



# Cruisers Coaches Handbook

## Training ideas and drills

## Essential softball skills

- Throwing
- Catching
- Fielding ground ball
- Fielding fly all
- Batting
- Bunting
- Running the bases
- Pitching (more information:  
<http://assets.softball.org.au/dl/sal/Coaching/Resources/FUNDamentals/Pitching%20FUNDamentals.pdf>)
- Catching (more information:  
<http://assets.softball.org.au/dl/sal/Coaching/Resources/FUNDamentals/Catching%20FUNDamentals.pdf>)

## Key Points to Skills in Checklist

### Defence

#### Fielding

##### Ready position (particularly infield)

- Starting position
- Feet shoulder width apart or more
- Backside down, eyes facing the batter
- Glove and throwing hands close to the ground

#### Footwork

- Use small steps (sideways and/or forwards)
- Move to the ball if in front
- Use crossover step if ball to the side

#### Glove Work

- Fingers in the glove to the side
- Hinge action (like a crab) index finger and thumb
- Catching a ball in the pocket instead of the fingers

#### Fly Ball

- Get to the ball first
- Eye on the ball, glove fingers up
- Use two hands and catch above head

## Line Drive

- Glove hand works like a clock with fingers pointing like a "hand" on the clock
- Get behind the ball
- Fingers down, pocket facing ball
- Hands well out in front of body
- Sweeping the glove, two hands close together

## Throwing

### Preparing to throw

- Give with the ball and use both hands
- Take both glove and throwing hand up to above throwing shoulder
- Rotate glove into throwing hand and grip ball in fingers
- At the same time bring the body into the set position for throwing by using a crossover step or crow hop

### Overhand throw

- Pull fingers back and cock wrist
- High action with elbow leading at first
- Shoulders, elbows and hips in line with target
- Ball released in the "high five" position
- Follow through with throwing shoulder at target and hand past the opposite knee

### Tagging

- Track ball into glove
- Secure ball with two hands
- Drop the knee and sweep the ball at runner
- Away from base, fielder places themselves to one side of the base runners path
- Tag can be made one handed or two handed

### Receiving Force Outs

- Get to base as quick as possible if not fielding the ball
- Place feet in front of base and present target do not set until throw is made
- Step towards throw and catch ball (chest and hips facing thrower)
- If close play step out further and elongate glove arm

- Get off base and get ready to make next play

## **Offence**

### ***Base running***

#### **Getting out of the box**

- Back/pivot leg first
- Body leaning forward
- Short wide steps (accelerate)

#### **Running basics**

- Run on balls of feet
- Good knee lift
- Use pumping action with arms

#### **Running through first base**

- Hit the front of the safety base
- Don't slow down until after base
- Use shorter steps and lower center of weight
- Turn head, not body towards second base

#### **Leading off a base**

- Lead off base when pitcher has released ball
- Rocking motion begins with pitchers arm at the top of the circle
- Maintain eyes on the ball to see what happens
- After two strides get side on into lead off position
- Keep backside down
- Throw arms in direction runner is going, next base or back to base

### ***Sliding***

- Start slide a few meters from base (varies with each runner, conditions etc)
- Bend knees and lower body onto side of thigh and throw arms up
- Weight back on the side of the sliding leg
- Extended leg is slightly bent chin tucked to the chest
- Do not "Jump" into slide – you will hit the ground too hard

# **Batting**

## **Bat Selection**

- Make sure bat isn't too heavy

## **Grip**

- Natural grip with bat held in fingers
- Basically, first set of knuckles are lined up with finger joints of other hand
- Hands together with dominant hand closer to bat barrel

## **Stance**

- Balanced with weight distributed on the inside balls of the feet
- Feet approximately shoulders width apart
- Hips and shoulders in line with batter's box
- Head turned towards the pitcher bat held at top of the strike zone
- Arms form an inverted "vee" in front of chest

## **Stride**

- Soft step or glide with front foot towards pitcher (foot remains closed)
- Shoulder and hips remain in line with batter's box
- Head remains over the belly button

## **Hips**

- Commences after stride
- Pivot on rear foot (squashing the bug)
- Knees remain flexed back leg forms an "L" shape

## **Swing**

- Throw hands at ball
- Bat is extended so that arms are out in front
- Wrists snap the bat through the ball
- Continue drive through the back leg by transferring weight to front
- Head remains over the belly button

## Follow through

- Bat remains on one plain through the ball and entire swing
- Knees, hips and shoulders remain in line
- Hips and shoulders open to complete swing
- Head remains over belly button with eyes still focused on the contact point

## ***Sacrifice Bunt***

- Pivot early so chest faces pitcher
- Bat at the top of strike zone
- Dominant hand on balance point of bat (start of the barrel)
- Use pinch and thumb grip on barrel and handle
- Catch and contact the top half of the ball
- Bend knees not arms to get to the ball below the bat (above the bat is not a strike)

## **The perfect training session**

### **Softball Practice Tip No.1: Create an Effective and Doable Practice Plan**

Time really is of the essence when it comes to softball. It's one of the most valuable assets a coach and a team has. Time determines how much your team can grow, so it's best to create an effective practice plan that the whole team can sustain and manage.

Set some time for warm-ups, softball drills/exercises that are theoretical and actual, team-building/bonding and cool-down exercises.

### **Softball Practice Tip No.2: Dynamic Warm-Ups**

Warm-ups are undoubtedly one of the most important phases of softball practices. These pre-game activities fire up the body to be able to perform at its fullest.

### **Softball Practice Tip No.3: Practice Versatility ‘**

When it comes to softball, it is vital for each and every player to know and be knowledgeable and skillful in all the roles not only in hitting or in pitching or in fielding.

### **Softball Practice Tip No.4: Practice What Matters**

Focus, agility and decision-making are some of the most important things to focus on in practice. Engage in softball drills that will help heighten these areas.

It will not only greatly minimize errors during games but having these elements mastered makes the odds of your team winning better. It is best to give about 85% of your practices for the development of these important softball matters.

## **Planning and reviewing – a training session**

Good training sessions don't happen by chance. If you are to ensure that you have everything you need for a training session (eg, an appropriate training area, necessary equipment, enough helpers, and players).

### ***Benefits of planning training sessions***

Each training session should be planned carefully so that all players are able to learn new skills and build confidence. This means being aware of individual differences within the team and appreciating that all people develop at different rates. The emphasis at training should be on improvement and enjoyment.

### **Planning each training session:**

- assures maximum use of the time available
- assures efficient coverage of all phases of the game
- leads to improved skill development
- maintains better player interest by ensuring there is a variety of drills and less time is wasted
- allows evaluation at the end of a session and aids in planning for future sessions
- ensures that each session is progressive, safe and fun

### **Considerations when planning a session**

When planning a training session you need to consider the following:

- time available for training
- number of players available
- type and amount of equipment required
- age and ability of players
- physical condition of players
- condition of the playing field

### **Deciding on the goal/s for the session**

The first step in planning a training session is to decide on the goal (or goals – no more than two or three) for the session. What is it that you would like to achieve from the session? What should the players be able to do by the end of the session (or a series of sessions)?

The goal or goals for the training session should take into account the players' skill levels and their own motivations for being involved (is it to have fun, make new friends, learn new skills, something else?). Some



goals may be achievable in one session, others may need several sessions to realise. Be flexible and be prepared to adjust the goals if they are too difficult or too easy for the players or if required equipment is not available or the environment presents a safety hazard (eg, a slippery surface due to rain).

The primary goal of a training session will be to develop some aspect of fundamental softball skills or team play but there are a number of secondary goals to be considered when planning a training session. These may relate to some aspect of fitness, knowledge of the rules, working together as a team/team spirit, developing a positive self-image in the players or having fun.

To explain what a 'strike' and what a 'ball' is by the end of the session

To incorporate conditioning activities within the skill activities each training session

To develop 3 friendships with children who have similar interests

The goal or goals for the training session will help guide the activities that you include in the session. What activities will help you achieve the training session goal/s with the players you are working with?

## **Elements of a training session**

The traditional training session plan should be completed before the actual training session.

A traditional training session plan has six elements. Some of these are necessary for every training session while others may be excluded according to the needs of the team based on the:

- skill level of the players
- time of playing season
- time and space available, the facilities being used
- objectives of the session

### **The elements of a traditional training session and the suggested duration of each element are:**

- Warm-up (15-20 minutes)
- Skill development (20-25 minutes)
- Game application (20 minutes)
- Conditioning/recreation (15 minutes)
- Cool down (5-10 minutes)
- Review and evaluation (5-10 minutes)

The suggested durations of each element are designed to provide sufficient time to achieve the objectives of each element. You should vary the duration according to the age, fitness level and ability of the

players eg, shorter duration for younger children or players with low levels of fitness or ability.

## **Warm-up**

The warm-up is a vital part of any training session or game. The warm-up serves two basic purposes:

- helps prevent injuries by raising the temperature of the muscles and increasing the circulation around the joints
- prepares players mentally for the training session or game in order to improve overall effectiveness through concentration

### **A proper warm-up includes:**

- a general body aerobic component (eg, jogging) to increase body temperature through increasing blood circulation. A good indication of an adequate warm-up is a light sweat
- flexibility ie, stretching exercises to stretch major muscle groups and mobilise major joints (you might just use range of movement activities for very young players, rather than formal stretching exercises), and
- simple softball activities (eg, throwing, catching, fielding)  
All around dynamic warm up routine which includes the rotation from one activity station to another.

Using games as part of the warm-up will help make the sessions more fun and enjoyable for children. Select games that when played, will achieve the desired outcomes of the warm-up. Don't choose games that have stop-start activities or long periods of rest.

Examples of suitable games that will develop agility, flexibility, speed and strength are:

### ***Fox and the Geese***

Divide the group into subgroups of five or six. One is the fox, the others are the geese. The geese must be linked by holding the waist of the person in front. The front goose tries to protect the others by blocking the path of the fox, who is attempting to tag the last goose. After a few minutes, rotate positions so that there is a new fox.

### ***Progressive Relay***

Form groups of four or five. The first member sprints to a marker and back to the team, collects the second player and, linking arms, they sprint to the marker and back. This continues until the last team

member is collected.

### ***Donkey***

All players jog inside an area, (eg a diamond) until the coach calls out a designated target, eg 2nd Base. Players run and line up behind that target. The last three to arrive are each given a letter of a word. The object is not to be the player who gets all the letters (note: the coach can control this activity by calling out a target close to one of the slower players.)

### ***Circle Run***

Six to eight form a circle, standing several metres apart (depending on skill level). One player has a ball. On 'Go', he/she throws the ball to the next person and then attempts to run around the outside of the circle in reverse direction before the ball is relayed around to its starting position.

### ***Rats and Rabbits***

Divide the group into two teams called 'rats' and 'rabbits'. Each team is given a home line (eg, home to 1base, and, 2 to 3base). The players jog inside an area, eg the diamond until the coach calls one of the names. If 'rabbits' is called, they must chase the "rats", in order to tag as many as possible before the 'rats' reach their home line.

### ***Giants and Dwarfs***

One of the group is the giant, the rest are the dwarfs. The giant stands in the diamond facing away from a baseline about 15 metres away. The dwarfs start from the baseline and advance slowly towards the giant. On the call of 'go', the dwarfs turn and run back to the line, the giant chases them and tries to tag as many as possible. If a dwarf runs outside of the diamond, they are considered tagged. The dwarfs tagged become giants and help chase the next time.

## **Skill development**

This element has two components - revision of previously acquired skills and/or strategies, and introduction of new skills and/or strategy.

- Demonstrate the skill (break the skill down into parts, starting from the simple and gradually becoming more complex) and progress at the appropriate time
- Ensure each child can see clearly and understand
- Group children according to ability level
- Organise to ensure realistic training ie, a related training activity that has the new skill as its focal point. Each skill situation should be put into a miniature game as soon as possible so the players can see the relevance
- Allow repetition (have sufficient equipment to form more groups with small numbers of players to reduce waiting time rather than a small number of large groups)
- Observe
- Praise good technique
- Correct fundamental errors, concentrating on self-improvement
- Set tasks to boost confidence
- Make the activity more challenging

## **Game application**

The goal of this element of the training session is to have the players perform the new skill(s) in game situations by setting up activities which simulate the part of the game to which the new skill applies. Follow these basic steps:

- Identify the game situation(s) where you will apply the skills
- List the activities you will use and their progressions
- Increase the competitive aspect of the activity in gradual steps

Players will play and react in a game situation directly relative to what they have been practicing and the more closely coaches simulate game conditions in their training sessions, the better the players' performance in the game will be.

As the level of arousal increases (competition stress) the more important the principle of specificity becomes. This is because, under stress, the response that has been trained (dominant response) will be even more likely to occur ie, the player will revert to automatic reactions. Thus, be sure that the automatic reactions that you instil in your players through training are the reactions that are required in the game situation.

## **Conditioning/recreation**

If conditioning is included, it should occur after skill training and there should be some progression from training session to training session. If recreation is the goal, use games or competitions to stimulate interest. For younger children, the emphasis at training should be on learning the basic skills. Developing fitness through the enjoyment of learning skills will establish a platform on which more formal conditioning can take place in the future.

Conditioning can be developed by a vigorous, skill-oriented session that builds the fitness base of the player. Intensive skill training sessions will in themselves ensure that an adequate level of fitness is achieved without emphasising any one physical element. As the player matures and progresses, the coach can develop a conditioning program to match the capacity of performance. If speed training is included in a training session, this needs to be done immediately after the warm-up, before the players get tired.

## **Cool down**

A proper cool down allows a player's body temperature and heart rate to decrease slowly and helps clear the lactic acid that is built up in muscles during vigorous activity. Like the warm-up, the cool down should be fun but not too active – you need to select activities which will relax the group, not get them excited. Stretching, walking or gentle jogging are suitable activities.

An effective cool down consists of a gradual reduction of activity levels for 5-10 minutes followed by a comprehensive stretching program (or 'disguised stretching' – range of movement activities – for young children).

## **Review and evaluation**

After a training session you must review the activities and results with your players. This allows you to check how well the objectives were achieved and to reinforce points or ask questions to ensure players understand what was covered. This should occur either during or immediately after the cool down. The information gained during this time contributes to the planning of future practice sessions.

## Game Sense Approach to training

### *Fun games to finish up training*

#### **The Barney Bop**

One of the best games I have used is called "Barney Bop." The tools needed are a sturdy chair, a large stuffed toy (I use Barney, hence the name) and preferably a backstop or net to place behind the target. Start by placing "Barney" in the chair and if needed, prop him up to get him about 3-4 feet off the ground and place the chair with Barney straddling 1st base. Place a net behind the chair.

Now divide your team up into two groups and have them line up in two columns at the shortstop position. Have the 1st player from Team 1 take the first play. Hit a grounder the player 1. She must cleanly field the ball and make a throw to 1st base trying to knock Barney out of the chair.

If this is done, her team scores one point. Then the 1st player from Team 2 takes the next play and does the same thing.

Do this until all of the players have had at least one turn. You can move the players from shortstop to 2nd base and do the same game.

I have also had the players set up out in the outfield and place the chair at 2nd base to teach a good throw to 2nd. Try to have some type of prize for the winning team, like not carrying the equipment or something like that.

#### **3, 2, 1 Run**

Another game I like is called "3, 2, 1, Run." In this game, again divide the team up into two teams. One team is at bat and one team is lined up behind 3rd base.

Take three balls and line them up at intervals of about 5-7 feet apart from 3rd base toward home plate. They should end about half way between 3rd base and home plate. The team at home is called Team 1 and the ones on defense are Team 2.

Have the 1st player from Team 2 stand on 3rd base with her glove while the 1st player from Team 1 is at home plate. When the coach says, "Go", the defensive player must run to the 1st ball, pick it up and make a throw to a teammate standing at 2nd base (I have a bucket there to

drop the balls into), then go to the 2nd ball and do the same thing and on to the 3rd ball. The player at home starts running at the sound of "Go" and runs to 1st base and on to 2nd.

The object of this game is to throw all three balls to the defensive player at 2nd base before the offensive player gets there. This is a LOT harder than it sounds, but it teaches making fast, accurate throws while under pressure.

After all members of each team have had a turn, switch places. You may have to adjust the distance between balls to make it fair for each team.

## **Don't Miss**

This hitting drill emphasizes making contact with the ball and correct placement of the bat once the batter has hit the ball. You will need a tee, a ball, a bat, gloves for each player and a hula hoop.

Divide the team into two sides. Fielders will play as usual. Batters take turns hitting from the tee, focusing on making solid contact with the ball.

Once they have hit the ball, they must toss their bat into the hula hoop on the ground next to home base before they can run to first. If the player misses the ball or knocks the tee over, it's a strike. After three strikes, the player is out.

The player is also out if they don't place their bat in the hula hoop before running to first.

## **Red Light Green Light**

Using this kids game for softball helps beginners get used to running with a glove and ball in their hands.

Each player will need a glove with a ball in it. Have the players form a line facing the coach, who is about 60 to 90 feet away.

The drill begins when the coach turns away from the players and yells "green light." The kids run toward him/her as fast as they can, making sure to hold on to their balls.

Periodically the coach will yell "red light" and spin around. If the coach sees any of the players moving after he/she has called "red light," those players are out.

The first player to get close and tag the coach out wins.

## Look Up

This drill teaches beginning players to catch fly balls in the outfield. When first learning to play softball, many kids are afraid of looking up to catch the ball. This drill will ease them into feeling comfortable catching from below.

The drill requires small, foam balls and as many tall people (coaches, assistants, or parents) as possible to stand next to the kids and drop the balls over their heads.

The kids look up with their hands raised and try to catch the balls. At first they should use both hands and no glove to get used to catching with both hands. Eventually they can move on to using gloves.

For more drills and videos with step by step instructions and coaching tips, check out our free archive of softball coaching videos today.



## **Softball conditioning activities**

### **Drill No.1: Running Lap Tosses**

Purpose: To develop catching and throwing skills while conditioning. This drill uses time efficiently.

Procedure: Partners are about six feet apart and play catch as they run using underhand tosses. They can run a full lap or in a straight line down the field and back. The drill develops players' catching and throwing skills and takes their minds off running.

### **Drill No.2: Merry-Go-Round**

Purpose: For infielders to warm up or work on conditioning while fielding ground balls.

Procedure: Players form two fielding lines at opposite corners of the infield; one to the left of second base and one at home. Be careful that the players in line at second don't trip over the base.

Two hitters hit or throw from the pitching circle area, one to each line. Players field and run to the end of the opposite line. Hitters hit ground balls, fly balls, range balls, line drives, and scoops.

Players return the ball to their hitter or place it in a bucket at the line they are running to. Hitters should have a bucket of extra balls to replace balls that fielders miss so the drill can be done at a steady pace.

### **Drill No.3: Weave Drill**

Purpose: To improve softball conditioning for outfielders while catching fly balls.

Procedure: Four players start in a line in left field. A tosser throws a ball to the first player, who fields and throws the ball back to the tosser and then runs toward center field to catch another ball thrown by the same person.

The fielder returns that ball to another tosser at second base, who repeats the sequence as the fielder continues to run toward right field. A third thrower at first base repeats the sequence. Fielders wait in right field and then repeat the drill going the other way. This is a good drill for all players.

### **Drill No.4: Pitchers Field and Cover First**

Purpose: To practice fielding all types of balls after delivering a pitch. This is an excellent conditioning drill as well.

Procedure: The drill works best with at least three pitchers, a catcher, and a hitter. If you don't have three pitchers, another player may play first and pitchers rotate only on the mound.

Pitchers form a single-file line at the mound, and one pitcher is at first to catch the throw. The pitcher pitches the ball to the catcher, and the hitter hits a ground ball back to the pitcher for fielding practice. The pitcher fields, throws to first, and then rotates to first to receive the throw from the next pitcher. After catching at first, the receiver rotates to the end of the fielding line. Vary the type of balls hit, hitting to each side of the pitcher and bunting and slapping as well. Include a sequence of having pitchers look imaginary runners back before making the throw.

### **Drill No.5: Random-Ball Conditioning**

Purpose: To practice throws to bases and improve softball conditioning for catchers.

Procedure: Randomly place six to eight balls in front of home. From the squat position the catcher explodes and throws to a receiver at the base, hustles back into catching position, and continues until all of the balls have been thrown. Repeat the drill with the catcher throwing to a different base.

## Batting

Batting: ; <https://youtu.be/ON-hx6SuiEU>

Batting 2: <https://youtu.be/HFXIONfyjek>

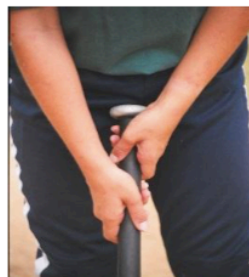
Batting 3: <https://youtu.be/i3NL2Fd797I>

### Selecting a bat

There is a tremendous range of bats available for players to choose from. They vary in length and weight to suit players' needs. When making a selection it is important that the player can control the bat, so the weight and length of it are important criteria to consider.

### Batting grip

- Place the hands together on the bat at a comfortable distance from the knob
- Right-handed batters place the left hand closest to the knob of the bat (as shown in the photos below)
- Left-handed batters place the right hand closest to the knob of the bat
- Wrap the fingers around the handle
- Hold the bat in the base of the fingers and not in the palm
- Centre the knuckles of the fingers (door knockers) so that they are in a straight line up the handle of the bat
- The grip on the bat should be relaxed but firm enough so that the bat does not slip from the hands
- If the bat is too heavy slide both hands away from the knob until the bat can be swung comfortably (this is known as 'choking the bat')



### Batting grip activities

**Activity 1 (as demonstrated in the above photos)**

- Stand with the knees together and rest the bat against the knees
- Reach down with both hands and wrap the fingers around the handle of the bat (photo on the left)
- Close the hands around the bat to form a 'V' between the thumb and index finger. The V should
- point down the line of the bat (middle photo)
- Lift the bat straight up to their shoulder (photo on the right)

## Activity 2

- Place the bat on the ground in front of the player
- Have them pick the bat up off the ground using both hands at the same time
- Check to see if the grip matches the key points described in Activity 1

## Basic hitting technique

### *Ready position*

#### Stance

- Take a comfortable and balanced position with weight distributed on the inside part of the balls of feet
- Feet should be shoulder-width apart and parallel to each other
- Head is over the belly button
- Bat is held roughly over the shoulder
- Knees are flexed
- Head and eyes are level



### *Sequence*

#### Stride

- Take a soft step towards the pitcher (this is a trigger to commence the batting sequence)
- Front foot and knee are closed and feet are parallel to home plate
- Keep hands and eyes level
- Head remains over the belly button



## Hip rotation

- Hip rotation commences after the stride
- Pivot on the ball of the rear foot after the stride foot is in position (squash the bug)
- Back leg forms an L shape in line with the back shoulder
- Front knee is flexed slightly (shark fin effect)



## Swing

- Shoulders commence rotation after hip rotation
- Belly button points to the ball
- Head is over the belly button
- Head and eyes remain level looking at the contact point
- Arms are well extended
- Throw the bat head at ball
- Extend the bat through the path of the ball



## Follow through

- Shoulders continue to rotate
- Maintain a balanced position
- Knee, hip and shoulder are aligned
- Bat finishes above the shoulder
- Head is over the belly button
- Head and eyes are level

Note: Make sure your players always wear a helmet when practicing batting or bunting. The coach in these photographs is demonstrating the segments of the hitting action for teaching purposes only.

## **Summary – basic hitting technique** *Stance*

Take a comfortable and balanced position with weight distributed on the inside part of the balls of feet.

### **Stride**

Take a soft step towards the pitcher (this is a trigger to commence the batting sequence).

### **Hip rotation**

Hip rotation commences after stride.

### **Swing**

Bat extension

### **Follow through**

Note: Make sure your players always wear a helmet when practicing batting or bunting. The coach in these photographs is demonstrating the segments of the hitting action for teaching purposes only.

## BATTING DRILLS

### ***7 Fundamentals Every Hitter Needs to Know***

Hitting a softball is not easy if you don't have the right fundamentals nailed down. Coaches emphasize correct softball hitting fundamentals because they know: for players to be successful at the plate they need to have the fundamentals properly aligned.

If you're a softball player and want to learn more about the hitting fundamentals of the game here is a quick review of what you need to know:

#### **Softball Fundamental No.1: The Right Grip**

When gripping the bat, the hitter needs to apply pressure with the fingers, not the palms. She grips the bat where the calluses are. The bottom hand which would be the left hand for a right-handed batter controls the bat, and the top hand supports the bat loosely. The bottom hand grips the bat just like a person would grip a hammer or a golf club.

The top hand is placed against the bottom hand with the door-knocking knuckles (middle knuckles) of both hands in a straight line. The arms are not crossed. The bat is gripped loosely and the wrists have some flexibility.

Some hitters curl the index finger of the top hand so that it only lightly touches the bat. For better bat control the player may choke up on the bat by moving both hands several inches up from the knob. A choke grip means a shorter bat and less power.

#### **Softball Fundamental No.2: Hand Position**

The hands start close to the body about three to four inches in front of the chest and between the shoulders. Both elbows are down, and the shoulders are tension free. Some players prefer a little movement back and forth with the hands and shoulders to keep them loose. This position is known as the power position, or power alley.

#### **Softball Fundamental No.3: Stance**

The player positions herself in the center of the batter's box so she can swing at pitches all over the strike zone. The batter keeps her feet

parallel to the direction home plate is pointing and digs them in around shoulder-width apart.

She bends her knees slightly, and keeps her weight evenly distributed on the balls of her feet. She moves her hands about 5 to 7 inches away from her body and approximately even with her shoulders. She points the bat upward and angles it slightly toward her body and then turns her head toward the pitches and focuses her eyes on the upcoming pitch.

### **Softball Fundamental No.4: Stride**

As the pitcher is moving toward the release, the hitter is starting to make some preparatory movement -- the stride, which moves the front foot to establish momentum into the pitch. The stride should not be more than eight inches.

At the same time with the stride, most hitters will cock their hips and also have some movement with the hands. The hip cock is the inward turn of the front hip. The front shoulder also turns in a little as the front hip turns in. The hips remain parallel during this cocking action and the front shoulder should be a little lower than the back shoulder. The front knee turns in slightly and points at home plate, and the back knee remains firm but flexed.

As the hips and shoulders are turning, the hands are moving as well. Just after the stride, the hitter's top hand turns slightly so that it is closer to the pitcher than the bottom hand. As the pitcher releases the ball, all preparatory movement should be completed.

As the stride is completed, the hitter's weight is back on the inside of the rear foot. The hands should now be in the hitting position, just off the rear shoulder as the ball is released. The knees should be flexed and ready to initiate the swinging motion.

### **Softball Fundamental No.5: Swing**

The swing begins with the leg and hips (the hands and shoulders stay back). The hitter pushes off the ball of the back foot as the softball approaches the plate. The back knee will begin to move in and the hips begin to rotate. During rotation the hips remain parallel to the ground.

During the movement of the legs and hips, it's important that the head and eyes remain level and still. As the hands begin to move the knob of the bat toward the ball, the hitter does not allow the bat head to fall below the hands. The lead arm maintains a 90-degree angle. This



method of approaching the ball guarantees a shorter arc and a more compact swing.

One of the most important body part is the front shoulder. Stress to the hitter to drive the front shoulder to the ball. If the front shoulder pulls away from the ball, the following problems might happen: the head will come out of the proper position and eye contact with the ball will be reduced, the back shoulder will drop down and that makes an unlevel position for the shoulders in their approach to the ball, the hands will drop which creates a loop in the swing, the back leg will collapse and eliminate any positive hip action in the swing. The batter should therefore allow the front shoulder to track the ball from the pitcher's hand to the contact zone.

As the bat approaches the ball, the arms remain bent. If the arms are extended too early in the swing, the swing arc will be too large and the hitter will sacrifice bat speed and power. As the hands move closer to contact, the top hand begins to rotate so that at contact the palm is nearly facing up. The hips continue to rotate as the hitter approaches the contact point. The back leg continues to drive into a now firm front leg, and the back toe begins to turn toward the pitcher.

## **Softball Fundamental No.6: Contact**

The contact spot for a pitch down the middle is directly opposite the front hip. If the player were delivering a punch, she would want the recipient to be standing at this spot to get the maximum blow. Contact for an inside pitch happens sooner, in front of the body, and the hips must open earlier.

On an inside pitch the batter should drive the back elbow into the body to get the hands out sooner and open the hips more quickly. For an outside pitch the contact spot is between the center of the body and the back hip, so the batter must wait on the ball. The hips stay closed until contact, and then the back hip drives through. The hands are well ahead of the bat head on an outside pitch.

The batter must be patient and wait for the ball to come to her. By using good rotation of the hips, the hitter can hit just as hard to the opposite field as she does when pulling a pitch. The player must understand where to make contact with different pitches so that she hits the ball hard at each location.

At contact, both arms are bent close to 90 degrees and the bat is driven through the ball on a level plane. After the ball has left the bat, both arms are fully extended. Both arms are straight, and the hitter

should be looking down both arms and the barrel of the bat.

The thumb and forefinger of the top hand are on top the bat, and the V between them points directly at the contact spot. As full extension of the arms is reached, deceleration occurs and the bat loses speed. The hitter moves her head down at contact and feels her chest go to the ball while maintaining a firm and rigid front side.

The action is like when a boxer drives his back hand and body into an opponent. Due to the pivot the back foot and knee are pointing at the front leg. Most of the weight is transferred to the inside of the front foot and leg. The body is in a balanced position with weight on balls of the feet. The body flows into the ball.

## **Softball Fundamental No.7: Follow-Through**

After contact the hitter must concentrate on hitting through the ball. The bat continues to move in the direction the ball is hit. A full weight transfer occurs with the majority of the hitter's weight over the firm front leg. This weight transfer helps ensure a long, full follow-through and a quicker time to first base. After contact is made and the follow-through is complete, the hitter's weight is balanced between both feet with the hitter's ear, back shoulder, hip and back knee in line with one another.

## ***5 Softball Drills to Train a Hitter's Eye***

### **Balls and Strikes**

Have the pitchers throw pitches and the batters just watch the ball into the glove and call balls and strikes. You'll be amazed at what batters think are balls. The best thing for good eyes are just seeing live pitching...lots of it, even if it is just being a batter while your pitcher is doing a workout. You can learn to read different pitches, and the pitcher gets better practice when there is a batter in the box.

### **Object**

Try golf whiffle balls, small coffee can lids (thrown like frisbees), pinto beans, etc, anything that has them concentrating on a smaller than usual target and hitting something that moves, rather than moving in a straight line. This will improve their concentration and teach them to follow the ball all the way in.

## Miss/Miss/Hit

Use a series of three pitches to teach them to watch the ball. The first pitch, the batter swings over the ball. The second pitch, swings under the ball. The third pitch the batter hits the ball. Repeat this drill until they can do it every time. After that, you can really fine tune this: Pitch 1- just nick the top of the ball. Pitch 2-Just nick the bottom of the ball. Pitch 3- Hit it right in the middle of the ball.

## Two-Ball Soft Toss

Get two different color whiffle balls (say red & white) or mark half of the balls with a different color dot. Works better with whiffle baseballs or even golf whiffle balls. Its easier to toss s maller balls plus helps hitters in focus and coordination. Toss the two balls at the same time (from same hand) and ask the player to hit one of them, either red or white. This helps players to coordinate, focus and react ti=o hit the correct color ball.

## Pick a Number

Take 3 or 4 balls, write a number on each ball. The players job is to see the ball well enough to tell you which number is on the pitched ball.

## Softball Hitting Drills – Single Tee Drill

Purpose: To improve the hitter's swing and sense of contact with the batting tee. This is one way of improving one's [softball hitting technique](#).

Procedure: You will need a single batting tee, a plate, a bucket of softballs, and a batting cage or a soft toss hitting ares. Have the batter stand in the batter's box so that she stands in front of the plate, the batter should assume a proper batting stance and "measures up". To measure up, the batter reaches out with her bat and touches the opposite side of the plate. The bat hits the ball of a batting tee that is positioned according to what hitting she is attempting to work on. The tee is positioned for an inside pitch by placing in front of the plate and on the inside corner. The tee is positioned for an outside pitch by placing it outside the plate, just off the back corner of the plate. To hit a pitch down the middle, the tee is positioned directly in front of the plate.

## Softball Hitting Drills – Two Tee Target Drill

Purpose: To hit the ball hard up the middle. To hit line drives. This drill can improve you [softball hitting technique](#)

Procedure: Two batting tees are required. Place the first tee slightly in front of home plate by 2 to 4 inches. Line it up with the middle of the plate. The second tee should be placed at least two feet in front of the first tee in a direct line at the same height. Place a ball on both tees. You will assume a ready position. Your partner will provide the verbal hitting commands — stride and pivot. Attempt to hit the ball off the first tee so that it makes contact with the ball on the second tee. The ball on the front tee serves as a target.

## Softball Hitting Drills – Double Tee Drill

Purpose: To develop the hitter's technique in coverage on the corners of the plate. Covering corners is one [softball hitting technique](#) you must practice well.

Procedure: This drill will require two single batting tees, bucket of softballs. A batting cage or a soft toss hitting area. Tee is positioned on the front outside corner of the plate while the second tee is placed on the inside corner, approximately six to eight inches in front of the first tee. A ball is put on each tee. The batter assumes his stance and loads. The coach, or hitting partner, calls out "inside" or "outside" when the batter loads to swing. The batter should then hit the ball off the tee that corresponds to the coach's command.

## **BASERUNNING/SLIDING**

### *Sliding*

#### **Softball Sliding Drills – Team Sliding**

Purpose: To teach the art of [softball sliding](#) while turning into a fun game.

Procedure: Divide the team into groups of four. One group of four should move out to a square area (about twenty by twenty feet) marked on the field, with a "base" in each corner and a player on each base. At the whistle, the player at home takes off for first, sliding in. When she touches the bag, the player standing there at first takes off for second. When she slides in, the runner on second base takes off toward third. This continues around the horn until the player who began at home gets back home again. Whichever team does this the fastest is the winner. If you do not have enough room to have all your groups going at once, then you can use a stopwatch to see which group is the fastest.

#### **Softball Sliding Drills – Mass Sliding**

Purpose: To determine the player's "tucked leg" for [softball sliding](#).

Procedure: All players are in the outfield in a mass drill formation. The head coach stands facing the group. The player sits on the ground with the arms extended in back to support the upper body. The legs are extended in front with the knees slightly bent. The player raises the body on the hands and feet and then falls backwards, while tucking one leg underneath in a "4" shape. When the player falls backwards, the arms are thrown in front of the body with the hands in the air.

#### **Fun Softball Drills – Slides and Steals Drill**

Purpose: Drill for [softball sliding](#) that has players review various slides

and steals, including bent leg, pop up, head first, back door, and pop tag.

Procedure: Divide players into four groups: one group each at home, first, second, and third. The group at home works on reading the first baseman coming off the bag and avoiding a tag by using the pop-tag slide method. The group at first works on stealing second, using either a bent-leg slide or a pop-tag slide. The group at second works on stealing third, using the head-first slide. The group at third works on stealing home, using the pop-up slide. Also have this group work on pop-tag and back-door slides as if they were scoring from second. Rotate stations every three minutes, and rotate groups of runners after about 15 minutes.

## **Softball Sliding Drills – Sliding Drill**

Purpose: To develop proper sliding technique and eliminate fear of the ball. Good drill that focuses on [basics of base running](#).

Procedure: Wet down the area without getting too much standing water and pair up players. One player sits on her side and buttocks, extending her lead leg and tucking her other leg under; her partner pulls her several feet. Players take time pulling and sliding.

## **Youth Softball Drills – Get Low**

Purpose: This drill is for [softball sliding](#) and is used more with kids. One of the biggest hurdles for learning how to slide is figuring out how far away from the base you should begin to slide. Get low helps the players gauge the proper distances for them.

Procedure: The youngster gets into her ready base-running stance at first base. The two coaches position themselves in front of second base, each holding one end of a broom at about stomach level. On a coach's command, the runner breaks for second base. As she nears the broom, she drops into her slide, at which point the two coaches raise the broom so the player's hands don't touch it. Give the youngster feedback on her technique. If she ends up too far away from the bag, move closer to it and tell her to begin her slide a step or two later next time.

## Batter-base runner

Base Running video: <https://youtu.be/ZoStz2b7Vp8>

### Digging out of the batter's box

- Take the first step with the back foot (the one farthest from the pitcher)
- Initially take short wide steps to gain power and momentum
- Lengthen the stride and pump the arms to maximise speed for running to 1st Base
- Running to first
- Run in foul territory within the tramline markings
- Continue running straight down the line and contact the base at top speed
- Don't break stride when contacting the base
- Focus on the base (do not watch the ball)
- Contact the front corner of the safety base (the one in foul territory)
- After contacting the base bend the knees, take short pumping steps and shift weight back to facilitate coming to a stop
- As speed is reduced glance left and/or right to look for the outcome of the play
- Turn to the left, toward the field of play, without making any attempt to go to 2nd Base
- Go directly back to the base in fair territory NOT the safety base
- Never slide into 1st Base unless avoiding a tag





## ***Base runner***

### **Leading off on the pitch – rolling start**

- Front foot is beside the front of the base
- Rear foot is behind the base
- Bend the knees and lean forward from the waist to take up a sprint position
- Watch the pitcher and take up this position when they are ready to pitch
- When the pitching arm reaches the highest point of the arc, begin the rocking movement
- Transfer body weight to the back foot to enable an 'explosive' drive from the sprint position
- Take the first step with the rear foot at the time the pitcher takes the stride
- Players should always remain alert and take cues from the pitcher, the defence and the coach.

### ***Rolling start***



### **Leading off on the pitch – track start**

- Rear foot is on the front of the base
- Front foot is extended in front of the base and points in the direction of the next base
- Bend the knees and lean forward from the waist to take up a sprint position
- Watch the pitcher and take up this position when they are ready to pitch



- When the pitching arm reaches the highest point of the arc, begin the rocking movement
- Transfer body weight to the back foot to enable an 'explosive' drive off the base
- Take the first step with the rear foot at the time the pitcher takes the stride
- Players should always remain alert and take cues from the pitcher, the defense and the coach

## Track start



Note: The Rules of Softball prevent a runner leaving the base before the pitcher releases the ball (or in tee ball before the batter hits the ball). If a runner is caught leaving the base early they will be called out.

## Softball Baserunning Drills- Bunt With Man On Third

Purpose: To stress the importance of bunting as a crucial run-producing tactic. It is important to practice every aspect of the game including base running when [coaching softball](#).

Procedure: Equipment needed are one softball, a bat, gloves and helmet. One player is in the batter's box, the other players take their infield positions, and a runner stays at third. The pitcher throws the ball, and the batter bunts the ball toward third base.

The base runner bounces off third base as pitch is released. The third baseman fields the ball and throws it to first, The base runner breaks for home as the third baseman lets go of the ball.

## **Softball Practice Drills – Beat Ball**

Purpose: Throwing accuracy and running speed all come into play in this game. [Coaching softball](#) requires teaching base running and accurate defensive plays.

Procedure: Prepare bases, gloves, and helmets. Make two teams with about seven kids on each. One team runs the bases. The other team places a person at each infield base. Include a pitcher and catcher. Extra fielders can back up, or rotate into the action after each throw. Play begins with the pitcher throwing the ball to the catcher who then throws to the first baseman. This person must tag the base with their foot before throwing to the second baseman, and so on, until the ball reaches home plate. Simultaneously, the first runner, who starts at first base, sprints around the bases in an effort to "beat" the ball home. If successful, a run is scored; otherwise, an out is called. After three outs, the teams change positions and the game continues. For safety purposes, fielders should throw "inside" or "outside" of the runner.

## **Softball Baserunning Drills – Tagging Up**

Purpose: To develop proper tagging-up techniques. This is for additional [Softball Coaching Tips](#).

Procedure: This drill will be needing three bases, a softball, and gloves for the fielders. Set up three bases in the shape of a softball diamond. Place three fielders in the outfield positions. A coach stands in the infield between the pitcher's plate and second base. The rest of the team lines up at first base. The first player in line leads off first base a few feet. The coach throws a fly ball to one of the outfielders, before the outfielder catches the ball, the player runs back to first base, tags up, then hustles to second base. Although the outfielder attempts to catch every ball, she does not throw out any of the base runners as they tag up and run to the next base. The first player stays at second base. The next player in line at first base repeats the drill, but this time, both runners on base tag up. Now the bases are loaded for the third throw, and all three runners tag up on it. Repeat the drill for every player. The coach rotates the throws to the different outfielders. After

everyone has had a chance to run at least twice, the fielders come in and three new players head to the outfield.

## **Softball Baserunning Drills – Base Race**

Purpose: To teach baserunners to cut tight corners and get around the bases as fast as possible. This drill works on the [basics of base running](#).

Procedure: Set up an infield with no pitcher. Your baserunner tosses the ball to herself and hits a ground ball. She then takes off around the bases as fast as she can, going from first to second to third to home. The infield also circles the bases with their throws, trying to get the ball to home plate before the runner gets there. If it's an inexperienced team, it should be about even. More advanced teams have to take the ball back to first each time – that means, field it, go to first, go to second, back to first, go to third, back to first, and then home. The person who fields the ball is not allowed to be involved in covering a base, just as it is in a game. Every baserunner who makes it home before the ball gets a point. Make it a contest to see who can get the most points.

## BUNTING

Bunting video: <https://youtu.be/uAEMboJHKkY>

### Softball Hitting Drills – Bunt-Drill Batting Practice

**PURPOSE:** To improve bunting technique. This drill is an excellent motivator for perfecting bunting skills. This drill will help coaches during games in [coaching softball](#)

**PROCEDURE:** Equipment needed are three cones, batting helmets, gloves, balls, bats. Set up three cones on the third-base line about 5 feet from home plate. Place one cone on the line and the others two feet and four feet at the fair territory beside the first cone. The coach will then pitch the ball. The batter squares to bunt, trying to bunt the ball between the two outside cones. Award one extra swing during regular batting practice if the batter bunts the ball between the two outside cones. The batter earns two extra swings for knocking down the middle cone. The coach can widen the cones depending on the age of the players or the team's skill. Positive reinforcement is important in this drill.

### Softball Practice Drills – One-Handed Bunting Drill

**Purpose:** To use the top hand as an anchor. To develop good bat control.

**Procedure:** Designate an area where players can practice bunting. This might be on the field, in the outfield or behind the backstop. A pitcher is needed with a bucket of balls. Grip the bat with your top hand. This hand will slide up the bat several inches. As the pitcher delivers the ball, try to bunt with only one hand (top hand) on the bat. Make sure the arm is extended out in front. The [hitter](#) must keep her eyes focused on the ball.

### Softball Bunting Drills – Target Bunting

**Purpose:** To practice placement of a [bunt](#) in addition to practicing bunting technique.

Procedure: Line up some bats three feet in from each foul line, marking off the areas where you want the bunt to go. Then get in there and bunt. For every bunt that lands between the bats and foul line, you get one point. For every ball that lands in the middle, between the two rows of bats, you subtract a point. The goal is to get a positive score after twenty bunts.

## **Fun Softball Drills – Line Bunting**

Purpose: This drill works on the [bunt](#) by giving the hitter lots of bunting practice and works on defense by giving fielders practice in scooping up the bunt.

Procedure: Line up about five fielders, each with a ball. One player stands at home plate with the bat, and another player stands on first. The first fielder tosses the ball to the bunter, who then bunts it down either line. The tosser has to field her ball and throw it to first. She then gets her ball back and goes to the end of the line. At the same time, the next player already tossed her ball to the bunter, and so on and so on. Players should rotate through the tossing line two or three times, and then the next player becomes the bunter, and the former bunter joins the tossing line. You can set up a few "home plates" and "first bases" to have everyone doing this at once.

## **Softball Hitting Drills – Bunt-Drill Batting Practice**

PURPOSE: To improve bunting technique. This drill is an excellent motivator for perfecting bunting skills. This drill will help coaches during games in [coaching softball](#)

PROCEDURE: Equipment needed are three cones, batting helmets, gloves, balls, bats. Set up three cones on the third-base line about 5 feet from home plate. Place one cone on the line and the others two feet and four feet at the fair territory beside the first cone. The coach will then pitch the ball. The batter squares to bunt, trying to bunt the ball between the two outside cones. Award one extra swing during regular batting practice if the batter bunts the ball between the two outside cones. The batter earns two extra swings for knocking down the middle cone. The coach can widen the cones depending on the age of the players or the team's skill, Positive reinforcement is important in this drill.



# FIELDING

## Throwing *FUND*amentals

Throwing Mechanics with Jen Schroeder:

<https://youtu.be/YoZB1HBHkP8>

How to throw a ball: <https://youtu.be/gcN3azy8GDY>

Throwing mechanics: <https://youtu.be/qYv1cGIY1TE>

How to field a ball: <https://youtu.be/LZLhf8Ep8t4>

Fielding a ground ball <https://youtu.be/ccta-HWnXis>

Catching a fly ball: <https://youtu.be/YZII1XdrdHI>

## Preparing to throw

- Once the ball is secured take the glove and throwing hand to the throwing shoulder
- Turn the glove towards the body
- Use the throwing hand to reach in the glove and grip the caught ball
- Bring the body to the 'Set Position' for throwing by using either a crow hop or crossover step



**Gripping the ball**



**'Set Position' for throwing**

## Gripping the ball



Executing an overhand throw

## Throwing grip

'Set Position' for throwing

- Hold the ball in the fingers not the palm
- Hold the ball with 2, 3 or 4 fingers on top of the ball
- Fingers are placed across the seams
- Aim to have the thumb on the seam directly under the ball
- Hold the ball firmly but not rigidly



## Set position

- Stand side on and point the glove hand shoulder and elbow at the target.
- Feet are slightly wider than shoulder width apart
- Head is over the belly button
- Throwing hand is extended back with the elbow above the shoulder
- Fingers and ball are pointing away from the body
- Head remains still and level with eyes looking at the target

## Throwing technique





- Throw starts with an extended walking step using the foot opposite to the throwing hand
- Step should be straight at the target
- Rotate hips, then body and then shoulders to the throwing side as
- weight is driven off back foot and transferred onto the front foot
- Weight transfers to the front foot as arm comes forward and over the top. Fingers are behind the ball
- Ball hand trails the elbow until the shoulders are square
- As the arm comes forward the wrist is under the ball and wrist is kept
- cocked
- Ball is released at a 'high five' position with wrist snap toward the
- target

## Follow through



- After release the body continues forward rotation until the throwing shoulder is pointing at the target and weight is on the front foot
- Throwing hand continues down and past the opposite hip and knee

## Field positioning

The diagram overleaf represents where players should stand for each fielding position. However as players' skill and confidence progress, they will become more aware of the cues available to them during the game which may impact on where they stand.

### Infield

The infield is the first line of defense behind the pitcher and will generally make more defensive plays than the outfield. Key positions that make up the infield include the:

- Pitcher
- Catcher
- 1st Base
- 2nd Base
- Third base; and
- Shortstop

Infield players are responsible for fielding ground balls, catching fly balls, throwing to various bases, covering bases, backing up and tagging runners. Whilst it is important for all players to develop the basic fundamentals in any position to be successful, there are usually four common qualities that characterise a good infielder. These include the ability to be alert on every pitch thrown and make the right play, an eagerness or aggressiveness to go after the ball rather than waiting for it to come to them, good reflexes and the ability to move quickly in all directions and no fear of hard hit balls or oncoming baserunners.

### Outfield

The outfield is sometimes considered less demanding than the infield, however a strong defensive outfield will execute important outs, and like the infield, will make a valuable contribution to the game. Key positions in the outfield include:

- Left Field
- Centre Field; and
- Right Field

Outfield players are responsible for catching fly balls, fielding ground balls, throwing to infielders at various bases including home plate, covering bases from time to time and backing up. Whilst it is important for all players to develop the basic fundamentals in any position to be successful, there are usually three common qualities that characterise a good outfielder.

These include the ability to position themselves properly for different batters and different situations, react to the batted ball quickly and possess a strong accurate throw.

## Catching a thrown ball

### Catching sequence

- Hold the glove open in front of the chest with the palm facing the thrower
- After the ball is released, move the body in line with the thrown ball

Adjust the glove position depending on the location of the throw:

- If the ball is above the waist, fingers of the glove point up
- If the ball is below the waist, fingers of the glove point down
- Watch the ball into the glove
- Catch the ball in the pocket of the glove, not the fingers
- Squeeze the glove closed and cover the glove with the throwing hand
- As the ball enters the glove 'give' with the hands and arms to cushion its impact and draw the ball and glove towards the body
- Take the glove and ball to the throwing shoulder as the throwing hand reaches into the glove to grip the ball ready to throw

### Ready position

### Body position

- Face the thrower
- Feet are shoulder width apart and parallel
- Bend the knees slightly with weight evenly distributed
- Hold both hands chest high with the glove open to the ball, fingers up and thumbs together



### Body movement

- Move the body behind the ball using a shuffle step or cross over step depending on the accuracy of the throw


## Catching technique

- Catch the ball in the pocket of the glove
- Draw the hands slightly back towards the body to 'soften' the impact of the ball into the glove
- Catching below the waist – the fingers are pointing down with the little fingers together
- Catching above the waist – the fingers are pointing up with the thumbs together
- Watch the ball into the glove
- Secure the ball by squeezing the glove around the ball after impact and covering the glove with the throwing hand

Catching below the waist

Catching above the waist

## Fielding a ground ball **Fielding sequence**

- Move behind the path of the ball and set feet slightly wider than shoulder width apart
- Bend the knees and lean from the waist with the weight on the inside part of the balls of the feet
- Lean forward from the waist so that the glove touches the ground in front of the body. (Players should be able to see their elbows)
- Hold the glove wide open facing the ball with the fingers of the glove pointing down
- The throwing hand is close to and beside the glove
- Watch the middle of the ball into the glove
- Close the glove and cover it with the throwing hand to secure the ball firmly
-  In one continuous motion grip the ball and transfer the glove and ball to the throwing shoulder ready to throw

## Ready position **Body position**

- Have the feet slightly wider than shoulder width apart
- Weight is forward, but spread along the inside part of the balls of the feet
- Bend the knees with the bottom low to the ground (like sitting on a milk crate)
- Keep the head up with eyes focused on the batter
- Keep the upper body relaxed

## Hand position

- Keep the hands low
- Glove touching the ground
- Have the elbows out in front of the knees and not locked in

## Fielding technique Body position

- Get into the path of the ball
- The body must stay low, with knees well bent and bottom low
- Feet should be at least shoulder width apart
- The striding foot should be slightly ahead of the pivot foot
- Move the head only to enable you to watch the ball into the glove
- Body should be directly facing the oncoming ball



## Hand position

- Keep hands well out in front of the body
- Glove should touch the ground
- Field the ball from the ground up
- Hold the glove wide open facing the ball
- As the ball hits the glove elbows 'give' with the ball
- Once secured, use the throwing hand to grip the ball inside the glove
- In one continuous motion take the glove and ball over the throwing shoulder ready to throw

## Preparing to throw

- Bring the ball in the glove straight up from the ground to the belly button/stomach. This is sometimes coined 'up the funnel'.
- Turn the body side-on to the target using either a crow hop or crossover step
- Take the ball and glove directly to the overhand throwing position (no windup)
- Point the glove side elbow to the target
- Commence throwing progression

### **Fielding a fly ball** Fielding sequence

- Move feet and body under the ball
- Hands are above the head and in front of the line of the body
- Hold the glove wide open facing the ball with the fingers of the glove pointing up
- The throwing hand is close to and beside the glove to secure the ball
- Watch the middle of the ball into the glove
- On impact close the glove and cover it with the throwing hand to secure the ball
- Let hands and arms give to soften the impact as the catch is made
- Bring the glove to the throwing shoulder ready to throw

### **Ready position** Body position

- Have the feet shoulder width apart
- The body is more upright for outfielders than for infielders: knees are bent less
- hands are further from the ground
- Keep the head up with eyes focused on the batter
- Keep the upper body relaxed

### **Body movement**

- Run to get under the ball as quickly as possible
- If the ball is hit beyond the fielder avoid running backwards to get to the ball
- If the ball is hit to the left turn to the left to get to the ball
- If the ball is hit to the right turn to the right to get to the ball

### **Catching technique**

- Watch the ball all the way into the glove



- Catch the ball as close as possible to the throwing shoulder
- Catch the ball with the fingers of the glove pointing up
- On impact close the glove and cover it with the throwing hand to secure the ball
- Let hands and arms give to 'soften' the impact as the catch is made

Once the ball is secured prepare to throw using either a crow hop or cross over step



## Softball Infield drills -Team Infield Drills

Purpose: Learn a series of fundamental drills to practice over and over. These [softball fielding tips](#) must be done over to develop a habit.

Procedure: You will need the following equipment tennis balls and gloves, regulation balls for older players. Explain and demonstrate each of the disciplines. Work in groups of two. Start off bare-handed. Then add in gloves and infielder paddles if applicable. Include the following:

1. Glove Work: Roll ball to each other in the crouched stance with an open glove.
2. Grounders Straight On: Same as above except start standing up.
3. Circle: Same as above except circle balls to the left and right.
4. Forehand: Charge to the glove side, field the ball, and swing the back leg over (as if facing first base).

## Softball Drills – Team Outfield Drills

Purpose: Learn series of fundamental drills to practice over and over. These are good outfield [softball fielding tips](#).

Procedure: Equipment needed are softballs and gloves. Coach has a bat and a bucket of balls with him. Have 3 groups at the outfield One group at left, center and right field area and two players on each base. Coach will bat the ball towards the groups in the outfield and the player must follow the instructions given on where to throw back:

1. Drop Knee: Crouch down and block the ball (hard hit ground ball with no one on base). Throw to 2nd base
2. Grounders: Receive the ball out front and pivot to throw. RF throw 1st, LF and CF throw 2<sup>nd</sup>

## Softball Infield Drills – Bases Loaded Force-out At Home

Purpose: To develop defensive tactics for making the force-out at home plate with two outs and the bases loaded. This is the kind of drill that helps players think and decide differently on the field giving some [mental training](#) as well.



Procedure: Equipment needed would be one softball, a bat and gloves. Set up a complete infield, including the pitcher and 3 catchers, and place runners at each base, including home plate. The coach stands in the batter's box and hits a slow ground ball to the pitcher. The player on home runs out of the batter's box toward first base. Where and how the pitcher fields the ball determines whether she should make the force -out at home or not.

## Free Softball Drills – Diving Drill

Purpose: To develop confidence and comfort when diving for balls. It is important that the [outfield](#) practice on this more.

Procedure: The first player in line starts on her knees. The coach will bounce the ball slightly to her. She will dive to stop or catch the ball, and try to get to her feet and throw the ball back to the coach. After four or five attempts, the next player takes a turn. Once each player is done catching to her left (glove side), switch it up and throw to the other side.

Players will only get comfortable when they try an activity. By making them dive in a controlled environment, they are more apt and ready for such a play during the game. Getting started on the drill will help eliminate the fear of injury. Teach feet to get to the throwing position.

## Fun Softball Drills – Relay

Purpose: This relay race includes the cutoff play into a running game. When [coaching softball](#) make sure to teach the cut-off person to do relays properly

Procedure: You will need cones, balls, and fielding gloves. Make equal teams. Place 1 cone and ball directly in front of each group (normal cutoff distance for age group). Teams should stand behind their own cone. At the starting signal, the first person in line runs to the cone. The next person in line throws the ball to his/her partner in cutoff fashion. Fielders should yell, "Hit me!" with their arms up. On a successful catch the receiver then runs with the ball back to his or her team, and puts the ball back at the front of the line. The two partners must slap gloves with one person sprinting to the cone and the other returning to the

back of the line. The rotation keeps going until every person has thrown the ball at least once.

## **Softball Practice Drills – Reaction Drill**

Purpose: To test and develop a player's reaction time when fielding an oncoming ball. This is a good [mental training](#) drill as well.

Procedure: Place four cones in a square with 10 to 15 feet between cones. The coach stands in the center of the square, and the first player stands next to a corner cone facing away from the coach. The coach throws a tennis ball toward the player, then immediately gives the "go" command. On the "go" command, the player turns and reacts to the ball, trying to make the catch. After catching the ball, the player drops it on the ground next to him. The player runs to the next cone, turns toward the coach, who has already thrown a ball in his direction, and tries to react to the tennis ball in the air before making the catch. When the first player has been to all four cones, it is the next player's turn. Players should be ready to catch the ball as they turn around and should catch the ball with both hands. Players should concentrate on making sure they catch the ball before running to the next cone.

## OUTFIELD

### Youth Softball Drills-Wall Ball

Purpose: Learn the different throwing release points according to varying distances and heights. One [softball fielding tip](#) to remember is that there are several release points when wanting to hit a target.

Procedure: Provide balls and cones for the drill. Arrange equal throwing stations about 15 to 20 feet away from the backstop. Everyone must stand behind their designated cone. Place the balls near each cone. Use the various levels on the backstop as different target areas. Either use three throws per player, or rotate from cone to cone after each throw. Kids can use the crow-hop as part of their toss. Only collect the balls until after everyone has gone. Increase the distances after several successful throws by the group. Either use 2 to 3 groups for one side of the backstop or 4 to 5 groups when using both sides.

### Basic Softball Drills – Back-Up

Purpose: Missing a backup duty in a game can cost a team a win. Stress the importance of backing up in a practice activity. This practice helps on [mental training](#) on focus and hustle plays

Procedure: This drill needs a bat, gloves and balls. Arrange a fielding line up. Hit fly balls and grounders. On each ball hit, every player should be doing something. Whether it's pitcher's backing up the plate on throws home, catchers running behind first base on ground balls in the infield, outfielders backing each other up on fly balls, or middle infielders backing up throws to the pitcher with a runner on third base. Pre-think your role on each situation. Incorporate double cutoffs and run-scoring base hits. Extra players can run the bases (wear helmets).

### Fastpitch Softball Drills – Lead Drill

Purpose: To develop the ability to catch while on the run. This is very

helpful for outfielders. Here are other [Softball Fielding tips](#) to remember in the outfield.

Procedure: Prepare a bucket of softballs, gloves, an empty bucket. The players line up in a single-file line. The coach, with a bucket of softballs, stands beside the first player. On the "go" command, the player runs away from the coach, looking over his shoulder at the coach. At the opportune time, the coach throws a softball, "leading" the runner with the throw like a quarterback leading a receiver. The player should not have to break stride to catch the ball. The player catches the ball, drops the ball in the bucket, and returns to the end of the line.

## **Softball throwing Drills – Desperation Throw**

Purpose: To develop [softball catching](#), softball fielding, and immediate softball throwing skills during a East-ditch effort for the final out at home plate.

Procedure: Equipments required are basket full of softballs, gloves. Position two catchers at home plate in full gear. Divide the rest of the players into the three outfield positions. The coach stands near the pitcher's mound with a bucket of softballs and simulates a hit by throwing a ball to one of the outfield positions. The first player in line charges the ball, picks it up, and throws it home, all in one fluid notion. The catcher gets into position to catch the ball and tag the runner out. The coach throws to each outfield position in turn. The two catchers rotate after three or four throws.

## **Softball Throwing Drills – Bucket Relay**

Purpose: This [softball throwing drill](#) is to develop techniques for relaying a softball from the outfield to the infield.

Procedure: Two buckets of softballs, six empty plastic buckets, gloves. Divide the players into two teams, station, one team and a coach in right center, and the other team and a coach in left center. Each group has a bucket of hardballs. On home plate, stack six empty plastic buckets into a pyramid. Place one player from each team in the infield. The teams alternate turns. The coach throws the ball high behind the outfielder, preferably hitting the outfield fence. The outfielder turns, locates the ball, runs to it, picks it up, turns, and throws it to the infielder.

The infielder pivots after the catch, and throws the ball toward the buckets, trying to knock down as many as possible. The outfielder becomes the infielder, and the infielder goes to the end of the line in the outfield.

## **TEAM DEFENCE**

### **Softball Infield Drills – Defend Steal of Second**

Purpose: To develop defensive strategies against a base runner advancing to second base on a steal. It is important to practice defensive plays when [coaching softball](#).

Procedure: The team will need one softball, a bat, and gloves. A player stands on first base, and a batter is in the batter's box. As the pitcher releases the ball the base runner runs to second base. The catcher throws the ball to second base.

The shortstop covers the base and tries to tag the runner out.

### **Basic Softball Drills – Back-Up**

Purpose: Missing a backup duty in a game can cost a team a win. Stress the importance of backing up in a practice activity. This practice helps on [mental training](#) on focus and hustle plays

Procedure: This drill needs a bat, gloves and balls. Arrange a fielding line up. Hit fly balls and grounders. On each ball hit, every player should be doing something. Whether it's pitcher's backing up the plate on throws home, catchers running behind first base on ground balls in the infield, outfielders backing each other up on fly balls, or middle infielders backing up throws to the pitcher with a runner on third base. Pre-think your role on each situation. Incorporate double cutoffs and run-scoring base hits. Extra players can run the bases (wear helmets).

### **Softball Practice Drills – Beat Ball**

Purpose: Throwing accuracy and running speed all come into play in this game. [Coaching softball](#) requires teaching base running and

accurate defensive plays.

Procedure: Prepare bases, gloves, and helmets. Make two teams with about seven kids on each. One team runs the bases. The other team places a person at each infield base. Include a pitcher and catcher. Extra fielders can back up, or rotate into the action after each throw. Play begins with the pitcher throwing the ball to the catcher who then throws to the first baseman. This person must tag the base with their foot before throwing to the second baseman, and so on, until the ball reaches home plate. Simultaneously, the first runner, who starts at first base, sprints around the bases in an effort to "beat" the ball home. If successful, a run is scored; otherwise, an out is called. After three outs, the teams change positions and the game continues. For safety purposes, fielders should throw "inside" or "outside" of the runner.

## **Softball Practice Drills – Bases Loaded Force-Out Play**

Purpose: To develop defensive tactics for making the force-out with two outs and the bases loaded. This can be a [mental training drill](#) for pressure situations.

Procedure: This drill will use one softball, a bat and gloves. You will rotate pitchers. Set up a complete infield, including the pitcher and a catcher, and place runners at each base, including home plate. The coach stands in the batter's box and hits a slow ground ball to any fielder.

The player on home runs out of the batter's box toward first base. Where and how the fielder fields the ball determines where she will throw the ball to. Upon fielding the ball the other fielders should know what base to cover

## **Free Fastpitch Softball Drills – V Throwing Drill**

Purpose: To improve the [softball throwing mechanics](#) and throwing accuracy of the infielder.

Procedure: The catcher, first baseman, and third baseman are at their respective bases, while the second baseman and shortstop are at their

defensive positions. The ball should be thrown continuously in the following sequence: catcher to first baseman, first baseman to third baseman, third baseman to second base with the second baseman covering the base, second baseman to catcher, catcher to second base with the shortstop covering the base, shortstop to third baseman, and third baseman to catcher.