



# **Coach Steve's Softball Training Modules for Primary & Middle School Players**

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# Softball Training Modules for Primary & Middle School Players

## 1. The Game

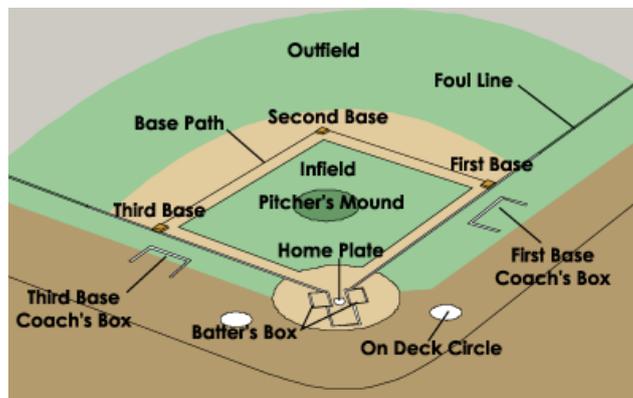
Softball is a Team game between 2 teams

- 9 Players on each side (Senior School); 10 Players (Middle School)
- 2 Phases of the game where:
  - One team is **“Fielding”** (or “in the Field”)
  - The other Team is **“Batting”** (or up “at Bat”)
- Players develop Playing Skills for both Fielding & Batting

### 1.1 Softball Playing Field

The Game is played on a diamond shaped field with

- a **“Home Plate”** and 3 **“Bases”** (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup>)
- A **“Batter’s Box”** on either side of Home Plate
- a **“Pitcher’s Plate”** also called the **“Pitcher’s Mound”**
- **“Foul Ball Lines”** extending from Home Plate past 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Bases make up the boundary between **“Fair Territory”** and **“Foul Territory”**
- Home Plate and 1<sup>st</sup> (*White part*), 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Bases are in Fair Territory
- The Red part of 1<sup>st</sup> Base and Running Lane are in Foul Territory (*Section 1.8*)
- **“Fair Territory”** consists of the **“Infield”** and the **“Outfield”**
- The Outfield between 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> bases is called **“Left Field”**
- The Outfield between 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> bases is called **“Right Field”**
- The Outfield behind 2<sup>nd</sup> base is called **“Centre Field”**



*Goal: All Middle & Senior School Players correctly identify the Softball Playing Field elements*

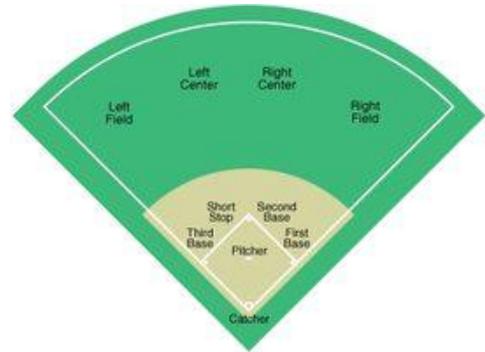
## 1.2 Fielding Team Players

For Senior School Teams there are 9 Fielding Team Players

For Middle School Teams, there are 10 Fielding Players (an extra fielder in centre field)



Senior School - 9 Players



Middle School - 10 Players

**Note:** *Players to download and watch the YouTube videos “1 Intro to Baseball – The Field” and “2 Intro to Baseball – Positions” via links found in Section 10 at the end of this module.*

*Goal: All Middle & Senior School Players correctly identify all areas of the Softball field and Fielding Team Positions*

**Text on Captaincy & Leadership Goals (under review)**

### 1.3 Batting Team Players (Senior School Teams)

- The **9 Batting Team Players** take turns “at Bat” as “**Batters**”. A Batter becomes a “**Batter-Runner**” if he hits a ball into Fair Territory
- The “**Batting Order**” (Batters 1 to 9) is decided at the start of the game.
- All Batters must bat in “Batting Order”
- The next Batter waits his turn “at Bat” in the “**On Deck Circle**”
- When the 9<sup>th</sup> Batter has been “at Bat”, the 1<sup>st</sup> Batter in the Batting Order is “**On Deck**” to be up next “at Bat”.
- At the start of a new inning, the 1st Batter up is the Batter who was in the On Deck Circle at the end of the previous inning except
  - If the Batter at Home Plate is not involved in the 3rd Out Play, that Batter is the first batter in the his team’s next innings
- A “**Base Runner**” is a previous Batter who is “**Safe on 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> base**”.

**Batter in Batter’s Box waiting for the next pitch**

**In the Background**

**Base Runner “Safe on 1<sup>st</sup> Base”  
ready to move to 2<sup>nd</sup> Base  
&  
Fielding Team’s 1<sup>st</sup> Baseman  
ready to make a play  
on a ball hit by the Batter**



### 1.4 Batting Team Players (Middle School Teams)

The same Batting team rules apply as with the Senior School Teams except:

- There are **10 Batting Team Players** or “**Batters**” (instead of 9)

*Goals: All Middle & Senior School Players remember their place in the Batting Order and consistently move to the On Deck Circle as next Batter to speed up play*

### **1.5 Softball Game - Innings (Senior School Teams)**

- Each Team takes turns Batting and Fielding in a Softball “**Inning**”
- The Visiting Team bats first in the “**Top Half**” of an Inning and the Home Team is “in the Field”.
- The Visiting Team bats until it has been given 3 “**Outs**” (*see Section 1.9*)
- The Home Team bats in the “**Bottom Half**” of the Inning until it has been given 3 “Outs”
- A complete game is 4 Innings if time permits.
- The Team with the greatest number of “Runs” after 4 Innings of play is declared the game winner
- If there is not enough time to complete the 4th Inning, the game winner is decided on the basis of the Runs scored at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Inning etc.
- The Home Team does not bat in the Bottom Half of the 4<sup>th</sup> Inning if its score after its 3<sup>rd</sup> Inning at bat is greater than the Visiting Team’s 4<sup>th</sup> Inning score

### **1.6 Softball Game - Innings (Middle School Teams)**

The same rules apply as with the Senior School Teams except:

- The Top and Bottom Halves of the Inning end after all the Players in the Team’s Batting Order have come to bat regardless of how many Outs are given in each Half Inning.
- A complete game is 3 Innings if time permits
- If there is not enough time to complete the 3<sup>rd</sup> Inning, the game winner is decided on the basis of the Runs scored at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Inning.
- The Batting Team retires from Batting and takes to the Field as Fielding Team Players after its 10<sup>th</sup> Batter has batted.

***Note: Players to watch the video “5 Intro to Baseball – Innings” (Section 10 of this module).***

*Goals: All Middle & Senior School Players be aware of when their Half Inning has ended so that they move on or off the Field promptly to speed up play*

## 1.7 Softball Game - Pitching (Senior and Middle School Teams)

### Play Starts each time the Umpire calls "Play Ball"

- A **"Pitch"** occurs when the Fielding Team's Pitcher throws the ball underhand from the Pitcher's Plate to Home Plate
- The **"Strike Zone"** is defined as any part of a pitched ball that passes over any part of Home Plate at a height between the Batter's knees and chest
- A **"Strike"** is declared when a Pitch passes through the Strike Zone or,
  - a Batter swings at a Pitch outside the Strike Zone
- A **"Foul Ball"** is a ball a Batter hits into Foul Territory
  - Counts as **"Strike 1 or 2"** if it hits the ground in Foul Territory, or,
  - if it first hits the ground in fair territory but rolls into or crosses the foul ball line between home plate and 1st or 3rd bases
  - Counts as a **"Dead Ball"** if the Batter already has 2 Strikes
- A **"Ball"** is declared when a Pitch is thrown outside the Strike Zone
- A Batter is awarded **"Safe on 1st Base"** if
  - A **"Walk"** is given (4 Balls are thrown before 3 strikes are declared)
  - The Batter **"Hit by a Pitched Ball"** while in the Batter's Box except if the Batter has made a swinging strike at the pitched ball

Note: Players to watch the video "3 Balls, Strikes & the Count" (Section 10 of this module).

### Play Stops each time the Umpire calls "Time" or "Time Out".

#### The Softball Strike Zone

The Ball passes between  
**Chest Height (top of strike zone)**  
  
and  
  
**Knees (bottom of Strike Zone)**  
  
over any part of Home Plate



**Strike Zone in Red**

*Goals: Senior School Pitchers throw at least 6 strikes for every 10 pitches  
All Players avoid swinging at a "Ball" outside the Strike Zone 4 out of 5 times*

## 1.8 Softball Game - Batting, Advancing to Home Plate and Scoring Runs

If the Batter hits a Pitch with the bat, Play continues as follows:

- A **"Fair Ball"** is a ball hit into Fair Territory
- The One Meter Line (**"Running Lane"**) is the area a Batter must run in when going to 1st Base from Home Plate.
- The **"Fair Portion"** of the **"Double Base"** at 1st lies in Fair Territory while the **"Foul Portion"** (usually coloured red) lies in Foul Territory
- A **"Hit"** is a Fair Ball that touches the ground or dropped by a Fielder before it is fielded ("Ground Ball") and is recorded when:
  - the Batter runs in the "Running Lane" and,
  - touches "Foul Portion" of the Double Base (with his foot or hand)
  - to be **"Safe on 1<sup>st</sup> Base"**
- An **"Error"** is when a Fielder's misplay allows a Runner to be Safe on Base
- On any Hit or Error, a Batter may elect to advance to 2nd Base (a **"Double"**), 3rd Base (a **"Triple"**) or Home Plate (a **"Home Run"**) at risk of being "Tagged-Out" (see Section 1.9)
- A **"Run"** is scored each time a Base Runner runs and safely touches (with a foot or hand)
  - 1st, 2nd, 3rd Base & Home Plate in sequence
  - in one or more Plays

On a **"Dropped 3rd Strike"**, a Batter may run to be **"Safe on 1st"** if 1st Base is unoccupied and there are less than two Outs - or - there are 2 Outs & 1<sup>st</sup> Base is occupied

**Note: Players to watch the video "6 Reaching Base - Hits & Walks" (Section 10 of this module.)**



**The One Meter Line or "Running Lane" starts halfway between Home Plate & 1<sup>st</sup> Base**

**The Running Lane is the Batter's area on the way to 1<sup>st</sup> Base**

**Batter must touch the "Red Part" of the Double 1<sup>st</sup> Base Bag**

*Goals: All Middle and Senior School Players use the Running Lane and touch the Red Portion of the 1<sup>st</sup> Base Bag when running to be "Safe on 1<sup>st</sup>" after hitting a "Pitch"*

## **1.9 Softball Game - OUTS**

A Batter or Runner can be put “Out” during:

- Fielding Plays
- Plays involving the Pitcher & Catcher at or near Home Plate
- Plays involving Umpire Decisions

**Fielding Plays** - An **Out** is recorded each time that a

- batted ball is caught before it touches the ground in Fair or Foul Territory - these are called caught “**Fly Ball**” or “**Line Drive**” **Outs**
- batted **Ground Ball** in Fair Territory is fielded, thrown & caught by a fielder who touches Base before the Batter or Base Runner (“**Force-Out**”); so if
  - No Runners on Base - Batter-Runner Force-Out at 1<sup>st</sup> Base
  - Base Runner at 1<sup>st</sup> Base - Force-Outs at 2<sup>nd</sup> or 1<sup>st</sup> Base
  - Base Runners at 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> - Force-outs at 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 1<sup>st</sup> Base
  - Base Runners at 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Bases (“**Bases Loaded**”)- Force-outs at Home Plate, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 1<sup>st</sup> Base
- Fielder touches a Batter-Runner or Base Runner with ball (either in hand or in Glove) when they are not “Safe on Base” (a “**Tag-Out**”)  
Note: Runner “**NOT Out**” if touched with an empty Glove
- A “**Double Play**” is recorded by
  - Two “**Force-Outs**” on the same play (Note; the Force-Outs must occur on bases in descending order to be a “Double Play”
  - “Tag-Out” of a Runner who has **NOT “Tagged-Up**” on a Fly Ball or Line Drive
- A Batter Runner is Tagged-Out or Forced-Out at 1st Base after a dropped 3rd strike with 1st base empty or when there are two outs.
- A Runner overtakes the Runner in front of him on a Fair Ball
- A Batter Runner turns towards 2nd Base after overrunning 1st Base and is Tagged-Out by a Fielder before he returns to be “Safe on 1<sup>st</sup> Base”

*Goals: All Senior and 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Middle School players know the ways an “OUT” can be recorded for various base running situations and apply this knowledge during game playing conditions.*

## **1.9 Softball Game - OUTS (cont'd)**

### **Outs involving the Pitcher & Catcher at or near Home Plate**

- Swinging or Called 3rd Strike caught by the catcher
- “Foul tip” caught by Catcher for Strike 3
- Foul Ball when a Batter tries to “Bunt” with a 2 strikes count
- Dropped 3<sup>rd</sup> strike when less than two outs & 1<sup>st</sup> base is occupied

### **Outs as a result of Plays involving Umpire Decisions**

- Any Play where the Umpire has determined the “On Deck Batter”, “Batter”, “Base Runner” or Team Coach has interfered with a Fielding Team Player’s progress to make a defensive play (“**Interference**”).
  - Offending “Batter” or “Base Runner” given Out, or,
  - In the case of the “Interference” caused by the “On Deck Batter” or Team Coach, the “Runner” nearest to “Home Plate” given “Out”.
- If Interference stops a “Double Play”, “Runner” closest to Home is also “Out”
- Batter is “Out” if one foot is completely outside the “Batter’s Box” or if part of his foot touches “Home Plate” when a ball is hit (Fair or Foul)
- A Batter-Runner or Base Runner who deviates more than 0.9 metres from the base path to avoid a “Tag-Out” is “Out”
- A Batter is “Out” when an “Infield Fly” is declared.
- A Base Runner is “Out” if, on any “Pitch”, they move away or take a lead from any base before the Pitcher has released the ball towards “Home”
- A Batter Runner is “Out” if, on any Fair or Foul Ball, he throws his bat in a dangerous fashion or to purposely interfere with a Fielder’s attempt to make a Play.

**Note: Players to watch the videos “4 Intro to Baseball –Outs” and “7 Intro to Baseball – Force-Outs (Section 10 of this module).**

*Goals: All 2<sup>nd</sup> year Middle School players know the ways an “OUT” can be recorded by the Pitcher and Catcher, improper stance in the batter’s box, running more than 0.9m outside the base path and leading from base before the pitch leaves the pitcher’s hand*

*Senior School players know all the ways an “OUT” can be recorded by the Pitcher and Catcher and also by Umpire Decision*

## Softball Training Modules for Primary & Middle School Players

### 10. Video Links “Explain the Game”

The links below explain the Game of Baseball. The Softball Training Modules develops Players to play what is called “Fast Pitch” Softball. Other than the smaller dimensions of a Softball diamond and the fact a “Pitch” is thrown underhand in Fast Pitch as opposed to an overhand delivery in Baseball, the playing rules for Fast Pitch Softball are generally the same as those of Baseball.

#### Video Links

#### Baseball Explained at “The On Deck Circle” Web Links

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Middle and Senior School level links	
<a href="#">1 Intro to Baseball - The Field</a>	<a href="#">4 Intro to Baseball - Outs</a>
<a href="#">2 Intro to Baseball - Positions</a>	<a href="#">5 Intro to Baseball - Innings</a>
<a href="#">3 Balls, Strikes &amp; The Count</a>	<a href="#">6 Reaching Base - Hits &amp; Walks</a>
<a href="#">7 Intro to Baseball - Force Outs</a>	

Advanced Softball links for Senior School 1 <sup>st</sup> & 2 <sup>nd</sup> Teams	
<a href="#">Tagging-Up and Sacrifice Flies</a>	<a href="#">Intro to Baseball - Stolen Bases</a>
<a href="#">Intro to Baseball - Errors</a>	<a href="#">Wild Pitches and Passed Balls</a>
<a href="#">Infield Fly Rule</a>	

## **11. Local Rules**

Every league or competition may adopt local rules (sometimes called “Ground Rules”). Typically these are agreed between the club managers before a game starts. Examples of Local Rules often adopted by Auckland Eastern Suburb Primary School teams include:

### **At the Senior (Under13) Teams Level**

- **“The Mercy Rule”** – maximum number of runs in a single inning (say 6)
- **“No stealing Home Plate Rule”** – Runners can only advance Home on a normal softball play (say on a hit, a one base advance on an Overthrow, forced home (bases loaded) when the batter is awarded a “Walk” or is hit by a Pitch.
- **“Pitcher’s Stance Rule”** – Pitcher’s are meant to have both feet in contact with the Pitcher’s rubber at the start of the pitching motion but leeway is given for pitcher’s new to the game provided any extra motion is not a “crow-hop” to shorten the distance between the Pitcher and Home Plate.

### **At the Middle School (Under11) T-Ball Teams Level**

- **“Every Batter Hits Rule”** – Every batter hits from the “Tee” in the batting line-up but if there are more than 10 batters in the line-up, the inning score for that team is determined at the conclusion of play involving the 10<sup>th</sup> batter
- **“No stealing Home Plate Rule”** is typically adopted
- **“No Pitching”** – to speed up the game, there is no pitching in T-Ball. The batter must wait for the Umpire to say “Play Ball” before hitting.
- **“Missed Hits”** – The object of the game is to encourage the batter to swing at the ball and to put it in play for the fielders. Miss-hits, dribblers in fair territory, bunts etc, are discouraged and the Umpire can call for a “Re-hit” in such cases.