



KEY STAGE 3

SOFTBALL BASIC RULES & SKILLS



Big Picture: To Develop Key Knowledge and Understanding of the Basic Rules and Skills in Softball

Basic Rules

Objective of Softball

The object of softball is to hit the ball with a bat before the player tries to run around an infield with four bases. Once a player manages to get round without being given out a run is scored. The team with the most runs at the end of the game wins.

Players & Equipment

Each softball team has 9 players. The game takes place over 7 innings. Fielders have a specialist softball glove for their non-throwing arm to assist with fielding. An innings is split into two sections called the top and the bottom of the innings. The in-field has four bases in a diamond shape. The bases are home base (where the batter stands), first base, second base and third base. The fielding team has a pitcher, catcher, a player on first base, second base, third base, three deep fielders and short stop. Home plate can be found in the centre of the field where the pitcher must stand to throw the ball. The pitcher must throw the ball underarm and must have at least one foot on the plate at the point of delivery. A batter can be given out by being caught by a fielder without the ball bouncing, missing the ball three times in which a strike is called or by being tagged by a fielder holding the ball whilst running between bases. A batter can walk to first base if the pitcher fails to get the ball within the strike zone 4 times. Down the first and third base line is a foul area. Once the ball crosses this line before it bounces the ball is deemed 'dead' and play restarts with a new pitch.

Scoring

To score a run the batter must successfully first hit the ball and make it around the bases without being given out. One run is scored for every batter they manage to get round. A run can be scored even if the batter who hit the ball doesn't make it round to home plate but manages to get a player that's already on one of the bases home.



Batting Skills

Different Grips

When gripping the bat: Focus on keeping the handle in the pads of your fingers and not gripping the bat too tight. Grip your fingers, then your thumb, which will allow you to align your "door-knocking knuckles." Having a relaxed and loose grip will allow for full extension and maximum bat speed.

Your dominant (top) hand should be closer to the top of the handle, and your other (bottom) hand should be closer to the bat blade. Putting your hands in the middle of handle gives the best combination of power and control. A high grip (hands towards the end of the handle) will generate more power.

Stance

To be a successful hitter you need to start in a relaxed, balanced stance. An athletic stance involves: Spreading your feet wider than shoulder-width apart. Pointing your toes slightly inward, with the weight of your body on the inside part of your feet and forward on the balls of your feet.

Follow Through

The hand is the last body part to move forward. Watch the ball in hand and make sure it stays behind the body. The follow through is important for power and accuracy as well as dissipating the force and eliminating the tendency to decelerate before the completion of the action.

Bunting

A bunt is a legally batted ball not swung at but tapped or intentionally tapped into the infield with the bat. The bat is held in the path of the ball and tapped slowly as opposed to a full swing. In softball, there are different types of bunts and plays that use them. Many left-handed batters will drag bunt or slap bunt so they can hit the ball as they are moving toward the pitcher. They must stay in the batter's box while bunting.

Pitching Skills

Positioning and Movements:

❖ Grips:
The pitcher can choose one of two possible fastball grips - either the 4-seam grip ("C" Grip) or the 2 seam (Horseshoe Grip). The "C" Grip is recommended for a new pitcher because it has no tailing action.

The stance should be comfortable and relaxed, and the hips should be closed (parallel to the catcher).

Shoulder/Arm Action

- ❖ Variation of Speed
- ❖ Height
- ❖ Angle
- ❖ Spin



The shoulders should be back and feet shoulder width apart. The feet must push-off (or throwing side) foot must be at the front of the pitching rubber, with at least half of it on the surface of the rubber. The stride (or glove side) foot will usually be behind the rubber or touching the back edge of the rubber.

As the arm comes down past the hip, keep the wrist back then allow it to whip forward at the precise instant the ball is released. Keep the arm outstretched and do not snap the wrist. Allow the arm to stay loose at the joint and let the arm finish in a natural way. Some pitchers prefer to let the hand turn over in front of the body and dangle loosely at the wrist.

Running

Base-Running

Runners may attempt to advance from base to base on any fair ball that touches the ground.

Leading Off/Stealing

When a runner runs to the next base without the ball being hit. The runner may not leave the base until after the pitcher releases the ball. If they are tagged, they are out.

Fielding Skills

Fielding Positions

Total of **nine** positions that are always played by the defensive team. The positions are called:

1. First base
2. Second base
3. Shortstop
4. Third base
5. Left field
6. Centre field
7. Right field
8. Pitcher
9. Catcher

Infield and Outfield Positions

Infielders are responsible for fielding ground balls that are near their position on the field. Must have quick reflexes, as these are the closest positions to home plate. The **outfielders** are positioned outside the area marked by the four bases, with the right one standing closest to first base. Their job is to catch and throw balls that fly out of the infield and **backing up** their teammates at the bases.

Fielding Ground Balls

The knees should be bent and back should be parallel to the ground, and both arms should be outstretched in front of the body. The back of the fielder's glove should be on the ground with the throwing hand above it.

Catching Fly Balls

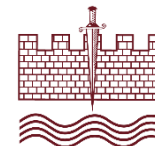
Get your glove up in-line with the ball with your fingers pointing to the sky. Catch the ball in front of your head off the throwing side of the body. Catch the ball with one hand (glove), covering the ball in your glove with your bare hand.

Throwing

You will need to practice your underarm and overhead throws over short and long distances.

Tag-Outs

A tag, is a play in which a baserunner is out because a fielder touches them with the ball.



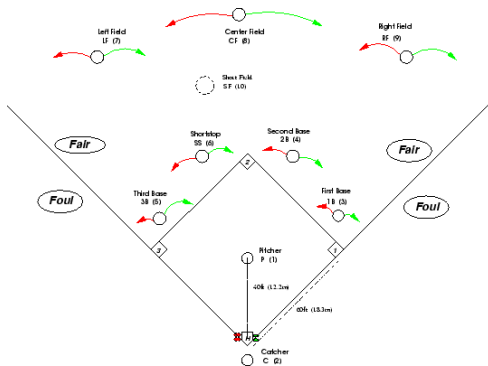
KEY STAGE 3

HOMEWORK / SUPPORT / UNDERSTANDING

The key questions, key vocabulary & assessment level guidance below can all be used for Homework/Home learning on this topic

Key Questions

- What is the object of the game of softball?
- How many bases are there on the softball field, excluding home plate?
- The shape of home plate is a
- The pitcher is what position on the field?
- A regulation softball game has how many innings?
- Who backs up 1st base when a throw is coming from the short stop?
- How many balls for a walk?
- Three strikes and you are what?
- When a pitcher throws _____ balls, does the batter get a free walk/run?
- What is a Bunt?
- Is the runner allowed to steal a base before the pitcher throws?
- What are the progressions to teach pitching?
- How would you teach someone to throw the ball accurately?
- What are the key points when teaching batting?
- What skills can be linked in softball?



Key Vocabulary

- Backstop** – The screen, padding, or short wall behind home plate.
- Ball** – A pitch that is not in the strike zone and the batter refrains from swinging at it. Batters get four of them before a walk is given.
- Base** – One of four corners on the diamond that the base runners must touch before they score a run. First, second, and third are always called bases. Home is often called a plate.
- Bases loaded** – When base runners are on first, second, and third all at the same time.
- Batter's Box** – The spaces on either side of home plate where batters stand when pitches are thrown. The boxes measure 1m by 1.2m, or 3 ft by 7 ft.
- Bunt** – The hitter doesn't swing at a pitch, instead uses the bat to tap the ball into play. They must stay in the batter's box while bunting.
- Catcher** – The defensive position behind home plate. Receives and calls pitches.
- Double play** – This is a defensive play where two outs are made off of one hit ball.
- Drop ball** – This is a pitch where the ball has a downward motion as it reaches the batter.
- Fair ball** – When a ball is hit and lands in regulation territory.
- First base** – This is the first spot the hitter runs to after hitting the ball.
- Fly ball** – A ball that is hit high into the air and travels deep into the outfield.
- Foul ball** – When a ball is hit and lands on the ground outside of fair territory.
- Hit by pitch** – When the batter is hit by the pitch, the ball is declared dead and the batter is given first base.
- Home plate** – The base where the batter stands to hit the ball. It is also the last base that a runner must reach before scoring.
- Home run** – When a batter hits the ball and is able to cross all four bases and earns an RBI.
- Infielder** – A defensive player in the dirt area of the diamond.
- Load** – When the batter prepares to hit the ball as the pitcher winds up. All batters have a slightly different way to do this, but the load is designed to make the swing smooth and effective.
- Out** – When an umpire does not give a player a base, usually because the player strikes out or is thrown out on a defensive play.
- Outfield** – A defensive player who is stationed outside of the dirt area of the field – usually in a grassy area. The positions are right field, centre field, and left field.
- Pitcher** – The defensive position that is responsible for throwing the ball to the batter.
- Run** – When a base runner crosses home plate. The team of the player earns a point.
- Safe** – The umpire declares that a base runner reached a base before an out is made.
- Stealing** – A base runner advances to the next base as the pitcher releases the ball.
- Strike** – A pitch that is in the strike zone or is swung at by the batter. The strike can be a foul ball.
- Tag out** – When a fielder touches the base runner or steps on the base with the ball.
- Triple Play** – This is a rare move where three outs are made off of one batted ball.
- Umpire** – The official who is making decisions on the plays and pitches in the game.
- Windmill** – The style of underhand pitching that fast-pitch pitchers use.

Assessment Levels

Things to look for when assessing:

- Can they pitch the ball consistently?
- Do they let the ball bounce before catching?
- Are they rarely catching the ball?
- Do they use the glove when the ball is travelling along floor?
- Do they make simple errors when running between bases?
- How effective are they in games?
- Do they stop the ball with their feet?
- Do they have the ability to throw the ball?
- Do they forget to run when on a base?
- Do they rarely strike the ball when batting?
- They use a basic static stance.



Grade 3

- Remember five rules/scoring systems.
- Recall the teaching points for pitching, different throws, and batting technique.
- Demonstrate basic underarm & overarm throws over shorter distances.
- Display basic fielding skills and techniques with teacher guidance.
- Show basic batting stance occasionally making contact, hits the ball over shorter distances.

Grade 4

- Apply the correct pitching technique consistently in a competitive situation.
- Understand the different fielding positions within the game.
- Show a good batting technique, hitting the ball over a short distance consistently.
- Identify most of the rules associated with the game and discuss basic tactics.
- Independently show basic fielding skills in a game, such as long barrier, underarm throw and catching from a soft throw.

Grade 5-6

- Analyse their own technique or a peer's technique in softball skills.
- Know what type of throw should be used in different situations. Know where to aim the ball when batting in terms of the positioning of the fielders. Be able to demonstrate this.
- Apply and evaluate different fielding and batting tactics.
- Combine skills effectively with consistent precision, speed and accuracy, e.g. long barrier followed by an accurate overarm throw to one of the bases.
- Apply skills and techniques accurately in pressured situations.

Grade 7-9

- Be able to effectively outwit an opponent in a competitive game situation.
- Be able to consistently use advanced and creative skills in game play.
- Can adapt "their game" to suit their opposition's weaknesses.
- Can develop practices and tactics in training sessions confidently.
- Can assess and improve other pupils' performances.