

Softball Unit Handout

History

The game of softball is over 100 years old. George Hancock is credited with developing the game and its first set of rules in Chicago in 1887. The game was first called "inside baseball" because it was played indoors. The game soon moved outdoors and was referred to by many names such as Kitten Ball, Mush Ball, Big Ball, Recreational Ball, and Diamond Ball. Since then, the game progressed with some rule changes until 1933 when Amateur Softball Association (ASA) was formed and gave softball its official name and developed a formal set of rules.

This Is Not Baseball!

Although the two games are very similar, several differences exist between baseball and softball that set them apart. In softball the ball is larger and softer; pitching is done underhand; the dimensions of the playing field are smaller; the bases are closer together; and the pitcher throws at a distance closer to home plate. There is no base leading or stealing allowed (runners may not move off a base until the pitched ball either crosses home plate or is hit by the batter).

Special Equipment

First base has a safety bag attached to reduce the number of injuries. Home plate also has an attachment that extends the strike zone. Any legal pitch that lands on any part of the plate is considered a strike.



Safety Bag at 1st Base



Home Plate

Home Plate Extension

Offense - Batting

Batting takes place at home plate in a "batter's box." The batter stands at the plate and swings his or her bat in an attempt to hit the pitched ball into fair play. Batters must swing at the ball when it is pitched in the strike zone or else it may be called a "strike." When a batter hits a fair ball he or she becomes a base runner and sprints to first base.

Key for Successful Batting

1. Face home plate
2. Knees are slightly bent
3. Hold bat back and up just over the right shoulder at about 45 degree angle
4. Arms and elbows out and away from the body
5. Eyes on ball
6. Weight on right (back) foot
7. Twist back
8. Swing big and level with ground
9. Shift (transfer) weight to left (front) foot
10. Snap wrists
11. Bring the bat to the ball
12. Roll wrists over
13. Follow through
14. Drop bat
15. Run at top speed



Some Rules of the Game

1. Three called **strikes** and the batter is out, four **balls** and the batter gets a "walk" (A.K.A. a **base on balls**).
2. If the batter has two strikes and hits a foul ball, it is a third strike and the batter is out.
3. If the runner is in a "**force**" **situation** then the fielders have to touch the base. If it is not a force situation then the runner has to be **tagged**.
4. **Base runners** cannot break their **baseline**. The baseline is the line that goes from base to base. The general area is six feet on either side of the line.
5. **Fielders** may not interfere with base runners.
6. If the batter hits a **fly ball** that is caught, then the batter is out. All other base runners must return to their bases.
7. When the defensive team makes an **overthrow** to a base, then the base runners may advance to the next base. If the runner is already at that base, and there is an overthrow, then the batter advances two bases.
8. If the **umpire** calls a foul ball, and the ball is caught, the batter is not out. It is a foul ball and counts as a strike.

9. No more than one base runner on a base at one time.
10. **Infield Fly Rule** - A batter is automatically called out if he or she pops the ball up in the infield when base runners are on first and second with fewer than two outs. It is enforced regardless of whether or not the ball is caught.

Vocabulary



Ball – A pitch that does not enter the strike zone.

Bases Loaded - Term for when there are runners on first, second, and third base.

Base on Balls – A batter goes to first base when four pitches are judged to be balls.

Batter's Box - The rectangular areas on either side of home plate where players stand when batting.

Co-ed Softball – An official game of softball played by five girls and five boys.

Defensive Team – The team in the field.

Double – A two-base hit.

Double Play – A play by the defensive team in which two offensive players are put out.

Fair Ball – A batted ball that touches or comes to rest in fair territory. A batted ball that is hit within the foul lines.

Fair Territory – That part of the field between the first and third base foul lines.

Foul Ball – A batted ball that touches or comes to rest in foul territory.

Foul Territory – That part of the playing field outside of the first and third base lines.

Grand Slam - A home run with the bases loaded. Four runs are scored.

Ground Ball - A batted ball that is hit directly on to the ground. AKA a grounder.

Home Run – A four base hit that scores a run.

Infield - That area of the playing field in fair territory that is dirt.

Inning – That portion of the game in which each team has three outs while on offense and three outs on defense. A softball game is seven innings long.

Offensive Team – The team up at bat.

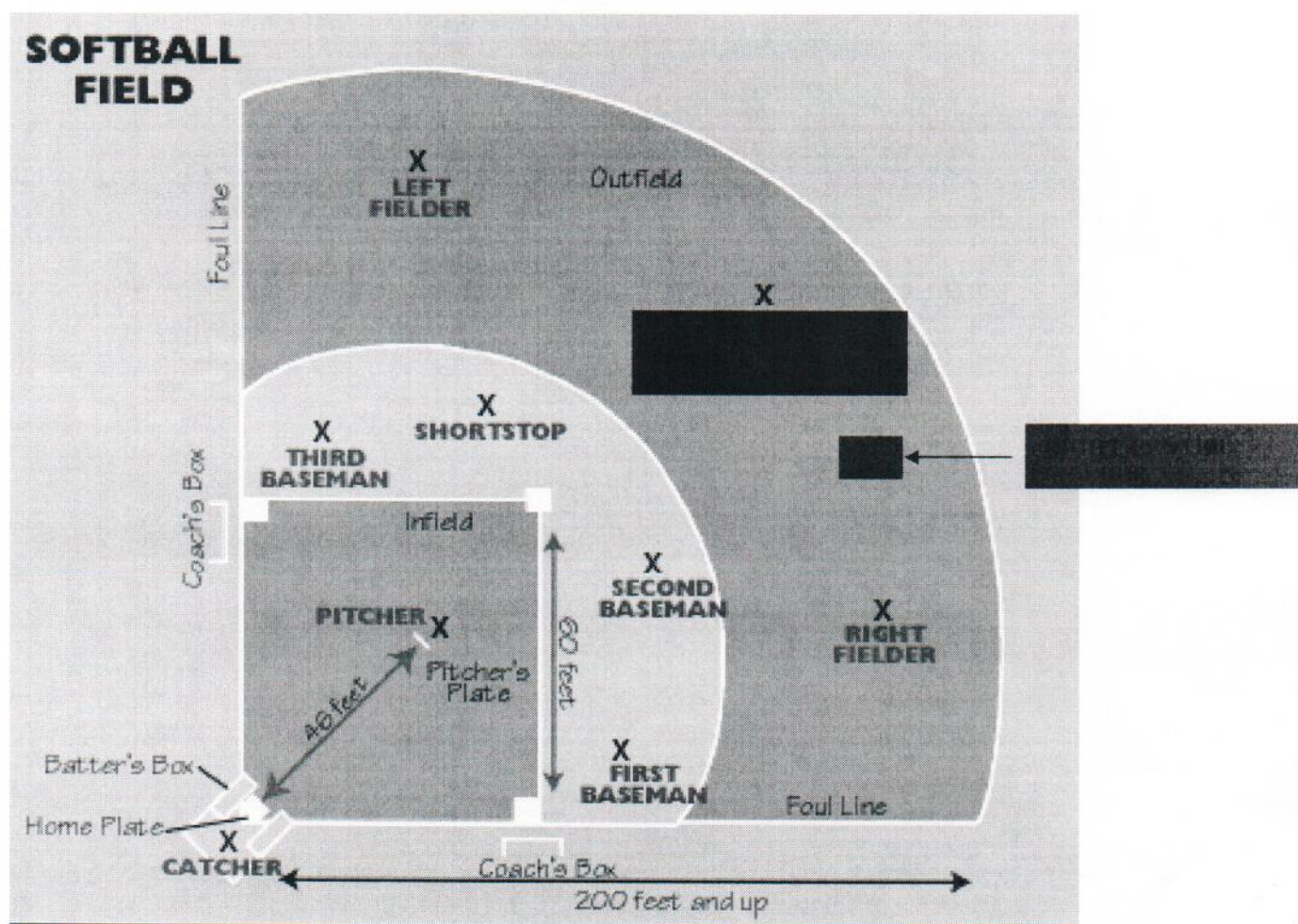
Overthrow – A thrown ball that goes beyond the intended receiver.

Single – A one-base hit.

Strike Zone – That area over home plate between the batter's armpits and the top of the knees.

Triple – A three base hit

The Field



Softball Rules Simplified.

HISTORY

The game of softball originated in Chicago on Thanksgiving Day, 1887. A group of about twenty young men had gathered in the gymnasium of the Farragut Boat Club in order to hear the outcome of the Harvard-Yale football game. After Yale's victory was announced and bets were paid off, a man picked up a stray boxing glove and threw it at someone, who hit it with a pole. George Hancock, usually considered the inventor of softball, shouted, "Let's play ball!" He tied the boxing glove so that it resembled a ball, chalked out a diamond on the floor (smaller dimensions than those of a baseball field in order to fit the gym) and broke off a broom handle to serve as a bat. What proceeded was an odd, smaller version of baseball. That game is now, known as the first softball game.

THE GAME

- There are 9 players on a Fast Pitch softball team. (10 players on a Slow pitch team.)
- The playing field is divided into the infield and outfield
- The lines between the bases are 60' apart and when joined they form a "diamond", inside the baseline is known as the infield
- Outside the baseline but inside the playing field is called the outfield.
- Any ball going outside the 1st or 3rd base line is a foul ball (runners can not advance and the batter gets another try unless the ball was caught in the air, which translates to an out)
- An official game is 7 innings (a inning is when both teams have had their turn to bat)

PITCHING

- The pitcher must have both feet on the pitcher's rubber and can only take one step forward while pitching.
- The ball must be thrown underhand.
- Both hands must be on the ball at the start of the pitch.
- The pitch must be released on the first forward rotation past the hip.

BATTING

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

BASE RUNNING

- Runners must touch each base in order
- Runners may overrun 1st base only, all other bases the runner may be tagged and called out if they are off the base.
- Runners cannot lead off a base. In fast pitch you must be on base until the ball has left the pitcher's hand. In slow pitch you must be on the base until the ball has been hit.

- After a fly ball has been caught the base runner must tag the occupied base before advancing to the next base
- One base runner cannot pass another base runner that is ahead of them.
- Stealing a base is not permitted
- A runner is out if:

a. they are tagged with the ball before reaching a base

b. the ball gets to 1st base before the runner. (or any other base on a force play.)

c. they run more than 3 feet out of the base line to avoid being tagged

d. they leave the base before the pitch is released

TERMS:

- Ball- A legally pitched ball that does not enter the strike zone (four balls equals a walk)
- Battery- The pitcher and catcher
- Grand slam is a home run hit with all three bases occupied by base runners ("bases loaded"), thereby scoring four runs—the most possible in one play
- Grounder- A ball that is hit on the ground
- Fair ball- A batted ball that touches a base, touches inside of the baselines, or lands in the outfield in fair territory
- Foul ball - A batted ball that settles in foul territory between home and 1st or home and 3rd, or first touches foul ground beyond 1st or 3rd
- Force out- When the runner has to advance to the next base to make room for the following base runner.
- Fly ball- A ball hit up in the air to the outfield
- On deck- The next batter
- Pop up- A ball hit up in the air to the infield
- Strike- The term used when a ball is swung at and missed or is called when the ball enters the strike zone and is not swung at all.
- Strike zone- The area that a pitched ball passes the batter over the plate between the top of the knees and the armpits
- Tag play - When a base runner runs and it is not a force play

