player who normally plays in the outfield may be considered an infielder if he moves into the area normally covered by infielders.

Infield Fly:

An Infield Fly is a fair fly ball (not including a line drive or an attempted bunt) that can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort when first and second, or first, second, and third bases are occupied, before two are out. The pitcher, catcher, and any outfielder who positions him or herself in the infield on the play shall be considered infielders for the purpose of this rule.

Note: When it seems apparent that a batted ball will be an infield fly, the umpire shall immediately declare, "INFIELD FLY, IF FAIR-THE BATTER IS OUT," for the benefit of the runners. The ball is alive and runners may advance at the risk of the ball being caught, or retouch and advance after the ball is touched, the same as on any fly ball. If the hit becomes a foul ball, it is treated the same as any foul.

If a declared infield fly is allowed to fall untouched to the ground, and bounces foul before passing first or third base, it is a foul ball. If a declared infield fly falls untouched to the ground outside the baseline, and bounces fair before passing first or third base, it is an infield fly.

Inning:

An inning is that portion of a game within which the teams alternate on offense and defense, and in which there are three outs for each team. A new inning begins immediately after the final out of the previous inning.

Intentional Base on Balls:

An intentional base on balls occurs when the defensive team desires to place the batter on first base without the requirement to deliver four pitched balls. This is referred to as an Intentional Walk. The ball is dead.

Intentionally Dropped Fly Ball:

An intentionally dropped fly ball is a fair fly ball, including a line drive or a bunt, with less than two outs and a runner on first base, which can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort, and the infielder intentionally drops, after it is controlled with a hand or a glove. A trapped ball or a fly ball allowed to bounce shall not be considered as having been intentionally dropped.
**Interference:**

Interference is the act of:

1. An offensive player or team member that impedes, hinders, or confuses a defensive player attempting to execute a play.
2. An umpire who impedes a catcher’s attempt to throw out a runner who is off the base.
3. An umpire being hit with a fair-batted ball prior to it passing an infielder, excluding the pitcher.
4. A spectator who reaches into the playing field and impedes a fielder playing the ball, or makes contact with the ball that a fielder is attempting a play on.

**Legal Touch (Tag):**

A legal touch (tag) is the action of a fielder in touching (or tagging):

1. A batter-runner or runner who is not in contact with a base, while it is securely held in a fielder's hand or glove. The ball is not considered as having been securely held if it is juggled or dropped by the fielder after touching (tagging) the runner, unless the runner deliberately knocks the ball from the hand of the fielder. The runner must be touched (tagged) with the hand or glove with which the ball is held.
2. A base with the ball securely held in his hand(s) or glove. The base may be touched (tagged) with any part of the body to be a legal touch (tag), (e.g., the fielder could touch (tag) the base with a foot, with a hand, sit on the base, etc.) This would apply on any force out or appeal situation.

**Legally Caught Ball:**

A legally caught ball occurs when a fielder catches a batted, thrown or pitched ball, provided it is not caught in the fielder's cap, helmet, mask, protector, pocket, or other part of his uniform. It must be caught and firmly held in the hand(s) or glove.

**Line Drive:**

A line drive is a ball in flight that is batted sharply and directly into the playing field.

**Lineup and Lineup Card:**

A lineup (batting order) is the list of players who are currently involved playing offensive and defensive positions in the game, including the EP, if being used. The lineup card will contain:

1. The last name, first name, position and uniform number of the starting players in the batting order (lineup), and
2. The last name, first name and uniform number of available substitutes, and
3. The last name and first name of the manager.
4. *(UNIFIED) Alternating Athletes and Partners must be identified with an A (Athlete) or P (Partner).*

Note: If an incorrect uniform number is listed on the lineup card, it may be corrected and the game continued with no penalty. If a player wearing an incorrect number violates any rule, the violation has precedence and must be enforced. If the player remains in the game following the violation, then correct the number and continue to play.
Obstruction:
   a. Obstruction is the act of:
      1. A defensive player or team member that hinders or prevents a batter from striking or hitting a pitched ball.
   b. A fielder who impedes the progress of a runner or batter-runner who is legally running bases while:
      1. not in possession of the ball, or
      2. not in the act of fielding a batted ball, or
      3. making a fake tag without the ball, or
      4. in possession of the ball and who pushes a runner off a base, or
      5. in possession of the ball, but not in the act of making a play on the runner which intentionally impedes the progress of that runner, while that player is legally running the bases.

Offensive Team:
   The offensive team is the team at bat.

Official Equipment:
   Official equipment is considered to be any equipment (bats, gloves, helmets, etc.) in current use by the defensive or offensive team in the course of play. Defensive equipment (gloves for example) left on the field by the team playing offense would not be considered as official equipment.

On-Deck Batter:
   The on-deck batter is the offensive player whose name follows the name of the batter in the batting order.

On-Deck Circle:
   The on-deck circle is that area closest to the player’s bench where the on-deck batter may warm up or takes practice swings, while waiting his turn to enter the batter’s box.

One Meter (Three Foot) Line:
   The One-Meter (Three Foot) Line is the area the last half distance between home and first base where a batter-runner must run to avoid being called out for interfering with a thrown ball from the home plate area, or with a fielder’s attempt to take such a throw, while running to first base.

Option Play:
   An Option Play is a play in which the offensive coach/manager is given the choice of taking the enforcement of the illegal action or the result of the play. Such options include
   1. Catcher obstruction
   2. Use of illegal glove
   3. Illegal substitution
   4. Illegal pitch
   5. Illegal pitcher returned to game and pitching

Outfield:
   The outfield is that portion of the field that is outside the diamond formed by the baselines or the area not normally covered by an infielder and within the foul lines beyond first and third bases, and boundaries of the grounds.
Overslide:

An over-slide is the act of an offensive player when, as a runner, overslides a base he or she is attempting to reach. It is usually caused when momentum causes the runner to lose contact with the base, which causes the batter-runner to be in jeopardy. The batter-runner may overslide first base without being in jeopardy if he or she immediately returns to that base.

Overthrow:

An overthrow is a play in which a ball is thrown from one fielder to another, resulting in the ball going beyond the boundary lines of the playing field or becoming blocked.

Pitch:

A pitch is the act performed by the pitcher in delivering the ball to the batter.

Note: If the pitch becomes blocked or goes out of play, one base is awarded all runners.

Pivot Foot:

The pivot foot is that foot which, when placed in contact with the pitcher’s plate by the pitcher, must remain in contact with the pitcher’s plate until the pitched ball is released.

"Play Ball":

a. "Play ball" is the term used by the plate umpire to indicate that play shall begin or be resumed when the pitcher holds the ball and is on or near the pitcher’s plate.

b. All defensive players (except the catcher who must be in the catcher's box) must be in fair territory to put the ball in play.

Pre-Game Meeting:

The pre-game meeting is a meeting held at the home plate area, at a pre-determined time, between the umpires and the head coaches/managers or team representatives of the respective teams. This meeting is held to:

1. Confirm and approve the lineups of each team, and to distribute a copy to the opposition, and
2. Review any special ground rules that may be applicable.

Protests:

A protest (separate from an appeal) is the action of a defensive or offensive team objecting to:

1. The interpretation or application of a playing rule by an umpire, or
2. The eligibility of a team roster member.

Quick Return Pitch:

A quick return pitch is one made by the pitcher with the obvious attempt to catch the batter off balance. This would be before the batter takes his desired position in the batter's box or while he is still off balance as a result of the previous pitch.

Re-Entry:

Re-entry is the act of any of the starting players, returning to the game after being legally or illegally substituted.
Removal from the Game:
Removal is the act of the umpire declaring a player ineligible for further participation in the game as a result of an infraction of the rules, other than ejection.

Note: Any athlete (or partner in unified play) so removed may continue to sit on the bench but shall not participate further in the game except as a coach.

Replacement Player:

a. A replacement player is a player required to enter the game for a defined period of time to replace a player who must leave the game to attend to an injury that is causing bleeding.

b. The replacement player may be:
   1. A listed substitute who has not yet been in the game.
   2. A listed substitute who has been in the game but subsequently substituted from the game, or
   3. A starting player who is no longer in the lineup and who is no longer eligible to re-enter the game.

c. A replacement player is not classified as a substitute, but must be reported to the umpire.

Runner:
A runner is a player of the team at bat who has finished a turn at bat, reached first base, and has not yet been put out.

Safety Home Plate:
Shall be placed in foul territory, eight feet from the back tip of home plate on a line extended from first base. A line shall be drawn from third base to the safety home plate.

1. Defensive players can only touch home plate and runners can only touch the safety home plate.

2. Runners must touch the second home plate located adjacent to the right-handed batter’s box in order to be safe at home.

3. Runners tagged by a defensive player will not be out.

4. Should a defensive player touch the second home plate and still touch the original home plate before the runner reaches the second home plate, the runner would be out.

5. If the runner touches the original home plate, the runner will be out and the ball will remain live.

6. Once a runner passes the commitment line (20 foot marking) from a second home plate, the runner cannot return to third base.

   Effect: The runner will be called out if the runner returns, and the ball remains live.

7. If the runner has passed the commitment line (20 foot marking) and continues to run on the original foul line, and interferes with the fielder taking a throw at, or in contact with, the original home plate.

   Effect: A dead ball should be declared and the runner is out.

Starting Players:
Starting players are the players listed on the official lineup given to the Umpire-In-Chief and/or the plate umpire.

Stealing:
Stealing is the act of a runner attempting to advance during or after a pitch to the batter. Stealing is not allowed in Special Olympics play.
Strike Zone:
The strike zone is that space over any part of home plate that is between the batter's back shoulder and his knees when the batter assumes his natural batting stance.

Substitute:
A substitute is a player listed on the official lineup card, who is:
1. A non-starting player who has not been in the game, other than as a replacement player.
2. A starting player who has left the game and legally returns to the game.

Note:
1. This is referred to as a re-entry.
2. The player may only return to his or her previous position in the batting order.

Tagging Up:
Tagging up is the action of a runner returning to his base, or remaining on his base, before he or she legally advances on a batted fly ball that is first touched by a fielder. Not to be confused with the action of a fielder tagging a base or a runner.

Team Member:
A team member includes any person authorized to sit on the team bench.

Throw:
A throw is the act performed by a fielder when throwing the ball to another fielder.

Note: If the throw becomes blocked or goes out-of-play, two bases are awarded all runners from the last base touched at the time of the throw.

Time:
“Time” is the term used by the umpire to order the suspension of play during which the ball is dead.

Trapped Ball:
A trapped ball is
1. A legally batted fly ball or line drive that hits the ground or a fence prior to being caught.
2. A legally batted fly ball that is caught against a fence with the glove or bare hand.
3. A thrown ball to any base for a force out which is caught with the glove over the ball on the ground rather than under the ball.

Triple Play:
A triple play is a continuous action play by the defense on which three offensive players are put out.

Turn at Bat:
A turn at bat begins when a player first enters the batter's box and continues until the batter is put out or becomes a batter-runner.
Wild Throw:
A wild throw is a play in which a ball is thrown from one fielder to another, and cannot be caught or controlled, is not blocked and remains in play.

Withdrawn Player:
A withdrawn player is a player forced to leave the game (lineup) in accordance with the replacement player ruling.
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A Listing of Official Events Offered

The range of events is intended to offer competition opportunities for athletes of all abilities. Programs may determine the events offered and, if required, guidelines for the management of those events. Coaches are responsible for providing training and event selection appropriate to each athlete’s skill and interest.

1. Individual Skills Competition
   Base Race, Hitting, Fielding & Throwing
2. Team Skills Softball
3. T-Ball Competition
4. Slow Pitch Team Competition
5. Unified Sports® Slow Pitch Team Competition

Setting Goals

Realistic yet challenging goals for each athlete are important to the motivation of the athlete both at training and during competition. Goals established and drive the action of both training and competition plans. Sport confidence in athletes helps to make participation fun and is critical to the athlete’s motivation. Please see the Principals of Coaching Section for additional information and exercises on goal setting.

The first thing in setting goals is to understand the individual athlete’s limitations. Beginning coaches who write a goal statement before establishing what that athlete is capable of will only undermine the validity of the goals.

1. Determine the intellectual, physical and social strengths and weaknesses of the athlete.
2. Define three to five small measurable goals that the athlete should realistically be able to achieve over the course of a single season. These goals can be skill-based (e.g., learning to consistently hit the ball), social-based (e.g., avoiding any angry outbursts or sulking at practices) or physical (e.g., performing a drill in a faster time).
3. Remember to phrase your goals in a positive way.
4. Define one or two goals in which the athlete will need to truly apply him/herself to accomplish – “stretch goals.”
5. Identify how the athlete’s strengths and weaknesses will affect these goals and devise a plan to address any potential problems.
6. Meet with the athlete and appropriate caregiver to explain the goals and gain their understanding and buy-in.
7. The degree of support you can expect from the caregiver may limit some of the goals you would otherwise want to set.
8. Avoid goals that are outside of the athletes direct control (the team winning a game or tournament).
9. Determine if there are any non-skill based goals the athlete/caregiver is interested in setting, such as becoming an assistant coach for a lower level team, a Global Messenger and/or a SOOPA Official.
10. Identify whether there is anything you (the coach) will need to learn or accomplish to support these goals. What is your plan?
11. Identify motivating rewards or recognition you can offer the athletes as they achieve each goal. These should NOT be in the form of bribery or substantial material rewards.
Sample Softball Goals

• Learn to consistently pitch underhand, measured as getting eight out of 10 behind the plate and at the correct arc: 1.83m (6 ft) to 3.65m (12 ft);
• Lead the team in warm-up and cool-down stretching using the correct sequence of stretches;
• Give a speech at the annual softball awards banquet;
• Increase my scores in the Individual Softball Skills Competition Event i.e. hitting off of a tee or throwing for accuracy;
• Learn to help put out the bases for games or practice;
• Assist with an outreach presentation at a nearby residential home to help recruit new athletes.

Benefits of Goal Setting

• Increases athlete’s level of physical fitness
• Teaches self-discipline
• Teaches the athlete sports skills that are essential to a variety of other activities
• Provides the athlete with a means for self-expression and social interaction

Creating Meaningful Involvement in Unified Sports®

Unified Sports embraces the philosophy and principles of Special Olympics. When selecting your Unified Sports team, you want to achieve meaningful involvement at the beginning, during and at the end of your sport season. Unified Sports teams are organized to provide meaningful involvement for all athletes and partners. Every teammate should play a role and have the opportunity to contribute to the team. Meaningful involvement also refers to the quality of interaction and competition within a Unified Sports team. Achieving meaningful involvement by all teammates on the team ensures a positive and rewarding experience for everyone.

Indicators of Meaningful Involvement

• Teammates compete without causing undue risk of injury to themselves or others.
• Teammates compete according to the rules of competition.
• Teammates have the ability and opportunity to contribute to the performance of the team.
• Teammates understand how to blend their skills with those of other athletes, resulting in improved performance by athletes with lesser ability.

Meaningful Involvement Is Not Achieved When Team Members

• Have superior sports skills in comparison to their fellow team members.
• Act as on-field coaches, rather than teammates.
• Control most aspects of the competition during critical periods of the game.
• Do not train or practice regularly, and only show up on the day of competition.
• Lower their level of ability dramatically, so that they do not hurt others or control the entire game.
Sample Work Outs

Beginner Team

Warm-up (10-15 minutes)
- Jogging: 3 minutes around field
- Stretching: Chest, shoulders and arms, hamstrings, quads, groin and calves
- Team warm-up: Throwing, grounders, air swings

Skill Work (45 minutes)

Introduction to Fielding
- After the coach demonstrates the proper form, the athletes will practice assuming the correct ready position without the ball.
- Athletes form two lines facing each other 2 meters (6 feet) apart and practice rolling the ball back and forth between them.

Introduction to Catching
- Demonstrate hand position for over-head catching.
- Athletes form two lines facing each other 2 meters (6 feet) apart and practice catching the ball while throwing it to each other, focusing on correct mechanics rather than the actual catch.
- Once the athletes become more confident, they should move farther apart.

Introduction to Hitting
- Demonstrate correct hitting mechanics
- Athletes form one row 2 meters (6 feet) away from one another and practice dry swings.
- Using a tee the athlete then practices hitting mechanics as they swing and hit off of a tee.

Team Concept (15 minutes)
- Practice ready positions with infielders in positions only.
- Discuss the offensive and defensive responsibilities of each position (who fields, pitches, who hits, etc.).

Cool-down (10 minutes)
- Bring the team together for cool-down stretching.
- The coach will make one positive comment about each athlete within a “winners circle.”
Intermediate Team

Warm-up (10- 15 minutes)
- Jogging: 5 minutes around field
- Stretching: Chest, shoulders and arms, hamstrings, quads, groin and calves
- Team warm-up: Throwing, grounders, air swings

Skill Work (15 minutes)

BASE Drill
- Focus on consistency of hitting.

Team Concept (15 minutes)

Shagging Hitting Practice
- Set up the team to field grounders hit.
- The coach or assistant coach should lead the drill by pitching consistently to the hitters, allowing the team to practice hitting the ball fair and for the defense to work on proper fielding technique.
- For each fair-ground ball, the offensive team receives one point; the drill can end when a total number of ground balls fair have occurred or when a specific number have occurred in a row.

Scrimmage (30 minutes)
Divide the team into four equal groups of three, and play using competition rules.
- Ideally this will be a 3 against 9 game. Coaches, volunteers or family members can be recruited to fill out one team.
- Whenever possible, have an official who uses whistles and hand signals to train the team on what to expect in competition.

Cool-down (10 minutes)
- Bring the team together for cool-down stretching.
- The coach will make one positive comment about each athlete within a “winners circle.”
Advanced Team

Warm-up (10- 15 minutes)
- Jogging: 5 minutes around field
- Stretching: Chest, shoulders and arms, hamstrings, quads, groin and calves
- Team warm-up: Throwing, grounders, air swings

Skill Work (15 minutes)

BASE Drill
- Focus on accuracy of hitting.

Team Concept (15 minutes)

Target/area Hitting Practice
- Set up the team to field grounders hit.
- The coach or assistant coach should lead the drill by pitching consistently to the hitters, allowing the team to practice hitting the ball fair and for the defense to work on proper fielding technique.
- Break up the field into three sections, left, middle and right. For each fair-ground ball, in each area the offensive team receives one point; the drill can end when a total number of ground balls fair have occurred or when a specific number have occurred in a row in the specific area.

Scrimmage (30 minutes)
Divide the team into two equal groups of six, and play using competition rules.
- Ideally this will be a 10 on 10 game. Coaches, volunteers or family members can be recruited to fill out one team.
- Whenever possible, have an umpire calling balls and strikes/out and safe to train the team on what to expect in competition.

Cool-down (10 minutes)
- Bring the team together for cool-down stretching.
- The coach will make one positive comment about each athlete within a “winners circle.”
Special Olympics – Softball Skills Assessment for Individuals

A. Hitting and Baserunning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score: 1=never 2=rarely 3=sometimes 4=frequently 5=always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enters batter’s box</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumes proper batting stance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracks pitches to bat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes good pitch selections to swing at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knows pitch count and situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has good bat control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can hit the ball with power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can place the hit to all fields</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drops or carries the bat after the ball is hit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can run with speed (rate 1 as slow and 5 as fast)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(To determine base speed a timer should be used and charted. Fast, slow and average times should be based upon the base distance and field conditions. Softer sand infields will be considerably slower than artificial surfaces or cement. Objectivity is important as fast in younger skills athletes is NOT fast by adult athletic standards!)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score: 1=never 2=rarely 3=sometimes 4=frequently 5=always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avoids fielders while running</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rounds a base without breaking stride</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slides into a base when needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reacts to coach’s signs, signals or directions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looks for the ball and decides to stop or continue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tags up on caught fly balls</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Fielding, Throwing and Catching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score: 1=never 2=rarely 3=sometimes 4=frequently 5=always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cleanly fields a grounded ball hit directly at them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moves laterally to a grounded ball and fields it cleanly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catches a fly ball hit to them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catches a fly ball on the run</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can leap to catch a fly or thrown ball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can dive to field a hit or thrown ball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can position themselves at a base to catch a thrown ball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can properly grip a ball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can throw a ball accurately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can throw a ball with velocity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knows where to throw the ball without coaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has a quick release</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Special Olympics Softball
Coaches Quick Start Guide

C. Pitching (must have a minimum of two pitchers submitted)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>1=never</th>
<th>2=rarely</th>
<th>3=sometimes</th>
<th>4=frequently</th>
<th>5=always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Remains in contact with the pitching rubber</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pauses on the pitcher’s plate prior to the pitch</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can maintain a legal arc (6-12”)</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitches with accuracy</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knows the count and makes appropriate pitch selection</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finishes the pitch in fielding-ready position</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes sure team is ready prior to each pitch</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is a team leader</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D. Coaching (Overall team grades for all coaches from GMT and/or Competition Committee with input from HOD)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>1=never</th>
<th>2=rarely</th>
<th>3=sometimes</th>
<th>4=frequently</th>
<th>5=always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have good control of team</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate well with athletes &amp; partners</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have knowledge of rules</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a positive attitude</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are prepared (line-up cards, equipment, etc…)</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can direct runners from coach’s box</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Softball Attire

For competition uniforms refer to the ‘Equipment’ reference in the International Softball Federation Rules which can be found at: www.isfsoftball.org

For training, appropriate softball attire is required for all competitors. As the coach, discuss the types of sport clothes that are acceptable and not acceptable for training and competition. Discuss the importance of wearing properly fitted, weather appropriate, clothing along with the advantages and disadvantages of certain types of clothing worn during training and competitions. For example, long pant jeans to blue jean shorts are not proper softball attire for any event. Explain that they cannot perform their while wearing jeans that restrict movement. Take athletes to high school or collegiate games while training or during competitions and point out the attire being worn. You can even set the example, by wearing appropriate attire to training and competitions and not rewarding athletes that do not come properly dressed to train and/or compete.

Shirts
Shirts should be comfortable and non-confining with short or long sleeves such as (t-shirts, sweatshirts or warm-up jackets etc.).

Pants/Sliding Pants
All player pants shall be either all long or all short in style. Players may wear a uniform solid color pair of sliding pants. It is not mandatory that all players wear sliding pants, but if more than one player wears them, they must be alike in color and style except temporary, snap-on or Velcro sliding pads. No players may wear ragged, frayed or slit legs on exposed sliding pants.

Shorts
Shorts with waistbands that fit snugly around the waist are recommended. Shorts should be long enough to provide protection to the thighs when sliding. Shorts should provide the athlete with comfort and good appearance. An elastic waistband will help keep the shirt in place. Sliding shorts, though optional, can be worn under the athletes’ shorts and may help reduce injuries from sliding.

Socks
Athletic socks are recommended for softball training.

Shoes
Probably the most important piece of clothing a player wears are their shoes. Shoes which are ill-fitting can cause the athlete discomfort that will impede the athlete’s play and concentration. Molded rubber softball cleats or sturdy sneaker/ tennis shoes are recommended. Metal cleats are not allowed.

Cap or Visor
Caps, visors and headbands are optional for players, but can be mixed. If more than one type is worn, they must all be of the same color and style. Plastic or hard visors are not allowed.
**Softball Equipment**

For legal softball equipment refer to the ‘Equipment’ reference in the International Softball Federation Rules which can be found at: [www.isfsoftball.org](http://www.isfsoftball.org)

The sport of Softball requires the type of sporting equipment below. It is important for athletes to be able to recognize and understand how equipment for the specific events works and impacts their performance. Have your athletes name each piece of equipment as you show it and give the use for each. Equipment must be safe for athletic use. Use proper equipment at all times and teach athletes to use equipment and perform all activities the “right” way, first time and every time. For safety’s sake, keep playing areas free of clutter, like loose equipment and clothing. Be alert to safety hazards and problem areas and do whatever is necessary to avoid them.

**Softballs**

A 30 cm. rubber or leather covered softball with compressed cork center is recommended for adult team or Unified team play. Younger athletes are able to use a 28 cm ball (rubber or leather). Soft-softballs and 40 cm. balls are recommended for instructional use.

**Bats**

Bats included on the ISF and ASA Bat Lists that continue to meet the provisions of Section B.1 are approved for use. Should a bat no longer meet the requirements of Section B.1 it shall be considered an illegal bat and not approved for use.

**Gloves**

Gloves are made for both left-handed and right-handed players. They are also made in junior and standard sizes. Most new gloves require a breaking in period.
Catcher’s Equipment
Catcher’s masks and protective headgear are required. A chest protector and shin guards are recommended for all catchers.

Helmets
Helmets are mandatory on offense for batters, on-deck batters, batter-runners, runners, players who coach in the first and third base coaches box, and youth age representatives that participate as a bat boy or girl while on the field or in the dugout.

Coaching Aids
Coaching aids are vital to the success of every softball program. Use cones, batting tees, and reversible jerseys during your training sessions. A tethered softball is excellent for developing batting skills. It allows the athlete to practice hitting without the need to chase the ball. The tethered softball is also adaptable to wheelchair activities. Also, there are many videotapes available that break down each skill into small components, or have someone videotape a practice session for later review.
Teaching Softball Rules

The best time to teach the rules of softball is during practice. For example, when during a practice game a player runs out of the baseline it is a good time to stop the game and explain that you cannot run out of the base line and then demonstrate the appropriate boundaries a runner can occupy and stay within the rules. As an international sports program, Special Olympics has both adopted and modified the International Softball Federation (ISF) Rules. Please refer to the official Special Olympics Sports Rules, which can be found at www.specialolympics.org for the complete listing of softball rules as modified and approved by Special Olympics Inc. As a coach, it is your responsibility to know and understand the rules of the game and to teach these rules to your players and other coaches.

Field of Play

1. The Playing Field
   a. Is the area within which the ball may be legally played and fielded.
   b. Shall have a clear and unobstructed area with the minimum radius as set out in the Distance Table.
   c. Shall have an unobstructed area of not less than 7.62m (25 ft.), nor more than 9.14m (30 ft.) in width, outside the foul lines and between home plate and the backstop.
   d. Should have a warning track. If a warning track is used, it shall be:
      1. An area within the playing field and adjacent to any permanent fence along the outfield and side boundaries.
      2. A minimum of 3.65m (12 ft.) to a maximum of 4.57m (15 ft.) from the outfield and/or side fences.
      3. Made of material (dirt, gravel) that is level with, but different from, the playing surface. The material must distinguish itself from the outfield surface, and signals players when they are approaching the fence.

      Note: There is no requirement for facilities to cut a warning track in the permanent outfield surface (grass or otherwise) when temporary fencing is used.

2. Ground or Special Rules

   Ground or special rules establishing the limits of the playing field may be agreed upon by leagues, or opposing teams, whenever backstops, fences, stands, vehicles, spectators, or other obstructions are within the prescribed area.
   a. Any obstruction on fair territory less than 83.82m (275 ft.) from home plate should be clearly marked for the umpire's information.
   b. If using a baseball field, the mound should be removed and the backstop set at the prescribed distance from home plate.

3. The Official Diamond Shall Have Base Lines As Follows:
   a. 19.81m (65 ft.). May be modified to 18.29m (60 ft.) for younger or less competitive divisions.

   The Official Diamond Shall Have Pitching Distance As Follows:
   b. 15.24m (50 ft.) to 12.19m (40 ft.).

      Note: If during the game, the base distance or the pitching distance is found to be at the wrong distance, correct the error at the start of the next full inning and continue playing the game.
4. Bases

The bases, other than home plate, shall be 38.1cm (15 in) square and shall be made of canvas or other suitable material, and not more than 12.7cm (5 in) in thickness. The bases should be securely fastened in position.

   a. The double base is approved for use at first base. This base is 38.1cm by 76.2cm (15 in by 30 in), made of canvas or other suitable material and no more than 12.7cm (5 in) in thickness. Half the base is secured in fair territory, and half the base (of a different solid contrasting color) is secured in foul territory.

   Note: The following rules apply to the double base:

   1. A batted ball hitting the fair portion is declared fair, and a batted ball hitting the foul portion only is declared foul.

   2. If a play is made at first base on any batted ball, and the batter-runner touches only the fair portion, and if the defense appeals prior to the batter-runner returning to first base, the batter-runner is out.

       Note: This is treated the same as missing the base.

   3. A defensive player must use only the fair portion of the base at all times.

   Exception: On any live ball play made from first base foul territory, the batter-runner and the defensive player may use either base. When the defensive player uses the foul portion of the double base, the batter-runner can run in fair territory and if hit by a throw from the foul side of first base, it would not be interference. If intentional interference is ruled, the batter-runner would be out. Note: The one meter line is doubled on throws from foul territory.

   b. After over-running the base, the batter-runner must return to the fair portion.

   c. On balls hit to the outfield when there is no play being made at the double base, the batter-runner may touch either portion of the base.

   d. When tagging up on a fly ball, the fair portion must be used.

   e. Once a runner returns to the fair portion, should he stand on the foul portion only, it is considered not in contact with the base and the runner shall be called out, if

       1. He is tagged with the ball, or

       2. He leads off from the foul portion on a pitched ball.

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**Special Olympics Unified Sports® Rule – Softball**

1. The roster shall contain a proportionate number of athletes and partners.

2. During competition, the line-up shall never exceed five athletes and five partners (six athletes and six partners if the EP is used) at any time. Failure to adhere to the required ratio results in a forfeit.

3. Each team shall have an adult non-playing coach responsible for the lineup and conduct of the team during competition.

4. The batting order shall be an alternation of athletes and partners.

5. During competition, the position requirements are as follows: two athletes and two partners in both the infield and the outfield, and one athlete and one partner as pitcher and catcher.
Protest Procedures

Protest procedures are governed by the rules of competition and may change from competition to competition. Only rules violations can be protested. Judgment calls made by officials or divisioning decisions cannot be protested. The protest must cite specific violations from the rulebook and a clear definition of why the coach feels the rule was not followed.

The role of the competition management team is to enforce the rules. As a coach, your duty to your athletes and team is to protest any action or events while your athlete is competing that you think violated the Official Special Olympics Softball Rules. It is extremely important that you do not make protests because you and your athlete did not get your desired outcome of an event. Protests are serious matters that impact a competition’s schedule. Check with the competition team prior to competition to learn the protest procedures for that competition.

1. Protests that will not be received

   Protests shall not be received, or considered, if they are based solely on a decision involving the accuracy of judgment on the part of an umpire, or if the team lodging the protest won the game.

   Examples of protest that will not be considered are

   b) Whether a batted ball was fair, or foul.
   c) Whether a runner was safe, or out.
   d) Whether a pitched ball was a strike, or a ball.
   e) Whether a pitch was legal, or illegal.
   f) Whether a runner did, or did not, touch a base.
   g) Whether a runner left the base too soon on a caught fly ball.
   h) Whether a fly ball was, or was not, caught legally.
   i) Whether it was, or was not, an Infield Fly.
   j) Whether there was, or was not, an interference.
   k) Whether there was, or was not, an obstruction.
   l) Whether a player, or live ball, did or did not, enter a dead ball area, or touch some object or person in a dead ball area.
   m) Whether a batted ball did, or did not, clear the fence in flight.
   n) Whether the field is fit to continue, or resume, play.
   o) Whether there is sufficient light to continue play.
   p) Any other matter involving only the accuracy of the umpire's judgment.
2) Protests That Will be Received

Protests that shall be received and considered include matters of the following types

a) Misinterpretation of a playing rule.

b) Failure of an umpire to apply the correct rule to a given situation.

  Failure to impose the correct penalty for a given violation.

  Note:
  1. Protests for the above must be made before the next pitch, or before all infielders have left fair territory or, if on the last play of the game, before the umpires leave the playing field.
  2. After one pitch has been thrown (legal or illegal), no change can be made on any umpire’s ruling.

c) Eligibility of a team roster member.

  Note: Protests for the above are to be submitted to the appropriate authority (not the umpires) and may be made at any time, subject to the provisions of Rule 11 Section 5.

3) Protests Involving Judgment and Interpretation of Rule

Protests may involve both a matter of judgment and the interpretations of a rule.

a) An example of a situation of this type follows:

  1. With one out and the runners on second and third bases, the batter flied out. The runner on third tagged up after the catch, the player on second did not. The runner on third crossed the plate before the ball was played at second base for the third out. The umpire did not allow the run to score. The questions as to whether the runners left their bases before the catch and whether the play at second was made before the player on third crossed the plate are solely matters of judgment and are not grounds for protest. The failure of the umpire to allow the run to score was a misinterpretation of a playing rule and was a proper subject for protest.

4) Notification of Intent to Lodge Protest

The notification of intent to protest must be made immediately before the next pitch. (EXCEPTION): Player ineligibility.

a) The manager or acting manager, of the protesting team shall immediately notify the plate umpire that the game is being continued under protest. The plate umpire shall, in turn, notify the opposing manager and official scorekeeper.

b) All interested parties shall take notice of the conditions surrounding the making of the decision that will aid in the correct determination of the issue.

  Note: On appeal plays, the appeal must be made before the next pitch, legal or illegal or before the defensive team has left the field. For the purpose of this rule, the defensive team has "left the field" when the pitcher and all players have left fair territory, on the way to the bench or dugout area.

5) Time to Lodge an Official Protest

The official written protest must be filed within a reasonable time.

a) In the absence of a league or tournament rule fixing the time limit for filing a protest, a protest should be considered if filed within a reasonable time, depending upon the nature of the case and the difficulty for obtaining the information on which to base the protest.

b) Within 30 minutes after the umpires have left the playing field is generally considered a reasonable time.
6) Information Required for Written Protest
   The formal written protest should contain the following information.
   a) The date, time and place of the game.
   b) The names of the umpires and scorers.
   c) The rule and section of the Official Rules, or local rules, under which the protest is made.
   d) The decision and conditions surrounding the making of the decision.
   e) All essential facts involved in the matter protested.

7) Result of Protest
   The decision made on a protested game must result in one of the following
   a) The protest is found invalid and the game score stands as played.
   b) When a protest is allowed for misinterpretation of a playing rule, the game is replayed from the point at which the incorrect decision was made, with the decision corrected.
   c) When a protest for ineligibility of a team roster member is allowed, the game shall be forfeited by the offending team.
Softball Glossary

Altered Bat:

a. A bat is altered when the physical structure of a legal bat has been changed. Examples of altering a bat are: replacing the handle of a metal bat with a wooden or other type handle, inserting material inside the bat, applying excessive tape (more than two layers) to the bat grip, or painting a bat at the top or bottom for other than identification purposes. Replacing the grip with another legal grip is not considered altering the bat. A "flare" or "cone" grip attached to the bat is considered an altered bat.

b. Engraved identification “ID” marking on the knob end only of a metal bat is not considered an altered bat. Engraved “ID” marking on the barrel end of a metal bat is considered an altered bat. Laser marking for “ID” purposes anywhere on the bat is not considered an altered bat.

Appeal Play:

A live or dead ball appeal is a play or situation on which an umpire cannot make a decision unless requested by a manager, coach or player of the non-offending team. A coach or manager may only make a dead ball appeal and only after stepping onto the playing field.

If made by a fielder, the fielder must be in the infield when making the appeal. The appeal may not be made after anyone of the following has occurred.

a. A legal pitch has been thrown or an illegal pitch has been called.

Exception:

1. An appeal for the use of an Illegal Substitute, Illegal Re-entry, a Replacement Player or Withdrawn Player (either leaving or returning to the line-up under the Replacement Player Rule) and not reporting to the umpire can be made anytime while such player is still in the game.

2. An appeal for runners switching positions on the bases they occupied may be made at any time until all such runners are in the dugout or the half-inning is over.

b. The pitcher and all defensive players have left fair territory; or

c. The umpires have left the field of play following the last play of the game.

These are the types of appeals:

1. Missing a base
2. Leaving a base on a caught fly ball before the ball is first touched
3. Batting out-of-order
4. Attempting to advance to second base after making a turn at first base
5. Illegal substitutions
6. The use of unannounced players under the Replacement Player Rule
7. Illegal re-entry
8. Runners switching positions on the bases they occupied.

Ball Compression:

Ball Compression is the “Load force” in kilograms (pounds) required to compress a softball 6.5mm (0.25 inches) when measured in accordance with the ASTM (American Society for Testing Measurements) test method for measuring compression-displacement of softballs.
Ball Cor.:
The Coefficient of Restitution of a softball when measured with the ASTM (American Society for Testing Measurements) test method for measuring the Coefficient of Restitution of softballs.

Base Line:
A Base Line is a direct line between bases.

Base on Balls:
A base on balls occurs when four pitches are judged by the plate umpire to be balls, including illegal pitches. The batter is awarded first base. This is sometimes referred to as a Walk. Effect: The ball is dead.

Base Path:
A base path is a direct line between a base and the runner’s position at the time a defensive player is attempting (or about to attempt) to tag a runner.

Batted Ball:
A batted ball is any ball that hits the bat, or is hit by the bat, and lands either in fair or foul territory. No intention to hit the ball is necessary.

Batter:
A batter is an offensive player who enters the batter’s box with the intention of aiding his team to score runs. He continues to be a batter until he is either declared out by the umpire or he becomes a batter-runner.

Batter's Box:
The batter's box is the area to which the batter is restricted while in position with the intention of helping his team to obtain runs. The lines are considered as being within the batter's box.

Batter-Runner:
A batter-runner is a player who has finished a turn at bat but has not yet been put out or touched first base.

Batting Order:
The batting order is the official listing of offensive players in the order in which members of that team must come to bat. When the line-up card is submitted, it shall also include each player's position.

Blocked Ball:
A blocked ball is a batted, thrown or pitched ball that:
1. Becomes lodged in the fencing, or
2. Is touched, stopped or handled by a person not engaged in the game, or
3. Touches any object that is not part of the official equipment or playing area, or
4. Is a ground ball that is touched by a defensive player who is in contact with the ground that is not part of the playing area.

Bunt:
A bunt is a batted ball not swung at, but intentionally met with the bat and tapped slowly within the infield.
Catch:

A catch is a legally caught ball, which occurs when the fielder catches a batted or thrown ball with his hand(s) or glove.

1. In establishing a valid catch, the fielder shall hold the ball long enough to prove the ball is securely held and/or that the release of the ball is voluntary and intentional. If the player drops the ball after reaching into the glove to remove it or while in the act of throwing, it is a valid catch.

2. If the ball is merely held in the fielder’s arm(s) or prevented from dropping to the ground by some part of the fielder’s body, equipment, or clothing, the catch is not completed until the ball is in the grasp of the fielder’s hand(s) or glove.

3. The fielder’s feet must be:
   I. When moving toward the out-of-play line, the feet must either: (a) be within the playing area, (b) touching the ‘out-of-play’ line or (c) both feet in the air after leaving the playing area, in order to have a valid catch.
   II. A player, who is in dead ball territory and returns to the playing area, must have both feet touching the playable area. In order to have a legally caught ball

4. It is not a catch, if a fielder (while gaining control), collides with another player, umpire or a fence, or falls to the ground and drops the ball as a result of the collision or falling to the ground.

5. A batted ball striking anything other than a defensive player while it is in flight is ruled the same as if it struck the ground.

Catcher's Box:

The catcher's box is that area within which the catcher must remain until the pitched ball is batted, touches the ground, plate, or batter, or reaches the catcher's box. The lines are to be considered within the catcher's box. The catcher is considered within the box except when touching the ground outside the catcher's box.

Charged Conference:

A charged conference takes place when

1. Offensive Conference: The offensive team requests a suspension of play to allow the manager, or other team representative, to confer with any member of their team.

2. Defensive Conference: The defensive team requests a suspension of play to allow
   I. A representative of the defensive team to enter the playing field to communicate with any defensive player,
   II. A fielder leaves his position and goes to the dugout and gives the umpire reason to believe that he received instruction.

   Note: It is not a charged conference if the coach/manager notifies the plate umpire of a change of pitchers before or after crossing the foul line.

Chopped Ball:

A chopped hit ball is one at which the batter strikes downward with a chopping motion of the bat so that the ball bounces high into the air.

Coach:

a. A coach is a person who is responsible for the team’s actions on the field and he represents the team in communications with the umpire and opposing team.

b. For the purpose of these rules, the manager of a team is considered to be the Head Coach.
Coach’s Box:
The area in which the two base coaches (one per box) are restricted to prior to the pitch.

Courtesy Runner:
A courtesy runner is any player who runs for a runner without a charged substitution.

Dead Ball:
A dead ball is one that
1. Touches any object that is not part of the official equipment or official playing area or a player/person not engaged in the game,
2. Lodged in umpire’s gear or in an offensive player’s clothing, or
3. The umpire has ruled dead.

Defensive Team:
The defensive team is the team in the field.

Delayed Dead Ball:
A Delayed Dead Ball is game situation in which the ball remains alive until the conclusion of a play. When the entire play is completed, the umpire shall rule a dead ball, and enforce the appropriate ruling. (Refer to Rule 9, Sec. 3)

Dislodged Base:
A dislodged base is a base dislodged from its proper position.

Double Play:
A double play is a play by the defense in which two offensive players are legally put out as a result of continuous action.

Dugout:
An area in dead ball territory designated for players, coaches, bat boys or girls, and official representatives of the team only. There shall be no smoking in this area.

Ejection From the Game:
Ejection is the act of any umpire ordering a player, official or any team member to leave the game and the grounds for the duration of the game. An athlete or minor partner is allowed to remain in the dugout ONLY if there is no team representative or delegate to assist them away from the grounds.

Fair Ball:
A fair ball is a legally batted ball which
1. Settles or is touched on or over fair territory between home and first base or between home and third base.
2. Bounds past first or third base on or over fair territory, regardless of where the ball hits after going over the base.

3. Touches first, second or third base.

4. While on or over fair territory touches the person or clothing of an umpire or player.

5. First falls on fair territory beyond first and third base.

6. While over fair territory, passes out of the playing field beyond the outfield fence.

7. Hits the foul line pole on the fly.

Note:

1. A fair fly shall be judged according to the relative position of the ball and the foul line, including the foul pole, and not as to whether the fielder is on fair or foul territory at the time of touching the ball. It does not matter whether the ball first touches fair or foul territory, as long as it does not touch anything foreign to the natural ground in foul territory and complies with all other aspects of a fair ball.

2. The position of the ball at the time of interference determines whether the ball is fair or foul, regardless if the ball rolls untouched to foul or fair territory.

**Fair Territory:**

Fair territory is that part of the playing field within, and including, the first and third base foul lines from home base to the bottom of the extreme playing field fence and perpendicularly upwards.

**Fake Tag:**

A ‘fake tag’ is a form of obstruction on a runner, while advancing or returning to a base, by a fielder who is not in possession of the ball, and that impedes the progress of the runner. The runner does not have to stop or slide. Merely slowing down when a fake tag is simulated would constitute obstruction.

**Fielder:**

A fielder is any defensive player of the team on the field.

**Fly Ball:**

A fly ball is any ball batted into the air.
Force Out:
A force-out is an out which can be made only when a runner loses the right to the base which he is occupying because the batter becomes a batter-runner, and before the batter-runner or a succeeding runner has been put out. On an appeal play the force out is determined at the time the appeal is made; not at the time of the infraction.

Forfeit:
A forfeit is the act of the plate umpire ruling that the game is over by declaring the non-offending team the winner.

Foul Ball:
A foul ball is a legally batted ball which:

1. Settles on foul territory between home and first base or between home and third base.

2. Bounds past first or third on or over foul territory.

3. First touches on foul territory beyond first or third base.

4. While on or over foul territory touches the person, attached or detached equipment or clothing of an umpire or player, or any object foreign to the natural ground.

5. Touches the batter or the bat in the batter’s hand(s) a second time while the batter is within the batter’s box.

6. Goes directly from the bat, not higher than the batter’s head, to any part of the catcher’s body or equipment and is caught by another fielder.

7. Hits the pitcher’s plate and rolls untouched to foul territory before reaching first or third base.

Note:
1. A foul fly shall be judged according to the relative position of the ball and the foul line, including the foul pole, and not as to whether the fielder is on fair or foul territory at the time of touching the ball.

2. The position of the ball at the time of interference determines whether the ball is fair or foul, regardless if the ball rolls untouched to foul or fair territory.

Foul Territory:
Foul territory is any part of the playing field that is not included in fair territory.
Foul Tip:

A foul tip is a batted ball which
1. Goes directly from the bat to the catcher's hands.
2. Goes not higher than the batter's head, and
3. Is legally caught by the catcher.

Note: It is not a foul tip unless caught; and any foul tip that is caught is a strike. The ball is dead. It is not a catch if it is a rebound, unless the ball first touched the catcher's hand(s) or glove.

Helmet:

a. A helmet must have two ear flaps (one on each side) and shall be the type that has safety features equal to or greater than those provided by the full plastic cap with padding on the inside. A liner covering the ears only does not meet the rule specifications.

b. A helmet worn by a catcher may be the skull type without the earflaps.

c. A helmet worn by a defensive player, other than the catcher does not need earflaps.

d. Any helmet that is cracked, broken, dented or altered shall be declared an illegal helmet and removed from the game.

Home Team:

The home team is the team on whose grounds the game is played, or if the game is played on neutral ground, the home team shall be designated by mutual agreement or by a flip of a coin.

Illegal Bat:

An illegal bat is one that does not meet the requirements of Rule 3. Sec. 1. (ISF Official Rules of Softball)

Illegal Extra Player:

An Illegal Extra Player is one who violates any of the provisions of Rule 4, Sec. 6. (ISF Official Rules of Softball)

Illegal Pitcher:

An Illegal Pitcher is a player legally in the game, but one who may not pitch as a result of
1. Being removed from the pitching position, by the umpire or the manager, as a result of the defensive charged conference limit being exceeded, or
2. Being removed from the pitching position by the umpire, as a result of pitching with excessive speed after a warning.

Illegal Player:

An illegal player is a player who takes a position in the line-up, either on offensive or defense, who has not been reported to the plate umpire, including: These are the types of “Illegal Players”
1. A REPLACEMENT PLAYER entering the game (under the Replacement Player rule) without reporting to the plate umpire.
2. A WITHDRAWN PLAYER (under the Replacement Player rule) returning to the game without reporting to the plate umpire.
Illegal Re-Entry:

An Illegal Re-entry occurs when:

1. A starting player returns to the game a second time after twice being substituted.
2. A starting player returns to the game after being substituted but not in his original position in the offensive line-up.
3. A substitute who has legally been in the game returns to the game after being replaced by either the original starting player or another substitute.

Illegal Substitute:

An Illegal Substitute is a player who has entered the game without being announced to the umpire. He may be:

1. A substitute who has not previously been in the game;
2. An Illegal Player;
3. A declared Ineligible Player;
4. An Illegal Re-entry; or
5. An Illegal EP.
6. A replacement player who remains in the game as an unannounced substitute for a withdrawn player who has not returned to the game within the time permitted under the provisions of the replacement player rule.

Illegally Batted Ball:

An illegally batted ball occurs when the batter hits the ball fair or foul:

1. While his entire foot is completely out of the batter’s box, on the ground, when he makes contact with the ball.
2. While any part of the batter’s foot is touching home plate, when he makes contact with the ball.
3. While contacting the ball with an illegal, non-approved, or altered bat.
4. After he steps with his entire foot out of the batter’s box, and returns to contact the ball while inside the batter’s box.

Illegally Caught Ball:

An illegally caught ball occurs when a fielder catches a batted, thrown, or pitched ball with his cap, mask, glove, or any part of his uniform while it is detached from its proper place.

Ineligible Player:

An Ineligible Player is a player who may no longer legally participate in the game, because the umpire has removed him.

Ineligible Replacement Player:

An Ineligible Replacement Player is a player who may NOT enter the game to replace a player who must leave the game to attend to an injury that has caused bleeding. An Ineligible Replacement Player is one who:

1. Has been either removed or ejected from the game by the umpire for a violation of the rules.
2. Is in the current line-up.
In Flight:
In flight describes any batted, thrown, or pitched ball that has not yet touched the ground or some object other than a fielder.

In Jeopardy:
In jeopardy is a term indicating that the ball is in play and an offensive player may be put out.

Infield:
The infield is that portion of the field in fair territory that includes areas normally covered by infielders.

Infielder:
An infielder is a defensive player, including the pitcher and catcher, who is generally positioned anywhere near or within the lines of the base paths forming fair territory. A player who normally plays in the outfield may be considered an infielder if he moves into the area normally covered by infielders.

Infield Fly:
An Infield Fly is a fair fly ball (not including a line drive or an attempted bunt) that can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort when first and second, or first, second, and third bases are occupied, before two are out. The pitcher, catcher, and any outfielder that positions himself in the infield on the play shall be considered infielders for the purpose of this rule.

Note: When it seems apparent that a batted ball will be an infield fly, the umpire shall immediately declare, “INFIELD FLY, IF FAIR-THE BATTER IS OUT,” for the benefit of the runners. The ball is alive and runners may advance at the risk of the ball being caught, or retouch and advance after the ball is touched, the same as on any fly ball. If the hit becomes a foul ball, it is treated the same as any foul.

If a declared infield fly is allowed to fall untouched to the ground, and bounces foul before passing first or third base, it is a foul ball. If a declared infield fly falls untouched to the ground outside the baseline, and bounces fair before passing first or third base, it is an infield fly.

Inning:
An inning is that portion of a game within which the teams alternate on offense and defense, and in which there are three outs for each team. A new inning begins immediately after the final out of the previous inning.

Intentional Base on Balls:
An intentional base on balls occurs when the defensive team desires to place the batter on first base without the requirement to deliver four pitched balls. This is referred to as an Intentional Walk. The ball is dead.

Intentionally Dropped Fly Ball:
An intentionally dropped fly ball is a fair fly ball, including a line drive or a bunt, with less than two outs and a runner on first base, which can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort, and the infielder intentionally drops, after it is controlled with a hand or a glove. A trapped ball or a fly ball allowed to bounce shall not be considered as having been intentionally dropped.
Interference:

Interference is the act of:

1. An offensive player or team member that impedes, hinders, or confuses a defensive player attempting to execute a play.
2. An umpire who impedes a catcher’s attempt to throw out a runner who is off the base.
3. An umpire being hit with a fair-batted ball prior to it passing an infielder, excluding the pitcher.
4. A spectator who reaches into the playing field and impedes a fielder playing the ball, or makes contact with the ball that a fielder is attempting a play on.

Legal Touch (Tag):

A legal touch (tag) is the action of a fielder in touching (or tagging):

1. A batter-runner or runner who is not in contact with a base, while it is securely held in a fielder's hand or glove. The ball is not considered as having been securely held if it is juggled or dropped by the fielder after touching (tagging) the runner, unless the runner deliberately knocks the ball from the hand of the fielder. The runner must be touched (tagged) with the hand or glove with which the ball is held.
2. A base with the ball securely held in his hand(s) or glove. The base may be touched (tagged) with any part of the body to be a legal touch (tag), (e.g., the fielder could touch (tag) the base with a foot, with a hand, sit on the base, etc.) This would apply on any force out or appeal situation.

Legally Caught Ball:

A legally caught ball occurs when a fielder catches a batted, thrown or pitched ball, provided it is not caught in the fielder's cap, helmet, mask, protector, pocket, or other part of his uniform. It must be caught and firmly held in the hand(s) or glove.

Line Drive:

A line drive is a ball in flight that is batted sharply and directly into the playing field.

Line-Up and Line-Up Card:

A line-up (batting order) is the list of players who are currently involved playing offensive and defensive positions in the game, including the EP, if being used. The line-up card will contain

1. The last name, first name, position and uniform number of the starting players in the batting order (line-up), and
2. The last name, first name and uniform number of available substitutes, and
3. The last name and first name of the manager.
4. (UNIFIED) Alternating Athletes and Partners must be identified with an A (Athlete) or P (Partner).

Note: If an incorrect uniform number is listed on the line-up card, it may be corrected and the game continued with no penalty. If a player wearing an incorrect number violates any rule, the violation has precedence and must be enforced. If the player remains in the game following the violation, then correct the number and continue to play.
Obstruction:
  a. Obstruction is the act of:
     1. A defensive player or team member that hinders or prevents a batter from striking or hitting a pitched ball.
  b. A fielder who impedes the progress of a runner or batter-runner who is legally running bases while:
     1. not in possession of the ball, or
     2. not in the act of fielding a batted ball, or
     3. Making a fake tag without the ball, or
     4. In possession of the ball and who pushes a runner off a base, or
     5. In possession of the ball, but not in the act of making a play on the runner which intentionally impedes the progress of that runner, while he is legally running the bases.

Offensive Team:
The offensive team is the team at bat.

Official Equipment:
Official Equipment is considered to be any equipment (bats, gloves, helmets, etc.) in current use by the defensive or offensive team in the course of play. Defensive equipment (gloves for example) left on the field by the team playing offense would not be considered as Official Equipment.

On-Deck Batter:
The on-deck batter is the offensive player whose name follows the name of the batter in the batting order.

On-Deck Circle:
The on-deck circle is that area closest to the player's bench where the on-deck batter may warm-up or takes practice swings, while waiting his turn to enter the batter's box.

One Meter (Three Foot) Line:
The One-Meter (Three Foot) Line is the area the last half distance between home and first base where a batter-runner must run to avoid being called out for interfering with a thrown ball from the home plate area, or with a fielder’s attempt to take such a throw, while running to first base.

Option Play:
An Option Play is a play in which the offensive coach/manager is given the choice of taking the enforcement of the illegal action or the result of the play. Such options include
  1. Catcher obstruction
  2. Use of illegal glove
  3. Illegal substitution
  4. Illegal pitch
  5. Illegal pitcher returned to game and pitching

Outfield:
The outfield is that portion of the field that is outside the diamond formed by the baselines or the area not normally covered by an infielder and within the foul lines beyond first and third bases, and boundaries of the grounds.
Over-Slide:
An over-slide is the act of an offensive player when as a runner he over-slides a base he is attempting to reach. It is usually caused when his momentum causes him to lose contact with the base, which then causes him to be in jeopardy. The batter-runner may over-slide first base without being in jeopardy if he immediately returns to that base.

Overthrow:
An overthrow is a play in which a ball is thrown from one fielder to another, resulting in the ball going beyond the boundary lines of the playing field or becoming blocked.

Pitch:
A pitch is the act performed by the pitcher in delivering the ball to the batter.
Note: If the pitch becomes blocked or goes out of play, one base is awarded all runners.

Pivot Foot:
The pivot foot is that foot which, when placed in contact with the pitcher’s plate by the pitcher, must remain in contact with the pitcher’s plate until the pitched ball is released.

“Play Ball”:
a. "Play ball" is the term used by the plate umpire to indicate that play shall begin or be resumed when the pitcher holds the ball and is on or near the pitcher’s plate.
b. All defensive players, (except the catcher who must be in the catcher's box) must be in fair territory to put the ball in play.

Pre-Game Meeting:
The pre-game meeting is a meeting held at the home plate area, at a pre-determined time, between the umpires and the head coaches/managers or team representatives of the respective teams. This meeting is held to:
1. a. Confirm and approve the line-ups of each team, and to distribute a copy to the opposition, and
2. Review any special ground rules that may be applicable.

Protests:
A protest (separate from an appeal) is the action of a defensive or offensive team objecting to:
1. The interpretation or application of a playing rule by an umpire, or
2. The eligibility of a team roster member.

Quick Return Pitch:
A quick return pitch is one made by the pitcher with the obvious attempt to catch the batter off balance. This would be before the batter takes his desired position in the batter's box or while he is still off balance as a result of the previous pitch.

Re-Entry:
Re-entry is the act of any of the starting players, returning to the game after being legally or illegally substituted.
Removal from the Game:

Removal is the act of the umpire declaring a player ineligible for further participation in the game as a result of an infraction of the rules, other than ejection.

Note: Any Athlete (or Partner in Unified) so removed may continue to sit on the bench but shall not participate further in the game except as a coach.

Replacement Player:

a. A Replacement Player is a player required to enter the game for a defined period of time to replace a player who must leave the game to attend to an injury that is causing bleeding.

b. The Replacement Player may be:
   1. A listed substitute who has not yet been in the game.
   2. A listed substitute who has been in the game but subsequently substituted from the game. Or
   3. A starting player who is no longer in the line-up and who is no longer eligible to re-enter the game.

c. A Replacement Player is not classified as a substitute, but must be reported to the umpire.

Runner:

A runner is a player of the team at bat who has finished a turn at bat, reached first base, and has not yet been put out.

Safety Home Plate:

Shall be placed in foul territory, eight feet from the back tip of home plate on a line extended from first base. A line shall be drawn from third base to the safety home plate.

1. Defensive players can only touch home plate and runners can only touch the safety home plate.
2. Runners must touch the second home plate located adjacent to the right-handed batter’s box in order to be safe at home.
3. Runners tagged by a defensive player will not be out.
4. Should a defensive player touch the second home plate and still touch the original home plate before the runner reaches the second home plate, the runner would be out.
5. If the runner touches the original home plate, the runner will be out and the ball will remain live.
6. Once a runner passes the commitment line (20 foot marking), from a second home plate, the runner cannot return to third base.
   Effect: The runner will be called out if the runner returns, and the ball remains live.
7. If the runner has passed the commitment line, 20 foot marking, and continues to run on the original foul line, and interferes with the fielder taking a throw at, or in contact with the original home plate:
   Effect: A dead ball should be declared and the runner is out.

Starting Players:

Starting Players are the players listed on the official line-up given to the Umpire-In-Chief and/or the plate umpire.

Stealing:

Stealing is the act of a runner attempting to advance during or after a pitch to the batter. Stealing is not allowed in Special Olympics play.
Strike Zone:
The strike zone is that space over any part of home plate that is between the batter's back shoulder and his knees when the batter assumes his natural batting stance.

Substitute:
A substitute is a player listed on the official line-up card, who is:
1. A non-starting player who has not been in the game, other than as a Replacement Player.
2. A starting player who has left the game and legally returns to the game.
Note:
1. This is referred to as a re-entry.
2. The player may only return to his previous position in the batting order.

Tagging Up:
Tagging up is the action of a runner returning to his base, or remaining on his base, before he legally advances on a batted fly ball that is first touched by a fielder. Not to be confused with the action of a fielder tagging a base or a runner.

Team Member:
A team member includes any person authorized to sit on the team bench.

Throw:
A throw is the act performed by a fielder when throwing the ball to another fielder.
Note: If the throw becomes blocked or goes out-of-play, two bases are awarded all runners from the last base touched at the time of the throw.

Time:
“Time” is the term used by the umpire to order the suspension of play during which the ball is dead.

Trapped Ball:
A trapped ball is
1. A legally batted fly ball or line drive that hits the ground or a fence prior to being caught.
2. A legally batted fly ball that is caught against a fence with the glove or bare hand.
3. A thrown ball to any base for a force out which is caught with the glove over the ball on the ground rather than under the ball.

Triple Play:
A triple play is a continuous action play by the defense on which three offensive players are put out.

Turn at Bat:
A turn at bat begins when a player first enters the batter's box and continues until the batter is put out or becomes a batter-runner.
Wild Throw:
A wild throw is a play in which a ball is thrown from one fielder to another, and cannot be caught or controlled, is not blocked and remains in play.

Withdrawn Player:
A Withdrawn Player is a player forced to leave the game (line-up) in accordance with the Replacement Player ruling.

Warm Up
A warm-up period is the first part of every training session or preparation for competition. The warm-up starts slowly and gradually involves all muscles and body parts. The warm-up is also a good time for the coach and athletes to talk about the objectives of the upcoming practice. In addition to preparing the athlete mentally, warming up also has several physiological benefits.

The importance of a warm-up prior to exercise cannot be overemphasized. Warming up raises the body temperature and prepares the muscles, nervous system, tendons, ligaments and cardiovascular system for upcoming stretches and exercises. The chances of injury are greatly reduced by increasing muscle elasticity.

Warm Up Benefits:
- Raises body temperature
- Increases metabolic rate
- Increases heart and respiratory rate
- Prepares the muscles and nervous system for exercise

The warm-up is tailored for the activity to follow. Warm-ups consist of active motion leading up to more vigorous motion to elevate heart, respiratory and metabolic rates. The total warm-up period takes at least 25 minutes and immediately precedes the training or competition. A warm-up period will include the following basic sequence and components.

Aerobic Warm-up
The first activity in an athlete's training routine should be to warm the muscles. Based on your athletes' ability levels, this may be: walking briskly, jogging slowly or running for 3-5 minutes. As a coach, you should be aware of individual athletes' needs regarding the warm-up walk or run. This activity circulates the blood through all the muscles, thus providing them greater flexibility for stretching.

For those athletes capable of running, they should start out slowly and gradually increase speed; however, the athletes should never reach even 50 percent of their maximum effort by the end of the run. Remember, the sole objective of this phase of the warm-up is circulating the blood and warming the muscles in preparation for more strenuous activity.

Examples:
a) Slow Jog
b) Jumping Jacks

Stretching is one of the most critical parts of the warm-up and an athlete's performance. A more flexible muscle is a stronger and healthier muscle. A stronger and healthier muscle responds better to exercise and activities and helps prevent injury.
Examples:

a. Upper Body
   i. Neck rolls
   ii. Shoulder rolls
   iii. Arm circles
   iv. Across the body

b. Trunk
   i. Twist, lower back stretches
   ii. Arm reaches
   iii. Windmill

c. Lower Body
   i. Hamstring stretches
   ii. Quad stretch
Throwing
to propel or project through the air by a forward motion of the hand and arm

The skill of throwing in softball is an integral part of a team’s defense. Throwing is how defensive players get the ball from one player to another. They “throw” the ball through the air to a teammate in order to try and get one of the offensive players (batter/runners) “out”.

Grip – The athlete should grip the ball with 3 fingers across the seam of the ball when possible, with the little finger riding loosely on the ball. The knuckle lines under the fingertips should rest on the seam. This is so the fingers can pull down on the seams during release. (Athletes with smaller hands may need to use 4 fingers. Extra-large hands may be able to use two fingers.) The thumb is located under the ball beneath the index finger. The ball should not be in the palm of the hand.
Teaching Points

1. Variation: Athletes with small hands may place all four fingers on top of the ball, with thumb underneath.
2. Athletes with very large hands may try a two fingered grip with thumb underneath.
3. A too tight grip can prevent proper spin on the ball. The grip should be firm but not too tight, thus allowing the wrist to be flexible which creates backspin.
4. Touch the athlete’s fingertips with your hands. Place the athlete’s fingers in the correct position.
5. The finger pressure on the ball should be evenly distributed
6. Stand beside the athlete. Place softball in the athlete’s hand and move his/her arm through a throwing motion.
7. Emphasize form. Stress one aspect of form at a time, work on it for a few minutes or for a certain number of throws and then move on to another aspect of form. Include a sufficient number of form throws at increasing distances in preparation for all-out throws in practice or competition.
8. Practice throwing over objects placed at different distances from a line to get proper release angle and throwing arc. Use football goal posts, improvised targets made from bamboo poles, wooden dowels, broomsticks and string or adapt other devices to practice releasing the ball.

Lower Body Drive

1. Open instep of the throwing foot slightly toward the target. (45 degrees). This is the pivot foot. The pivot foot turns out toward the target to begin the throwing sequence (picture insert) see Ace guide
2. The foot on the glove-side should land at a 45 degree angle when transfer begins.
3. Weight should be balanced on the balls of the feet.
4. Lower body transfer begins as the front foot (glove-side) steps on line to the target, with the arm in the “fingers to the sky” position.
5. Weight transfer begins as the glove-side arm pulls down and into the chest, as the throwing arm comes forward into the release position.
6. Lower body weight transfer completes as the ball is released and follow through occurs. The ball-side leg (back leg) continues forward (drag of the foot).
7. Tell your athletes that the ball will go where their hand is pointing when they let go of it.
8. “Flipping” the wrist is another word for emphasizing “snapping” the wrist.
9. Use a striped ball when executing throwing drills.

Throwing Drills
Catching

Catching is the act of receiving the thrown, hit or pitched ball in the air. (Firmly held in the athletes hands or glove)

The skill of catching a thrown ball if often difficult for our athletes, as it requires good hand-eye coordination. Sometimes our athletes are afraid of the ball. They may even close their eyes and turn away from the ball.

When teaching athletes how to catch a thrown ball, focus on the following:

Ready Position:
- feet shoulder-width apart with knees slightly bent,
- weight on balls of feet
- shoulders, hips, and knees are square to the target
- Hands start in “neutral” position ~ approximately waist high, thumbs up, palms facing each other
- Receive ball with hands in front of the body, palms facing the ball
- Catch the ball in the middle of the body
- When the ball is coming in above the waist, catch the ball with fingers towards the sky “high to the sky”
- When the ball is coming in below the waist, catch the ball with fingers towards the ground: “down to the ground”
Teaching Points – Assume the correct position for catching the ball below the waist

1. Demonstrate the proper position of hands.
2. Point out the similarity between the below-the-waist catch position in softball and trying to hold water in one’s hands.
3. This is the ‘Below the waist’ catching position.
4. If your athletes are struggling to play catch with each other, there are many progressive steps you can use to lead up to catching a regular softball.
   a) Use rag balls, rubber balls, or whiffle balls to decrease hardness of a regulation softball.
   b) Use larger balls such as playground balls, soccer balls, or beach balls. This also helps to encourage the use of two hands.
   c) Deflate balls slightly to soften impact. This helps diffuse fearful tendencies and decrease chance of hurting fingers.
   d) Use bean bags to encourage “flexible fingers”
   e) Start closer together and slowly increase distance between
   f) If still having difficulty, use balloons to alleviate fear and emphasize “tracking the balloon with your eyes”

Catching Drills
Fielding

Fielding is the ability to stop a hit/batted ball by receiving the ball into the glove, which is traveling on the ground or in the air.

Assume the correct ready-to-field position,

Ready Position:

- Feet shoulder-width apart with knees slightly bent,
- Weight on balls of feet, with balance slightly forward
- Shoulders, hips, and knees are square to the ball
- Bend at knees, not at waist, to lower the body into good fielding position

Fielding Drills
Pitching

At the beginning of each play the pitcher, while in contact with the pitcher’s plate, will pause and then with a continuous underhand motion, deliver a pitch with an arc of between 1.83m (6ft.) and 3.05m (10ft.) from the ground and towards home plate. The object of the pitcher is to get either: three strikes on the batter, in which case the batter is called out and the next batter takes their place in the batter’s box, OR the batter hits the ball in play and the fielders on the pitcher’s team can make a defensive play in order to get an out. Four balls by the pitcher would result in the awarding of first base with no liability to be put out.

Pitching Drills

WATCH VIDEO 1

WATCH VIDEO 2

WATCH VIDEO 3

WATCH VIDEO 4

WATCH VIDEO 5
**Batting and Hitting**

Batting/Hitting skills allow a team to get runners on base and get in position to score runs. The ability to visually track a pitched ball (hand-eye coordination) while also demonstrating correct timing of swinging the bat, will hopefully result in good contact between bat and ball.

For right-handed batters the right hand will be gripping the bat near the knob, with the left hand immediately above (stacked on top) the left hand.

For left-handed batters the left-hand will be gripping the bat near the knob, with the right hand immediately above (stacked on top) the left hand.

Before proper grip, stance, and swing can be achieved, it’s important to know some basic bat facts. As a coach, you need to make sure that your athletes are using bats that are the appropriate size and weight for their ability.
Teaching Points – Demonstrate the proper batting/hitting stance

1. The batter does not have to “line up the knuckles” when gripping the bat, but if he/she decides to do this; the knuckles that should be lined up are the knocking knuckles (the knuckles that a player would use to knock on a door). Lining up the knuckles is a personal preference and should not be insisted on by the coach.

2. The strength to which the athlete grips the bat should not be any tighter than a comfortable handshake.

3. Make sure the batter is not using too heavy or too long of a bat. To check this, have your batter swing the bat first with his/her top hand keeping the elbow at 90 degrees against his/her body. Then check the bottom hand, again keeping the elbow close to the body. If he/she can’t keep the bat level when swinging one handed like this then the bat is too heavy.

4. To ensure good plate coverage with the swing, have the player reach across the plate with their bat. There should be at least two inches of the bat extended over the plate.

5. If a player’s elbows are up it will cause the hitter to have a slow and upper cut swing thus making it almost impossible to hit the ball.

Teaching Points – Demonstrate the proper batting/hitting swing

1. The hands are kept relaxed and should bring the bat into the hitting area in the fastest and most direct route. This will happen by the hitter pulling the bat across his/her chest with his/her bottom hand and the top hand driving the bat forward. The handle of the bat should stay out of the strike zone.

2. Demonstrate the proper swing.

3. Suggest the athlete use a count of four to keep a rhythm to the swing: one, step; two, lead with elbow; three, extend arms and roll hands at point of contact; four, swing all the way through. Following swing, batter should not be off balance.

4. Have athlete practice swing all the way through.

5. Have athlete practice swing in front of a mirror, without the bat.

6. For training purposes you may have your athlete swing a legal weighted training softball bat to strengthen arm, shoulder and torso muscles.

Batting and Hitting Drills
Baserunning

Baserunning is what a player does after they’ve hit the ball and started to “run” around the bases. Players always run in a counterclockwise direction around the bases. Baserunners should only run as far toward the next base as they think they can go before being tagged with the ball by the defense. Baserunners must always wear a helmet to protect their head in case they are hit by a thrown or batted ball.

Advanced Skills

Relay Throws

Throwing accurately to the cut-off person is vital for preventing too many runners from advancing/scoring. Proper positioning of the cut-off person is important so appropriate throwing distances of the fielders are gauged correctly. The cut-off person is the key for controlling the defense; proper positioning for receiving throws, deciding when and where to throw, or whether to hold the ball when no play can be made.

NOTE: When playing in the outfield, use the cut-off person for relaying the throw into the infield.

Teaching Points – Relay Throws

1. Diagram relay throws on paper or a blackboard. Discuss the reason for using relay throws: i.e., to get the ball back into the infield as quickly as possible.
2. If there is to be play at the base, no verbal direction is needed. Shouting any command other than “cut,” may be confusing and misinterpreted.
3. On a very short ball to the outfield, the cut-off person can back up the base. Positioned as a cut-off person, they may be in the way of the throw.
4. Have cut-off person offer a target, with their glove, to the outfielder.
5. On possible plays at home plate, the pitcher or first-baseman would serve as the cut-off person, and the catcher would be the baseman. Be sure to designate which player will be the cut-off person.
6. Note: If the shortstop has the stronger, more accurate throwing arm, he/she could take all outfield relays.
Advanced Pitching Drills

Pitches to induce Ground balls
A common grip used to induce grounders is the over-the-top grip. For this grip, hold your palm facing down, the back of your hand facing directly up. Place the ball in the palm of your hand and then grip it with all four fingers facing forwards with your thumb behind the ball. Use the same pitching motion, but flick your hand and wrist forward when you release the ball. Practice this pitch to several batters to establish consistency.

Arc Drill
Practice releasing the ball at different points to achieve high arc pitches as well as shorter flatter pitches. This will help to throw off the batter’s timing.

Ladder Drill
Use different height step ladders to create a visual pitching height you wish to achieve. Place the ladder between the pitcher’s mound and home plate. Practice pitching over the ladder with the ball landing on home plate. Vary the ladder height to achieve arc variation.

Bucket Drill
Place a small bucket just behind home plate. Move the bucket to the corners and try to pitch the ball into the bucket from the pitcher’s mound. This helps with accuracy as well as arc level.

Also, vary the bucket in front of and behind the plate to vary short and deep pitches.
Double Plays

As softball coaches, we know that game momentum can easily be changed by a double play ball ending a scoring threat. It’s very exciting to witness the execution of getting two outs off a single ground ball. The following drills are based on turning the double play from 2nd base to 1st base. Many various double play situations can be implemented into the drill format. Ex. If there are runners on 1st and 2nd, or if bases are loaded, do you want to try to stop the runs from scoring if there are no outs by throwing from home to first?

Part I ~ Shortstop Execution

- On the field: Shortstop, 2nd baseman, 1st baseman
- 2 base runners: Runner at home going to 1st base, and a runner at 1st base going to 2nd base (extra runners nearby to alternate in)
- Coach stands at home plate with bucket of balls.
- The coach will hit ground balls to Shortstop.
- On contact, the base runners will advance to 1st base and 2nd base at full speed.
- The shortstop will execute the double play with the 2nd baseman.
- The 2nd baseman will practice their footwork on catch/throw situation and throwing through the advancing runner.
- REPETITION REPETITION REPETITION!!

Variation: “take-it-yourself-shortstop” Repeat the drill with the Shortstop executing all the parts of the double play: fielding, tagging 2nd base, and throwing the ball to first.

Part II ~ 3rd Baseman Execution

- Same format as above except coach will hit grounders to the 3rd baseman
- The 3rd baseman will execute the double play with the 2nd baseman
- Throws will be from 3rd to 2nd to 1st

Part III ~ 2nd Baseman Execution

- Same format as above except coach will hit grounders to the 2nd baseman
- The 2nd baseman will execute the double play with the shortstop (who will receive the throw at 2nd base from the 2nd baseman)
- Throws will be from 2nd to SS to 1st

Part IV ~ 1st Baseman Execution

- Same as above except coach will hit grounders to the 1st baseman
- The 1st baseman will execute the double play with the shortstop
- Throw will be from 1st to 2nd to 1st

Note: The 1st baseman fields the grounder, throws to 2nd, and then goes to 1st to record the second out. If they tag their base first, then the runner going to 2nd, must be tagged out since there is no longer a force play there. A variation of this situation is having the 2nd baseman cover the bag for the 1st baseman.

Part V ~ Pitcher Execution

- Same as above except coach will hit grounders to the Pitcher
- Throw will be from pitcher to 2nd to 1st
- Usually the Shortstop will receive the ball at 2nd base.
Batting and Hitting

The ability of the batter to be able to choose where he/she wants to hit the ball, based on the runners’ positions, the gaps in the field, and the type of pitch being pitched.

NOTE: A hitter should always be aggressive, but should not try to “pull” every pitch. Being able to “go with the pitch” allows the batter to hit to:

- open areas
- down foul lines
- between fielders
- behind runners
- unprepared fielders

Outside Pitch Drill (for Opposite field Hits)

- Pitcher has bucket of balls – 10 -15 pitches per batter
- Batter gets in ready position in batter’s box at home plate
- Pitcher aims for the outside side of home plate for all pitches
- Batter intentionally attempts to hit ball to opposite field
- (Right handed batters aim for Right field, left handed batters aim for Left field)
- Encourage the batter to wait a little longer before making contact with the ball.
- They may need to back away from the plate a little, or even open up their batting stance
- A slight step towards the opposite field may be needed for desired results
- Avoid stepping on home plate as this would be an out in a game
- Eventually, the batter should be able to hit the ball accurately and with force to the opposite field if they are able to wait for the pitch to come in.
- Start with center field as the target, and slowly move the target of aim further and further to the right side of the field.

Pull Hits

- Pitcher has bucket of balls – 10 -15 pitches per batter
- Batter gets in ready position in batter’s box at home plate
- Pitcher aims for the inside side of home plate for all pitches
- Batter intentionally attempts to hit ball to the same side of home plate where their feet are. Right-handed batters are attempting to pull the ball down the 3rd base line
- Left-handed batters are trying to pull the ball down the first base line.
- Encourage the batter to go after the ball, getting their bat around quickly with a strong follow-through
- (If they are fouling off balls, then they will need to wait a little longer to make contact)

Going-with-the Pitch Drill

- Pitcher has bucket of balls – 10-20 pitches per batter
- Batter gets in ready position in batter’s box at home plate
- Pitcher varies all pitches – some inside, some outside
- Batter attempts to hit ball to the field of choice, based on the position of the pitch
- Inside – pull hit
- Middle – up the center hit
- Outside – opposite field hit
Cool Down

The cool down is as important as the warm up, however is often ignored. Stopping an activity abruptly may cause pooling of the blood and slow the removal of waste products in the athlete’s body. It may also cause cramps, soreness, and other problems for Special Olympics athletes. The cool down gradually reduces the body temperature and heart rate and speeds the recovery process before the next training session or competitive experience. The cool down is also a good time for the coach and athlete to talk about the session or competition. Note that cool down is also a good time to do stretching. Muscles are warm and receptive to stretching movements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Time (minimum)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slow aerobic jog</td>
<td>Lowers body temperature</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gradually lowers heart rate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light stretching</td>
<td>Removes waste from muscles</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
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