



GUIDE TO RUNNING A SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL SOFTBALL PROGRAM

Educate | Inspire | Retain

Tim Hatzi

0479 104 403

tim.hatzi@softball.org.au

North & West Metro

Danielle Rigg

0439 034 869

danielle.rigg@softball.org.au

Eastern Metro + Sporting Schools

Jo Schutt

0425 785 161

jo.schutt@softball.org.au

Southern Metro & Regional Vic



Contents

INTRODUCTION	2
HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?	3
WHAT DO I NEED TO PLAY SOFTBALL?	7
SUMMARY OF RULES	8
PRIMARY (YEAR 5/6): Fully Loaded Slow Pitch	8
YEAR 7 & YEAR 8: Fully Loaded Fast Pitch	9
INTERMEDIATE (Year 9/10): Fast Pitch Softball	9
SENIOR (Year 11/12): Fast Pitch Softball	9
RESOURCES.....	10
SCORING FULLY LOADED SOFTBALL	11
PLAYING AREA & FIELDING POSITIONS	12
FIELD DIMENSIONS	13
FULLY LOADED CHECKLIST FOR PRIMARY TEACHERS & COACHES.....	14
TIP FOR TEACHERS COACHING FULLY LOADED SOFTBALL (PRIMARY).....	15
FAQs FOR PRIMARY (FULLY LOADED SLOW PITCH)	17



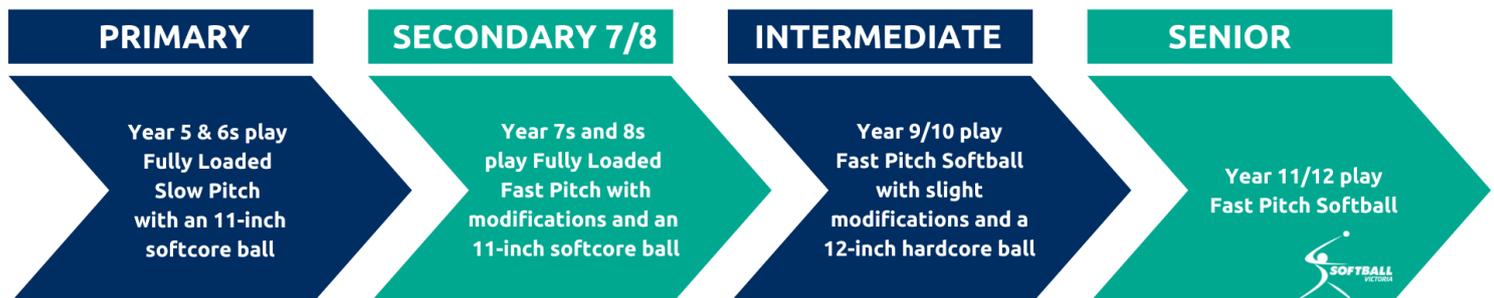
INTRODUCTION

Softball's history in Victoria dates to the early 1940s, which started in schools. The variety of benefits to its participants continue today both in clubs and the school environment.

Modifications have been made to school Softball, particularly Primary, with the aim of making the game easier to learn, more fun and to increase participation.

Our aim is to improve the Softball experience for students, teachers, and officials and ensure that Softball continues to be an option for Victorian students.

Students should have a smooth transition through their softball journey from Year 5 & 6 Primary to their senior years. The pathway enables students to graduate from a highly modified version that allows them to develop the required skills and game sense, to the traditional version of the game that's played at a senior club level, as outlined below:



Before we proceed, it's an important reminder that while Softball Victoria does not run or administer the school Softball or T-ball competitions, we highly value our partnership with School Sport Victoria and enjoy working closely with our school communities to ensure the best outcomes can be achieved.

It's vital that Sport / PE Teachers, and SSV coordinators across Victoria are aware of the support available from Softball Victoria and we encourage you to please contact us at any time.



HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?

There's a variety of ways the Softball experience can be more fun and engaging for teachers and students.

Softball Vic Participation staff have noted many SSV Softball and T-ball events across the state in our calendars and aim to attend as many as possible. If your division or district is running an event that is not on the SSV website, we'd appreciate you emailing us the details (contact details on cover page).

TRAINING & EDUCATION

Assisting students and teachers to become more knowledgeable and confident and therefore improve the experience for everyone involved:

- Through provision of resources for teachers that are easy and efficient to use including a Softball for Schools Newsletter, checklists like 'what to bring', 'how to prepare my team' and 'summary of rules' & simplified scoresheets etc. (see below)
- Through regular visits to schools by SV Participation staff to provide coaching for students
- Inviting teachers to attend online information sessions and / or attending professional development days in each region
- Attending the annual ACPHER conference and facilitating interactive sessions

Umpires & Officials:

- We are holding information sessions online each term to clarify the different rules and allow for discussion, questions etc.
- Providing support on the day of competition by giving officials 'cheat sheets' for the rules of that age group, and being present to assist
- Umpires will be provided with a set of reference cards that outline the differences between each age group



RESOURCES

FIND YOUR CHAMPIONS

- **Identify and recruit 'Softball Champions' in your Primary and Secondary school.**
This could mean getting teachers excited about the opportunities and pathways available for their students or finding a parent volunteer who has strong knowledge of the game and asking them to assist the team.

PASS IT ON

- Primary Schools can create continuity by **leveraging relationships with Secondary schools** and utilise the knowledge of students who have played the sport in previous years. Most schools offer the subject "sports Coaching" to middle school students which is a perfect way to tick multiple boxes at once.

KEEP THEM PLAYING

- Another way to improve continuity is to encourage students to choose Softball each year so they can build on the team dynamics, skills and knowledge they've gained the previous year.

TEACH THE TEACHERS

- Having more than one teacher learn about Softball will provide schools with suitable replacements if the 'Softball coach' isn't available to attend the competition.

LET'S TALK

- We will continually gather data from teachers and coordinators by conducting surveys and through conversations to discuss challenges being experienced by teachers, staff and umpires. We also welcome teachers to contact us as soon as you identify a way we can assist or improve our level of support.

WIN-WIN

- By using the resources available (and of course, getting lots of practice in) you will see the capabilities and knowledge of the students improve dramatically and therefore so will the amount of FUN they have. Quite often so much so that the students want to practice out in the yard at recess and lunch time!



WHY SOFTBALL?

DEVELOP WELL ROUNDED INDIVIDUALS AND TEAM MEMBERS

The skills involved in Softball are not just physical. The mental ‘strategy’ side of the game means it attracts those who may not be as athletic or ‘sporty’ as others and can benefit from playing a ‘smart’ game.

Of course, the physical side is also one that develops a well-rounded skillset in athletes including:

- Batting / striking
- Throwing
- Fielding
- Pitching
- Catching
- Running
-

Softball players at all levels agree that the game has a lot to offer:

1. Total Body conditioning – Softball develops multiple skills requiring upper and lower body strength and explosive movements
2. Improves flexibility & coordination
3. Builds physical endurance
4. Improves mental focus and attention
5. Builds self-esteem
6. Develops leadership skills and teamwork
7. Encourages strategic thinking
8. Softball can offer students a great pathway and provides opportunities for students to represent Victoria for SSV. There’s also community participation at a local club, to high performance in state representation or even the Olympics.



9. IT'S FUN!! When students and teachers start to develop their understanding of the game, they have an absolute blast on the diamond, which is incredibly rewarding!

ULTIMATE OUTCOMES FROM OUR PERSPECTIVE

1. **SSV REPRESENTATIVE TEAMS** - We want to see all students have the opportunity to represent Victoria at the School Sport Australia championships each year, and we want them to have the best chance of success.
2. **MORE FAMILIES JOINING LOCAL SOFTBALL CLUBS** – We'd like to see our Softball community grow.
3. **A FITTER, HEALTHIER AND MORE ENGAGED COMMUNITY** – everyone should have the opportunity to experience the benefits and quite often we see when a child joins a team, parents and older siblings wanting to play too. There's no age limit, it's perfect for ALL ABILITIES.



WHAT DO I NEED TO PLAY SOFTBALL?

EQUIPMENT FOR ALL AGE GROUPS

- 3 Bases (one with orange safety base)
- 1 Pitching plate
- At least 1 Bat
- At least 9 gloves (allow for left-handed throwers)
- Minimum of 4 Batting Helmets (5 is ideal for Fully Loaded, plus additional for students who are base coaching)

PRIMARY school teams will also need:

- 1 Ball (11 inch softcore)
- 1 Strikezone mat that is placed over Home Plate (or where it would usually be)
- 1 Tee
- 1 Catcher's face mask / helmet (minimum requirement)

SECONDARY school teams will also need:

- Year 7 & 8 – 11inch Softcore ball
- 1 Home Plate (regular diamond layout so home plate is used instead of the strike zone mat)
- Full catchers set (leg and chest guards, face mask /helmet)

WHAT ELSE TO BRING

- A copy of the rules as published on the SSV website
- Enough scoresheets for all games (best to bring extras)



SUMMARY OF RULES

PRIMARY (YEAR 5/6): Fully Loaded Slow Pitch

MODIFIED Softball rules with loaded bases at the beginning of each innings

- Slow pitch uses a 'strike zone mat' that covers home plate (100 x 90cm)
- The pitch must travel in a rainbow shape, going over the batter's shoulder at some stage during flight, and must land on the strike zone mat for it to be a strike
- There are no walks, if the pitcher delivers THREE 'balls' the batter hits off the Tee
- Batter swinging and missing or a foul ball also count as strikes as per the usual rules of softball
- The catcher (backstop) stands approximately 4m from the Strikezone mat, well clear of the batter. They must come to the FRONT of the mat for any play at home and allow space behind them for the runner to attempt to cross the mat safely. Catcher's must wear a protective mask, other protective gear is recommended but not compulsory
- No tagging, all force plays (beat the runner to the base with the ball), if runner passes half way on the base path they must advance and will be called out if the fielder has the ball on the base in front of them, however they can retreat if the base is occupied by another runner
- Runners can advance on a caught ball (no need to "tag up")
- Start with loaded bases (innings 1, batters 7, 8 & 9 start on base, innings 2, batters 1,2 & 3 start on base, innings 3, batters 4, 5 & 6 start on base)
- All 9 batters hit, batting team announces when the 9th batter is about to have their turn, the 9th batter must attempt to run all bases and return home to make a run, if the fielding team makes an out on any runners ahead of the 9th batter play stops. In most cases the fielding team try to get the ball back to home plate as quickly as possible
- No dropped 3rd strike – 3rd strike batter is out
- No infield fly rule
- 11-inch softcore ball



YEAR 7 & YEAR 8: Fully Loaded Fast Pitch

Regular Softball rules with loaded bases at the beginning of each innings

- Normal strike zone for pitching applies and the catcher plays the usual position attempting to catch the pitch. Catcher's must be in full protective gear
- Usual Softball rules of 4 'balls' being pitched awards the batter with a 'walk'
- Start with loaded bases (innings 1, batters 7, 8 & 9 start on base, innings 2, batters 1, 2 & 3 start on base, innings 3, batters 4, 5 & 6 start on base)
- Dropped 3rd strike is an automatic out
- No infield fly (runners tag up and run if the ball is dropped)
- 9th batter rule – 9th batter must reach first base for their run to count and any other runners on base who are not put out by the defensive team, also count as a run
- 11-inch softcore ball

INTERMEDIATE (Year 9/10): Fast Pitch Softball

Regular Softball rules with the following 2 modifications

- Dropped 3rd strike is an automatic out
- No infield fly (runners tag up and run if the ball is dropped)
- 12-inch regular softball

SENIOR (Year 11/12): Fast Pitch Softball

Regular Softball rules

- Dropped 3rd strike is played out as per usual rules - with less than 2 out, if 1st base is occupied and the 3rd strike is dropped, the batter is automatically out. However, if 1st base is not occupied and the 3rd strike is dropped by the catcher, the batter is still 'alive' and the catcher must quickly retrieve the ball and either tag the batter (if still in proximity) or throw to 1st base to make the out. The batter should be aware of the game situation, identify the catcher dropped the 3rd strike and attempt to advance to 1st base. If the batter walks towards the bench instead of 1st base they are out.
- Infield fly is in play (when there's a forced play at 3rd base e.g. runners on 1st & 2nd base or loaded bases, with less than 2 out, if a ball is hit in the infield that can be caught with reasonable effort, the umpire must call "infield fly" and the batter is automatically out. All runners can remain on their base or advance at their own risk
- 12-inch regular (hard) softball



RESOURCES



HOW TO RUN A FULLY LOADED GAME AT YOUR SCHOOL HERE:

<https://fullyloadedsoftball.com.au/school-resources>

FUN GAMES AND TRAINING DRILLS CAN BE FOUND HERE:

<https://www.softballbatterup.com.au/> (requires sign up & login)



SCORING FULLY LOADED SOFTBALL


**FULLY LOADED SOFTBALL
SCORESHEET**

DATE: _____ ROUND: _____

TEAM 1: _____ TEAM 2: _____

BATTING POSITION	PLAYER NAME	INNINGS 1		INNINGS 2		INNINGS 3	
		1st batter	2nd batter	3B	7th batter	4th batter	8th batter
1		2nd batter	3rd batter	1B	9th batter	6th batter	3B
2		3rd batter	4th batter	2nd batter	8th batter	2B	1B
3		4th batter	5th batter	3rd batter	7th batter	1st batter	2nd batter
4		5th batter	6th batter	4th batter	6th batter	3rd batter	1st batter
5		6th batter	7th batter	5th batter	5th batter	2nd batter	1st batter
6		7th batter	8th batter	6th batter	4th batter	1st batter	2nd batter
7		8th batter	9th batter	1B	3rd batter	2nd batter	1st batter
8		9th batter	1B	2nd batter	4th batter	3rd batter	1st batter
9		1B	2nd batter	3rd batter	5th batter	4th batter	3rd batter
RUNS THIS INNINGS							
TOTAL RUNS							

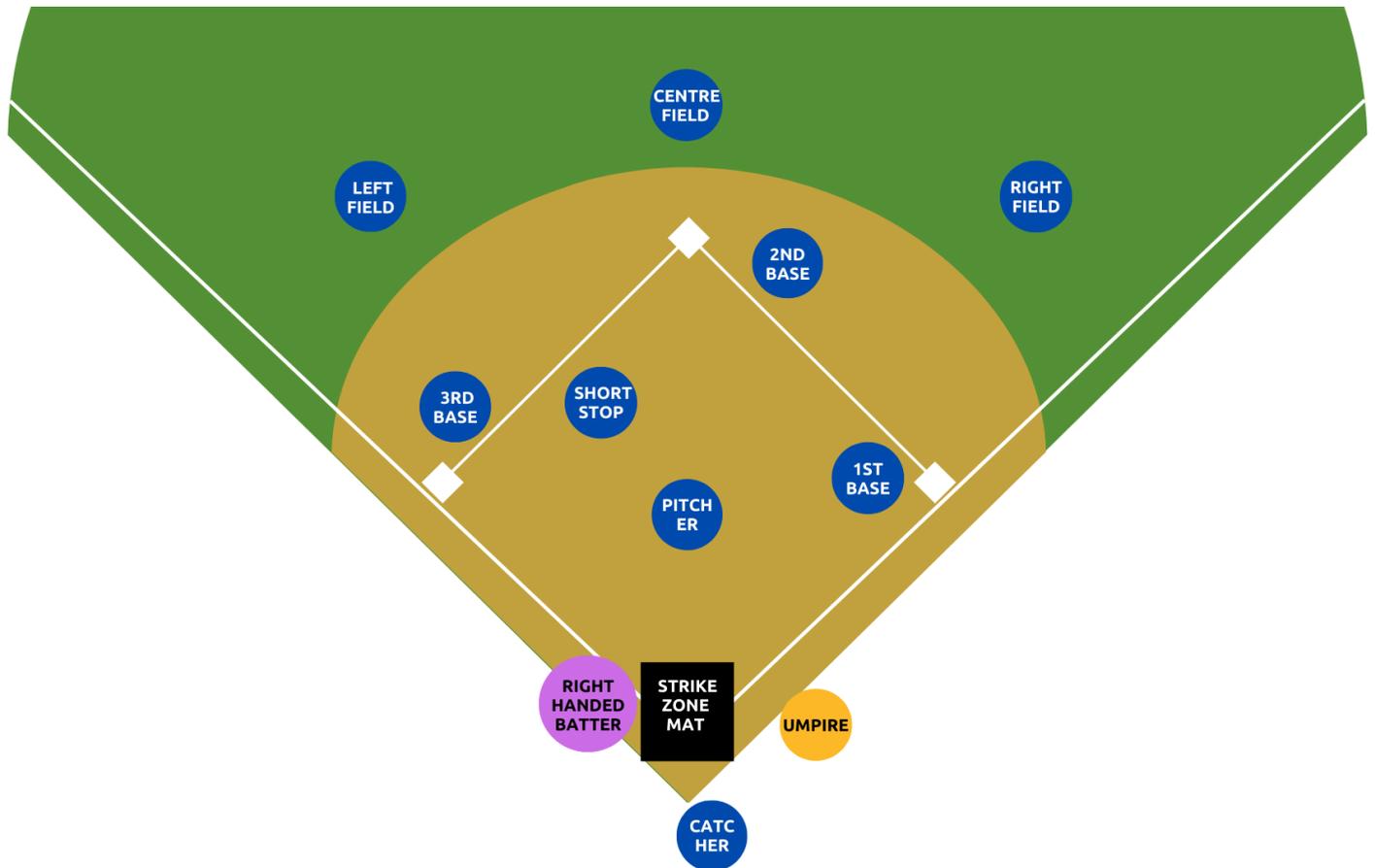
FINAL SCORE: TEAM 1 TEAM 2

SCORING GUIDE:

- 3B, 2B & 1B indicates which base the runners start on at the beginning of each innings (e.g. 1st, 2nd or 3rd base)
- Players need to stay in their batting order throughout the game (write number on their hand to help them remember)
- Place a TICK if the runner safely touched all bases and crossed the strike zone mat to SCORE A RUN
- Place a CROSS next to the runner if they were OUT
- Teams can make a maximum of 12 runs per innings (you count the runners that start on bases if they come home)
- If you have more than 9 batters you must still only bat 9 per innings but can interchange players each innings.
- If substituting a player, draw a line through the name of the batter being replaced and enter the new batter's name.
- Players can go back into the game once they had an innings off, these players replace the next person coming off
- Teachers / coaches to keep score for opposition team as well as their own, then confer in the middle of every innings



PLAYING AREA & FIELDING POSITIONS



NOTES:

This is only an example of where you might like to place your defensive team, however there are a few important things to note:

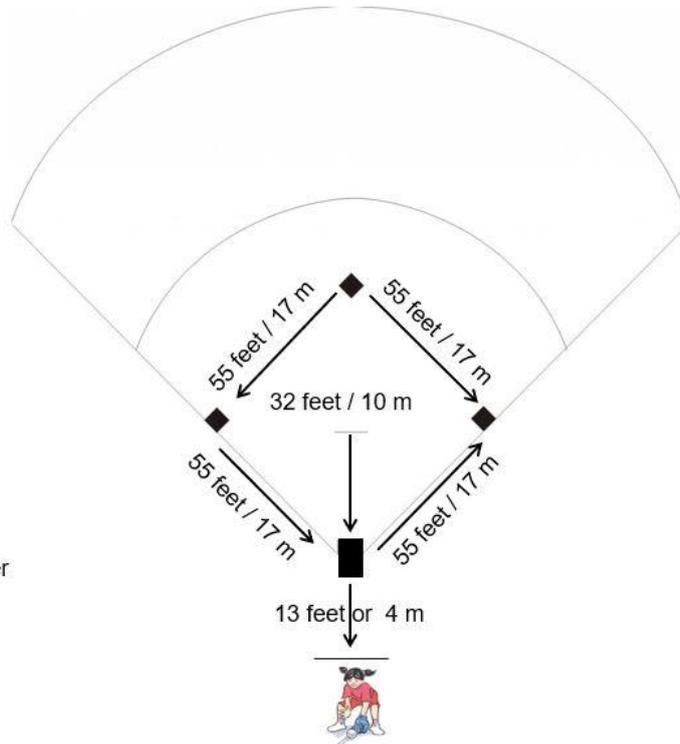
- Fielders are not standing ON the base, but near the base waiting to field the ball.
- Fielders playing in a base position, only need to be near the base if a play is being made there
- No fielders are standing ON the base PATHS (white lines between 1st and 2nd and 2nd to 3rd are only in place to demonstrate) – unless a fielder is in the act of fielding a ball, they must leave a clear path for the base runner
- For safety reasons, the umpire and catcher are to the front side of the batter because if a bat is accidentally thrown, it will usually land to the back side of the batter!
- Fielding teams must have 3 'outfielders' = Left field, centre field and right field.



FIELD DIMENSIONS



Primary School - Junior Diamond Sizing



For competitions:

- Fully Loaded T Ball
- Fully Loaded Junior Slowpitch

Pitching distance: 32 feet or 10m

Base paths: 55 feet or 17m

Note: Avoid being hit by an accidentally thrown bat, the catcher (back stop) should be a minimum of 4 meters behind the batter and should also be wearing a face mask





FULLY LOADED CHECKLIST FOR PRIMARY TEACHERS & COACHES

What do I need to bring to a game of Fully Loaded Slow Pitch?

ITEM	COMMENTS	PACKED
BATTING TEE	Tees are used in Fully Loaded Softball when a batter faces 3 balls (instead of getting to first base automatically)	
HELMETS X 5	One for each base runner, one for the batter, one for the batter 'on deck' (batter who is next batter in line)	
BATS	A range of sizes to suit the height and strength of the players on your team	
GLOVES	At least one for each player, making sure there are 2-3 gloves for left hand throwers. Students may have identified their favourite glove during practice, some schools allow them to put their name on them so they are responsible for it	
CATCHER'S GEAR	only a face mask is compulsory for Primary, chest protector and leg guards are recommended	
MATCH BALLS	Primary use an 11-inch RIB (Reduced Injury Ball) / Softcore ball. Ensure you include sufficient balls for students to warm up / practice	
STRIKE ZONE MAT (90mm x 100mm)	Bunnings have a Matpro piece of rubber that you can cut in half giving you two mats at the correct size, or use a piece of synthetic grass)	
SCORESHEETS, CLIPBOARD & PEN	Two sheets per game (or one double sided) as you also need to score the opposing teams runs and confer at each half innings	
A PRINTED COPY OF THE FULLY LOADED SOFTBALL RULES	https://ssv.vic.edu.au/Downloads%20Library/FullyLoadedSoftballJuniorSchoolPlayingRulesDec2019.pdf	
FIRST AID KIT	Some events / venues will provide these but as with all sports, it's best to be prepared with an instant icepack on hand if required	



TIP FOR TEACHERS COACHING FULLY LOADED SOFTBALL (PRIMARY)

In addition to the rules and regulations:

Batters must stay in their batting order for the entire game.

- Innings 1 – Batters 7, 8, 9 start on base, batter 1 bats first
- Innings 2 – Batters 1, 2, 3 start on base, batter 4 bats first
- Innings 2 – Batters 4, 5, 6 start on base, batter 7 bats first

To help everyone keep on track with the batting order, bring a black Texta and write their batting order number on each student's hand. Keep them in the same batting order for the whole day.

BASE RUNNING:

- The safety base is for the runners, the white base is for the fielder.
- Teach your students to run **through** FIRST base, touching the YELLOW or ORANGE 'safety' base on the way through.
- After the runner has safely made it to first base, they then take off from the white base.
- If runners go past 2nd or 3rd base and a fielder is standing on that base with a ball, they will be called OUT, so teach students to stop ON 2nd and 3rd base
- Run through the Homeplate area touching the BACK of the strike zone mat, leaving the front for the catcher
- Students are permitted to 'base coach' for their team during their batting innings. This can help players to improve their base running. Any student base coaches must be wearing a batting helmet and be at least 3m away from the diamond.

FIELDING:

- A fielder should stand AWAY from the bases while fielding and only run to the base if there is a play to be made there (i.e., a fielder is throwing them the ball to attempt an 'out').
- Runners must NOT run through 2nd or 3rd base, if they do run over the base and a fielder is standing on that base with possession of the ball, the runner will be called 'out' by the umpire.
- Tell ALL your fielders to ensure they are not blocking the base paths and therefore hindering base runners.



- Catchers should be approximately 4m back from the Strikezone mat when the ball is being pitched. After any hit that has been made into the field, the catcher should move to the FRONT of the Strikezone mat for any play at 'home'. The runners coming home to score then have the rest of the mat.

PITCHING

- We teach students to aim to make a RAINBOW with the ball
- Step forward with the opposite foot to what they throw with
- Release the ball out in front, either with their palm up to start with
- Once they get the hang of it, some students like to experiment with releasing the ball with their palm down

BATTING

- Athletic stance with feet wide (shoulder width apart and knees slightly bent)
- Feet should be lined up along the edge of the strike zone mat facing side-on to the pitcher
- Hands TOGETHER on the bat at the very end (ideally), not half way up the handle of the bat
- Making door knocking knuckles (knuckles lines up on both hands)
- Raise the bat up to their back shoulder
- Step into the ball (towards the pitcher) as they stride to swing the bat
- Swing hard following through all the way around their body with the bat
- Place the bat down (DO NOT THROW IT) and run fast to 1st base



FAQs FOR PRIMARY (FULLY LOADED SLOW PITCH)

WHAT CONSTITUTES A STRIKE OR A BALL?

1. For a pitched ball to be called a strike, the following two things must happen
 - a. it must go higher than the batter's shoulder 'at some point during the pitch' – we teach the kids to try to make a rainbow with the ball and,
 - b. the ball **MUST** land on the Strikezone mat
2. IF a batter swings at ANY pitched ball and missed (regardless of whether it is the right height or hits the mat) – it is deemed a STRIKE
3. A FOUL ball (a ball that is hit and lands outside the fair territory lines – home to first base and home to 3rd base) is also a strike, if there are less than two strikes on the batter. If a batter has 2 strikes on their pitch count and they hit another foul ball, this does not count as anything.
4. If the batter is standing on the Strikezone mat and gets hit by the pitched ball, this is a strike

CAN THE BATTER STAND ON THE STRIKEZONE MAT?

- The batter should stand with their toes up to the edge of the mat, standing side on to the pitcher. If they stand on the mat and hits the ball, this is fine, the ball is in play. If they stand on the mat and get hit by the pitched ball, this is deemed a strike.
- A **"BALL"** is any pitch that the umpire deems not high enough (did not go over the batter's shoulders or does not land on the strike zone mat.

DOES THE BATTER ADVANCE TO 1ST BASE IF HIT BY A PITCH?

- No, this is called a "ball" and the batter continues their time at bat.

ARE THERE ANY "WALKS" IN FULLY LOADED SLOW PITCH?

- No, to increase the pace and participation, if the batter faces 3 "balls" during their bat, they hit from the Tee.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER 3 BALLS?

- The batter will then hit from the tee.

WHEN THE TEE IS USED HOW MANY ATTEMPTS AT HITTING THE BALL DO THEY GET?



- They cannot strike out; the batter keeps attempting until they hit a 'fair' ball.

When does a play stop?

- When the ball is returned to the pitcher, play stops and runners must stop advancing on bases.

IF SOMEONE IS A BIG HITTER AND SMASHES IT OVER EVERYONE'S HEAD OUT TO WHERE CONES WOULD BE IN A NORMAL GAME HOW FAR CAN THEY RUN?

- Play continues until the ball is back to the pitcher.

DO FIELDERS HAVE TO TAG?

- No, if a fielder tags a player they are NOT out. Fielder's must get the ball to the base that the runner is attempting to advance to.

CAN RUNNERS OVERRUN THE BASES?

- No, if a runner makes it safely to a base, but overruns the base and the fielder has possession of the ball while standing on the base, the base runner can then be called out by the umpire.
- The exception here is 1st base, where base runners can 'run through' the base (touching the orange base on the way through) and then return to take off from the white base.

CAN RUNNERS 'GET A LEAD' OR STEAL BASES?

- No, they must not leave the base until the ball is HIT into play

CAN A RUNNER GO BACK TO THE BASE THEY CAME FROM ONCE THEY'VE PASSED IT?

- Yes, but only if they have not passed the halfway mark (this is a subjective mark that will be determined by the umpire). If they pass half way, they must keep going.
- The only exception to this, is if the base in front of the runner is occupied by another base runner. E.g. if a runner attempts to advance to the next base, makes it almost to that base but the runner ahead of them has not advanced, they can go back to the base they came from, however they can still be put out by the fielders while attempting to go back.



DO RUNNERS HAVE TO 'TAG UP' ON A FLY BALL?

- No, if the ball is hit in the air and caught by a fielder, runners do not have to advance but can if they please, without 'tagging up' – this means they can just run to the next base when the ball is hit!
- NOTE: "Tagging Up" is one of the more difficult rules for players to learn when they are new to the game. Removing this rule has created less confusion for students and teachers, therefore creating a greater level of enjoyment and participation overall.

DO THE OUTS MATTER OR DO YOU JUST KEEP BATTING UNTIL EVERYONE HAS HAD A GO?

- The 'outs' matter in the sense that the more outs the defensive team can get, the less runs the offensive team can make. However, each team goes through NINE batters per innings. With 3 runners starting on base each innings the batting team can make a total of 12 runs if none of their batters or base runners go out during that innings.

WHAT IS THE PITCHING DISTANCE AND BASE DISTANCE?

- Pitching distance is 32 feet / 10m
- Base paths are 55ft / 17m

HOW LONG DOES A GAME GO FOR?

- Games are usually a duration of 45 to 60 minutes, depending on the convenor, with the aim of completing 3 innings per game.

IF ONLY ONE TEAM HAS A SECOND INNINGS, DOES IT COUNT?

- No, usually you would attempt to have a minimum of 2 innings (3 is achievable) but if the teams have not had an even amount of hitting and fielding opportunities then the score 'reverts back' to the last equal innings.

Example

Innings 1: school 'Z' bats (makes 6 runs), school 'Y' fields

Innings 1: school 'Y' bats (makes 8 runs), school 'Z' fields

Innings 2: school 'Z' bats (makes 4 runs), school 'Y' fields

Innings 2: school 'Y' bats (makes 7 runs), school 'Z' fields

The score is now School 'Z' = 10 to School 'Y' = 15

Top of innings 3: school 'Z' bats and makes 6 runs, school 'Y' fields



Time runs out and school Y does not get to have their 3rd bat, so the last 6 runs that school 'Z' made do not count towards their score – the score 'reverts back' to the last complete innings.

WHAT DO YOU DO IF THE SCORE IS TIED AT THE END?

- This will generally be up to the convenor and will depend on the weight of the game. Often it will not matter and the score gets recorded as a tie. However, if the game being played is going to determine whether a team advances to the next round or play in a final, a tie breaker innings will be played.
- The score must be tied after even innings have been completed for a “tie breaker” to be played.
- **A TIE BREAKER** is a shortened innings where each team has 3 batters, this can be any 3 players and they also select any 3 players to start on the bases.
- The fielding team can select any pitcher (even if they have previously pitched).