

## *Softball Study Guide*

### History

One version of the origin of softball gives credit to John Hancock as inventor. In 1887, it was played indoors with a tied up boxing glove and broom as a bat. The team used a wrestling mat for a diamond and the leadoff runner had the choice of running clockwise or counterclockwise. Some early names given to softball were Kitten Ball, Mush Ball, Diamond Ball, and "Dainty Drawers". Through the game's popularity, many revisions took place. The first National Tournament was played at Chicago's World Fair in 1933. Rules were revised and unified then to further perfect the game. This has been done since on a yearly basis.

### The Game

The game is seven innings long. In case of a tie, an extra inning is played and the team with the most runs at the end wins. There are nine players to a team; pitcher, catcher, 1<sup>st</sup> basemen, 2<sup>nd</sup> basemen, 3<sup>rd</sup> baseman, right fielder, left fielder, center fielder, and shortstop.

### Basic Skills

- Throwing - overhead, underhand (pitching; toss), sidearm
- Catching - ground balls, fly balls, line drives
- Fielding - force outs, tag outs, packing up, positioning
- Batting - line drive, bunt, place hitting

### Basic Rules

**Strike:** called when one of the following occurs:

- Batter swings at pitched ball and misses
- Pitched ball delivered between top of batter's knees and arm pits (strike zone)
- Fly ball goes foul and is not caught, batter has less than two strikes
- Foul tip that remains lower than the batter's head is caught by the catcher
- Batter with less than two strikes is hit by his/her batted ball

**Ball:** called when one of the following occurs:

- Pitched ball that doesn't go over the plate in the strike zone
- Ball that touches the ground before reaching home plate
- An illegally pitched ball

**Batter out:** called when one of the following occurs:

- Third strike is caught by the catcher
- Swings and misses the third strike and ball touches batter
- Bunts foul after the second strike
- Foul ball is legally caught
- Hits an infield fly with runners on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, or 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, & 3<sup>rd</sup>, less than two outs (infield fly rule)

**Base runner out:** called when one of the following occurs:

- Ball reaches 1<sup>st</sup> base before the runner
- Runner is tagged with the ball before reaching 1<sup>st</sup> base
- Fly ball is caught
- Runner interferes with a fielder trying to field the ball
- Runner runs more than three feet outside baseline
- Forced out at a base
- Passes a base runner
- Leaves base before the ball leaves the pitcher's hand
- Catcher drops third strike but the runner is touched with the ball by the fielder before touching 1<sup>st</sup> base

## **Basic Fundamentals**

### *Catching and Fielding*

- Keep your eye on the ball all the way until you field it
- Keep your body in front of the ball
- Relax and give with your hands as the ball is caught
- Use two hands whenever possible
- Charge slow rolling groundballs
- Try to face home plate if possible when catching a fly ball
- Always call for any pop-up or fly ball
- Use your body to prevent the ball from rolling through
- When a ball is caught above the waist, the thumbs are inward
- When a ball is caught below the waist, the thumbs point away from each other

### **Batting**

The bat used should feel comfortable to swing, not too heavy or too long, it should also be held with a firm grip, and relaxed wrist. In batting, keeping your eye in the ball is the most important. The stance is very important also. A closed stance is the most common used. The distance from the plate is determined by arm length and bat size. When swinging, a step forward as you start the swing of the bat is essential, in order to use body weight and bat speed to hit the ball with power. When contact is made, a good level swing and a follow through will enable a good solid hit to be made.

### **Base Running**

Good base runners are always alert. They have their eyes open and heads up, ready to advance a base when the defense makes an error. Two important essentials are the start and the ability to round the bases tightly. The start consists of a crossover step, keeping the body low and using the arm for momentum. Rounding the bases, you should judge your speed and hit the inside corner of the base.

### **Slow pitch 16” Softball Rules you should know**

- Requires 10 players – 12” softball has 9 players
- Bases are 55 feet, 12” bases are 60 feet apart
- Two hesitations deliver on third – 12” no hesitations
- No lead off until ball leaves pitcher’s hands
- No bunting or chopping
- The strike zone is between the arm pits and the bottom of the knees, across home plate
- The batter may reach 1<sup>st</sup> base on a hit, an error, a walk or fielder’s choice
- The batter is out when he grounds or flies out, strikes out, bunts or chops the ball, does not bat in the correct order, interferes with a defender trying to field the ball, infield fly rule and when a runner off base is hit by a batted ball
- A batter is automatically out on an Infield Fly Rule call.
- During a time at bat, if the batter hits two foul balls, they are out. This rule saves time and allows for faster play.

### **Basic Strategy**

- As a member of the team in the field, always play for one sure out
- As a member of the team in the field, catch the ball securely before trying to throw it
- Always move to back up a teammate on each throw or batted ball
- As a fielder, “call for the ball” when a fly ball could be caught by more than one player
- As a fielder, know the position of the base runners and the number of outs
- As a fielder, do not throw the ball to a base after the runner is there
- As a base runner, keep your head up and when the ball is thrown poorly, try for the next base if possible
- As a batter, risk a called third strike when you have a 3-0 count

## **Terms**

<b>Ball</b>	A ball thrown by the pitcher that does not cross the plate between the batter's knees and arm pits, and if the batter does not swing at it.
<b>Called Strike</b>	A pitch that the umpire calls a strike even when the hitter does not attempt to swing at the ball.
<b>Cut-Off</b>	When a player intercepts a throw meant for another player with the intention of putting out a base runner, or preventing a base runner from advancing to another base.
<b>Double</b>	A fair hit ball that permits the batter to reach second base safely without an error occurring.
<b>Double Play</b>	Two outs made in succession during the time the pitcher throws the ball and receives it back again for the next pitch
<b>Error</b>	A misplay by a member of the defensive team which allows either the batter to continue batting or a base runner to advance bases
<b>Fielder's Choice</b>	When a player on the defensive team chooses to put out a base runner instead of the batter, on a batted ball
<b>Fly ball</b>	A ball that is hit high in the air
<b>Force Out</b>	When a base runner is put out because it was necessary for him/her to advance to another base
<b>Full Count</b>	When a batter has three balls and two strikes on him/her
<b>Hit</b>	A batted ball in fair territory that permits the batter to reach one or more bases safely without the aid of an error
<b>Inning</b>	When both offensive and defensive teams have been at bat and each has made three outs
<b>Put-out</b>	Recorded for the defensive player who handles the ball last on a play that retires a base runner
<b>Sacrifice</b>	A ball hit by the batter which advances the base runner and results in the batter being out at first
<b>Single</b>	A fair hit ball that permits the batter to reach first base safely without an error occurring
<b>Strike</b>	A ball thrown by the pitcher which crosses the plate between the batter's knees and arm pits which he/she does not swing at or swings at and misses. Also, a ball hit into foul territory and is not caught for an out.
<b>Triple</b>	A fair hit ball that permits the batter to reach third base safely without an error occurring
<b>Triple play</b>	Three outs made in succession during the time the pitcher throws the ball and receives it back again for the next pitch
<b>Walk</b>	When the batter advances to the first base due to the pitcher throwing four pitches that are not in the strike zone