

# Tee Sox & Rookie Sox Rules + Modified Games



**GRASS ROOTS SOFTBALL**  
Produced by the New Zealand Softball Association Inc



# Introduction

This resource has come about largely due to the desire for Associations to adopt a consistent set of junior softball rules and modified games for younger players just learning to play softball.

The modified games described in this booklet have been created for youngsters from a very young age to junior college students. The games have been developed following consultation with coaches and associations around New Zealand. Games have been modified to provide a more suitable playing field dependant on the age and capability of the player. The rules are recommended for you to incorporate in your own leagues.

The young child or junior athlete plays our game primarily for fun, enjoyment, participation and to interact with others. It is our responsibility to ensure that those needs are met so that the child continues to play softball to a higher level. By providing modified games of softball, youngsters are in an environment where everyone can experience a measure of success and are therefore more likely to remain in the game.

I hope you have success and fun in the delivery of these games to your junior members and coaches.

Thank you to the many coaches, parents, administrators & volunteers who give willingly of their time to help softball develop. The success of softball at this development level is reliant on your enthusiastic and wonderful contribution to our game. I encourage you all to further develop your own skills through the Softball New Zealand Coach Development Pathways. Contact your Association or Softball New Zealand for more information.

Glen Roff  
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## T-Ball

**Age 5-8 years:** Focus on FUN & PARTICIPATION, not competition

**Equipment Required:** Hitting tee, small/medium bat, 11+flexball, set of bases including safety base, pitching strip, home plate, gloves, helmets & catching equipment optional, but recommended.

**Rules:** Rules may vary from Association to Association so it is important that you also obtain a copy of your local association rules. The rules listed here are recommended by Softball New Zealand in order to keep the game simple and allow for children aged between 5 to 8 years to enjoy the game in a non-competitive environment.

- ❑ Base Distance: 10 metres.
- ❑ The home plate shall be placed immediately behind the hitting tee so that runners do not collide with the tee, fielders or the ball.
- ❑ A safety base (an extra base placed on the outside of 1st base) will be used so that runners do not collide with the 1st base fielder.
- ❑ T-Ball is a mixed gender game, particularly suitable for 5 to 8 year old children. A team will consist of a minimum of 7 and a maximum of 12 players.
- ❑ Every player present shall be placed on the field for a minimum of a batting & fielding innings each during the course of a game.
- ❑ Use fielding positions to determine your batting order. The order will be; Pitcher, Catcher, 1st base, 2nd base, 3rd base, shortstop, left field, centre field & right field.
- ❑ It is OK to have one extra outfielder. This player will occupy the position following right field in the batting order.
- ❑ Players must rotate positions in order to learn different positions. Ensure that boys do not dominate key positions.
- ❑ There are no specific rules regarding bat throwing. However encourage batters to drop the bat, rather than fling it once they have hit the ball off the tee.
- ❑ Stay on the base until the ball; has been hit (no stealing)
- ❑ Deliberate short hits (bunting) are not allowed.
- ❑ If a team is short of players, then they can borrow players from the opposition if necessary to balance the number of players in each team (optional).

- ❑ There shall be a minimum of four (4) infielders, and they must stay on the infield area. Pitchers & catchers are not considered infielders. There shall be a minimum of 3 outfielders, but there is provision to add another outfielder.
- ❑ Coloured markers or small cones can be used to indicate fielding positions (optional).
- ❑ A coach and up to two helpers may take the field and assist the defensive team.
- ❑ A coach and up to two helpers may take the field to assist the base runners.
- ❑ There will only be swinging & miss+strikes . foul balls will not be counted as strikes.
- ❑ Three swings and misses and the batter is out.
- ❑ A ball is deemed ~~lead~~+if it does not roll more than 1 metre following a mis-hit. The child gets another chance to hit. Base runners cannot advance on a ~~lead~~ ball+.
- ❑ Following a hit, once control of the ball has been maintained (usually within the framework of the infield) play will be deemed suspended at the call of the umpire.
- ❑ To encourage pitching, the fielding pitcher will pitch one ball per new batter. The ball is then placed on the tee to be hit. The pitching distance is flexible as long as the fielder is at a safe distance once the ball is ready to be hit off the tee.
- ❑ All infield players throw the ball to 1st base, or they can tag someone off base. The ball becomes ~~lead~~+once this play has been made.
- ❑ All outfielders throw the ball to 2nd base. The ball becomes ~~lead~~+once this play has been made.
- ❑ Tagging up does not apply in T-Ball. Once a catch has been made, the ball becomes ~~lead~~+ and base runners must return to the base they started at.
- ❑ To increase the speed of the game, have a coach catcher (or parent catcher) available to assist the catcher with stopping the ball. The catcher is still responsible for any defensive plays in that area.
- ❑ The ball becomes ~~lead~~+once it has passed 5 metres beyond any base line on the diamond
- ❑ Playing time will be one hour or three complete innings, at the discretion of both coaches.
- ❑ No score is taken as the focus is on participation, not competition.

### **Sportsmanship**

- ❑ Teams line up at home plate at the start of each game.
- ❑ A toss is done.
- ❑ Players shake hands with their opposite and wish ~~good luck~~+.
- ❑ Team cheers/thanks opposition at the conclusion of the game.

## 5 Up T-Ball

**Age 5-8 years:** Optional modified T-Ball for beginners with lots of action

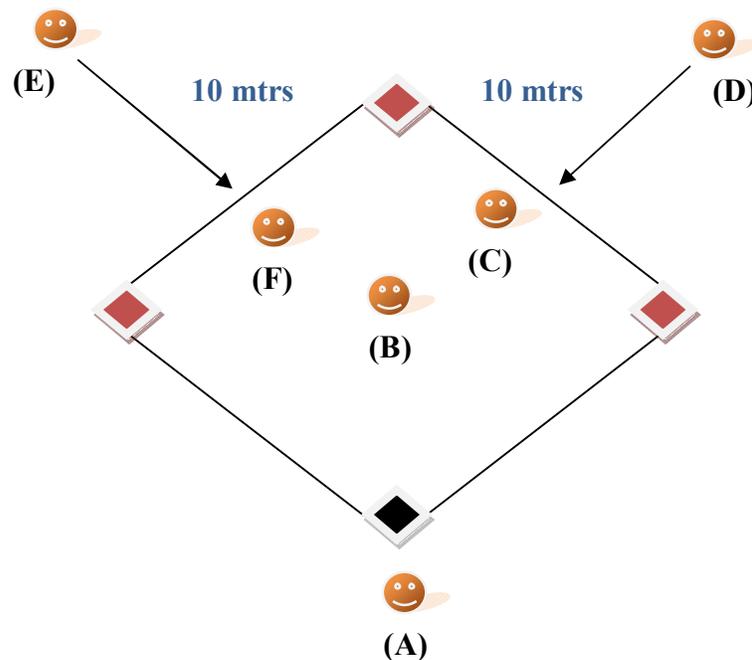
6 players per team . regular T-Ball rules apply

- ❑ 4 infielders (Catcher, Pitcher, Shortstop, 2nd Base).
- ❑ Place the markers for the SS and 2B just inside the infield running lines, to avoid collisions with base runners.
- ❑ Place the Pitcher marker a metre back from the traditional pitching mark for safety.
- ❑ 2 outfielders (Left Field, Right Field). The markers for the Outfielders are 10 metres back from the infield running lines.
- ❑ All fielding start positions are marked (use ice cream pottle bottoms, or similar)
- ❑ Pitcher learns to cover base two.
- ❑ 2B learns to cover base one.
- ❑ SS leans to cover base three or two.
- ❑ Outfielders learn to anticipate where the ball is likely to be hit and cover a base when the ball is hit to the other outfielder.
- ❑ Players are required to change fielding positions, each inning:

Catcher (A) → Pitcher (B) → 2B (C) → RF (E) → LF (F) → SS

Then back to the start again (to catcher)

- ❑ It is recommended that the coach run the players round the positions first, so that the kids get to understand the sequence.



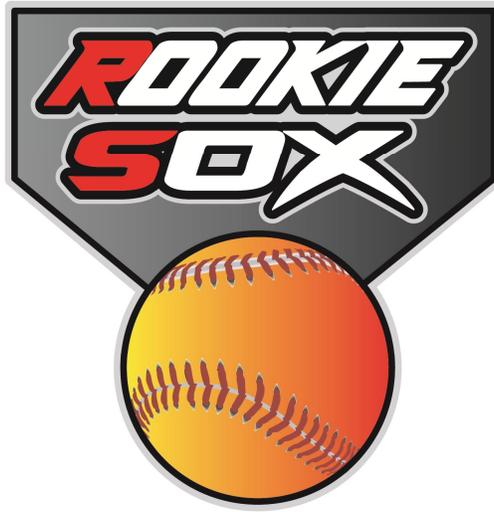
- ❑ Each team bats and fields 6 times.

- ❑ Play stops when the ball is returned to the Infield and is under control in the coach/umpires judgement, or is touched to the top of the Tee . i.e. last batter rule.
- ❑ Reduced field dimensions
- ❑ 10 metre baselines instead of 14 metres.

### **Sportsmanship**

- ❑ Teams line up at home plate at the start of each game.
- ❑ A toss is done.
- ❑ Players shake hands with their opposite and wish good luck.
- ❑ Team cheers/thanks opposition at the conclusion of the game.





## Rookie Sox - Parent/Coach Pitch Option - Participation

**Age 9-12 years:** Focus on Fun and Mastering of basic softball skills

**Equipment Required:** Medium bat, 11+flexiball, set of bases including safety base, pitching strip, gloves, catching equipment, batting helmets

**Rules:** For Parent/Coach Pitch Option (focus on participation)

The normal rules of softball apply unless modified as stated below

- ❑ A minimum of 7 and a maximum of 12 players on the field.
- ❑ A parent or coach shall lob (pitch) the ball over the plate for their own hitting team and should not be any closer than 10 metres. The coach does not field any hit balls.
- ❑ A defensive player should be fielded in the normal pitching position and fields any ball hit in that direction.
- ❑ There will be no walks. The batter remains in the batters box until the ball is hit, unless they have swung and missed the 3rd strike where the batter shall then be called out.
- ❑ There are only swing and miss strikes. Foul balls will not be counted as strikes. Three swing and misses and the batter is out.
- ❑ Try to keep a gender balance between infield and outfield and allow players to rotate positions in new innings.
- ❑ Games run for approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes and both teams must have had an equal turn at fielding & hitting.
- ❑ Everyone has a turn at bat per innings.
- ❑ No penalty for batting out of order.
- ❑ Infield fly rule and dropped third strike rule not in affect.
- ❑ Base runners are encouraged to run anytime the ball is hit, either in the air or on the ground. If the ball is caught the batter is out and the base runners must go back to the base they started from when the ball is hit.
- ❑ No stealing bases.

- ❑ Play will be deemed suspended, at the call of the umpire, once control of the ball has been maintained, usually within the framework of the infield.
- ❑ Catchers must wear mask, leggings and helmet, all batters and base runners must wear helmets.
- ❑ Metal cleats prohibited.
- ❑ Recommended base distance for 9-10yr olds: 12.0 metres
- ❑ Recommended base distance for 11-12yr olds: 14.0 metres
- ❑ No score is taken as the focus is on participation not competition.

## Rookie Sox . Team Pitcher Option - Competition

**Age 9-12 years:** Focus on Fun and Mastering of basic softball skills

**Equipment Required:** Medium bat, 11+flexiball, set of bases including safety base, pitching strip, gloves, catching equipment, batting helmets

**Rules:** For Team Pitcher Option

The normal rules of softball apply unless modified as stated below

- ❑ A minimum of 7 and a maximum of 12 players on the field.
- ❑ A pitcher is not allowed to pitch more than once through the batting order.
- ❑ Therefore each pitcher can only face each batter once per game.
- ❑ Teams should be encouraged to use as many pitchers and catchers as possible.
- ❑ Umpires calling of the strike zone at this level should be generous.
- ❑ Have the coach/umpire stand behind the pitcher to call the plate. From this position, they can call the plate, encourage the pitcher and help direct the field.
- ❑ Try to keep a gender balance between infield and outfield and allow players to rotate positions in new innings.
- ❑ Games run for approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes and both teams must have had an equal turn at fielding & hitting.
- ❑ Everyone has a turn at bat per innings.
- ❑ No penalty for batting out of order.
- ❑ Infield fly rule and dropped third strike rule not in affect.
- ❑ Base runners are encouraged to run anytime the ball is hit, either in the air or on the ground. If the ball is caught the batter is out and the base runners must go back to the base they started from when the ball was hit.
- ❑ Stealing bases is to be encouraged.
- ❑ Play will be deemed suspended, at the call of the umpire, once control of the ball has been maintained, usually within the framework of the infield.
- ❑ Catchers must wear mask, leggings and helmet, all batters and base runners must wear helmets.
- ❑ Metal cleats prohibited.

- ❑ Base distance should be the normal distance of 18.3m
- ❑ The score will be recorded and the team with the most runs wins.
- ❑ Please refer to the following page for guidelines on the %Rookie Sox Strike Zone+

**Recommended pitching distances**

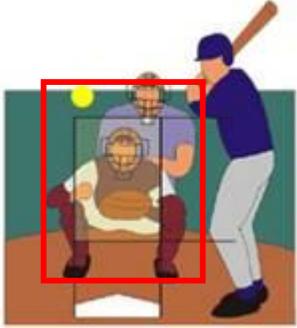
<b>Pitching Distance:</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>
	U10 . 10m	U10 . 9m
	U12 . 11m	U12 . 10m
	U13 . 12m	U13 . 11m



Rookie Sox Home Plate  
Larger version - 600mm wide

# Tips for All Rookie Sox Umpires

## Big Strike Zone

The Official Strike Zone	The Rookie Sox Extended Strike Zone
 <p>The official strike zone in the softball rulebook is when any part of the ball is pitched over the home plate and between the batters armpits and the top of the knees when the batter is in their natural batting stance.</p> <p>The official strike is too small for the U13 Rookie Sox age group.</p> <p><b>The smaller the player, the smaller the strike zone. It is difficult for an U13 player to pitch consistently to a smaller area.</b> A child's strike zone is much smaller than an adult's strike zone.</p> <p>The success of the game is very dependent on the umpire's strike zone.</p>	 <p>The Rookie Sox extended strike zone will ensure that there is more action in a game. If a pitch is hittable, the umpire should call it a strike.</p> <p>Call the game so that the home plate is wider and the height of the zone is stretched lower and higher. This will mean the pitcher will have more success at pitching strikes, and batters will be encouraged to swing at more pitches.</p> <p>As a consequence there will be less walks in the game and more action and more enjoyment.</p> <p>Use of an extended home plate (600mm) will help with the calling of pitches.</p> <p>Optional: The umpire can stand behind the pitcher to call the plate or set up behind the catcher with some equipment on.</p>

# Intermediate & Junior Secondary School Option - Play ball

**Year 7 to Year 10:** An optional game to introduce softball to new players at intermediate and secondary school level

**Equipment Required:** Suitable weight bat, 12+flexi ball, set of bases including safety base, pitching strip, gloves & batting helmets optional but recommended, catching equipment not required.

**Rules:** The normal rules of softball apply unless modified as stated below

- ❑ 10 players maximum, the extra fielder must go in the outfield.
- ❑ Each batter faces 3 underarm pitches from a member of their own team. The third pitch does not need to be caught out by the catcher.
- ❑ Pitching distance is 10-12m, or whatever distance it takes to get the ball across the plate. Ensure that pitchers are a safe distance back.
- ❑ A defensive player should be fielded in the normal pitching position and fields any ball hit in that direction.
- ❑ There is no strike zone. Batters must hit one of the three balls delivered.
- ❑ The batter is out if they have not put the ball in play by the third pitch.
- ❑ When 2 pitches have been made, a foul ball on the 3rd delivery does not count as the third pitch, unless the foul ball is caught, then the batter is out in the normal manner.
- ❑ Unless running for home, all play ceases when the ball is in the hands of the catcher. The runner must go back to the last base touched.
- ❑ No bunting or stealing bases.
- ❑ The runner cannot leave the base until the ball is hit (no leading off).
- ❑ Infield fly rule and dropped third strike rule not in affect.
- ❑ The game constitutes 7 innings or 1 hour, whichever occurs first.
- ❑ A team may use more than one pitcher. The pitcher bats like any other team member and is replaced on the mound by another team member when batting and base running.
- ❑ Catchers should remain a suitable safe distance (approx. 3-4m) behind the home plate and batter.

## Parents, Coaches & Teachers Guidelines

- ❑ Make an effort to understand the rules of the game. The game is more enjoyable when you understand it better.
- ❑ Accept that striving to win is more important than winning it. Accept the outcomes of all games, irrespective of the result.
- ❑ Avoid pressuring your child about winning or losing, help to focus on the process of participation, not the outcome (i.e. how did you do? Not did you win?)
- ❑ Be a good role model for your child and team.
- ❑ Emphasise that your child plays for themselves and the team and not for you.
- ❑ Encourage a balanced lifestyle between sporting, academic, social and other interests. Stress the benefit of taking part, friends, teamwork, success and failure, health, exercise, self-esteem etc.
- ❑ Encourage independence and let your child/team set their own standards of excellence.
- ❑ Applaud and appreciate good play from either side. Never ridicule an individual player in either the opposition or your own team.
- ❑ Refrain from any criticism or abuse directed at officials in front of your child. If you do, they will think it's acceptable behavior.
- ❑ Emphasise enjoyment, provide encouragement and always support your teams and children's performance.

## Top Ten Things to Remember When Coaching Junior Softball

- ❑ The players and coaches should have fun!
- ❑ Be organised . have a plan.
- ❑ Be flexible enough to change the plan if it's not working.
- ❑ Ensure that everyone has a chance to play.
- ❑ Teach the basic fundamentals well.
- ❑ Rotation of roles . no specialisation in positions.
- ❑ Enlist the help of other parents.
- ❑ Keep the action moving . this will help keep your players' attention.
- ❑ Remember the Compliment Sandwich . when correcting a player, start by praising/complimenting them on something they did well, explain the area they could improve, then finish with a positive statement.
- ❑ Keep your sense of humour.

## Catch Phrases for Kids

- ❑ Aeroplane Approach . glide in like an aeroplane when approaching a ground ball.
- ❑ Alligator Catch . when explaining how to field a ground ball.
- ❑ Ball into Belly Button . smooth transition of ball from ground into belly in preparation for a throw.
- ❑ Chop the wood . bottom hand action when hitting.
- ❑ Door Knocking Knuckles . line these knuckles up when gripping the bat.
- ❑ Hang like a gorilla . the low stance adopted by infielders.
- ❑ Knock your cap off . with a cap worn sideways, a beginner pitcher should brush their pitching arm by the ear as they complete an arm circle . thus knocking the cap off.
- ❑ Letter K . a point reached during a pitchers action.
- ❑ Letter C . form a backwards letter C when demonstrating how to grip a ball across the seams when throwing.
- ❑ Move like a crab . sideways shuffle when fielding.
- ❑ Nose, Toes, Throws . rhyme sequence for players to look, step, throw.
- ❑ Pinky to pinky . catching the ball below the waist.
- ❑ Shoulder to shoulder . Correct shoulder rotation for throwing and hitting.
- ❑ Squash the bug . refers to the pivot of the foot when hitting or throwing.
- ❑ Throw the pizza . top hand action when hitting.
- ❑ Throw your heel at the catcher . pivot of back foot to initiate weight transfer when hitting.
- ❑ Thumb to thumb . catching the ball above the waist.
- ❑ Top of the triangle . an imaginary triangle that defines the ready position for fielding and where to receive the ball out front.
- ❑ Up, back & go . sequence called out by the coach to assist with hitting; Up (raise the bat) Back (take bat back to armpit level) Go (hit the ball).
- ❑ Wear out your big toe . the slide of the back foot following the release of the ball.

# Softball New Zealand Coaching Resources



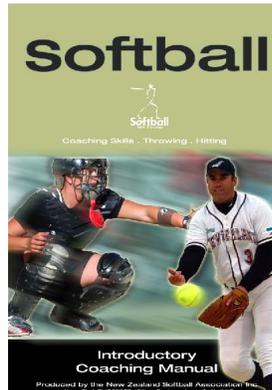
## Coach T-Ball Unit

1 Hour practical course for Tee Ball Coaches, Parents or Teachers



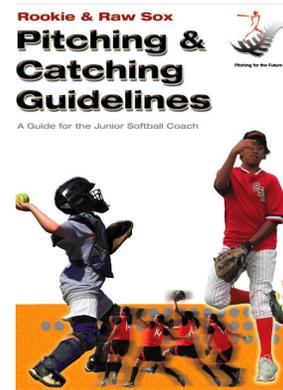
## T-Ball Skills Passport Sets

For teams & schools



## Induction Unit

2 Hour practical course for Beginning Coaches



## Rookie Sox Pitching & Catching Module

1 Hour practical module for Beginning Coaches, Parents or Teachers



A resource for primary and intermediate schools

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