

*2015 Season*

# Coaches Manual

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*Ayr Minor Softball Association*

*Information to assist coaches from beginning to end of the season. Organizational information, contacts and other helpful documents are included.*

*2/11/2015*

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## **Welcome!**

Hello Coaches,

Thank you for volunteering to coach with the Ayr Minor Softball Association. Your time and effort is invaluable and the reason we are able to provide a positive sporting experience for so many kids!

The information in this handbook will give you a good start to your season and will answer many questions, especially if you are new to coaching. Please read it carefully and if you have further questions you can follow up with the Player Development Co-coordinators for clarification or ask questions at the coaches meetings.

In addition to this manual each team will receive a Softball Canada Coaches Manual for their age group complete with a full season of practice plans. These are great resources and will give you plenty of ideas and information. Although you do not need to follow the plans I recommend you at least review them and ensure your practices meet the stated objectives for your team.

The Player Development Coordinator will be working with each team throughout the season and you are always welcome to ask questions and provide feedback.

Thanks again, have a great season and have FUN!

Ken Sherk  
Ayr Minor Softball Association  
Player Development Coordinator

### **Who is Ayr Minor Softball?**

The AMSA offers youth in our community the opportunity to participate in the sport of softball. Our objective is to provide the FUNdamentals – to have FUN first and foremost while teaching softball skills, team play, and sportsmanship. Our goals are to have fun, create friendships, offer the experience of being part of a team and develop their skills both physically and mentally with the hope of strengthening their self-esteem and confidence. Every child is of equal importance and deserves the best guidance we can offer.

AMSA follows Softball Canada guidelines as prescribed in their Long Term Development Player Development plan (LTPD). Our policies and recommendations are in line with these principles for the benefit of all participants. It is the responsibility of everyone in the program to always abide by spirit of these policies.

## Association Information

AMSA provides an opportunity for approximately 200 players to participate in softball in our community. To do this we rely on volunteer coaches and helpers. Travel teams are selected based on tryouts evaluated by impartial volunteers. House league teams are set by the Board of Directors in the best interest of the players. We cannot guarantee that each team will be balanced in terms of ability, but the nature of recreational softball is that you take the team you are assigned, focus on fun and learning and enjoy your season, no matter what the results.

## Important Contacts

Position	Contact Person	Email
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Ayr Minor Softball Association		
President	Dawn Sherk	ayrjrvics@gmail.com
Past President	Mark Hicks	markhicks@rogers.com
Travel Team Convener	Mark Johnston	sparkyj35@rogers.com
Secretary	Sue Hall	registerayrjrvic@gmail.com
Treasurer	Kristen Brodhaecker	mkbrodhaecker@rogers.com
House League Convener	Heather Verwey	u10u12jrvics@gmail.com
Player Development Coordinator	Ken Sherk	amsaplayerdevelopment@gmail.com
Learn to Play Coordinator		trimatejrvics@gmail.com
Umpire Coordinator	Dawn Sherk	amsaumpires@gmail.com Text 519-573-0294
Equipment Manager	Chris Oakley	Chris.Oakley@sobeys.com

Township of North Dumfries		
Community Liason	Michelle Poissant	mpoissant@northdumfries.ca
Recreation Director	Frank Prospero	fprospero@northdumfries.ca

## Facilities and Equipment

### Playing / Practice Facilities

The following facilities have been made available by the Township of North Dumfries for use by AMSA. There may be times when these facilities are not available to AMSA due to other township commitments. To ensure fair distribution of these resources all facilities listed here must be booked through the online AMSA system. Anyone who has booked the facility has full rights for its use for the duration of their reservation.

Facility	Location	Type	Recommended Age Group
Victoria Park Diamond 1	Lower Victoria Park	Stone Dust	All
Victoria Park Diamond 2	Upper Victoria Park	Stone Dust	U12 and lower
Victoria Park Batting Cage	Victoria Park behind Diamond 1	Fence enclosure / Stone Dust	All
Lions Ballpark	Northumberland St. beside DanAyr Driving Range	Stone Dust	All
Pipers Glen Diamond	Pipers Glen Park	Stone Dust / Sand	U10 and lower
Schmidt Park Diamond 1	Behind Cedar Creek PS	Stone Dust	All
Schmidt Park Diamond 2	Behind Cedar Creek PS	Stone Dust	All
Queen Elizabeth Arena (ACC)	Church St.	Cement Floor (ice surface)	All

Teams are encouraged to use these facilities for any team activities. Use of any other facilities may not be covered under the insurance limitations of AMSA.

### Booking Facilities

To book a facility for your team you can contact your AMSA convener (Travel or House League) with your request. Availability of the facility will be confirmed and you will receive a notice that the facility is booked. It will also be added to the association calendar and your team calendar on the AMSA website.



## **Cancellations**

Suitability of the playing fields due to weather or any other factors will be determined by North Dumfries Township Staff. Coaches and coordinators will be notified no later than 3:00pm weekdays or 3 hours prior to weekend events. **It is the responsibility of the affected coach to notify opposing coaches of a postponed or cancelled game.** Umpires will be notified by the AMSA umpire coordinator.

## **Equipment Storage**

Generally, teams are provided with all necessary equipment by the responsible coordinator however there may be a need to access the equipment storage room. The primary storage room is located in the back half of the concession booth at Victoria Park. This room will remain locked when not in use. A key for the room will be kept in a code-lock keybox located on the batting cage and the combination for the keybox will be available only to AMSA directors and team head coaches. Arrangements for access to the equipment room by anyone else may be made with any of the directors.

**Coaches may not to share the key code with anyone (assistants included) without prior permission from an AMSA director.**

## **Equipment Inventory Items:**

AMSA has the following items available for the use of participants

- Softballs
- Bats
- Catchers gear
- Umpire equipment
- Pitching machines,
- Batting tees
- Other instruction aids
- Uniforms

All equipment has been cataloged and labeled for tracking purposes.

## Safety and Emergency Information

Our goal is to provide a safe and fun experience for all participants in the game of softball. Our sport has many inherent risks and you should do your best to minimize them for your team. Remember, safety equipment is required for a reason and it is your responsibility as a coach to ensure it is used properly.

### Emergency Information

An emergency contact information card will be included in the team equipment bag. There will also be a sign posted at Victoria Park which provides emergency contact information.

Additional details on emergency information can be found in the **AMSA Emergency Plan** document provided to each team and also available on the AMSA website.

- **Coaches should always ensure that a copy of the AMSA Emergency plan accompanies the team at any team function**

### Team Trainer

Each team should have a designated trainer and a backup who are familiar with treatment of basic first aid. The names of these individuals must be provided to AMSA as soon as they are appointed by the coach.

If the team does not have such a person available for a team practice or game the coach is responsible for finding an alternate. If a suitable person is not found then AMSA Player Development Coordinator must be notified as early as possible to try and give assistance.

### Facilities and Tools

Part of your responsibility is to ensure the facilities and tools you use are in good condition and are safe for use. If you find any AMSA equipment that is unsafe you should immediately notify a member of the AMSA Board of Directors or the Equipment Manager.

### Batting Helmets and Cages

All batting helmets in the U10 age category and above are required by our governing body to have an approved facemask properly attached. Players must have this to participate in practices or games.

### Defensive Facemasks

As a general principle, AMSA is recommending that all minor pitchers and corner infielders wear protective facemasks while playing defense on the field. These masks are not mandatory and it is up to the players/parents/coaches of each team to make their own decision on its use. It is expected that this equipment will become mandatory in the near future. AMSA will provide information for the education of each team during the season.

## **Bats**

All bats to be used in games or practices by AMSA players must meet the following criteria:

- ✓ Barrel must be cylindrical throughout and be free of dents or severe scratching.
- ✓ End caps must be firmly attached. Once removed from the bat an end cap cannot be replaced.
- ✓ Handles must have continuous baseball grip tape or manufacturer applied one-piece rubberized grip. Torn or excessively worn tape is grounds for a bat to be disqualified from play at the umpire's discretion
- ✓ No electrical, duct, medical or hockey tape may be used as grip material allowed. These materials may be used to secure the end of the grip.

**Note: Any bat with a crack must be immediately removed from play and returned to AMSA Equipment Manager as soon as possible.**

In addition to these requirements all bats used in games at U10 and above travel leagues must also meet the following requirements:

- ✓ Certification marking of ASA 2004 (with home plate logo) must appear on the barrel. Certified bats where the logo is no longer clearly visible are NOT acceptable.

All AMSA bats are marked with a code (B##) on the knob and/or above the grip and have been inventoried.

**If AMSA bats become damaged during the course of regular use, bring it to the attention of the Player Development Coordinator and provide the AMSA bat code number.**

You may then be issued another bat or have it repaired as necessary.

Any bats not meeting the above characteristics for game eligibility but still deemed safe for training use by AMSA will be marked "PRACTICE ONLY" on the barrel. Any change to the condition of the bat must be reported to AMSA.

## **Injury Reporting**

It is important for the organization to track injuries in order to maintain an effective safety plan. Injury frequency is also a measureable required for fulfillment of Ontario Trillium Fund grant applications.

Any softball related injury (whether related to player, coach or facility), no matter how minor, must be recorded and reported to the Player Development Coordinator. This includes scrapes, bruises, arm pain, etc.)

There is an injury reporting form on the AMSA website which can be filled out by the coaching staff. The form should be filled out as soon as possible after the incident.



## Age Groups and Teams

As of the 2015 season AMSA is adopting the prescribed age group names from Softball Canada for all travel teams. The name of the division is determined by the maximum age of the player as of January 1 of the playing season. The U in the name represents “Under” therefore U10 means “Under 10”. For example in the 2015 season, a player who turned 10 years old before January 1, 2015 is not “Under 10” and therefore only eligible to play U12.

Learn to Play and Tri-Mite names have been preserved so players can be appropriately placed based on ability rather than age. This flexibility allows for a smoother introduction to the game for the player.

At some age groups there are Select teams as well as House League teams.

House League teams will play in a joint league with Paris and/or other communities. Select or Rep teams represent Ayr in the South Oxford Softball League (SOSL). This league covers territory between Springfield and Norwich in the south west to Kitchener in the north east. Teams represented within the league vary by age group.

Age groups provided by AMSA for the 2015 season:

Division	Alternate Names	Birth Year Eligible (2015 Season)	Levels Available
Learn to Play	U6, Teeball, LTP Level 1	2009 and later	Co-ed
Tri-Mite	U8, Coach Pitch, LTP Level 2	2007, 2008	Co-ed
U10	Mite, Atom, LTP Level 3	2005, 2006	Co-Ed Select, House League
U12	Squirt or Lassie	2003, 2004	Co-Ed Select, House League
U14	Peewee	2001, 2002	Co-Ed Select, House League
U16	Bantam	1999, 2000	Boys Travel, Girls Travel

Players are expected to play in the appropriate age groups however there are some exceptions for overage players or playing up in age.

Players wishing to play in a division other than their age level may request permission from AMSA Player Development Coordinator. A decision will then be made by the Board of Directors in the best interest of both the player and the affected teams.

If a coach feels that a player is not in the appropriate level based on physical ability or maturity the coach is encouraged to discuss the situation with the player’s family. If all parties are in agreement that a change would benefit the player then the AMSA Player Development Coordinator should be contacted.

Final decision on player placement is made by the AMSA board of directors and in the best interest of both the player and the overall program.

## Umpires

It is the intention of AMSA to schedule a paid plate umpire for Tri-Mite games. Base and plate umpires will be paid for each older division game. If an umpire does not show up for a game please let the umpire coordinator know the issue will be addressed. If you have a concern about anything to do with an umpire, please contact the umpire coordinator who for assistance. Under no circumstances should an umpire be approached about the game outside of the field of play.

### **AMSA HAS A NO TOLERANCE POLICY FOR UMPIRE ABUSE OF ANY NATURE.**

We will be instructing and encouraging our umpires to ask disruptive and disrespectful coaches and/or spectators to leave the park. It is up to the coaching staff to control the behaviour of your parents. Please give all umpires the same support and respect you give your own players.

Umpires have the final say on any calls made during a game. Remember that all of our umpires are young and are doing the best job that they can.

***Many of our umpires grew up playing for our association and they could be your child. Please think what you as a parent would feel like if your son/daughter was mistreated by other adults.***

It is your responsibility as a coach to know and understand the rules of the game as well as how and when you may properly appeal. Appendix A of this manual provides a summary of commonly misunderstood rules and how to a coach can handle them. Please familiarize yourself with these as well as the rest of the rule book to the best of your ability.

The umpires receive yearly training/testing and in most instances they know the rules better than anyone else on the field. If they make a mistake please remember that they are junior umpires. Softball nationwide is experiencing a critical shortage of umpires especially in the younger age groups. It is our responsibility to encourage their development just as with the players.

## Conduct and Discipline

### **DISCIPLINARY ACTION GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEERS**

AMSA strives to instill sportsmanship in all of its players; it also expects good sportsmanship and appropriate conduct from its volunteers. Unfortunately, there are times when inappropriate behavior occurs. With this in mind, we have established the following guidelines for volunteers. For these guidelines, inappropriate behavior is defined as conduct that is contrary to the philosophy and goals of the AMSA. If inappropriate behavior occurs, the following guidelines will be followed:

#### **Reporting of Inappropriate Behavior:**

AMSA may receive reports of inappropriate behavior in many ways. A few examples are as follows:

- 1) A director of the AMSA may personally observe actions taken by a volunteer.
- 2) The AMSA may receive written correspondence describing actions taken by a volunteer.
- 3) A complaint may be received from an official about a volunteer's conduct during a game.
- 4) A parent whose child is involved in a program may file a written or verbal complaint about a volunteer's actions.

#### **Informing the Volunteer of the Situation:**

The following steps will be taken to inform the volunteer of any reports of inappropriate behavior:

- 1) The volunteer in question will be notified by phone about the situation and informed about the steps that will be taken.
- 2) If deemed appropriate, the volunteer will also receive a written notice from the AMSA. This notice will include the alleged actions that occurred, the date and time of the actions and why the actions will not be tolerated.
- 3) The volunteer will further be informed that he/she will be given one week to respond to the complaint. If he/she chooses not to respond, he/she will receive the appropriate disciplinary action.
- 4) If the volunteer chooses to respond to the complaint, the volunteer will meet with the coordinator for the program and an AMSA executive member.
- 5) Following this meeting it will be determined whether the volunteer should receive disciplinary action as well as determine which level of disciplinary action will be imposed.
- 6) The volunteer will then be notified in writing of the decision.

#### **Levels of Discipline:**

The AMSA will follow a progressive form of discipline as outlined below, if deemed appropriate. However, the AMSA is not required to do so and may, in its sole discretion, forego lesser forms of discipline at any time and proceed immediately with the volunteer's dismissal.

**Probation:**

The grounds for the disciplinary action, "Probation", may include, but shall not be limited to the following:

- 1) Not following mandated playing time rules for all players.
- 2) The use of profanity or vulgar language while conducting or attending practices or games.
- 3) Failing to conduct at least one team practice every two weeks.
- 4) Being ejected from a game while coaching.
- 5) Failure to develop knowledge of, or follow the rules.
- 6) Failure to treat coaches, players, fans and officials with respect.
- 7) Leaving a field or facility before a parent has picked up all players.
- 8) Failure to coach in accordance with Coaches Code of Conduct.
- 9) Causing a game to be forfeited by an official due to conduct.
- 10) Any other actions, which, in the professional opinion of the AMSA, should result in probation.

**Suspension:**

The grounds for the disciplinary action, "Suspension", may include, but shall not be limited to the following:

(The length of the suspension will be determined by the severity of the action)

- 1) Continuing actions that originally led to the probation of a volunteer.
- 2) Intentionally threatening a fan, player, coach or official.
- 3) Being ejected from two games while coaching any AMSA related team within a one-year time period.
- 4) Attending a practice or game under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- 5) Any other actions, which, in the professional opinion of the AMSA, should result in suspension.

**Dismissal:**

The grounds for the disciplinary action, "Dismissal", may include, but shall not be limited to the following:

- 1) If, while suspended, a volunteer performs any actions which can result in either probation or suspension.
- 2) Intentionally striking, pushing or laying hands on a fan, player, coach or official in a harmful manner.
- 3) Any other actions, which, in the professional opinion of the AMSA, should result in dismissal.

## **General Coaching Information**

### **Qualities of an Effective Coach**

Over the years there have been many examples of coaches on both ends of the spectrum with respect to athlete achievement. Below is a list of the key characteristics that the most successful coaches share.

A great coach requires a very unique set of talents and skills. It's unlikely any one person will excel in all areas, but a good coach will have many of these qualities.

#### **Seeks Out New Information**

While a good coach knows a great deal about a sport (s)he must continue to learn and develop new training techniques. Watching videos, reading books, can also be helpful.

#### **Is a Motivator**

The successful coach is a motivator with a positive attitude and enthusiasm for the game and the players. The ability to motivate and inspire is part of the formula for success. Getting athletes to believe in themselves and achieve come far easier from some coaches than others. The coach who can motivate is able to generate the desire to excel in their athletes. Motivation may mean keeping the practice fun, fresh and challenging. When motivating a player, a good coach stresses trying to reach performance goals, not outcome goals. A coach should make sure that players understand that you can completely control your own effort and training, but can't control what your opponent does or the outcome of every match.

#### **Knows the Athletes**

Being aware of individual differences in athletes is also an important ingredient in coaching excellence. Individualizing communication and motivation to specific players is key to team success. Paying attention to the player's emotions, strengths and weaknesses are the responsibility of a good coach.

#### **Is an Effective Communicator**

The effective coach is a coach who communicates well and exudes credibility, competence, respect and authority. A coach should be able to explain ideas clearly. Clear communication means setting defined goals, giving direct feedback and reinforcing the key messages. Acknowledging success is also essential for good communication.

#### **Is a Good Listener**

Part of communicating effectively is listening. A coach should be a compassionate ear and should welcome the players comments, questions and input. The effective coach will seek out information from the players. Finally, the good coach will be flexible and will use player feedback to modify the training plan if necessary.

### **Is Disciplined**

Athletes need to adhere to a reasonable set of rules both on and off the field and if these are ignored the coach is responsible for discipline. The effective coach clearly states a code of conduct up front and adheres to it. When violations do occur, discipline should follow. Evidence supports that for discipline to effectively change behavior, it must be mild, prompt, and consistent.

### **Leads by Example**

The effective coach also leads by example. A good coach adheres to the same rules (s)he expects of the players. A coach who wants respect should also show respect. A coach who expects players to remain positive needs to display a positive attitude. A coach who wants athletes to listen will also listen to the players.

### **Displays Commitment**

The best coaches do it because they love it. Besides being strongly committed to the sports and success the best coaches display a clear commitment to looking out for the best interest of the players.



## Coaching Philosophy

We strongly recommend that each coach take the time before the season to write their own Coaching Philosophy summary to distribute to your team. This exercise will be very helpful in setting your goals for the season and also allowing everyone around the team to get to know a bit more about you. Below is a sample summary to help you getting started.

### **Coaching Philosophy Example:**

*I am who I am today because of the lessons I learned from my youth softball coach. The opportunity to have the same kind impact on young players as my youth softball coach had on me is one reason I strive to be the best youth softball coach I can be. My youth coach impressed upon me how vital integrity, a good work ethic, and passion can be in the game of softball and in life. I hope to teach young players these same life-enhancing values, while also at the same time teaching them about the great game of softball.*

#### **Integrity**

*My youth softball coach had a great deal of integrity. He was always true to his word, and he never compromised his moral values or the values of his players to win a game. He taught his players that winning did not matter if they had to cheat to win. He called this the “do right rule.” I believe that when players follow the “do right rule,” they will make the best decision even if they have to tackle difficult choices or circumstances. The “do right rule” is something I will pass on to my players. I will gradually but firmly establish this concept in players by challenging them to “do right” even when they are tempted to do what is clearly wrong.*

#### **Work Ethic**

*I was never the most skilled player. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, I always out worked my teammates in training sessions and my opponents in games. My coach often rewarded my work ethic with playing time. I believe players who put the time and effort into every training session should be given the opportunity to play. Even players who are not the most agile or the best ball players should be rewarded for their insatiable desire to play the game. The right attitude’s worth a thousand homeruns! I want to teach players that those who continuously give maximum effort can be successful on the playing field and in life.*

#### **Passion**

*The third component of my coaching philosophy is to create an environment that ignites tremendous passion in all players. When players are driven by an inner passion that sudden overwhelming sensation helps them achieve what they thought could not be done. Players who have passion for the game of softball put forth the greatest effort. They do not necessarily believe that they deserve to win every game, but they believe that every game they win has been earned. It is the difference between merit and entitlement. Players may stop playing the game of softball. They might even lose a fondness for the game. What I hope players never lose is the passion that comes from within and how it can guide them in making responsible choices throughout their lives.*

*Integrity, a good work ethic, and passion are, for me, the three most important pillars of good coaching. As a youth softball coach, I will work very hard to ensure these values are a part of every training session and every game. These postulates govern my approach to the great game of softball.*

*This is my coaching philosophy.*

## Coaching Expectations

There are certain administrative tasks that need to be prioritized at the start of the season. These include the following four documents:

### ***Coaches Code of Conduct and Volunteer Waiver***

- Coaches (head and assistant) are required to read and sign a code of conduct and volunteer waiver. The code of conduct basically outlines our expectations of you as a coach. This will be discussed in detail at the coaches meeting. The Volunteer Waiver is a release of all claims and assumption of risk. This is a new form this year.

### ***Volunteer Criminal Background Check***

- All coaches (head and assistant) are required to complete and sign a Criminal Background Check. This is a requirement and the form must be submitted prior to your first practice/meeting with your team.
- Background checks are valid for 2 years so you will be required to complete one if you are new to coaching here or if yours has expired. If you have done one within the last two years for another minor sports organization, a copy of that will be acceptable.
- This form can be returned by scan/e-mail or dropped off with an AMSA director.

### ***Spectator Code of Conduct***

- All parents are required to print, read and sign a code of conduct and the Disciplinary Action Guidelines for Parents & Spectators. The code of conduct basically outlines our expectations of parents with children in youth sports. The Disciplinary Action explains the consequences of inappropriate behavior.
- Do not turn these forms in to the AMSA. Collect them and keep them with you at all times you are working with the team.

### ***Emergency Treatment Release***

- All parents are required to complete and submit an Emergency Treatment Release. This form provides you with emergency contact information and is a release if a parent cannot be reached and a child needs emergency medical care.
- Do not turn these forms in to the AMSA. Collect them and keep them with you at all times you are working with the team.

## Player Characteristics by Age

Youth sport coaches often do not have experience leading large groups of children. This section offers some guiding principles of child development to help ensure the coaching matches the level of the athletes. It is simply meant as a starting point to be used for reference. It is the responsibility of the coach to learn his/her players and adjust their coaching accordingly.

### Learn to Play (U6) Characteristics

#### Guiding Principles:

- Fun, participation, and learning
- All players with various skill levels play together
- Fundamental movement skills are learned through process of “play” with limited instruction.

#### Psychomotor Characteristics:

- Easily fatigued, but rapid recovery.
- Make sure to give lots of short breaks during practice and encourage kids to drink water.
- Emphasis on fundamental movement skills.
- Focus on movement and balance in practice. It is important that kids learn how to move their bodies even while trying to learn how to play softball.
- Locomotor: walking, running, leaping, jumping, and hopping.
- Non-locomotor: bending, stretching, twisting, pulling, and pushing.

#### Cognitive Characteristics:

- Tend to only one task at a time in problem-solving situations.
- Process small bits of information at a time.
- Make sure to give short and concise instructions only focusing on one element.
- Do not have an understanding of time and space.
- Remind kids of boundaries.
- Rules must be simple.
- Short attention span.
- Individually oriented. (Me, My, Mine)

#### Psychosocial Characteristics:

- Development of self-concept, body awareness, self-image through movement.
- Egocentric- sees the world only through their perspective.
- Little or no concerns for team activities.
- Psychologically easily bruised.

#### Character Development:

- Encourage personal growth and development through teachable moments and acknowledge players doing something well.
- Introduce fair play attitudes- respect for self and others
- Introduce concepts of team play and fair play.
  - Social Interaction
  - Positive attitudes
  - Good Effort
  - Confidence

## Tri-Mite (U8) Player Characteristics

### Guiding Principles

- Fun, participation, and learning
- All players with various skill levels play together
- Fundamental movement skills are learned through the process of “play” with limited technical instruction.
- Practice time provides repetitions through active “play” rather than just drills.

### Psychomotor:

- Skeletal System is still growing, Growth plates are near joints, and thus injuries to those areas merit special consideration.
- Cardio system is less efficient than adults. Child’s heart rate will peak sooner and take longer to recover.
- Temperature regulation system is less efficient than adults; core temperature will elevate quickly and take longer to cool down.
- Improvement in coordination from 5/6 year old stage.
- Still into running and jumping.

### Cognitive:

- Limited ability to tend to more than one task at a time.
- Limited understanding of time and space.
- Limited experience with personal evaluation; effort is synonymous with performance.

### Psychosocial:

- Self-concept, body awareness, self-image starting to develop, but very fragile.
- Great need for approval from adults such as parents, teachers, and coaches.
- There is a desire for social acceptance. They want everyone to like them.
- Most influential person is most likely father or significant parent.
- Still lack sense of Pace.
- Still very sensitive. Dislike failure in front of peers.

### Character Development:

- Encourage personal growth and development through teachable moments and acknowledge players doing something well.
- Continue developing fair play attitudes and behaviors- respect for self, teammates, coaches, opponents, officials, rules
- Continue to develop positive individual values- honesty, integrity, kindness, responsibility, self -esteem.
- Continue to develop team concept: team work, work ethic

## U10 Player Characteristics

### Guiding Principles:

- Fun, participation, and learning
- All players with various skill levels play together.
- A stimulating learning environment is organized, active, game-like, and includes a variety of activities.

### Psychomotor:

- Boys and girls start to develop separately.
- Ability to stay physically active is increased.
- Sensitive to heat and cold.
- Gross and small motor skills becoming more refined.
- Greater diversity in playing ability.

### Cognitive:

- Lengthened attention span and ability to sequence thought and actions.
- Starting to think ahead.
- Intrinsically motivated to play.
- Starting to recognize tactical concepts such as change in direction.
- Repetitive technique is important, but cannot be static. (Live pitching/hitting, situation plays)
- Demonstrate increased responsibility:
- They can carry their own gear.

### Psychosocial:

- May initiate play on own.
- Positive reinforcement very important.
- Explanations- brief, concise, and to the point.
- Becoming more serious about their play.
- Peer pressure is significant.
- Team identification becomes important.

### Character Development:

- Encourage personal growth and development through teachable moments and acknowledge players doing something well.
- Continue developing fair play attitudes and behaviors: respect for self, teammates, coaches, opponents, officials, rules, and sport
- Continue to develop positive individual values- honesty, integrity, kindness, responsibility, self-esteem.
- Continue developing the team concept:- teamwork, work ethic – giving best effort, deal graciously with defeat and victory, playing safely

## **U12 Player Characteristics:**

### **Guiding Principles:**

- Fun, participation, and learning
- Players are divided based on skill levels if possible.
- Player autonomy is developed.
- Players play 1 to 2 complementary sports and play 2 to 3 positions in softball.
- The focus is on individual and team development rather than on a competitive outcome.
- Multiple sport participation is encouraged.

### **Psychomotor:**

- Beginning of puberty.
- Increase amount of exercise does not increase aerobic fitness.
- Resistance training and flexibility training can be introduced.
- Flexibility=strength and prevents injuries.
- Beginning to develop complex coordinated skill sequences.

### **Cognitive:**

- Beginning to think in the abstract and can answer the hypothetical.
- Change in thought processes is a result of increased ability to acquire and apply knowledge.
- Increased problem solving skills.

### **Psychosocial:**

- Peer pressure is a very big deal.
- Whether player goes through puberty early or late has important psychosocial issues.
- Learning appropriate sex roles.
- Most will seek peers that are most like them.
- Starting to develop set of values.
- Less unstructured play.

### **Character Development:**

- Encourage personal growth and development through teachable moments, acknowledge players doing something well, and formalize teaching with examples or discussions.
- Establish a Code of Ethics.
- Continue to develop fair play attitudes and behaviors: respect for self, teammates, coaches, opponents, officials, rules, and the sport.
- Continue to develop positive individual values:- respect for the truth, moral reasoning, including recognition of right and wrong, considerate behavior, responsibility/accountability – no excuses or laying blame, mental toughness and determination, integrity
- Continue to develop positive team concept, taking pride in teamwork- work ethic, including dedication, effort, and commitment to hard, productive work, expressing gratitude, thanking coaches, officials, and volunteers, accepting and fulfilling role on team.



## Goal Setting

Every journey needs a destination and every team needs to have goals. It is striving for a goal that encourages players and coaches to improve themselves.

Organizational goals have been covered earlier in this document and your team goals can be developed along with the AMSA Player Development Coordinator. You are encouraged to focus on development of skills as opposed to wins and losses. Strive for improvement that is measureable and visible to the players.

Your goals should be formed with input from the team. Once you assemble them into a plan it should be presented to the team and parents. Discuss the goals again at that time and encourage feedback whenever possible.

Each goal should have a way to measure progress and/or success. Find ways to measure and track progress along the way and share with the team.

It is always a good idea at mid-season to have a meeting to remind players and parents of the team goals and where they stand in the process.

If necessary, make adjustments. If an early goal was not achieved, don't let it drag the team down. Either modify the goal or replace it with something more appropriate.

## Team Development

### Coaches/Assistants Responsibilities

Coaching a youth sports team can be an overwhelming experience if the coach is not able to delegate some of the team responsibilities. At the start of the season the coach should find volunteers to take care of various tasks necessary for the smooth operation of the team. One person may be able to handle multiple tasks however sharing the duties makes it easier for everyone and helps foster a better team experience. Emergency duties must be handled by separate individuals.

#### Typical team responsibilities

Position	Responsibilities
Head Coach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Set and deliver all team objectives and plans including schedules</li><li>• Communicate information to team players and parents</li><li>• Develop practice plans</li><li>• Lead team on field in games and practices</li><li>• Make game decisions for team</li><li>• Communication with coaches of other teams</li><li>• Coordinate assistant coaching duties</li><li>• Ensure all participants and spectators adhere to codes of conduct</li></ul>
Assistant Coach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assist Head Coach with any duties requested</li><li>• Run drills in practice, coach at bases if required in games</li><li>• Stand in when Head Coach is not available</li></ul>
Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure all team members/families are aware of upcoming events/games/practices etc.</li><li>• Ensure other roles are being fulfilled</li></ul>
Trainer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure all First Aid equipment is available and in good order</li><li>• Ensure Emergency Charge, Call and Control persons are available for team events</li></ul>
Emergency Charge Person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Certified in First Aid</li><li>• Assess injured players</li><li>• Enact emergency plan as required</li></ul>
Emergency Call Person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Call for emergency assistance on instruction of Emergency Charge Person</li><li>• Communicate between Charge and Control persons</li></ul>
Emergency Control Person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure Emergency personnel can reach injured person and have room to perform their duties</li><li>• Communicate with parents of injured player</li></ul>
Assistant Trainer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Backup if Trainer is unavailable</li></ul>
Treasurer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Track and handle all team funds</li></ul>
Coach – Parent Liaison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Act as communicator between coach and parents if needed</li></ul>
Scorekeeper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Keep score during games as directed by Head Coach</li></ul>
Fundraising Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Arrange and lead all fundraising activities</li></ul>
Social Event Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Plan and organize off field team events</li></ul>

Coaches are encouraged to submit names of all support staff to AMSA so they can be recognized for their efforts.

## Preseason Coaching - Getting Started with the Team

Take the following steps at the start of the season to ensure everyone understands the expectations.

1. Choose a practice time and location. It need not be a softball field – any open space will work. One of the benefits of coaching is that you have the ability to choose a location and time that is convenient for you.
2. Schedule a pre-season parents meeting (this could be before your first practice or at a separate time). Call or e-mail all the parents to say “hello” and inform them of the date of the meeting. Things to cover at this meeting are:
  - a) Introduce yourself & assistant coach(es) – tell them a few things about yourselves, your athletic history, your family, your coaching philosophy.
  - b) If you don’t have one already, solicit a team coordinator/manager.
  - c) Discuss equipment that players must have (cleats/gym shoes, mitt).
  - d) Discuss schedules for practices and games.
  - e) Encourage parents to check the web-site for schedules, weather, updates etc.
  - f) Discuss practice policies – why attendance and timeliness are important.
  - g) Set up phone tree and/or e-mail list.
  - h) Have the parents complete the necessary paperwork.
  - i) Review the Parent’s Code of Conduct – have parents sign it!
  - j) Discuss your expectations for the season, i.e., practices and games are fun, everyone plays, what age-appropriate skills can be taught at specific age levels.

## Coaching During the season

Plan your practices. Don’t try and “wing” it – do your homework and practices will be much more fun and useful. Spending 15-20 minutes planning your practice will pay off. Have REALISTIC expectations of what children can learn at different ages and don’t expect too much too soon.

Practices should follow a logical, consistent pattern. A suggested sequence of activities would be:

- 1) Warm up activity
- 2) Skill Introduction – demonstrate – try – demonstrate – try
- 3) Game/activity to reinforce skill
- 4) Scrimmage – “let the game teach the game”
- 5) Wrap Up

Plan more activities than you think you will need. If an activity does not seem to be working, move to the next activity.

Try to keep your instruction to a minimum. Learning will be reinforced naturally as the player masters a skill. A few comments between activities are all that most children will absorb. Again, remember to keep your directions age-appropriate.

Remember to keep it positive!

**Measure your success:**

AMSA Player Development Coordinator will provide forms to help evaluate your players' skill development throughout the season. This data will be kept over the career of the player to help tailor training in the following seasons.

In order to support the Long Term Player Development plan AMSA wants to be able to measure how the players view their experience. We encourage each team to develop a system to get feedback from the players after every team event (games and practices). Be creative in how to get this information based on the age of your players.

Ask the following questions:

**Did you improve your softball skills today?****Did you have fun today?**

By gathering this information you may also be able to identify issues early, before they become problems.

**Plan your game day:**

- 1) Make sure that parents know to arrive to a game early. We recommend at least 30 minutes ahead of the scheduled game time.
- 2) Determine which responsibilities will be taken by coaches and asst. coaches.
- 3) Plan your line-up, but be flexible. Be sure to incorporate substitutions.
- 4) Keep sideline direction to a minimum. Coaching is done 95% during practice sessions. Let the players play and don't commentate.
- 5) Focus on small victories – "nice pitch", "great hit" rather than runs.
- 6) After the game, conclude with a few positive feedback points and things to think about for the next practice or game.

**Five Keys to Being an Effective Coach**

- 1) Always be prepared – know what you want to accomplish and how you will do it in all practice and game situations.
- 2) Be flexible – if what you are doing is not working, do something else.
- 3) Good words go a long way – be positive!
- 4) Keep the energy level high – it's contagious.
- 5) Keep your eyes open and get to know your team. They are a group of individuals with specific learning and communication styles.

## Team Equipment

Coaches will be provided with an equipment bag that contains

- Practice softballs
- Game softballs
- 2-3 game ready softball bats, 2-3 additional “Practice Only” bats
- Catcher’s gear (mask/helmet combo, shin guards, chest protector, mitt)
- First aid kit including injury reporting form
- Current Softball Canada Rule Book

The team bag will be provided at an arranged pick-up date and must be returned at the conclusion of the season. It is requested that each team clean the equipment and bag prior to returning it at the end of the season.

- Due to the importance of catcher’s gear for safety of players it is recommended that a responsible person be charged with maintaining this equipment during the season. In most cases the internal padding is removable and can be washed. Talk to AMSA for more information.

Once returned, the equipment will be inventoried and then the bags are re-stocked and re-issued next season. The value of the equipment bag and its contents is approximately \$600 so please take good care of it. Please do not write your team name on the equipment.

## Team Building Activities

It is important that players and parents are able to function as a cohesive unit to make a successful season. Try to plan a few different activities, maybe not even softball related, so that everyone has a chance to get to know each other. Many long lasting friendships have been formed around a softball field.

Remember that FUN is the primary objective as long as it is done in a safe manner.

## Parent Communications

Communication with parents may be the most critical part of your job as a coach. To keep things running smoothly we encourage the following:

- Require the 24 hour rule. Parents should not contact a coach with a grievance until at least 24 hours after the incident. Often the problem seems much less important after a day has passed.
- Appoint a Coach-Parent Liaison. This person can be a parent who will bring any communications to you from other parents. Parents may be uncomfortable contacting you directly so this is a less confrontational option.
- Schedule regular parent meetings to communicate what you are doing and how they perceive it.
- Strongly encourage parents to be present for practices. They should know what the players are working on so they can help out between practices.
- Expect players to do work on their own between team events. One way is to have a Practice Signoff Sheet where parents sign to confirm the player did such training. Incentive can be used for home practice however be careful that it is entirely based on effort of the player and not game results. Incentives, when used incorrectly, can lead to selfish game play and animosity between teammates.

## Fundraising

If you intend to participate in tournaments or purchase equipment in excess of what is provided by AMSA you may need to do fundraising. If so, you should do the following:

- Appoint a Fundraising Coordinator.
- ENSURE THAT EVERYONE PARTICIPATES IN SOME WAY!
- Have fundraising activities approved by AMSA executive. The team should submit ideas to the AMSA executive as far in advance of activities as possible. The purpose is to confirm that there are not competing activities among member teams and also to ensure the activities do not adversely affect any the image, values, principles or financial affairs of AMSA.



## Skills Development

AMSA is dedicated to providing proven and effective training information to its members. Make use of the information provided and participate in coaching development activities whenever possible.

## Skill Training and Conditioning

Position and skill specific training will be provided at various points in the season by AMSA Player Development Coordinator at no extra cost to the players.

Please do your best to attend as many of these sessions as possible as well as encouraging your players to do so. It will benefit everyone in the long run.

Development appropriate training documents will be provided to each coach for them to use during the season.

## Team Practices

You will be responsible for planning and executing your team practices. We have provided a Softball Canada coaching manual with sample drills and practice plans to get you started. AMSA is following the Softball Canada Long Term Player Development Plan for training players as they advance through the various levels of our program. Please try to follow the recommendations and training progression as best you can. If you have strong disagreement with any methods or activities that are prescribed please meet with the Player Development Coordinators to discuss it.

### Principles of Practice:

- Ensure practice is developmentally appropriate.
- Clear, Concise and Correct Information.
- Start simple and move towards complex.
- Safe and Appropriate training area.
- Decision making developed through game like activities.
- Activities should have implications for the game.
- Ensure you give players breaks for water after each game like activity.
- Practice to Game Ratio: based on age of players
- Before the season starts, we encourage coaches to practice at least 2 times per week.
- Once the season starts, we encourage coaches to practice at least once a week.
- Practice is where players will improve. Games showcase areas of improvement.

**Typical U6 Practice:**

- Should not exceed 60 minutes.
- Warm-up includes movement with and without the ball. (10 minutes)
- Game like activities

**Typical U8 Practice:**

- Should not exceed 60 minutes.
- Warm-up dynamic, each player with a ball.
- Introduction of partner activities and individual skills.

**Typical U10 Practice:**

- Should not exceed 75 minutes.
- Warm-up small group activities, dynamic stretching. (10 minutes).
- Introduction of partner activities.
- Small group activities and circuits
- More situational/positional activities
- Cool down- 5 minutes.

**Typical U12/U14 Practice:**

- Should not exceed 60-90 minutes.
- Warm-up small group activities, dynamic stretching. (10 minutes).
- Introduction of large group activities (6-8 players)
- Continue on to situational/positional activities
- Cool down- 5-10 minutes.

**Typical U16/U18 Practice:**

- Should not exceed 120 minutes.
- Warm-up small group activities, dynamic stretching. (10 minutes).
- Introduction of large group activities (6-8 players)
- Continue on to situational/positional activities
- Cool down- 5-10 minutes.

## Game Play

### Sportsmanship

- 1) Harassment of the umpires by coaches, parents and spectators will not be tolerated. Coaches should only approach the umpire for an interpretation of the rule in question or a legitimate appeal. See appendix information for some commonly misunderstood rules and appeal situations.
- 2) Positive chatter is fine, but harassing or negative chatter or cheers are forbidden.
- 3) No spectators are allowed to stand or sit directly behind home plate.
- 4) No smoking on the field or in dugout by coaches or team personnel.
- 5) No coaches or spectators are allowed to stand/sit in front of dugout fence with the exception of base coaches.

### Equipment

- 1) Players must wear team provided equipment for all games. Each team receives jerseys and hats while some travel teams may also receive softball pants. Individual equipment should be matched to team equipment in colour and style as much as possible. Proper softball shoes or gym shoes with laces tied must be worn on the field for all practices and games. Rubber cleats are allowed but no metal spikes will be permitted.
- 2) Catcher must wear a mask, helmet, throat protector, chest protector, jock and shin guards.
- 3) Anyone catching for a pitcher in the park must wear a facemask. NO EXCEPTIONS!
- 4) All batters and base runners must wear a batting helmet while on the field of play.
- 5) All batting helmets in U10 or above must have an approved face mask properly attached.

### Playing Time

Local League teams should strive to have all players participate as equally as possible. Although players are encouraged to try all positions on the field, some positions (P, C, 1B, 3B) have increased levels of physical risk therefore it is the responsibility of the head coach to ensure players at these positions have been properly prepared. A coach may refuse a position to a particular player ONLY on grounds of safety and this must be communicated to the player and parents immediately. The coach should also provide a skill development plan whereby the player can at some point play the position through practice and demonstration of the required skills.

For Select and Travel teams in the South Oxford Softball League all players will be in the batting order and there are unlimited defensive substitutions. Although these teams are more competitive than Local League the head coach should manage playing time so as to be fair to all participants. Keep track of innings played and at bats for each player. All players should have the opportunity to prove their skills on the field. Any issues with playing time should be directed to the Travel Team Coordinator.

## **Game Tactics**

Remember, our association is intended for fun and player development throughout the regular season. That said, in tournaments and playoffs the coaches may give some preference to more skilled players in the interest of giving the team a better opportunity to win those games. If a player is not given the opportunity to participate in a game then that player should participate in more than 50% of the next tournament or playoff game. It is important that all players experience the competition.

Enjoy the season and celebrate the small victories along the way!

## Appendix A: Common Rule Misinterpretations

The following list covers some of the most misunderstood or misapplied rules in the game of softball. As a coach it is your responsibility to know and understand the rules of the game and it is therefore recommended that you read the rule book cover to cover at least once per year. This section will help you better understand and know how to handle situations you may find yourself in during games.

### A few general notes:

- **The decision of the umpire will be final. Questioning the judgment, fairness or ability of an umpire is unsportsmanlike and will not be tolerated.**
- **All communications with the umpires shall be done in a respectful manner**
- **Understand the rules of the game so you can discuss them intelligently.**
- **You are responsible for your spectators and their behaviour. Ensure they understand their responsibilities and they do not engage in any communication towards the umpires.**

The following items are meant as a quick reference guide but they reflect the official Softball Canada Rule Book 2015-15.

Be aware that tournaments or playdowns may have alternate or additional rules which should be supplied to you prior to the competition.

### 1. Appeal Plays

There are certain umpire calls which may be appealed by one team or the other. This is only in the case where a rule has been applied incorrectly to the situation. Judgment calls (throw beats runner, strike/ball, fair/foul) cannot be appealed.

There are also two types of appeals.

1. Live Ball Appeal – happens while the ball is still in play and before an umpire calls “TIME!”

Some potential situations include:

- Runner leaving base early on caught fly ball
- Runner missing a base
- Batting out of order

A live ball appeal must be made by a player on the infield. For a runner leaving a base early or missing a base your players may either tag the runner or the base in question. According to the rules the player must indicate to the umpire why they are making the appeal verbally (ex. “She left the base early!”) For most situations the reason is clear and the umpire will simply grant the appeal without any verbal indication but it is good practice to teach players to make the indication.

2. Dead Ball Appeal – happens after a play has been declared dead by the umpire. Some plays may cause the ball to become dead immediately.
  - Offensive Interference
  - Ball out of play

Any play eligible for a live ball appeal can also be appealed on a dead ball as long as a pitch has not been thrown to another batter or the entire infield defense has left the playing area at the end of an inning.

If you wish to make a dead ball appeal you should first ensure time is called. Approach the umpire and say that you would like to appeal the call. You must specifically state what it is that you are appealing (ex. “Second baseman obstructed my runner on the play”). The appeal must be made to the umpire responsible for making the call. If you are unsure which umpire then approach the home plate umpire first and he/she will redirect you if needed. There is no need for the ball to be put into play for a dead ball appeal. This was the case many years ago but is not currently part of the rules.

Approach in a non-confrontation manner and state your reason clearly and without exaggeration (ex. “He was 3 steps off the base before the ball was touched!”). If the umpire states that he did not see the infraction you may request that he/she consults with the other umpire in case that official had a better/different view of the play.

The umpire will give you a ruling on the play and at that point it is official. Accept the call and move on.

There will always be bad calls in the game but it is our responsibility as coaches to treat them as part of the experience and learn from them. Any responsible umpire will also review the questioned play themselves when they have an opportunity.

**Some umpire communication tips:**

- Always assume the umpire has every intention of calling the game fairly.
- Don’t try to appeal by talking or yelling from the bench. After ensuring time is called, approach the umpire.
- When appealing a call approach calmly and remain calm.
- Attempt to keep the conversation between you and the umpire. Nobody else needs to know what you are discussing. It is much easier for an umpire to ask his partner for help if he has not just been publically called out.
- Avoid face-to-face posture. Umpires will be more responsive if you turn slightly to the side while discussing.
- Don’t exaggerate. You lose credibility immediately when you do this.
- Accept the final decision and move on to your next coaching task.

- Do not accept any umpire abuse from your players or spectators. Make it clear it will not be tolerated.
- Do not show up an umpire or publicly highlight clear mistakes
- Never bring a rule book on the field to the discussion (see point above). This is grounds for ejection from the game. Do have a rulebook on hand for your own reference if unsure about a rule. Umpires are responsible for knowing the rules but especially with newer umpires there may be mistakes. They are required to make the call to the best of their ability but must do so of their own accord, not by checking a rulebook at that time.

## 2. Pitcher's Circle

The Pitcher's Circle is the area within an 8' radius of the pitcher's plate - the lines are considered within the circle.

The common misconception is that if the ball is thrown back to the pitcher and he/she has it in his/her possession in the pitcher's circle before the batter-runner reaches first base that the batter-runner must stop at first base.

Even though the ball may be in the pitcher's possession in the pitcher's circle, the batter-runner:

- May continue past first base.
- Is entitled to run toward second base, as long as he/she does not stop at first base.
- Once the runner makes a stop, he/she must immediately proceed to the next base or return to his/her base UNLESS the pitcher makes a play (including a fake throw) on the runner or another runner.

If the runner stops and simply stands there off the base while the pitcher has possession of the ball in the pitcher's circle and no play is made - "DEAD BALL - RUNNER IS OUT - LEAD-OFF".

If the runner stops and then makes a move in more than one direction immediately after the stop while the pitcher has possession of the ball in the pitcher's circle and no play is made "DEAD BALL - RUNNER IS OUT - LEAD-OFF"

Points of Emphasis:

- The pitcher cannot force the first stop by a runner merely by having possession of the ball in the pitcher's circle. Put another way - the runner is allowed one stop - as soon as he/she stops he/she must make a decision immediately to either advance or return.
- A play on the runner (including a fake throw) nullifies any penalty - put another way, every fake throw allows the runner one more stop.

Definition of a "Play on the runner" is at the discretion of the umpire. As a coach you are entitled to ask for an explanation of how the ruling was made and formally appeal if you believe the rule was not properly applied.

### **3. Left Hand Turn from First**

A runner forfeits his/her exemption from liability to be put out if, after overrunning first base, he/she makes an attempt to run to second base.

The key to this rule is continuation to second base. There must be at least an attempt towards second base. It does not matter which direction the batter-runner turns after reaching first base if they are coming back to first base without attempting to advance to second base.

### **4. Infield fly**

An infield fly is intended to protect the offensive team from the defense intentionally dropping a fly ball to gain more than one out. Since runners must retreat to the base previously occupied at the time of the pitch after a caught fly ball they are most likely to stay close to that base when the ball is expected to be caught. If a fielder drops the ball they could pick it up and force out runners who are far from the next base.

The protection for this is to have the batter declared out before the ball is caught. When this happens the runners are no longer forced to advance if the ball is not caught.

This call involves several subjective decisions by the umpires and is rarely able to be appealed.

Requirements for an Infield Fly:

- Runners on first and second base OR first, second and third base.
- Less than 2 out.
- Not a bunt.
- Not a line drive.
- Can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort this includes the, pitcher, catcher or any outfielder positioned in the infield.

In an infield fly situation, prior to the first pitch of the at bat, the umpires should give the infield fly signal to each other. When it becomes apparent that a batted ball is an infield fly (typically when the ball reaches its' highest point and is just on its' way down) the plate umpire shall declare "INFIELD FLY, IF FAIR - THE BATTER IS OUT"

Once an Infield Fly is declared:

- if the hit becomes a foul ball, no penalty, treat like any other foul ball
- if the hit remains a fair ball the batter is out regardless of whether the ball is caught or not and the ball remains alive
- the runners may advance at their own risk
- if the fly ball is caught, they must tag up
- if the fly ball is not caught, they can choose to advance but as the batter has already been declared out there is no force play

If you believe the call is not correct you may ask the umpire for clarification. Appeals may not be made on judgments of the umpire. You should ask for confirmation that the play met all of the criteria listed above for an infield fly.



## 5. Safety base

The Double Base is used at first base with the orange portion in foul territory and the white portion in fair territory. A batted ball striking any portion of the white/fair side is declared a fair ball, a batted ball striking the orange/foul portion only is declared a foul ball

The defensive player (typically the first baseman) must use only the white/fair portion of the base at all times. (see Exception below)

The offensive player must use only the orange/foul portion of the base on his/her first attempt at first base when a play is being made on him/her. This includes when the batter-runner runs on a dropped third strike. (see Exception below)

On a ball hit to the outfield with no play being made at first base, the offensive player may touch either portion of the base on his/her first attempt at first base.

Once an offensive player has touched the orange/foul portion of the base on his/her first attempt at first base, he/she must then use the white/fair portion of the base:

- when returning to the base after overrunning first base
- when taking his/her position prior to the next pitch
- when tagging up on a fly ball

Points of Emphasis:

- the defensive player - when he/she is required to use the white/fair portion, provided any portion of his/her foot is touching any portion of the white/fair portion of the base, he/she is considered to be in contact with the base
- the offensive player - when he/she is required to use the orange/foul portion, provided any portion of his/her foot is touching any portion of the orange/foul portion of the base, he/she is considered to be in contact with the base
- once the offensive player has made his/her first attempt at first base, for simplicity sake the orange/foul portion of the base no longer exists for him/her

Exception (introduced 2013)

- On any live ball play made from first base foul territory, the batter-runner and the defensive player may use either base. When the defensive player uses the foul portion of the double base, the batter-runner can run in fair territory and if hit by a throw from the foul side of first base, it would not be interference (unless it is an intentional act like throwing up their arms etc.)
- Allowing the first baseman to use the orange bag when a ball comes from first base side of foul territory may avoid collisions. It should be clear the runner or the fielder can use either base on a ball fielded on the foul side of first base. Both the runner and fielder could be touching the same base. If the fielder uses the orange base in this situation and the runner makes contact with the fielder it is interference on the runner. If both players use the white portion and the fielder causes the runner to hold up or change direction it is obstruction on the fielder.

- If you believe the exception rule was incorrectly applied you should ask for clarification on where the ball was thrown from, which base the batter-runner and fielder were entitled to and if the revised 2013 rule was applied correctly to this situation. If an umpire declares a runner out for touching the incorrect base when there is no expectation of a play at first that call may be appealed.**
- If an umpire calls a runner out for touching both bases simultaneously, that call may be appealed.**

## **6. Running Lane to First Base**

The softball field markings should include a zone which is between the first base foul line and a parallel line in foul territory which runs for the last half of the distance from home to first base. This lane is intended to prevent the batter-runner from intentionally running off course to interfere with a defensive fielder receiving a throw at first base as well as to provide the umpire with a standard frame of reference for interference calls.

The batter-runner is never under any obligation to run in the running lane, however:

- If there is a throw to first base which hits the runner while the runner is outside of this lane the runner will be called OUT.
- As long as the runner is within the running lane they are protected from this OUT call unless he/she is deemed to have intentionally interfered with the defense receiving a throw.

**This is a judgment call and cannot be appealed.**

**If a runner is called out for a running lane violation when he/she has not interfered with the defender's ability to make the catch then that call may be appealed.**

**Teach your players that when there is expected to be a play at first to run in the lane.**

## **7. Base Line vs Base Path**

Pay close attention to the terminology in this item. There are only two base lines on a softball field and their purpose is simply to determine a fair or foul ball. They have no effect on baserunners except as it pertains to the running lane at first (see above).

The base path is an imaginary line that is drawn between a baserunner and the base they are advancing towards. This imaginary line is defined at the moment in time when a defender begins to make an attempt to tag out the runner (defender must have control of the ball at this time).

From the time a base path is established the runner may not step outside a 3 foot wide path centered on this line to avoid a tag. Doing so results in being called OUT.

**This rule is very commonly misunderstood by players, coaches and umpires alike. If you believe it has been misapplied you may appeal. It is recommended to ask the following of the umpire: When was the base path established? How far did the runner go out from the established base path? The answers to these questions are both umpire judgments however**

they can lead to the rule being applied incorrectly. You may ask the umpire to consult with his/her partner however, once the call has been confirmed you have no further recourse.

## 8. Runner Hit by Batted Ball

This is a rule that is half understood by everyone but fully understood by few. If a runner is hit by a batted ball when not in contact with a base he/she will be declared OUT. The misunderstanding comes in the exceptions to this rule.

- Even a runner in contact with a base can be called out if determined to have **intentionally** interfered with the ability of the defense to make a play.
- Once a batted ball has passed an infielder (other than the pitcher) and no other player has a chance to make a play the runner is no longer automatically out. Once again intentional interference could result in an out being called. Example: Runner on first and 1B playing in front of base. Batter hits ball that goes past 1B and hits runner (who either didn't see the ball or attempted to avoid it) on the way to second. If no other infielder is in a position to make a play the ball remains alive and runners may continue to advance.

**You may appeal the ruling however if the umpire determines that the criteria for the hit runner have been met the call will stand. If the umpire is not aware of the exceptions you may ask him/her to consult with a partner.**

## 9. Dropped third strike (U12 and above only)

An out is not recorded on a strikeout until one of the following has occurred.

- The pitch has been caught legally (without touching the ground) by the catcher
- The batter-runner has been tagged while not on a base
- First base has been legally tagged by a fielder before the batter-runner reaches it safely
- First base is occupied at the time of the pitch and there are less than two outs

Until one of these conditions is met after a third strike is called the ball is live and the batter-runner may run to first base. All regular running rules apply for any baserunners. With two outs the batter-runner will force any runner on first base to advance. Instruct your catchers that on a dropped third strike with the bases loaded all runners are forced to advance and the third out can be recorded by touching home plate before the runner safely reaches it.

## 10. Foul Tips

A foul tip is a batted ball which:

- Goes directly from the bat to the catcher's hand(s); and
- Does not go higher than the batter's head; and
- Is legally caught by the catcher.

Note:

- It is not a foul tip unless caught; and
- Any foul tip that is caught is a strike.
- The ball is in play.
- It is not a catch if it is a rebound, unless the ball first touched the catcher's hand(s) or glove.

## 11. Interference/ Obstruction

This is a very complex subject and it is recommended that you read the rulebook carefully for a full understanding. Here are some general notes.

Interference:

- Typically an act by an offensive player.
- Also possible to have umpire interference and spectator interference.
- Results in "Dead Ball" being called (exception - umpire interference).
- Results in an out if by an offensive player.
- Common misconception - catcher's interference is actually catcher's obstruction.

Obstruction:

- Is an act by a defensive player.
- Results in a delayed dead ball. Umpire holds a clenched fist with a straight arm out from his body parallel to the ground to indicate.
- Award is determined at the end of the play (exception - if the obstructed runner is called out).
- An obstruction call does not entitle the obstructed runner to keep attempting to advance until played upon.
- An OBSTRUCTED runner cannot be called out between the bases where OBSTRUCTION was called.
- Umpires must determine how far the runner could reasonably have reached had the OBSTRUCTION not occurred. They may award the runner bases up to that point but the call is discretionary. After a runner has reached that point during a live play they are no longer protected by the rule. It is the responsibility of the player to understand when they are at risk to be put out. The umpire cannot give any indication of where the award will be while play is live.

Note:

- A fielder in the act of fielding a batted ball has the right of way. Runners must avoid INTERFERING with the ability of the fielder to field the batted ball.
- A fielder NOT in the act of fielding a batted ball may not OBSTRUCT a baserunner.
- Any intentional contact may result in a player (offense or defense) being called out and possibly ejected from the game.

Contact does not always mean interference or obstruction occurred. There is such a thing as incidental contact - 2 players both unsure of where to go and contact is made. Rule 8.10(c) states that the runner is not out when more than one fielder attempts to field a batted ball and the runner comes in contact with the one who, in the umpire's judgment, was not entitled to field the ball.

## 12. Overthrows

The common misconception with this rule is the old rule of "one plus one," a rule that was changed long ago. The correct ruling is that when a thrown ball goes out of play (beyond the established boundary lines of the playing field)

- all runners, including the batter-runner shall be awarded two bases from the last base legally touched at the time that the thrown ball left the fielder's hand
- if there are two runners between the same bases, the award is based on the position of the lead runner

Keys to remember with this rule:

- the award is based on their position at the time the throw was made, not at the time that the ball went out of play – difficult to call on a very long overthrow from the outfield
- the award is two bases from the last base legally touched - if a runner is returning to first base to tag up on a fly ball, they will still be awarded two bases which is second base and third base as the last base that they had legally touched was first base

This rule applies regardless of who threw the ball or from where. **It does not apply to pitched balls!**

A pitched ball leaving the playing area without being touched by the offense is a "Blocked Ball". One base is awarded to all runners from the time of the pitch.

Be aware that there may be local or league specific rules that are different but those should be covered in the pre-game ground rules conference with the umpires. This is often the case with fields lacking complete or adequate fencing.

### **13. Fair Batted Ball Going Out of Play**

When a fair ball bounces out of play, including if it deflects off a defensive player, the umpire shall declare "Dead Ball" as soon as the ball goes out of play.

- All runners shall be awarded two bases.
- The award is based on their position at the time of the pitch - not at the time that the ball went out of play.
- The award is the same regardless of where the ball actually goes out of play.
- In some situations this rule could actually end up bringing runners backwards.
- On a long rolling ground ball that goes out of play and the batter is already past second base - the batter goes back to second base.
- Same play, runner starting at first base is already past third base and on their way to score when the batted ball goes out of play, the runner is returned to third base.

This is very similar to the overthrow rule. The main difference is that the two base award is applied from the time of the pitch, not when the ball leaves the playing area. For example, a line drive that lands in fair territory but rolls out of bounds (field with no fence down the line) all runners are awarded two bases from the time of the pitch, regardless of how many bases they may have been able to reach if the ball stayed in play.

### **14. Illegal Pitch**

As a coach you should learn the pitching rules and understand their application. This is an area that most umpires are reluctant to interject unless it is severe. Generally, unless a pitcher is gaining a distinct advantage from the action it will not be called.

If you believe there is an illegal action by the pitcher you should discretely bring it up with the umpire (preferably between innings). Simply state that you feel the pitcher is getting an unfair advantage from this specific action and you would appreciate if it can be addressed. Typically the umpire, if in agreement, will talk to the offending coach and/or pitcher. Do not pursue it any further and avoid letting it become a distraction for your players. Tell them they need to find a way to get the better of the pitcher no matter what he/she is doing.

## 15. Missed Bases

Missed bases by runners are not to be called by umpires except on appeal by the defense. Tagging a runner who missed a base is considered a live ball appeal (see Item 1 of this list). When a runner misses a base and continues to the next there will be no indication from the umpire. They cannot call an out unless you properly appeal. By the rules of softball a runner is considered to have reached a base safely simply by passing by it. He is however at risk of being put out on appeal until he does touch it.

When home plate is missed the umpire will delay the call for a few seconds. If no appeal is made immediately he will indicate safe. **This is not an error, it is proper umpire mechanics!** The call is still eligible for a legal appeal. As a coach you should watch the umpire for the hesitation on the “safe” call at home.

## 16. Check Swing

If it is the plate umpire’s judgment that the batter made an attempt to swing at the ball (but not a full swing), the plate umpire shall call the pitched ball a strike. This call may NOT be appealed to the base umpire.

However, if the batter attempted to swing at the ball but the plate umpire did not see the attempt (perhaps blocked out by the catcher) then a ball shall be called. With this call, the plate umpire does have the opportunity to check with his/her base umpire(s) with or without a request from the defensive team. The plate umpire may make the request on his/her own or may choose to make the request when asked to do so by the defensive team. The key to the base umpire is that they shall only answer a check swing request made by the plate umpire - they do not respond to a request made directly to them by a defensive player. Teach your catcher to make the request of the home plate umpire.

Note that there is no physical definition for what constitutes a swing. It is simply a judgment by the umpire that the batter “attempted” to swing. Arguments about the bat crossing home plate or the wrists breaking should not be used as they only demonstrate to the umpire that you are not familiar with the rules of the game.

## **17. Batted Ball Hitting Home Plate or Any Other Base**

### Home Plate

- A batted ball remains alive and in play when it strikes home plate: This is a common misconception - many, many years ago when a batted ball struck home plate it was declared a dead ball.
- In the event that a batted ball comes to rest on home plate, it shall be ruled a fair ball and the plate umpire shall signal accordingly.
- Remember, the fair/foul lines come to the back point of home plate so the plate is completely in fair territory.

### First or Third Base

- When properly installed, first and third base are positioned on the diamond completely in fair territory.
- Once a batted ball strikes first or third base without having been first touched by a player, the batted ball shall be ruled a fair ball regardless of where the ball ends up.
- Once the ball touches first or third base it does not have to pass the base, touching the base is all that is required to make it a fair ball.

### Second Base

- Once a batted ball strikes second base without having been first touched by a player, the batted ball shall be ruled a fair ball.

## **18. Hands are Not Part of the Bat**

If a batter is hit with a pitch on the hands, it is simply a dead ball and the batter is awarded first base. Any time a batter is hit, it is ALWAYS a dead ball. If the batter is swinging and the ball contacts his/her hands first, it is a DEAD BALL/ STRIKE. If the ball contacts the batter in the strike zone...same result – if it is the third strike in either of these cases – the batter is out.

## **19. Batter's Box**

### Stepping on Home Plate

- the batter is out if any part of their foot is touching home plate when the bat contacts the ball
- the ball is dead and runners may not advance on the play.

### Stepping directly in front of Home Plate

- The batter is out if their foot is completely outside the lines of the batter's box and touching the ground when the bat contacts the
- The ball is dead and runners may not advance on the play.

### Points of Emphasis:

- There is no penalty unless the batter makes contact with the ball.



- The position of the foot must be judged at the time the bat makes contact with the ball - if the foot is in the air and then comes down on the ground after the ball is hit, there is no penalty.
- With the exception of the foot touching home plate, the foot must be completely outside the lines of the batter's box - touching any part of the lines is acceptable as the lines are part of the box
- The same penalty applies whether the batted ball is fair or foul - "Dead Ball" is called as soon as the batter makes contact with the ball.

This call is at the discretion of the umpire and can be influenced by inconsistencies of field preparation. Some batter's boxes may be incorrectly sized or positioned. If in doubt, discuss with the umpire.

A new rule in 2013 required the batter to maintain one foot in the batter's box between pitches. This requirement was waived if the batter swung at the prior pitch or was somehow forced out of the box due to the pitch or subsequent play by the defense or baserunners. The penalty is a strike call to the batter. This penalty is entirely up to the discretion of the umpire. The intent is to keep the game moving without long delays by batters so it is hoped the penalty would be very rarely enforced and players would cooperate in keeping the game moving. Umpires are still learning how to apply this rule so, please be patient and if you have concerns with the application of the rule you should discuss it with them.

## **Appendix B: Code of Conduct Documents**

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## Coaches Code of Conduct



I will:

- ✓ teach my players that rules of the game of softball are mutual agreements that no one should evade or break
- ✓ develop team respect for the ability of opponents as well as for the judgment of umpires and opposing coaches
- ✓ be professional in my manner and accept responsibility for my actions by displaying high standards in language
- ✓ display control, respect, dignity and professionalism to all involved with softball including opponents, coaches, officials, umpires, scorekeepers, administrators and spectators and encourage team players to do the same
- ✓ operate within the rules and spirit of the game
- ✓ abide by and respect the regulations governing softball and the organizations and individuals administering those regulations
- ✓ be a positive role model for softball and my athletes
- ✓ always respect game officials' decisions
- ✓ sign the Coaches Code of Conduct pledge

I will not:

- ✓ engage in, or tolerate, offensive, insulting or abusive language or behaviour to any other
- ✓ participant in the game of softball

Coach Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Coach Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## Players Code of Conduct



I will:

- ✓ play by the rules
- ✓ never argue with the officials but will comply with umpires' decisions with dignity
- ✓ control my temper
- ✓ be a good sport
- ✓ treat all players as I would like to be treated
- ✓ co-operate with my coach, team-mates, opponents, and umpires, for without them we don't have a game
- ✓ be a positive role model for softball at all times
- ✓ accept responsibility for my actions
- ✓ participate within the competition conditions and rules, and in the spirit of fair play
- ✓ refrain from offensive or abusive language or gestures
- ✓ not tolerate, participate in or respond to acts of abuse, disrespect or aggression
- ✓ remember that, as humans, we all make mistakes
- ✓ sign the Athlete's Code of Conduct Pledge

I will not:

- ✓ by my actions support the abuse of any other player, coach, umpire or other official

Player Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Player Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## Spectators Code of Conduct



I will:

- ✓ be on my best behaviour and use appropriate language when communicating with players, coaches and/or game officials
- ✓ respect the officials' decisions and teach young people to do the same
- ✓ encourage players to always play according to the rules
- ✓ support all efforts to remove verbal and physical abuse from softball
- ✓ condemn the use of violence in any form, whether it is by spectators, coaches, officials or players
- ✓ respect the rights of every participant in softball regard less of their gender, ability, cultural background or religion
- ✓ be aware of and follow the Spectator's Code of Conduct
- ✓ ensure anyone I bring to the game is aware of and follows the Spectator's Code of Conduct

I will not:

- ✓ publicly question the officials' judgment and/or honesty
- ✓ use violence, harassment or abuse

Parent Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C: Additional Resources

For any softball related questions feel free to contact the AMSA Player Development Coordinator.

The internet is a wonderful tool for learning about the technique of sports. Be aware that there is just as much bad information as good out there and always question what you are learning. It is good practice to subscribe to what is known in baseball and softball coaching circles as the Hanson Principle:

“Always compare anything anyone tells you to slow motion video of the best in the world.”

All of the following links are recommended by AMSA

### Publications:

Softball Canada Rule Book 2014-2015  
Softball Canada LTPD Guide  
Softball Canada LTPD Guide for Parents  
Softball Canada Coaches Manuals

### Websites:

#### Governing Bodies

Softball Canada: [www.softball.ca](http://www.softball.ca)  
Softball Ontario: [www.softballontario.ca](http://www.softballontario.ca)  
Ontario Rural Softball Association (ORSA): [www.ontarioruralsoftball.ca](http://www.ontarioruralsoftball.ca)  
Ontario Amateur Softball Association: [www.oasa.ca](http://www.oasa.ca)  
Provincial Womens Softball Association of Ontario: [www.ontariopwsa.com](http://www.ontariopwsa.com)

#### Softball Discussion/Chat

DiscussFastpitch.com: [www.discussfastpitch.com](http://www.discussfastpitch.com)  
Discussion board for discussion about the sport (primarily USA girls fastpitch)

#### Training Resources

New England Catchers Camp (NECC): [www.catchingcamp.com](http://www.catchingcamp.com)  
Training resource for softball and baseball catchers. Contains free and paid content

AB Athletics: <http://www.abathletics.com>  
Training resource for baseball/softball throwing, hitting and conditioning. Contains free and paid content