

# Softball Rules Simplified



## HISTORY

Softball was created by George Hancock in Chicago in 1887. The game originated as an indoor variation of baseball and was eventually converted to an outdoor game. The popularity of softball has grown considerably, both at the recreational and competitive levels. In fact, not only is women's fast pitch softball a popular high school and college sport, it was recognized as an Olympic sport in 1996.

## OBJECT OF THE GAME

To score more runs than the opposing team. The team with the most runs at the end of the game wins.

## EQUIPMENT

Equipment differs for offensive and defensive positions.

- On offense, batters have a wooden or aluminum bat, batting gloves for grip, and batting helmets for protection.
- On defense, fielders use a leather glove. The catcher has special protective equipment, including a face mask, chest protector, and shin/leg guards.

All players wear shoes with cleats. The uniform consists of a jersey; pants, shorts, or skirt; and a baseball cap, visor, or headband.

## MAJOR DIFFERENCES FROM BASEBALL

Fast pitch softball is similar to baseball; however, there are notable differences.

- For example, the pitch is delivered underhand, the ball is larger, the field is smaller, and base runners cannot leave a base until the pitcher releases the pitch.

## THE GAME

- 1) There are 9 players on a softball team.

- 2) The playing field is divided into the infield and outfield
- 3) The lines between the bases are 60' apart and when joined they form a "diamond", inside the baseline is known as the infield
- 4) Outside the baseline but inside the playing field is called the outfield.

Any ball going outside the 1st or 3rd base line is a foul ball (runners can not advance and the batter gets another try unless the ball was caught in the air, which translates to an out)

An official game is 7 innings (an inning is when both teams have had their turn to bat)

- a) The visiting team bats in the first half of each inning, called the "top of the inning;" the home team bats in the second half of each inning, called the "bottom of the inning."

There is no set time that an inning lasts; each half of the inning continues until the defense accumulates three outs. If the game is tied after the last inning, the game goes into "extra innings," and continues until one team holds a lead at the end of an inning.

### **PITCHING**

- 1) The pitcher must have both feet on the pitcher's rubber and can only take one step forward while pitching.
- 2) The ball must be thrown underhand.
- 3) Both hands must be on the ball at the start of the pitch.

### **BATTING**

- 1) Batters must follow the same order throughout the whole game
- 2) The batter is out if and when:
  - a) three strikes have been called
  - b) a fly ball is caught
  - c) the batter does not stand in the batter's box

### **BASE RUNNING**

- 1) Runners must touch each base in order
- 2) Runners may overrun 1st base only, all other bases the runner may be tagged and called out if they are off the base.
- 3) Runners can not lead off a base, they must be on base until the ball is left the pitcher's hand
- 4) After a fly ball has been caught the base runner must tag the occupied base before
- 5) advancing to the next base
- 6) One base runner can not pass another base runner that is ahead of them.

- 7) Stealing a base is not permitted
- 8) A runner is out if:
  - a) they are tagged with the ball before reaching a base
  - b) the ball gets to 1st base before the runner
  - c) they run more than 3 feet out of the base line to avoid being tagged

**TERMS:**

- 1) **Ball:** a legally pitched ball that does not enter the strike zone (four balls equals a walk)
- 2) **Grounder:** A ball that is hit on the ground
- 3) **Force out:** when the runner has to advance to the next base to make room for the following base runner.
- 4) **Fly ball:** ball hit up in the air to the outfield
- 5) **On deck:** the next batter
- 6) **Pop up:** ball hit up in the air to the infield
- 7) **Strike:** term used when a ball is swung at and missed or is called when the ball enters the strike zone and is not swung at all.
- 8) **Strike zone:** the ball passes the batter over the plate between their chest and knees
- 9) **Infield:** The infield is that portion of the field in fair territory which includes areas normally covered by infielders
- 10) **Outfield:** The part of the field beyond the diamond, or infield. It is occupied by the fielders and it is farthest from the batsman.
- 11) **Foul Lines:** Two lines (first and third base line) that distinguish fair territory from foul territory
- 12) **Fair Territory:** Fair territory is that part of the playing field within and including the first and third base foul lines from home plate to the extreme playing field fence and perpendicularly upward.
- 13) **Batter's Box:** Box marked with chalk near home plate that a batter must stay within while batting.
- 14) **Bases:** Home plate is one corner of a diamond with bases at each corner. The bases other than home plate are 15 in (38 cm) square, of canvas or a similar material, and not more than 5 in (13 cm) thick. The bases are numbered counter clockwise as first base, second base, and third base
- 15) **Pitcher's Mound:** Located near the center of the diamond it is the spot from where the pitcher throws the ball.
- 16) **Foul Poles:** Poles stationed at the end of each foul line to distinguish fair territory

from foul territory.

- 17) **Double play:** A play in which the defense records two outs.
- 18) **Triple Play:** A play during which the defense records three outs.
- 19) **Tag Out:** A base runner that is not on a base when she or he is tagged by a player with the ball. The defense must create three "outs" before it can switch to defense. Outs can be by strike out, force out, fly out or tag out.
- 20) **Hit:** A batted ball that allows a batter to safely reach base.
- 21) **Home Run:** Fair ball hit over the outfield fence between the two foul poles.
- 22) **Run:** An offensive player safely tags home plate.
- 23) **Strike Out:** Occurs during an at-bat when a batter accumulates three strikes, at which point the at-bat ends and the player is called out.
- 24) **Umpires** make the decisions about play in a softball game. The number of umpires in a game can range from a minimum of one to a maximum of seven. There is never more than one "plate umpire"; there can be up to three "base umpires", and up to a further three umpires positioned in the outfield. Most games use a crew of two umpires (one plate umpire, one base umpire). The umpire's decisions are usually indicated by both the use of hand signals, and by vocalizing the call.
- 25) **Safe:** Called when a base runner reaches a base without getting **tagged out** or avoids a **force out**.
- 26) **Walk:** Player advances to 1st base when 4 consecutive pitches were called as balls.
- 27) **Hit and run:** Base runner advances to the next base when the pitch is released, knowing that the batter is swinging at the pitch.
- 28) **Line drive:** Ball hit with a trajectory almost parallel to the ground.
- 29) **Sacrifice:** A batter strategically hits the ball into an out situation to advance or score a runner. Usually a "sacrifice bunt" or "sacrifice fly."

## **PLAYING POSITIONS**

**Outfielders (CF, RF, and LF):** Positioned beyond the infield, they catch and field "fly balls," line drives, and ground balls hit into the outfield.

**Rover (or Buck Short):** plays 10-20 feet outside the infield on the "pull" side of the hitter. For example, a deep short stop for a right handed batter

**Second Basemen (2B):** Plays in the gap between the bag at second and the first baseman. Receives throws from fielders attempting to make outs at 2nd base and fields "grounders" and "pop ups" hit to this side of the infield.

**Short Stop (SS):** Fields the balls hit to the infield between second and third base. She or He covers second base (along with the second baseman) and is often involved in force plays and "double plays" with the second baseman.

**Pitcher (P):** Throws the softball from the center of the diamond (pitcher's mound) to the catcher. The pitcher uses an underarm motion to pitch the ball toward the "strike zone". After making a pitch, the pitcher gets ready to field balls hit up the middle.

**Third Basemen (3B):** Plays to the left of third base and covers any plays there. Receives throws from other fielders attempting to make outs at 3rd base.

**First Basemen (1B):** Positioned just to the left of the first base. Their main role is to make fielding plays on balls hit toward first base.

**Catcher (C):** Plays in a semi-crouched position behind home plate and receives pitches thrown by the pitcher. Also receives throws from fielders attempting to make outs at home plate.

## THE SOFTBALL PLAYING FIELD

