

BEGINNING SOFTBALL

THE GAME OF SOFTBALL

The game we know today as softball was invented by George Hancock in 1887 at the Farragot Boat Club in Chicago. Hancock intended softball to be a game the rich members of the boat club could play indoors. Later, however, an outdoor version of the game, called *Kittenball*, was developed by Lewis Rober. Who in turn, introduced it to his fellow Minneapolis firemen. Today, softball is played all over the world by literally millions of people from all walks of life. The skills needed to play the game are few; very simple, one must be able to catch, throw, hit and run bases with a moderate degree of skill.

The game of softball has several variations, each with certain unique rules that set it apart. There are official rules for coed slow pitch softball and separate men and women's games of fast pitch, modified slow pitch, and 16-inch slow pitch. The rules of men's and women's games vary only slightly; however, the rules for fast pitch and slow pitch make the games very distinct from each other.

The primary emphasis of this class is on slow pitch softball.

PLAYING THE GAME

Official games of softball are depicted in the **Diagram** provided at the end of your packet.

KEY FACTS

- The playing field is the area within which the ball may be legally played and fielded.
- The playing field has its own boundaries; outfield fence, two side fences extending from the backstop to the outfield fence.
- Running parallel with the side fences is the foul line, ending with the foul pole.
- Distance between bases, pitching distances, and distances from home plate to the outfield fence vary, depending on the game being played. **(Refer to the diagram; these measurements are identical to the field we will be playing on, and will be what we use for this class.)**
- The playing field is made up of fair territory, which is the part of the playing field including the first and third base foul lines and the outfield fence, and the air above.
- Infield- portion of the fair territory that includes areas normally covered by the infielders and for this class, the dirt diamond.
- Outfield- portion of fair territory that is outside the diamond formed by the baselines, typically covered by outfielders and is the large grassy area.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Ball- A pitch that does not enter the strike zone.

Base on Balls- A batter gains first base after they have been pitched four balls.

Base Path- an area six feet wide between bases, the center of which is a direct line between bases.

Base Runner- A player of the offensive team that has reached the base safely.

Catch- A ball caught by a fielder.

Defensive Team- The team in the field at their positions.

Double- A base hit resulting in two bases.

Double Play- A play by the defense in which two offensive players is put out in one play.

Error- When a fielder attempts to field a ball; misplays it, drops it, or bobbles it and cannot complete the play.

Fair Ball- A batted ball that is touched or comes to rest in fair territory in the infield; or is touched or first hits fair territory in the outfield.

Fly Ball- A batted ball that goes into the air.

Foul Ball- A batted ball that is touched or comes to rest in foul territory in the infield; that is touched or first lands on or over the foul territory in the outfield.

Foul Tip- A batted ball that goes, no higher than the batters head, directly back to and is caught by the catcher.

Ground Ball- A batted ball that is hit directly onto the ground.

Home Run- When the batter hits the ball over the outfield fence in fair territory, or the batter hits the ball in fair territory and successfully reaches all four bases before the play comes to a stop.

Inning- each team has three outs on defense and three outs on offense. This is one completed inning.

Line Drive- A fly ball that travels into the playing field relatively parallel to the ground.

Offensive Team- the team that is up to bat.

Pop Fly- A fly ball hit in the infield or outfield area.

Sacrifice Fly- A fly ball that is caught but allows the base runner on third to tag up and score.

Single- A base hit that results in one base being awarded to the runner.

Strikeout- Occurs when the batter swings at and misses, or fails to swing at a third strike.

Strike Zone- Area over home plate between the batters shoulder and knees. For slow pitch the pitched ball must have a slight arch and land in the area that consists of the back half of the plate to the inside of the extended 12inch box.

Triple- A base hit resulting in 3 bases being awarded to the runner.

COVERAGE RESPONSIBILITIES

Each of the positions in slow pitch softball has a specific name, number and coverage area. The corresponding system is represented in the following layout;

Position No.	Position Symbol	Player Position
1	P	Pitcher
2	C	Catcher
3	1b	First Basemen
4	2b	Second Basemen
5	3b	Third Basemen
6	SS	Short Stop
7	LF	Left Fielder
8	CF	Center Fielder
9	RF	Right Fielder
10	SF	Short Fielder (Extra Outfielder)

The coverage responsibilities of each position varying on the situation, relative range and skills of teammates. Typically coverage is as follows:

Pitcher- Has fielding priority over no one.

Catcher- Fielding priority over the pitcher.

First Basemen- Fielding priority over the catcher and pitcher and responsible for covering first base and fielding area on batted balls. **DO NOT STAND ON BASE.**

Second Basemen- Fielding priority over first baseman and pitcher; cover second base on batted balls to left field and be the relay from right field. Sometimes cover first base on bunts.

Third Basemen- Fielding priority over first baseman, catcher and pitcher; cover third base and fielding areas on batted balls.

Short Stop- Fielding priority over all other infielders; cover second base on batted balls to right field and be the relay from left field.

Left Fielder- Fielding priority over all infielders; back up to third base.

Center Fielder- Fielding priority over all infielders and outfielders; back up to second base.

Right Fielder- Fielding priority over all infielders; back up first base.

Short Fielder (Extra Outfielder)- Will generally be placed in center (right and left center) will keep fielding priority over the right fielder or left fielder depending on which side they are placed.

SOFTBALL TECHNIQUE

THROWING

There are three general types of throws in softball

- Overhand- the kind of throw used most often to get the ball from one player to another.
- Sidearm- used for relatively short throws where the ball must travel quickly and parallel to the ground.
- Underhand- typically for the pitcher only, and fast pitch softball only uses the full speed underhand throw.

Because the overhand throw is used most often and is considered the strongest and most accurate throw, the following phases will help break the throw down and illustrate that.

PREPARATION PHASE

1. Ball in finger tips- usually a 2-3 finger grip
2. Staggered stride, weight on back foot
3. Glove side to target
4. Arms extended, glove to target
5. Wrist cocked, ball to ear

EXECUTION PHASE

1. Step toward target
2. Push off rear foot

3. Elbow leads throw, hand trails
4. Weight on front foot
5. Hips square
6. Forearm rotates through vertical
7. Ball high
8. Glove hand low
9. Snap wrist

FOLLOW-THROUGH PHASE

1. Weight forward
2. Knees bent
3. Throwing hand low
4. Assume balanced position

DEFENSE/FIELDING

When fielding ground balls, there are 3 basic approaches;

- Straight on
 - o Weight on ball of feet
 - o Must have ability to move side to side
- Forehand or Glove Hand
 - o Pivot/Cross over step with foot opposite of glove hand.
- Backhand
 - o Pivot/Cross over step with foot on glove hand side
- Remember to have the glove to the ground and field ground up
- Key is to stay low in a balanced defensive position
- Always watch the ball into your glove

When fielding fly balls as an outfielder and infielder:

- o Drop step
- o Crow hop

HITTING

- **Keys to being an explosive hitter:**

1. sound mechanics
2. controlled, fluid movement
3. pitch selection and bat speed

- **Two parts to the swing:**

1. Linear or preparation phase
2. Rotational or swing phase

Linear or Preparation Phase

- **Stance** – comfortable and relaxed with good plate coverage
- **Negative Move** – movement away from the pitcher; includes the trigger and load of the hands and weight has shifted to back leg with the center of gravity behind your head.
- **Toe Touch** – aggressive positive move gets to toe touch. Stride foot touches down; this puts the hitter in a good strong ready position to swing.

Rotational or Swing Phase – Begins just at or prior to heel plant and is initiated by the back elbow.

- **Heel Plant** – Stops the positive move with the front heel down and back heel up as weight has been shifted into front leg.
- **Connection** – position when hands pass in front of back shoulder. Think of it as elbow connects with hip.
- **Bat Lag** – position when bat enters the strike zone; bat is parallel to the ground and pointed back at the catcher.
- **Release** – the wrists release power that has been generated by connection and hip rotation; hands are palm up/palm down.
- **Contact** – body still in strong position with a slight bend in the elbows and eyes on contact point.
- **Do not roll your wrists until after contact; then finish swing by following all the way through with the bat high around front shoulder but still be balanced.**