



GUIDE TO RUNNING A SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL SOFTBALL PROGRAM



WELCOME!

MEET THE SOFTBALL VICTORIA PARTICIPATION TEAM



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FULLY LOADED SLOW PITCH SOFTBALL

BENEFITS OF FULLY LOADED SLOW PITCH

HIGHER LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION, MORE ENGAGEMENT & LOADS OF FUN!

- **More chance for fielders to make plays** - Starting with runners on all bases provides more action and more opportunities for fielders
- **Every player gets to run the bases** - which means kids who may not usually get on base, are often still able to make a run for their team
- **More even playing field** - kids who are skilled at 'regular' pitching or catching can't dominate the game
- **All students can pitch and catch** – because they are not specialized skills at this level
- **Students get more opportunity to hit the ball** & bigger hitters are rewarded with scoring more runs
- **Higher scoring games**
- **Requires less resources** - one person (usually a teacher) can umpire, coach & score the game
- **FUN FACT: Slow pitch is the main form of Softball played in many countries including the USA.**



FULLY LOADED SLOW PITCH SOFTBALL

WHAT'S DIFFERENT

HOW IS FULLY LOADED SLOW PITCH DIFFERENT TO 'REGULAR' SOFTBALL?

The main differences between this and 'regular' (Fast Pitch) Softball are that:

1. We start every innings with loaded bases
2. The 'rainbow pitch'
3. No 'tagging'
4. No sliding into bases
5. The catcher does not have the same role, they are more of a 'backstop'
6. Faster paced - Games should go for a duration of 50-60 minutes, allowing time for 3 innings which means all 9 players should have 3 turns to bat
7. No '3 out - side away' rule – all 9 batters bat every innings.

FULLY LOADED SLOW PITCH SOFTBALL

HOW IS T-BALL DIFFERENT TO FULLY-LOADED SOFTBALL?

THE MAIN DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO GAMES:

Fully Loaded Slow Pitch Softball:

- Batters face a 'slow pitch' and only hit off the Tee if 3 'balls' are pitched
- 9 batters bat each innings
- Usually, 3 innings played in 50 minutes
- No tagging runners
- Runners don't have to "tag up" on a fly ball
- A maximum of 12 runs can be scored in an innings
- No sliding allowed
- 55ft base paths

Tee Ball:

- All batters hit from the TEE
- 3 outs or 7 runs (whichever comes first)
means change over batting / fielding
- Runners can be 'tagged out' at any time they are off a base
- Runners must 'tag up' on a fly ball
- Sliding is allowed
- 60ft base paths

FULLY LOADED SLOW PITCH SOFTBALL

PARTICIPATION...

HOW MANY PLAYERS CAN PARTICIPATE?

- It's recommended that teams bat through 9 batters and substitute players in and out if you have more
- At some levels of competition teachers may agree to bat through more (maximum of 12)
- Only 9 fielders should be on the field to allow for the anticipated increase in participation outcomes
- If you have more than 9 students there are plenty of ways the additional students can be involved, like scoring or base coaching, keeping the batters in their order or equipment organised

FULLY LOADED SLOW PITCH SOFTBALL

WHAT YOU NEED

KIT BAG

- **11-inch softcore balls*** (yellow balls, not white) You'll need to supply match balls (preferably Easton STB11Y,
- **At least 9 gloves** (usually 9 RHT & 3 LHT)
- **Catcher's face mask / helmet** (minimum requirement)
- **At least 1 Bat** (have several sizes to allow for different heights and strengths in students)
- **Minimum of 4 Batting Helmets** (5 is ideal for Fully Loaded, plus additional for base coaches)

FIELD SET UP

- **Batting Tee***
- **Strikezone mat** that is placed over Home Plate (or where it would usually be)*
- **1 base with the orange safety base** attached (1st base) plus **2 regular white bases**
- **Pitching plate** (rubber strip)



*Teams are required to bring these to your interschool sport days



FULLY LOADED SLOW PITCH SOFTBALL

FACILITATING THE GAME

THE UMPIRE / COACH / SCORER = TEACHER!

- The aim of fully loaded slow pitch is to make the game easier to play
- One person (usually a teacher) can coach, umpire & score the game
- The umpire stands opposite the batter, ensuring they are out of the way of any bats that may fly out of the batters' hands (batters are OUT if they throw the bat)
- Get the kids involved – allocate a person who may not want to participate to keep score

Don't forget to bring:

- Scoresheets – 2 per game as each teacher scores for your own team and the opposition, then confer between innings
- A copy of the rules for your reference



FULLY LOADED SLOW PITCH SOFTBALL

HOW TO PLAY

DURING THIS PRESENTATION WE'LL TALK ABOUT A FEW ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF THE GAME!

- The Pitcher
- Loaded Bases
- Balls & Strikes
- Scoring the Game
- The Batter
- FAQs & YOUR Questions
- The Backstop (catcher)
- Resources
- Fielding Positions
- Contact the SV Participation Team
- Making an OUT in the field



FULLY LOADED SLOW PITCH SOFTBALL

HOW TO PLAY

THE PITCH / PITCHER

- Pitching distance is 32ft. (approx. 10m)
- The pitcher must have at least one foot on the plate when releasing the ball
- Pitchers must use an underarm (slingshot) pitching motion
- Slow pitch uses a 'strike zone mat' (100cm x 90cm black rubber or synthetic grass mat)
- Play stops between batters, when the ball is returned to the pitcher



For a pitched ball to be a strike

1. the pitch must travel over the batter's shoulder at some stage during the pitch, but not go higher than 10ft (we teach kids to make a 'rainbow' with the ball)
2. and it must land anywhere on the strike zone mat
3. Or the batter swings and misses the ball / hits a foul ball

FULLY LOADED SLOW PITCH SOFTBALL

HOW TO PLAY

WHAT CONSTITUTES A STRIKE OR A BALL?

- If a batter swings at ANY pitched ball and misses (regardless of whether it is the right height or hits the mat) – it is deemed a STRIKE
- **There are no 'walks'** – if the pitcher throws THREE 'balls' (pitches that are not strikes), the batter hits off the Tee
- A **'ball'** is a pitch that is either too low, too high or does not land on the Strikezone mat
- The pitcher must be changed every innings, which encourages inclusion and participation
- A **'foul'** ball is also a strike, if there are less than two strikes on the batter. If a batter has 2 strikes on their pitch count and they hit another foul ball, this does not count as anything.

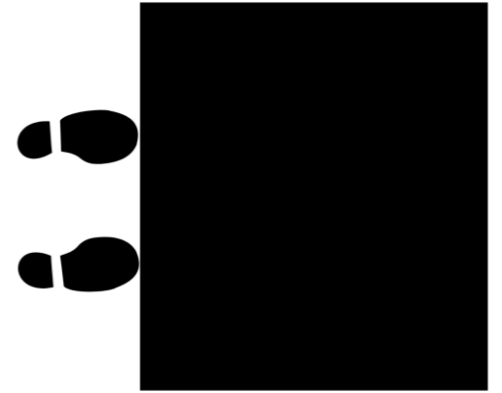


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HOW TO PLAY

THE BATTER + BALLS / STRIKES CONTINUED

- The batter should stand with their toes up to the edge of the mat, standing side on to the pitcher.
- If the batter stands on the mat and hits the ball, this is fine, the ball is in play.
- If the batter is standing on the Strikezone mat and is hit by the pitched ball (whether they swing or not), this is a STRIKE
- If the batter is NOT standing on the Strikezone mat and is hit by the pitch, this is a BALL
- BATTERS DO NOT GET TO GO TO FIRST BASE IF THEY GET HIT BY A PITCH!

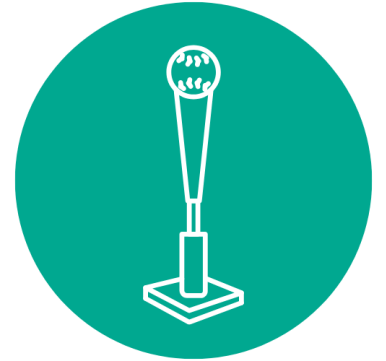


FULLY LOADED SLOW PITCH SOFTBALL

HITTING OFF THE TEE...

THERE ARE NO 'WALKS' IN FULLY LOADED SLOW PITCH

- When the pitcher throws 3 'balls' the batter gets to hit off the tee
- When hitting off the tee, the batter can have as many attempts at hitting the ball as required
- They cannot strike out, batters keep attempting until they hit a 'fair' ball



FULLY LOADED SLOW PITCH SOFTBALL

HOW TO PLAY

THE CATCHER

- The catcher (or backstop) stands approximately 4m from the Strikezone mat, well clear of the batter. They do not attempt to catch the pitched ball
- When a play is being made at home, the catcher must come to the very FRONT of the mat and allow space behind them for the runner to attempt to cross the mat safely
- It's useful to get catchers into the habit of running straight to the front of the mat as soon as a ball is hit into play
- Catcher's can catch any foul balls that go behind the batter – a successful catch will result in the batter being out
- Catcher's must wear a protective mask. Other protective gear is recommended but not compulsory



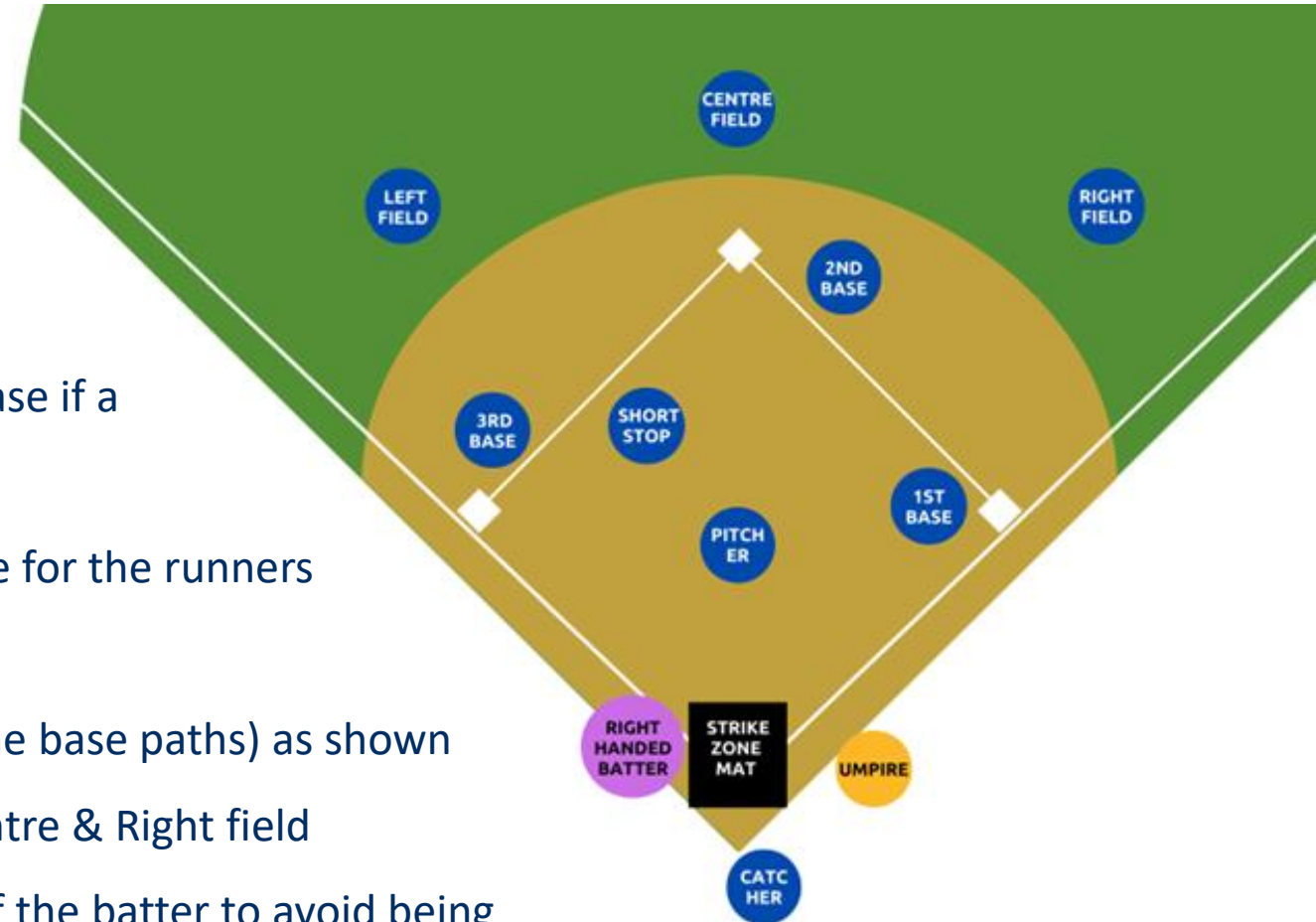
GAME PLAY TIP! – if catchers are having trouble remembering to go to the front of the mat, draw a cross for a visual cue to indicate where they should stand

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FIELDING POSITIONS

EXAMPLE OF FIELD SET UP:

- Before play starts, fielders are not standing ON the base but near the base waiting to field the ball
- Fielders are spread evenly and only need to go to the base if a play is being made there
- Fielders should be clear of the base paths to allow space for the runners and avoid collisions
- Fielders must be inside the diamond (on the inside of the base paths) as shown
- Teams are encouraged to have 3 'outfielders' = Left, Centre & Right field
- The umpire and catcher are standing to the front side of the batter to avoid being hit if a bat is accidentally thrown by the batter



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HOW TO PLAY

GETTING THE BATTER 'OUT':

- **STRIKE 3!** - If the batter swings and misses on the 3rd strike, they are OUT
- **If a ball is hit and caught** on the full by a fielder the batter is OUT (any base runner do not have to 'tag up', they can advance at their own risk). For those familiar with the 'infield fly' rule – this does not apply.



TO GET A BASE RUNNER OUT, FIELDERS CAN:

1. Field the ball and touch the closest base before the runner
2. Field the ball and throw it to another fielder on a base that a runner is attempting to run to

Essentially - beat the runner to the base with the ball - **There's NO tagging runners**

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HOW TO PLAY

GETTING BASE RUNNERS 'OUT':

- If base runner passes the **halfway mark** on the base path they must advance and will be called out if a fielder has the ball on the base ahead of them, however they can retreat if they have not reached halfway, or if the base ahead of them is already occupied by another runner
- **Runners cannot over-run the base.** If they do overrun the base and a fielder has the ball while standing on that base, they will be called OUT



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HOW TO PLAY

MAKING AN 'OUT'

GAME PLAY TIP! The fielding team should attempt to get as many OUTS as possible

We see a lot of students and teachers encouraging fielders to throw the ball to HOME however, it's a much smarter strategy (and easier to make outs), if fielders throw the ball to the closest base where a runner is going to. If that runner is called out, they cannot score, and this therefore reduces the amount of runs that the offensive (batting)team can score.

REMEMBER: The more outs you make the less runs they make!



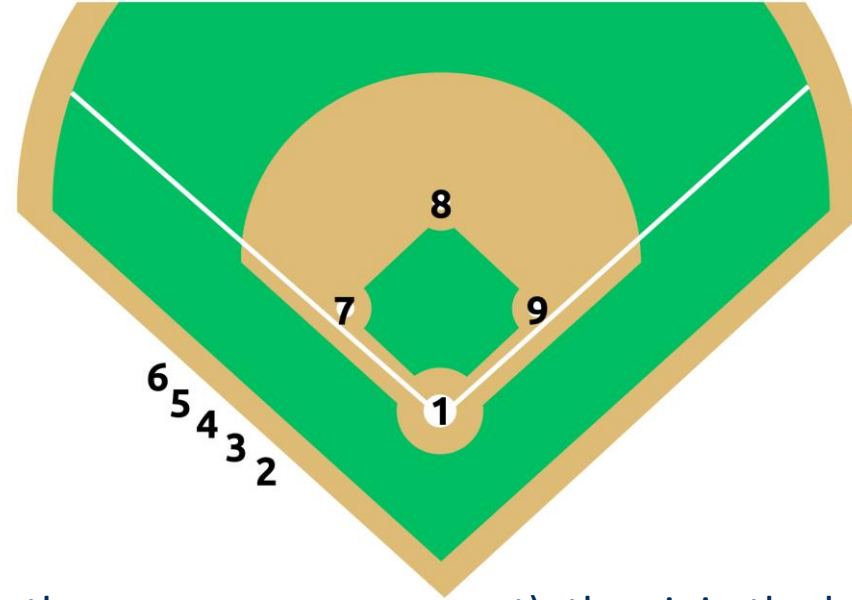
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LOADED BASES EXPLAINED

- **Start with loaded bases**
- Base runners **MUST** wear batting helmets
- Innings 1: batters 7, 8 & 9 start on base
- Innings 2: batters 1, 2 & 3 start on base
- Innings 3: batters 4, 5 & 6 start on base

Once the runners who start on bases come off the field (either they score a run or go out), they join the batting line up and still have a bat in that innings.

- The batting order **MUST** stay the same for the whole game – batters cannot swap positions in the order
- Each team can make a maximum of 12 runs per innings
- The fielding team should aim to get as many **OUTS** as possible to reduce the amount of runs the opposition can score



FULLY LOADED SLOW PITCH SOFTBALL

LOADED BASES EXPLAINED

- **All 9 batters have a turn to hit in each innings**, when the last batter is about to have their turn the batting team announces that they are the last batter
- This indicates to the fielding team...
 1. To attempt to get any of the runners OUT
(if the fielding team makes an out on any runners ahead of the last batter play stops)
 2. OR once a fielder has the ball on the Strikezone mat play stops and no more runs can be scored. Any runner that don't make it across the Strikezone mat, do not count as runs
- The 9th batter should attempt to run all bases and return home to make a run
- **Only runners that cross 'home' (Strikezone mat) score.** Any runners left on base when play has stopped, do not count
- Runners cannot take a lead, they can only leave the base **once the ball is hit into play**



FULLY LOADED SLOW PITCH SOFTBALL

LOADED BASES EXPLAINED

GAME PLAY TIP! When setting your batting order, consider putting your strongest batters in the **3rd, 6th and 9th** position in the order to ensure they are the last batters of each innings. These are the batters who you want to hit big and score the last few runs for the innings – they will start on 1st base at the beginning of the innings, and therefore will be the last hitter



REMEMBER:

- Innings 1: batter 7 starts on 3rd base, batter 8 starts on 2nd base & **batter 9 starts on 1st base – last hitter**
- Innings 2: batter 1 starts on 3rd base, batter 2 starts on 2nd base & **batter 3 starts on 1st base – last hitter**
- Innings 3: batter 4 starts on 3rd base, batter 5 starts on 2nd base & **batter 6 starts on 1st base – last hitter**

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SCORING THE GAME

- **Set your batting order** – this must stay the same for the entire game.
- Innings 1 – Batters starting on base are numbers 7, 8 & 9 and where they start is indicated by 3b, 2B & 1B on the scoresheet
- Place a tick if they safely touched all bases and crossed home plate (scored a run)
- Place a CROSS next to the runner if they were OUT



FULLY LOADED SOFTBALL SCORESHEET

DATE: _____ ROUND: _____

TEAM 1: _____ TEAM 2: _____

BATTING POSITION	PLAYER NAME	INNINGS 1		INNINGS 2		INNINGS 3	
1		1st batter		3B	7th batter		4th batter
2		2nd batter		2B	8th batter		5th batter
3		3rd batter		1B	9th batter		6th batter
4		4th batter		1st batter		7th batter	3B
5		5th batter		2nd batter		8th batter	2B
6		6th batter		3rd batter		9th batter	1B
7		3B	7th batter	4th batter			1st batter
8		2B	8th batter	5th batter			2nd batter
9		1B	9th batter	6th batter			3rd batter
RUNS THIS INNINGS							
TOTAL RUNS							

FINAL SCORE: TEAM 1 _____ TEAM 2 _____



FULLY LOADED SLOW PITCH SOFTBALL

SCORING THE GAME

- Teams can make a maximum of 12 runs per innings (you count the runners that start on bases if they come home)
- If you have more than 9 batters, still only bat 9 per innings but can interchange players each innings.
- If substituting a player, draw a line through the name of the batter being replaced and enter the new batter's name.
- Teachers / coaches to keep score for opposition team as well as their own, then confer in the middle of every innings



FULLY LOADED SOFTBALL SCORESHEET

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TEAM 1: _____ TEAM 2: _____

BATTING POSITION	PLAYER NAME	INNINGS 1		INNINGS 2		INNINGS 3	
1		1st batter		3B	7th batter		4th batter
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3		3rd batter		1B	9th batter		6th batter
4		4th batter		1st batter		7th batter	3B
5		5th batter		2nd batter		8th batter	2B
6		6th batter		3rd batter		9th batter	1B
7		3B	7th batter	4th batter			1st batter
8		2B	8th batter	5th batter			2nd batter
9		1B	9th batter	6th batter			3rd batter
RUNS THIS INNINGS							
TOTAL RUNS							

FINAL SCORE: TEAM 1 _____ TEAM 2 _____



FULLY LOADED SLOW PITCH SOFTBALL

SCORING THE GAME

GAME PLAY TIP! – Students can often forget when it's their turn to bat, but we want to encourage them to be ready to keep up the tempo of the game and give them as many opportunities as possible

To help players remember their batting order:

- Bring a sharpie and write their number on their hand
- Have players sitting on the bench in their batting order
- Delegate roles to the students e.g., keeping the students organised in their order, keeping the equipment tidy so bats and helmets are easily accessible etc.



FULLY LOADED SOFTBALL SCORESHEET

DATE: _____ ROUND: _____

TEAM 1: _____ TEAM 2: _____

BATTING POSITION	PLAYER NAME	INNINGS 1		INNINGS 2		INNINGS 3	
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6		6th batter		3rd batter		9th batter	1B
7		3B	7th batter	4th batter			1st batter
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9		1B	9th batter	6th batter			3rd batter
RUNS THIS INNINGS							
TOTAL RUNS							

FINAL SCORE: TEAM 1 _____ TEAM 2 _____

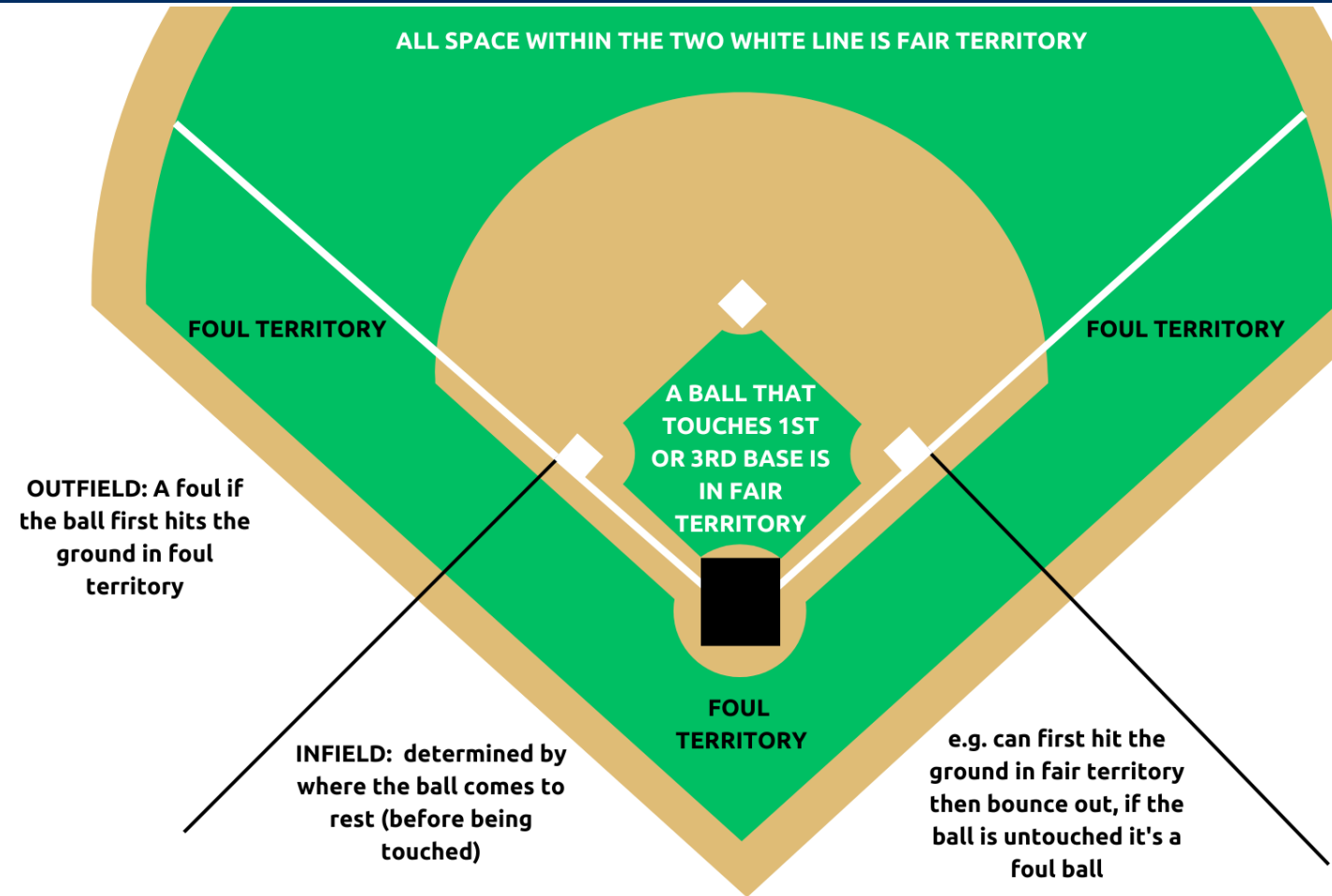


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FOUL BALLS EXPLAINED

WHAT IS A FOUL BALL?

- In the case of a ball landing in foul territory before 1st base or 3rd base (infield) - any ball that finishes in foul territory that has not been touch by a fielder before it lands, is deemed a foul ball.
- So, a ball can first land in fair territory roll or bounces out into foul territory without being touched and be a foul.
- If a fielder touches the ball in fair territory and carries it into foul territory, it's a FAIR ball and play continues

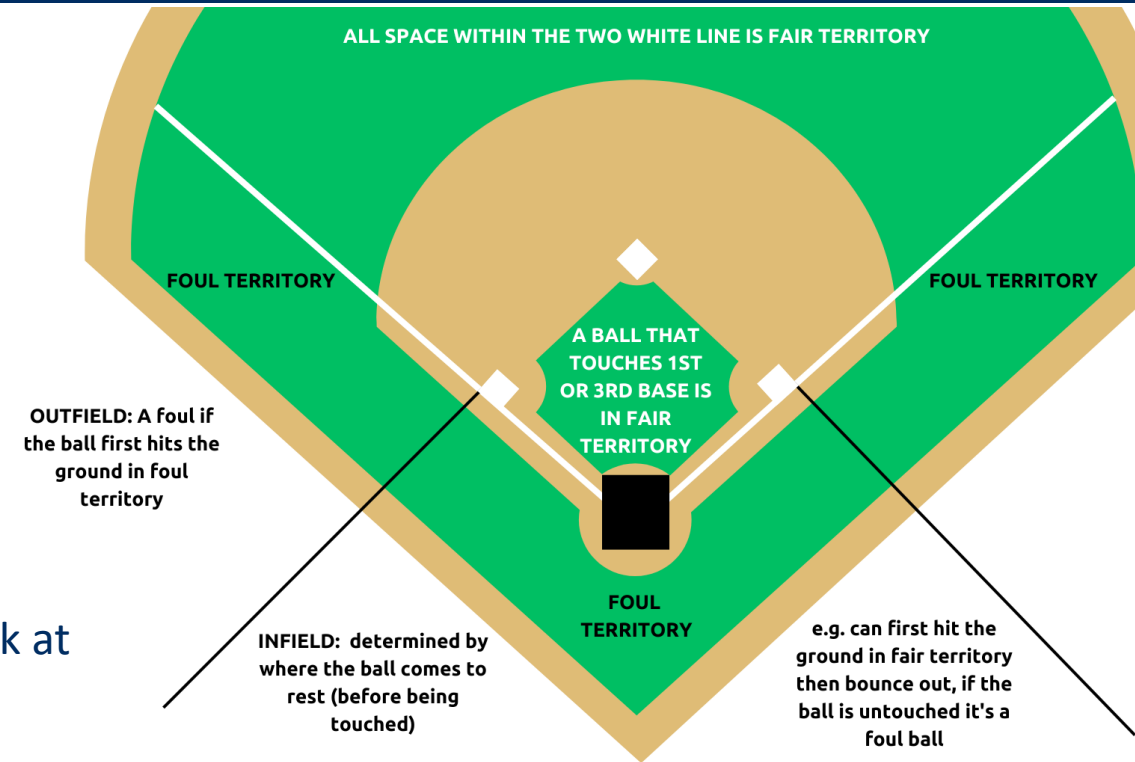


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FOUL BALLS EXPLAINED

WHAT IS A FOUL BALL?

- On the flipside, a ball may first land foul and roll or bounce INTO play – this is a fair ball and is played out as normal
- Or it may just land in foul territory and stay there – that's a FOUL
- If a ball comes to rest on the strike zone mat, it's FOUL
- For an OUTFIELD HIT (happening after 1st base or 3rd base) we look at where the ball first touches the ground
- So, any ball that first lands in foul territory regardless of where it finishes, is deemed a FOUL ball.
- If it first bounces in fair territory and then goes out – this is a FAIR ball because it first landed in fair territory



FULLY LOADED SLOW PITCH SOFTBALL

FOUL BALLS EXPLAINED

GAME PLAY TIP!

- We teach batters to run regardless of whether they think it's fair or foul because it may change
- So, don't look at the ball, just run to first base!
- A FOUL ball can be caught, and the batter is out – runners can advance if they choose.



FULLY LOADED SLOW PITCH SOFTBALL

ENDING THE GAME

EACH TEAM MUST HAVE AN EVEN AMOUNT OF BATTING AND FIELDING

- Usually, a minimum of 2 innings should be played (3 is achievable) but if the teams have not had an even amount of hitting and fielding opportunities then the score 'reverts back' to the last equal innings.

Example

- Innings 1: school 'Z' bats (makes 6 runs), school 'Y' fields
- Innings 1: school 'Y' bats (makes 8 runs), school 'Z' fields
- Innings 2: school 'Z' bats (makes 4 runs), school 'Y' fields
- Innings 2: school 'Y' bats (makes 7 runs), school 'Z' fields

The score is now School 'Z' = 10 to School 'Y' = 15

- Top of innings 3: school 'Z' bats and makes 6 runs, school 'Y' fields
- Time runs out and school Y does not get to have their 3rd bat, so the last 6 runs that school 'Z' made do not count towards their score – the score 'reverts back' to the last complete innings.

FULLY LOADED SLOW PITCH SOFTBALL

TIE BREAKERS

WHAT DO YOU DO IF THE SCORE IS TIED AT THE END?

- This will generally be up to the convenor and will depend on the weight of the game.
- Often it will not matter and the score gets recorded as a tie.
- However, if the game being played is going to determine whether a team advances to the next round or play in a final, a tie breaker innings will be played.
- The score must be tied after even innings have been completed for a “tie breaker” to be played.

A TIE BREAKER is a shortened innings where each team has 3 batters

- The fielding team stays in the field to save time
- Each team can use any player to pitch, even if they have previously pitched in that game
- Each team can select any 3 players to bat and any 3 players to start on the bases

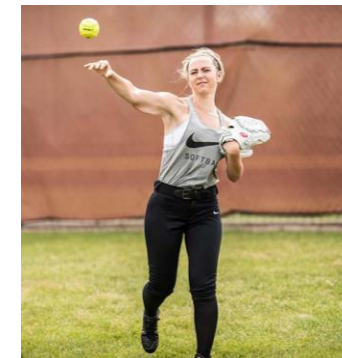
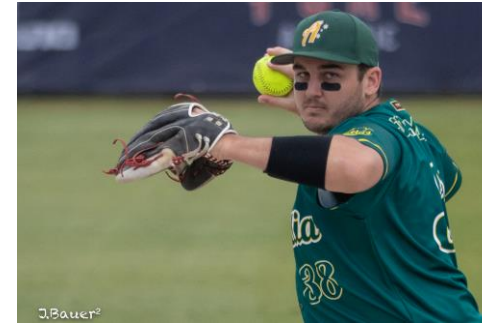
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SKILL FUNDAMENTALS

THROWING THE BALL

Every action in T-Ball and Softball requires the player to be 'athletic' and use their whole body. So, when throwing a ball, we use the lower body as much as the upper body

- Bring the ball right back behind the head, keeping the elbow bent
- Standing side-on, drive from the back leg and take a large step (stride) with the opposite leg to the throwing arm
- Emphasis the sequence of shoulder, elbow, wrist to throw the ball. This helps to prevent kids throwing with a pushing action.
- Finish off the throw by crossing the arm to the opposite hip and bringing the back leg through
- TIP: we can encourage kids to point to the target with the glove



FULLY LOADED SLOW PITCH SOFTBALL

SKILL FUNDAMENTALS

CATCHING THE BALL

The red and blue glove shows where the ball should be landing in the glove, AND how the glove should be positioned when catching a ball

- Teach fielders to have an athletic stance
- Fingers to the sky, palm to the ball
- Bend knees to catch a low ball and maintain proper glove position
- Only flip glove to face downwards if the ball is below the knees
- Free hand is near the glove ready to close the ball in
- Free hand is also ready to transfer the ball from glove to throwing hand



FULLY LOADED SLOW PITCH SOFTBALL

SKILL FUNDAMENTALS

CATCHING A FLY BALL

As with catching a regular ball, the glove should still be “palm out” & “fingers to the sky”

- The main difference here is that a fly ball should be caught ABOVE THE HEAD
- Keep elbows soft and let the ball come into the glove (rather than reach up or jump for it)
- Use the feet to move to where the ball is going to land - position your body UNDER the ball

And these same rules apply

- Teach fielders to have an athletic stance, fingers to the sky, palm to the ball. Free hand is near the glove ready to close the ball in & transfer the ball from glove to throwing hand



FULLY LOADED SLOW PITCH SOFTBALL

SKILL FUNDAMENTALS

BASICS OF FIELDING A GROUND BALL

The first thing is getting the fielders into a 'ready position' before the ball is hit – be in an athletic stance with feet wide, glove low, ready to move in any direction

When fielding a ball on the ground:

- Move the feet to the ball with feet are wide with your knees bent
- Bottom pointing to the ground and chest forward (to prevent the head getting too low)
- Glove out in front low to the ground, weight is slightly forward on balls of feet
- Watching the ball all the way into the glove, spare hand is ready to trap the ball and make the throw

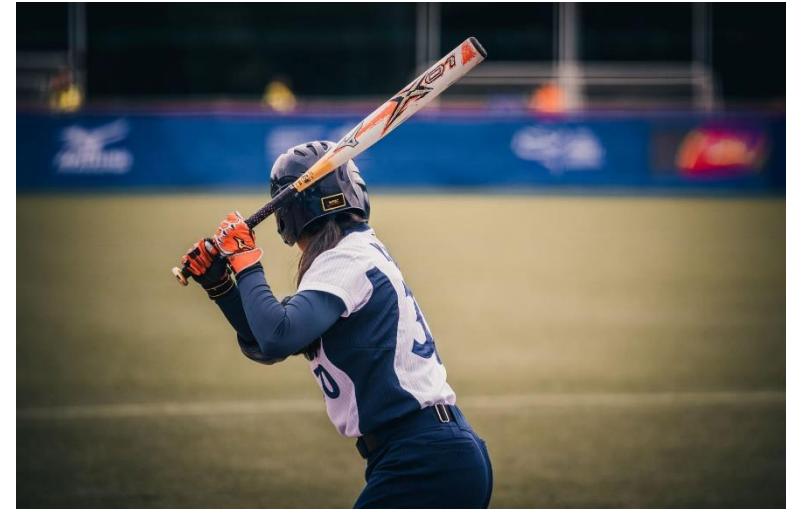


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SKILL FUNDAMENTALS

HITTING / BATTING

- Wide feet to provide an athletic stance
 - Hands start high at the back shoulder
 - Drive forward with the hips, keeping the back foot planted throughout the swing, getting power from the ground up
 - **Watch the ball**, pick a spot on the ball as a target to contact
 - Hands to the ball, barrel of the bat follows
-
- **SWING HARD, PUT THE BAT DOWN & RUN FAST**

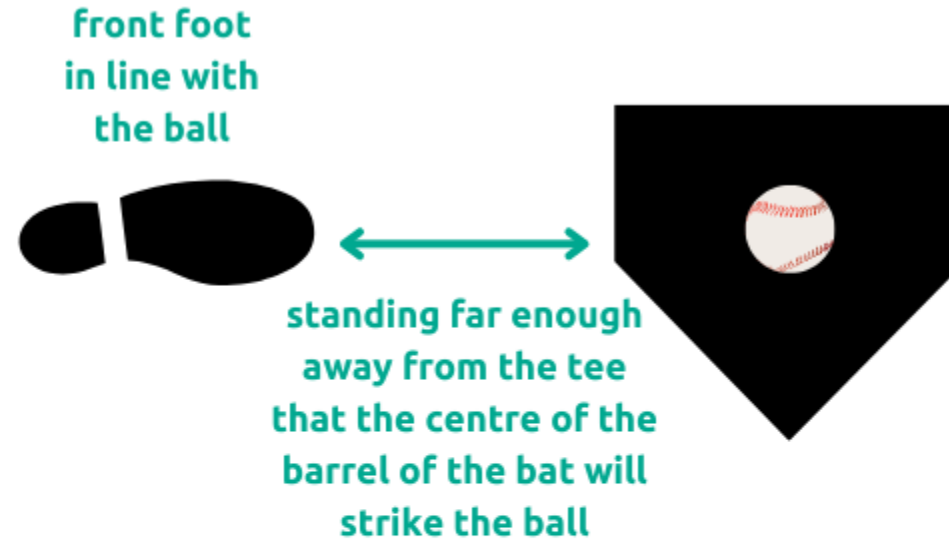


FULLY LOADED SLOW PITCH SOFTBALL

SKILL FUNDAMENTALS

BATTING STANCE FOR HITTING

OFF THE TEE



- This stance allows the batter to hit the ball in FRONT of their body, rather than in the middle, which will provide more power.

RESOURCES

WHERE TO FIND MORE INFORMATION:

FULLY LOADED SOFTBALL RESOURCES: <https://fullyloadedsoftball.com.au/school-resources>

Schools are eligible to apply for **Sporting Schools** funding, and request a coach to run a 4–6-week Softball program:

<https://www.sportaus.gov.au/schools/schools/funding>

<https://www.sportaus.gov.au/schools/schools/sports/softball>

Create a free account and login to access a wide range of resources including fun Softball activities to run with your students on the **Softball BatterUp** website: <https://www.softballbatterup.com.au/resources/>

Home Run Heroes: <https://www.softball.org.au/programs/home-run-heroes-about/>

WE ARE HERE TO HELP!

WE'D LOVE TO:

- Run a Softball session with your students and teachers
- Attend your interschool competitions
- Run a face-to-face Professional Development session with your group of District / Regional coordinators or PE staff
- Assist with accessing the right resources



WE ARE HERE TO HELP!

OUR AREAS

Danielle Rigg danielle.rigg@softball.org.au

SSV: Eastern Metro Region & Sporting Schools

Softball Associations: Dandenong, Waverley, Knox

Tim Hatzi tim.hatzi@softball.org.au

SSV: North and West Metro Regions

Softball Associations: Geelong, Werribee, Northern District, Sunshine, Sunbury, Keilor Park, Hume

Jo Schutt jo.schutt@softball.org.au

SSV: South East Metro Region and Regional Vic

Softball Associations: Melbourne, Frankston, Casey, Glen Eira, Albury Wodonga, East Gippsland, Bass Coast (coming soon)



THANKS FOR MAKING A DIFFERENCE!

Thank
You



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