

# SOFTBALL STUDY GUIDE

## Slow-Pitch (revised 07/05)

### I. TYPES OF SOFTBALL

**Slow pitch:** accounts for about 80 % of the softball played in the United States. Pitchers must throw the ball slow enough to make it have an arc on its way to the batter. Slow pitch rules prohibit bunting and base stealing.

**Fast pitch:** is gaining popularity at all levels. Some pitchers can pitch the ball up to 80 and 90 miles per hour. Batters may bunt and runners can steal bases after the ball leaves the pitcher's hand.

### II. HISTORY

- Softball was invented around the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by American professional baseball players who wanted to keep in practice during the off-season. The substitute game was played indoors.
- The first softball league was organized in Minnesota in 1900 and the game was officially named Softball in 1926.
- The Amateur Softball Association (ASA) was founded in 1933 to standardize the rules and govern the sport. It is still the governing body for softball in the United States.
- During World War II, American servicemen played the game wherever they were stationed, introducing softball to other countries.
- Women's fast-pitch softball became an event in the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, Georgia.

### III. DESCRIPTION OF THE GAME - RULES

1. Softball is a sport similar to baseball. The same basic equipment is used, except the ball is slightly larger, the playing field is slightly smaller and the ball is pitched underhand
2. A game consists of 7 innings. The top half of an inning is when the visiting team is batting. The bottom half of an inning is when the home team is batting. In case of a tie game, more innings are played.
3. Each team is allowed three outs when at bat. The players on the team bat in a specified order (called the batting order). The team with the most runs after seven innings wins the game.

4. Bases are **65** feet apart.

5. A team consists of **10** players on the field at a time. The player positions are:

- |                            |                         |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. catcher                 | 6. shortstop            |
| 2. pitcher                 | 7. left fielder         |
| 3. 1 <sup>st</sup> baseman | 8. left center fielder  |
| 4. 2 <sup>nd</sup> baseman | 9. right center fielder |
| 5. 3 <sup>rd</sup> baseman | 10. right fielder       |

4. A runner must remain on the base until the ball is hit. **No stealing or playing off the base** is allowed.

5. A **BATTER is out** when the following happens:

- a force out at first base
- a fly ball caught by a fielder
- a foul ball caught in the air by the catcher or a fielder
- a batter steps out of the batter's box or steps on home plate while hitting the ball
- a batter is hit by a batted ball
- a batter slings the bat
- when a batter bats out of turn
- swings three times without hitting the ball
- deliberately bunts the ball

6. A **BASERUNNER is out** when the following happens:

- runs out of the baseline
- forced out at a base
- fails to touch a base
- hit by a batted fair ball while off the base
- causes interference with a player fielding a hit ball
- tagged with the ball by a fielder before reaching the base or while off the base
- runs on a fly ball without tagging up
- passes another runner

#### 7. STRIKE, BALL, FAIR, & FOUL

A **STRIKE** occurs when:

- A pitched ball is delivered into the strike zone (between the armpits and knees) and the batter does not swing
- A batter swings and misses a pitched ball.
- A ball is hit foul with less than two strikes

A **BALL** occur when:

- A pitched ball does not go over the plate in the strike zone and the batter does not swing
- A pitched ball touches the ground before reaching home plate

A **FAIR BALL** occurs when:

A batted ball lands in fair territory whether in the infield or outfield (inside the foul lines).

A batted ball hits 1<sup>st</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> base

A **FOUL BALL** occurs when:

A batted ball lands on foul ground outside the first and third baseline or behind home plate.

A foul counts as a strike except on the 3<sup>rd</sup> strike.

If a foul fly ball is caught by the catcher or fielder the batter is out.

#### IV. BASIC SKILLS

- Batting, catching, throwing, fielding and baserunning are the **basic skills** in playing softball.
- Batting and baserunning are considered **offensive skills** of the game.
- Catching, throwing and fielding are considered **defensive skills** of the game.

#### V. TERMS

- A. Base on balls: when a batter is awarded 1<sup>st</sup> base following four pitches that are judged by the umpire as balls. This is also known as a walk.
- B. Count: the number of balls and strikes on a batter.
- C. Defensive team: the team on the field.
- D. Diamond: the area formed by home plate and the three bases.
- E. Double: a two base hit. A base hit that enables the batter to reach 2<sup>nd</sup> base despite perfect fielding by the defense.
- F. Double play: 2 outs resulting from one play.
- G. Error: a mistake by a defensive player.
- H. Fielder's Choice: a play where the fielder puts out a baserunner rather than the batter.
- I. Fly ball: a ball that is hit high into the air, usually to the outfield.
- J. Force out: to get a runner out by touching the next base he/she is forced to advance to due to the batter becoming a runner.
- K. Foul ball: a batted ball that is judged not fair.
- L. Full count: when there are three balls and two strikes on the batter.
- M. Grand slam: a home run with a runner on each base, scoring 4 runs.
- N. Grounder: a batted ball that hits the ground as it leaves the bat.
- O. Home run: a four base hit on which the batter touches all bases without the ball being misplayed.
- P. Infield: fair territory bounded by the base paths.
- Q. Inning: a division of the game, divided into halves that allow each team to bat and field once apiece.
- R. Inference: when a player prevents an opponent from making a play.
- S. Lead off: the batter who starts his/hers team's turn at the plate or to move off the base before the ball is hit.
- T. Line drive: A hard hit ball that travels in a straight line instead of going skyward before hitting the ground.
- U. Offensive team: the team at bat.
- V. On Deck: the next person to bat.
- W. Outfield: fair territory beyond the infield.
- X. Perfect Game: a game in which the pitcher allows no hits, no runs, and where no opposing player gets on base.
- Y. Pinch Hitter: a substitute batter.
- Z. RBI: run batted in
- AA. Relay: the return of the ball from the outfield to the infield.
- BB. Run: a unit of scoring.
- CC. Rundown: a defensive maneuver in which two or more defensive players attempt to tag a base runner trapped between bases.
- DD. Shutout: when a pitcher prevents the opposing team from scoring any runs during the game.
- EE. Single: a base hit on which the batter reaches first base.
- FF. Tag: the touching of the runner with the ball or with a glove that holds the ball, for the purpose of putting the runner out.
- GG. Triple: a three base hit on which the batter reaches third base.
- HH. Triple play: when three out result from one continuous play.
- II. Walk: a base on balls.