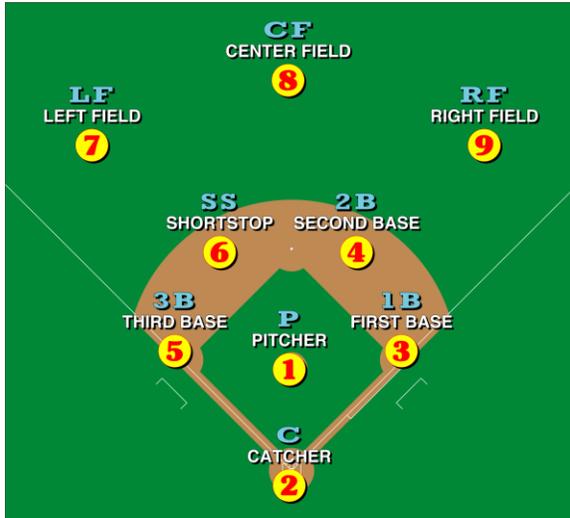


DEFENSE

- There are 9 positions on the softball field labeled as follows



THROWING MECHANICS

- Dynamic throwing warmup
 - Wrist flicks, wrist snap is super important for a strong, fast accurate throw.
 - Have arm out in front, thrower should be able to see the back of their hand, keep elbow up, place glove at elbow to isolate wrist.
 - Hold ball in fingertips and when partner is ready snap ball down letting the ball roll off fingertips, get the ball to have as much spin as possible.
 - Finish with fingertips pointing at the ground





- Feet Stuck in the mud, Upper Body only
 - Take about 4 to 5 steps back from your partner
 - Have chest and toes facing partner
 - After catching the ball, with two hands, bring the ball back making sure the ball is facing away, feed the dragon, have arm bent slightly.
 - When player looks back should be able to see finger tips
 - After checking the ball, look at partner's target and have throwing arm come up and over the top of front shoulder, like you are buckling yourself into a car, no side arm throws, inaccurate throws and causes injury
 - Aim for partner's chest
 - Should keep feet and chest facing partner the entire time, making sure to just isolate and warm up the upper body.
- Full Throws, Footwork
 - Take a few more steps back from your partner
 - After catching the ball, with two hands incorporate foot work
 - If righty thrower you take your first step with your right foot, lefty take first step with your left.
 - The first step is taken at a bit of an outward angle in front of the body, think stepping on a line
 - The instep allows players to be quicker and more efficient when turning their body into the ready position
 - Take next step with opposite foot, as taking next step turn body into ready position



- Have ball facing away
- Elbow up having elbow or glove point at target
- When throwing throw up and over the top like you are buckling yourself into a car.
- When throwing you can allow that back foot to come through

GROUND BALL MECHANICS

Ready Position



- Start with feet a bit wider than shoulder width apart
- Make sure players are not flat footed, have them be on the balls of their feet, it allows them to be more mobile and more athletic
- Glove should be out in front of the body, if the player were to look down feet and glove make a triangle with the glove being the tip.
- Glove should be on the ground
- The player should have bent knees and a flat back, the player should be able to see what is happening in front of her.
- Throwing hand should be up away from the glove, usually near the chest or face

Approach to the Ball

- When approaching the ball first step should be with your glove foot
- Stay low
- Come through the ball, body and glove
- Watch the ball all the way into the glove
- Try to field the ball in the center of your body
- Always try to attack the ball, don't give ground, don't back up, charge the ball
- If the ball is not directly to you, laterally shuffle from side to side, remember to stay low
- One the ball has been fielding cleaning go right into the proper footwork (*Refer to throwing mechanics*)

Forehand and Backhand

- Forehand
 - A forehand is when the player fields the ball to the glove side of her body



- Backhand
 - A backhand is when the player fields the ball to her throwing arm side





DEFENSIVE GAMES

- Ground balls through legs no glove
 - working on lateral shuffles, staying low and making sure the ball go's right between their legs, no hitting feet if it does it means they should have shuffled more
- Lateral shuffle cones, ground balls
 - Works on shuffles and quick reactions
 - One player stands between the cones at a time
 - Roll the ball in between the two cones, testing each side, forehand and back hand
 - As the game progresses pick up the pace as to how quickly and where you roll the balls
 - Ball gets behind the cones player is out
- Square Cone Game
 - Set up 4 cones in a 10 by 10 square
 - Be about 5-7 feet away from the square with buckets of balls
 - One player stands in the middle of the square at a time
 - Toss the balls in a short pop up to any part of the inside part of the square, it is the players job to catch all balls that fall within the square
 - Make sure the player is moving her feet, catching the ball with two hands and catching the ball as high as she can, working on hand I coordination
 - When the game progresses start to pick up the speed and difficulty
 - Once the player drops the ball she's out
- Target practice
 - Use an object as a target, we use a basketball at the facility
 - The players will be in a line a distance away from the target, the distance is up to you, shorter distances for players who are still improving their accuracy and longer distances to help increase arm strength in addition to accuracy
 - You hit or roll ground balls or pop ups to the player
 - Player will be aiming at the target, if she hits it off has to run down to put it back on
 - You can format this game in a lot of different ways, with time limits, team or individual goals, if they do not meet the goal you can give them a learning exercise, like push ups 😊
- Knock out
 - Players line up at least 30 feet away from the coach
 - One player goes at a time
 - Coach will hit or roll ground balls or pop up to the players
 - If the play fields the ball with a good throwback to the coach, she stays in, if the ball gets by the player she is out and can either wait until the game is over or do a learning exercise



- As the rounds increase make the balls harder and faster to field, try to test their range, can also get harder by eliminating them if they bobble the ball or make a bad throw
- Last player standing is the winner

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HITTING

Every players swings are going to be different, but there are key things to look out for.

1. **Stance**- starting shoulder with apart (at least)
2. When their **hands** are on the bat, do they have knocking knuckles?
3. Do they **load**? Do they put their weight on their back leg?
4. Watch their **pivot**, are the squishing the bug with their back leg?
5. Their bat should come thru the zone level.

Main parts of the swing are:

Stance: balanced, weight down the middle of our body. We have knocking knuckles on the bat with a loose grip (no white knuckles) and our feet should be shoulder width apart.

Load: load all of our weight to the back foot, with bend in our knees.

Step: We want to take a small step (on our toe—TOE TOUCH) but keeping our weight back.

Knob to the ball: our hands are led by the knob of the bat to the strike zone. We don't want

to drop our hands or chop at the ball, want to come through the zone level.

Squish the bug: pivot our back foot on the ball of our foot, with power. Weight is still back.

Finish: our bat should finish at our shoulder. The idea is shoulder to shoulder with our bat

and head

EYES ON THE BALL: players should be watching the ball from the pitchers hip until contact.



- We want to go in the boxes with our weight neutral or down the center of us (1st left picture). When we go to hit the ball, we want to load our weight back (2nd left picture). Notice the back elbow is up in right picture, she has an upside down “v,” very important.
- Bad part of the 2nd left picture is the bat head is behind her head, if we wrap the bat it is farther away from zone and takes longer.
- The right photo is what we should look like at contact. Level bat, with our weight back, squishing the bug, and our eyes are down looking at the ball.

BUNTING

Bunting Basics

1. Square around early, we **pivot on both feet** so we are facing the pitcher. You can also have your back foot come forward, but be careful the feet are still in the box. It is more effective and easier to teach where both feet pivot on the balls of your feet.
2. Slide our top hand down the bat, just before the bat gets to be "fat." Some Easton bats have a double line on the bat, that's where they should be pinching. **FINGERS AREN'T WRAPPED AROUND THE BAT.** Our fingers should be almost in a fist, with our thumb on top of the bat.
3. Start the bat at the top of the strike zone, right underneath your eyes. When we start here, we are coming down to meet the ball so the ball will go down, if we start down and push up then the ball goes up.
4. We **bend our knees** to the ball, never dropping just the bat or dropping the bat head down. We want to keep the bat level when we are bunting the ball to make sure it is not popped up.

**Many coaches now are teaching girls to bunt with the bat head above the knob at an angle. They do it for two reasons; when they hit the ball with an angle it increases the chances of putting the ball down. The other reason is when a lot of girls go to meet a low ball, their bat head will angle down instead of flat. If they start with an angle in their bat, when they meet it they will be level.
5. The idea of bunting is to "**catch**" the ball with the bat. Players should not be moving the bat forward when they bunt, instead giving a little with it.



Next Step Bunting

- When the girls are able to get down a sacrifice bunt (which are the basic bunts), then there are other bunts you can add to it.
 - Bunt for a hit: you square around as late as possible (usually when the pitcher is just after 12 o'clock)



- Squeeze Bunt: when there is a runner on 3rd, the batter must put down the bunt (no matter where it is pitched), because the runner is coming home. For this bunt you can square a little later than you would for a sacrifice bunt.
- Push bunt: this is a bunt when you are trying to get it past the corners. The idea is in-stead of “catching” the ball, is push it to where you want it to go. *For younger players this may be over the head and teach them the wrong idea of bunting!*
- Aiming a Bunt: when they understand how to get the bunt down, the next step would being able to bunt it down 1st and 3rd base. Usually you never want to bunt to a pitcher. To do this all you need to do it to angle you bat. To go to first base side your bat head should be behind your hands; while going down to third base, your bat hand should be in front of your hands at contact.

BASERUNNING

Running an “infield single” out:

- We want to run in a straight line out of the box, when it is hit to the infield.
- Always running to the orange bag (when there is one), and hitting the front of the bag! *Front of the bag means your hitting the closest point you can run too.*
- **Run through the bag.** If we were to try to stop on the bag, you slow down before hitting the bag. We don't want to slow down until two or three steps after we touch the bag.
- Once we run through, you want to turn to foul side or towards the base coach and head back to first base.



Running out a “outfield single:”

- When we notice the ball out in the outfield, instead of running straight to first we want to “buttonhook.” *The quickest distance between two points is a straight line. Instead of running down to first and making a 90 degree turn, if they get out big they will make it more like a circle.*
- When they make contact with first base their foot should be hitting the inside corner of the **white bag**, not the orange one.
- The ball hit to the outfield, you want to take a turn— meaning you want to go about two or three steps past first base. We do this in case there is a bobble or the girl missed it



Reminders

- Running into 2nd and third, you must stop on the bag. When they are old enough and they can't stay on the bag, encourage sliding
- Always tagging on a pop-flies with less than 2 outs. You want their first reaction to be back to the bag.
 - They can't leave before the fielder has caught the ball
 - For most ages, the coaches should be telling the runners when to leave the bag (*usually by saying go*). Extremely important with a runner on third and she can't see behind her.
 - **For advanced players:** If the ball is not a high pop up, but between a line drive and pop-up, have the players turn to the ball. They take their lead and then will turn to the outfield to see if they catch it and if not maybe take off
 - to the next bag.



- **Sliding**
 - Sliding should be learned in practice— best time and place to do it is after rain in the grass or just when the grass is wet.
 - Idea is “figure four” —- one leg is under you while the other is straight out. For the girls with sliding pads the pad should be on the bent on, protecting the knee cap.
 - They want to slide before they hit the bag, and need to be thinking sliding about half way between the base path.
 - Hands should not be on the ground, you want the hands in the air for 2 reasons. Don’t want to jam hands and wrists into the ground and also so they are able to call time.
 - You don’t want to plop on to the ground, it should be slowly going down. When your running you want to be getting lower and lower to the ground.
 - If someone is not comfortable with sliding during a game. Do not force them. They can get hurt.