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## SOFTBALL

### SOFTBALL

The Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Softball shall govern all Special Olympics competitions. As an international sports program, Special Olympics has created these rules based upon International Softball Federation (ISF) Rules for slow pitch softball found at [http://www.internationalsoftball.com/english/rules\\_standards/Rulebook\\_2002.pdf](http://www.internationalsoftball.com/english/rules_standards/Rulebook_2002.pdf). ISF or National Governing Body (NGB) rules shall be employed except when they are in conflict with the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Softball or Article I. In such cases, the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Softball shall apply.

### SECTION A— OFFICIAL EVENTS

The following is a list of official events available in Special Olympics.

The range of events is intended to offer competition opportunities for athletes of all abilities. Programs may determine the events offered and, if required, guidelines for the management of those events. Coaches are responsible for providing training and event selection appropriate to each athlete's skill and interest.

1. Base Race
2. Bat for Distance
3. Individual Skills Competition
4. Team Skills Softball
5. T-Ball Competition
6. Slow Pitch Team Competition
7. Unified Sports Slow Pitch Team Competition

### SECTION B— EQUIPMENT

1. Only bats marked by the manufacturer as "Official Softball" may be used.
2. A first baseman's trapping-type mitt may be worn by first basemen and catchers only.
3. The catcher must wear a facemask and batter's helmet.
4. All batters and base runners must wear a batter's helmet with chin strap.
5. A 30.5-centimeter (12-inch) red-stitch restricted softball must be used.

### SECTION C— GENERAL RULES AND MODIFICATIONS

#### 1. Team Competition

##### a. Divisioning

- 1) Teams will be divisioned according to:
  - a) Scores compiled from each athlete's score on the four Softball Skills Assessment Tests (SATs) of Base Running, Throwing, Fielding and Batting. These tests are for player/team assessment only and are not competition events for medals and ribbons. (Information regarding these Softball Skill Assessment Tests follow in Section C).
  - b) A classification round of games.
- 2) Coaches must submit a Softball Skills Assessment Test Score for each player on their rosters prior to the competition.
- 3) The "team score" shall be determined by adding the top 12 players' scores and then dividing that total by 12.
- 4) Teams are initially grouped in divisions according to their SAT team score. A classification round of games shall then be conducted as a means of finalizing the divisioning process.



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- 5) In the classification round, teams will play one or more games with each game lasting no longer than 30 minutes. Each team will be required to play all 12 players whose scores were used to determine the "team score." Both teams will be required to play the field and to bat.

### b. General Rules and Modifications

- 1) The field shall conform to ISF standards.
- 2) A regulation game shall consist of seven innings. The game will be considered complete if after five full innings of play, one team leads the other by 10 runs or more. The game shall last no longer than one and a half hours.
- 3) The distance from home plate to the pitcher's rubber may be modified to a minimum distance of 12.19 meters (40 feet) from the official distance of 15.24 meters (50 feet).
- 4) An extra player, referred to as "EP," is optional, but if one is used, he/she must be made known prior to the start of the game and be listed on the scoring sheet in the regular batting order. If the EP is used, he/she must be used the entire game. Failure to complete the game with the EP results in the forfeiture of the game.
- 5) The EP must remain in the same position in the batting order for the duration of the game.
- 6) If an EP is used, all 11 must bat and any 10 may play defense. Defensive positions may be changed, but the batting order must remain the same.
- 7) The EP may be substituted for at any time. The substituted EP must be a player who has not yet been in the game. The starting EP may re-enter.
- 8) When batting, players will take their stance within the lines of the batter's box.
- 9) The ball must be pitched in an underhand motion and should travel in an arc that is no less than 1.83 meters (6 feet) and no greater than 3.66 meters (12 feet).
- 10) Four balls constitute a walk and three strikes constitute an out. If the batter has two strikes and then fouls off the third pitch, he/she shall be declared out.
- 11) An appeal play is defined as a play in which an umpire is unable to make a decision unless he/she is requested to do so by a coach or player. The appeal can be made if a coach or player asks the umpire to make a ruling.
- 12) The umpires are empowered to make all decisions on the playing field. If a protest is made, it shall be brought to the Softball Rules Committee who will then make a final decision. A protest may only be made if it questions the applicability of the rules. No protest will be considered which pertains to any judgment call made by an umpire.
- 13) If a coach touches a runner while the ball is still in play, that runner will be declared out. Coaches are required to stay within the boundaries of the coaches' boxes.

## 2. T-ball Competition

### a. Divisioning

- 1) Teams will be divisioned according to a team score compiled in the Individual Skills Competition and a classification round.
- 2) Coaches must submit an Individual Skills Competition score for each player prior to the conducting of competition. A team score is determined by adding the 12 players' scores and dividing that total by 12.
- 3) Teams are initially grouped in divisions according to their Individual Skills Competition team scores. A classification round shall then be conducted as a means of finalizing the divisioning process.
- 4) In the classification round, teams will play one or more games with each game lasting no longer than 30 minutes. Each team will be required to play all of the players whose Individual Skills Competition scores were submitted to determine the team score. Both teams will be required to play the field and hit.



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**SOFTBALL****b. Playing Area**

- 1) The field shall conform to ISF standards, with the following modifications:
  - a) Bases may be modified to a distance of 18.29 meters (60 feet).
  - b) The distance from home plate to the pitcher's rubber may be modified to a minimum distance of 14 meters (45 feet, 11 1/4 inches).
  - c) A "neutral zone" will be marked in an arc of 14 meters (45 feet, 11 1/4 inches) from home plate. Any batted ball that does not cross this line will be designated a foul ball.
  - d) A coaches' circle will be located 3 meters (9 feet, 10 1/4 inches) beyond second base and made with a 1.8-meter (5 feet, 11 inch) diameter. One coach from the defensive team may be allowed to stand in this circle while his/her team is on the field.

**c. Equipment: Same as Slow Pitch Team Competition****d. Team and Players**

- 1) Each team must have 10 players in the following positions to start a game:
  - a) Pitcher: Defensive position is on the rubber
  - b) Catcher: Defensive position is behind home plate
  - c) First Baseman: Normal defensive position
  - d) Second Baseman: Normal defensive position
  - e) Third Baseman: Normal defensive position
  - f) Shortstop: Normal defensive position
  - g) Four Outfielders: Must play a minimum of 3 meters (9 feet, 10 1/4 inches) behind infielders

**e. General Rules and Modifications**

- 1) A batting tee will be placed directly on home plate.
- 2) A coach from the batting team will adjust the tee to fit the batter.
- 3) To start play, the catcher will place the ball on the tee and the umpire will say "play ball."
- 4) The batter will step in the batter's box and hit the ball.
- 5) If the batter completely misses the ball and the tee, the attempt shall be ruled a strike.
- 6) All defensive players must stand behind the neutral zone before the ball is hit. They may come into the neutral zone after the ball is hit to field it. If they touch a ball within the neutral zone, and a defensive player does not touch it, the ball will be called a foul ball.
- 7) If the batter has two strikes and fouls off the third attempt, he or she shall be declared out.
- 8) The batting team's half of the inning shall end when three outs have been made or the batting order is complete.
- 9) The batter must hit the ball within the foul lines and beyond the 14-meter (45 feet, 11 1/4 inch) neutral zone to be ruled a fair ball. If a batted ball does not leave the neutral zone, and the defensive player does not touch it, the ball will be called a foul ball.
- 10) A regulation game consists of six innings. A time limit of one hour shall be in force for all games.
- 11) The umpires are empowered to make all decisions on the playing field. If a protest is made, it shall be brought before the Softball Rules Committee who will then make a final decision. A protest will not be considered which pertains to any judgment call made by an umpire.



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12) After a ball is hit into fair territory and the batter has left the batter's box, the umpire shall remove the tee from home plate and set it in foul territory.

### f. Substitutions

- 1) Substitutions may be made whenever a "timeout" is called.
- 2) Any of the starting players may leave and re-enter the game. This may be done by each starting player only once, with the provision that the players occupy the same position in the batting order as the one they occupied when they left the game. A starting player may only re-enter the game for the person who substituted for him/her. Substitutes may re-enter the game in the same manner.

### g. Coaches Privileges

- 1) Two base coaches are allowed for the offensive team, one in the first base coach's box and one in the third base coach's box. The coaches must remain in those boxes while their team is at bat.
- 2) One of the two base coaches must adjust the tee to the proper height for each batter and return to the coach's box.
- 3) One coach from the defensive team may be allowed on the field, and he/she must remain in the coach's circle behind second base. Also, he/she must make a reasonable attempt to avoid any ball that is thrown in his/her direction.

## 3. Unified Sports Events

### a. Unified Sports Team Competition

- 1) The roster shall contain a proportionate number of athletes and partners.
- 2) During competition, the line-up shall never exceed five athletes and five partners (six athletes and six partners if the EP is used) at any time. Failure to adhere to the required ratio results in a forfeit.
- 3) Each team shall have an adult non-playing coach responsible for the lineup and conduct of the team during competition.
- 4) The batting order shall be an alternation of athletes and partners.
- 5) During competition, the position requirements are as follows: two athletes and two partners in both the infield and the outfield, and one athlete and one partner as pitcher and catcher.

## 4. Individual Skills Competition

- a. Individual Skills Competition is competition designed for lower ability athletes. It is not for athletes who can already play the game.
- b. The Individual Skills Competition is composed of four events: Base Race, Throwing, Fielding and Hitting.
- c. The athlete's final score is determined by adding together the scores achieved in each of these four events.
- d. Athletes will be pre-divisioned according to their total scores from these four events.
- e. Each event is diagrammed with the suggested number and placement of volunteers who will administer the event. It is also suggested that the same volunteers remain at an event throughout the competition so that consistency is provided.
  - 1) Base Running
    - a) Equipment— Three bases, home plate, stopwatch.
    - b) Purpose— To measure the athlete's base-running ability.
    - c) Description— Bases are set up like a baseball diamond and positioned 19.81 meters (65 feet) apart. The athlete is instructed to start on home plate, and run around the bases as fast as possible, touching each base en route.

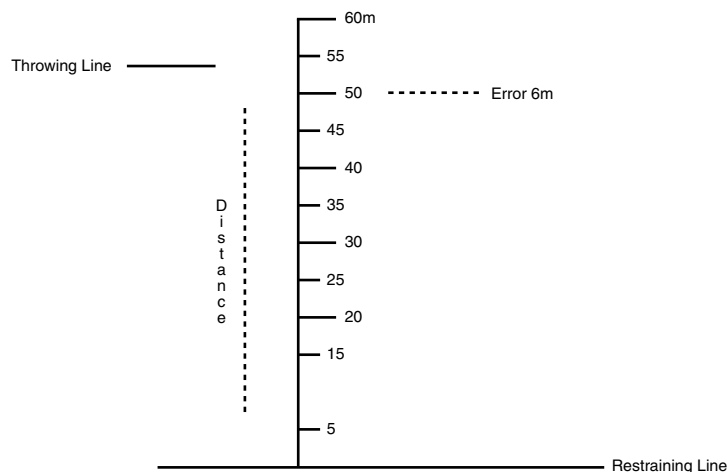


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- d) Scoring—The time starts when the athlete leaves home plate and stops when the athlete returns to home plate after circling the bases. The time elapsed in seconds is subtracted from 60 to determine the point score. A penalty of five seconds for each base missed or touched in improper order shall be assessed. The best score of two trials is recorded.

## 2) Throwing



- a) Equipment—Regulation field, two measuring tapes, softballs, two small cones or marking stakes
- b) Purpose—To measure the athlete's ability in throwing for distance and accuracy.
- c) Description—The player being tested stands behind the restraining line, back far enough to take one or more steps in preparation for throwing. The player has two trials to throw the softball as far and as straight as possible down the throwing line, without stepping over the restraining line. Coaches, assistants or other waiting players should be positioned in the field to indicate, using a cone or marking stake, the spot where each ball first touches the ground. The better of the two throws is measured and recorded as the player's score. If a player steps on or over the line before releasing the ball, the trial must be repeated. There will be a maximum of two repeats.
- d) Scoring—The net throwing score equals the throwing distance, measured at a point on the throwing line straight across from (perpendicular to) the spot where the ball landed, minus the error distance—the number of meters the ball landed off target, away from the throwing line. The player's score is the better of the two throws. Both error scores and distance are measured to the nearest meter; for example, if a ball lands even with (perpendicular to) the 50-meter point on the measuring tape, but is 6 meters off to one side, the player's score is 44 points (Distance thrown [50] minus number of meters off target [6] results in a net score of 44 meters). Athletes score one point per meter; for example, 44 meters equals 44 points. If the score falls between meters, the score should be rounded down; for example, 44.73 equals 44 points.

## 3) Fielding

- a) Equipment—30.5-centimeter (12-inch) softballs, measuring tape, chalk/line, cones.
- b) Purpose—To measure athlete's fielding ability.
- c) Description—The athlete will stand between and behind the two cones. The official must throw the ball on the ground to the athlete, between the cones. The throw to the athlete must hit the ground before the

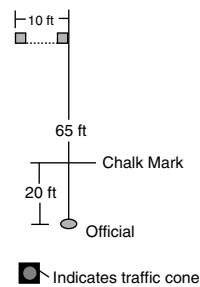


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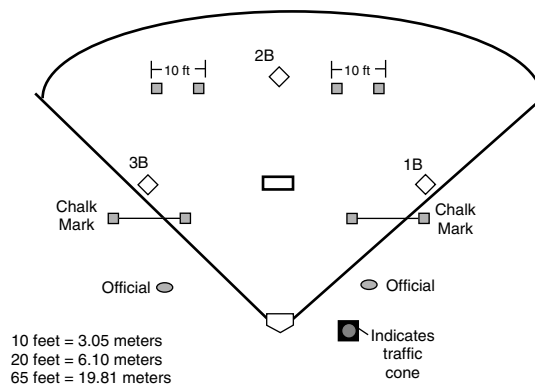
6.10-meter (20-inch) chalk mark. The athlete may move aggressively toward the ball. If the thrown ball is outside of the cones, the throw must be repeated. Each athlete gets five fielding attempts per trial. Each athlete receives two trials.

- d) Scoring—The athlete receives five points for a clearly fielded ball (either caught in glove or trapped against the body, but off the ground); two points for a ball that is blocked; zero points for a missed attempt, for a maximum score of 50.

FIELDING DIAGRAM 1



FIELDING DIAGRAM 2



### 4) Hitting

- a) Equipment—Batting tee, 30.5-centimeter (12-inch) red-stitch restricted-flight softballs, bat, measuring tape and chalk.
- b) Purpose—To measure the athlete's ability to hit for distance when hitting off a batting tee.
- c) Description—Standing in a regulation-size batter's box (i.e., 2.31 meters [7 feet, 7 inches] by 99 centimeters [3 feet, 3 inches]), the athlete is instructed to hit the ball off the tee. The athlete receives three attempts.
- d) Score—The distance of the longest hit shall determine the athlete's final score. The distance of a hit is measured from the batting tee to the point where the ball first touches the ground. The distance is measured to the nearest meter; for example, one meter equals one point; 46 meters equals 46 points. If the score falls between meters, scores should be rounded down; for example, 46.73 equals 46 points. A player's final score is determined by adding together the scores achieved in each of the four events which comprise the Individual Skills Competition.



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**SOFTBALL****5. Base Race**

Base Race is a single event intended for athletes with lower ability levels limiting them from participating in other softball competitions.

- a. Equipment — Four bases or markers, whistle, stopwatch, tape, measuring tape, chalk.
- b. Set-up:
  - 1) Arrange the bases in a square, with a distance of 5 meters (16 feet, 5 inches) between each base.
  - 2) Number the bases one to four using the tape.
  - 3) Make a straight line between each base using chalk.
- c. Rules:
  - 1) Athlete starts the race standing on base number four.
  - 2) Athlete begins race at the sound of the whistle.
  - 3) Athlete must touch each base in the proper order, which are bases one, two, three and four.
- d. Score:
  - 1) Athlete is timed from starting whistle to when he/she steps on base number four to complete the race.
  - 2) A penalty of five seconds is assessed on each occasion that an athlete fails to touch a base or fails to touch a base in proper order.

**6. Bat for Distance**

Bat for Distance is a single event intended for athletes with lower ability levels limiting them from participating in other softball competitions.

- a. Equipment - 30-centimeter (11 3/4-inch) whiffle ball, whiffle ball tee, chalk, measuring tape.
- b. Set-up
  - 1) Mark with chalk a 2-meter (6 feet, 6 3/4 inch) by 2-meter square for a batting area.
  - 2) Set the batting tee exactly in the middle of the square.
- c. Rules
  - 1) Whiffle ball is set on a tee by an official before each attempt.
  - 2) Tee is arranged at a height so the ball is even with the athlete's waist.
  - 3) Athlete is allowed three nonconsecutive "at bats" to hit the ball.
- d. Score
  - 1) The distance of each hit is measured from the point where the ball first touches the ground to the base of the tee.
  - 2) Athlete's final score is the cumulative distance of his/her "hits."
  - 3) Measure in meters; for example, one meter equals one point; round down to nearest meter.

**7. Team Skills Softball**

Team Skills Softball is a single event which offers structured team competition for lower ability athletes.

- a. Equipment
  - 1) Softball - 30.5-centimeter (12-inch) red-stitched restricted-flight
  - 2) Four bases, measuring tape



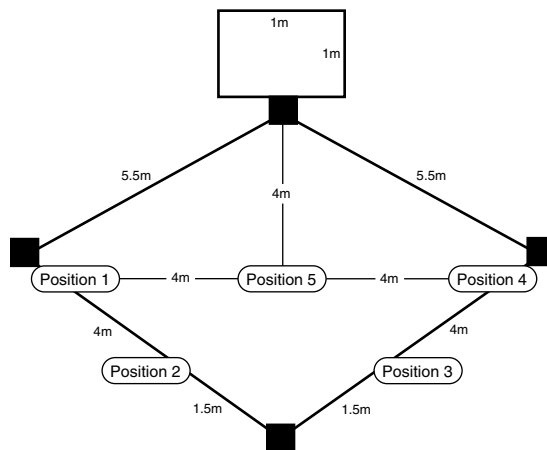
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- 3) Barrel or box approximately 1-meter (3 feet, 3 1/2 inches) tall by 1-meter wide (or in diameter)
- 4) Tape/chalk, five gloves, score sheets

### b. Set-up

- 1) Lay out the four bases in the formation of a baseball diamond. The bases shall be 5.5 meters (18 feet) apart.
- 2) Position number five is marked 4 meters (13 feet, 1 1/2 inches ) in front of the target.
- 3) The target shall be a barrel or box approximately 1-meter (3 feet, 3 1/2 inches) tall by 1-meter wide.
- 4) Mark position number one on first position number two 4 meters (13 feet, 1 1/2 inches) from position number one. Position number two will be located in the same area that a second baseman would occupy, and 1.5 meters (4 feet, 11 inches) from second base.
- 5) Mark position number four on third base. Position number three will be located in the same general location occupied by a shortstop and will be 4 meters (13 feet, 1 1/2 inches) from position number four, and 1.5 meters (4 feet, 11 inches) from second base.
- 6) Positions number one and number four are each 4 meters (13 feet, 1 1/2 inches) from position number five (see diagram).
- 7) Teams should submit a roster prior to the start of the game.
- 8) Teams should wear numbered uniforms or shirts.

### c. Diagram



### d. Rules:

- 1) The event director shall determine how many games shall be played. Two five-member teams shall compete. Only one team shall conduct a round at a time.
- 2) The game is composed of five innings consisting of five rounds. Players will be given one opportunity at each one of the five positions on the field.
- 3) Each player on the first five-member team shall attempt to catch the softball cleanly and then throw it accurately to the player stationed at the next position.
- 4) The umpire should hand the ball to the player in position number one. When the umpire shouts "Play Ball," the game will begin.



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- 5) The player in position number one begins the round by throwing the ball to the player at position number two. The player at position number two then throws the ball to the player at position number three, and this sequential throwing rotation continues until the ball reaches the player at position number five.
  - 6) Athletes may throw the ball in any manner, but each player must throw in numerical sequence. Players should attempt to throw the ball to their teammates on a fly.
  - 7) If the ball is thrown past an athlete, the athlete, coach or umpire may retrieve the ball. However, the athlete must return to his/her position number in that order to throw the ball to the next position. An accurate throw is defined as a ball that is thrown within reach of the receiving player.
  - 8) When the ball reaches the player in position number five, he/she attempts to accurately pitch the ball in an underhand manner into the target. Players stationed at position number five are required to simulate a softball pitching motion and throw underhand.
  - 9) Athletes at position number five shall only be given one pitch at the target.
  - 10) After the attempt by the player in position number five, the round ends.
  - 11) Following the completion of the round by the first team, the second team will conduct its initial round.
  - 12) Players shall rotate in numerical sequence to the next position after each round; for example, player in position number one moves to position number two and so on, while player in position number five moves to position number one. Each player must receive one turn at each position.
  - 13) Play alternates between teams following the completion of each round, until all five rounds have been completed. Once each team has completed five rounds, the game concludes.
  - 14) Substitutes are allowed into the game only after a round has been completed.
  - 15) Coaches shall remain in the coaches' boxes. One will be located outside of first base and one will be located outside of third base. Coaches may give verbal or signed instruction to players. Deaf athletes may receive physical assistance when they are positioning themselves.
- e. Score
- 1) The team receives one point for each accurate throw.
  - 2) The team receives one point for each successful catch.
  - 3) The team receives one point for successfully throwing the ball into the target.
  - 4) The team receives one point for each successful round of catches and throws.
  - 5) Final score shall be the aggregate number of points scored after all rounds are completed.
  - 6) Each team's score shall be compared to other teams' scores to determine the final standings in this event.
  - 7) The maximum number of points that can be accumulated by a single team is 50.

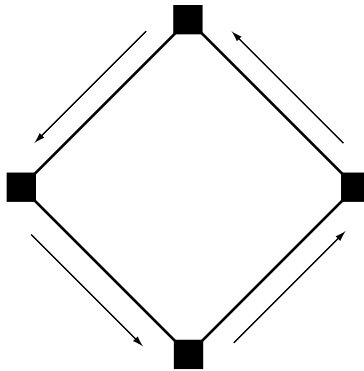
### 8. Team Skills Assessment Test

Individual scores from each of the following skills assessment tests are submitted to the Competition Organizing Committee by all teams entering Special Olympics softball competition. These tests are designated to help the Competition Committee gain a preliminary idea as to the ability level of the teams entered in the tournament. This allows the Committee to place teams in preliminary divisions for on-site evaluation. When there is a large number of teams entered in a competition and little time to carry on-site evaluations, these tests can be critical to the success of the tournament. These tests are to be used as an enhancement to, not a replacement for, on-site observation and evaluation.



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- a. Softball Team Skills Assessment Test (SAT)  
Test Number One — Base running



### SET-UP

- Standard softball field.
- Three bases, home plate, stopwatch.

### TEST

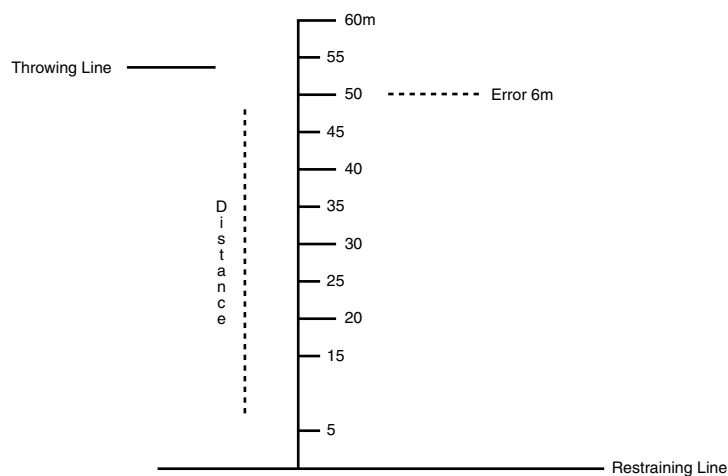
- Bases are set up like a baseball diamond and positioned 19.81 meters (65 feet) apart.
- The athlete is instructed to start at home plate and run around the bases as fast as possible, touching each base en route.

### SCORING

- The time starts when the athlete leaves home plate.
- The time stops when the athlete touches home plate after circling the bases.
- The time elapsed in seconds is subtracted from 60 to determine the point score.
- A penalty of five seconds for each base missed or touched in improper order shall be assessed.
- The best score of two trials is recorded.
- Athletes should not be asked to take the two trials consecutively.

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b. Softball Team Skills Assessment Test (SAT)  
Test Number Two—Throwing

**SET-UP**

An outfield or a smooth grass field that can be marked off in meters (feet).  
Two measuring tapes, softballs, two small cones or marking stakes.

**TEST**

The player being tested stands behind the restraining line, back far enough to take one or more steps in preparation for throwing. The player has two trials to throw the softball as far and as straight as possible down the throwing line, without stepping over the restraining line. Coaches, assistants or other waiting players should be positioned in the field to indicate, using a cone or marking stake, the spot where each ball first touches the ground. The better of the two throws is measured and recorded as the player's score. If a player steps on or over the restraining line before releasing the ball, the trial must be repeated. There will be a maximum of two repeats.

**SCORING**

The net throwing score equals the throwing distance, measured at a point on the throwing line straight across from (perpendicular to) the spot where the ball landed, minus the error distance—the number of meters the ball landed off target, away from the throwing line. The player's score is the better of two throws. Both error scores and distance scores are measured to the nearest meter.

**Scoring Example:**

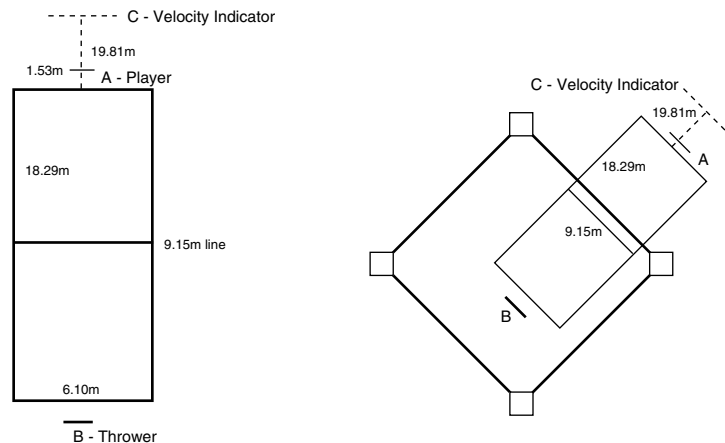
If a ball lands even with (perpendicular to) the 50-meter point on the measuring tape, but is 6 meters off to one side, the player's score is 44 points (Distance thrown [50 meters] minus number of meters off target [6 meters] results in a net score of 44 meters). Athletes score one point per meter; for example, 44 meters equals 44 points. If the score falls between meters, score should be rounded down; for example, 44.73 equals 44 points.



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### c. Softball Team Skills Assessment Test (SAT)

#### Test Number Three — Fielding



#### SET-UP

Standard infield or a smooth field with short grass on which chalk markings or cones can be placed.  
Softballs, fielding gloves, measuring tape.

#### TEST

The player being tested stands in a ready position (A) behind a 1.53-meter (5-foot) restraining line. A thrower stands behind the throwing line and throws two practice and six test balls to each player.

Each throw must strike the ground before the 9.15-meter (30-foot) line and must stay within the sideline boundaries of the marked area. The throw should be made sidearm, with sufficient velocity to carry an untouched ball to line C – the velocity indicator distance beyond the end line. The prescribed distance beyond the end line is marked by a cone or similar object. Of the six test trials, two balls should be thrown directly to the player, two to the right and two to the left side of the player. The player attempts to field each ball cleanly (i.e., with no noticeable bobbling or temporary loss of control) and toss it back to the thrower. On each trial, the player starts behind the 1.53-meter (5-foot) restraining line, but must move forward of the 18.29-meter (60-foot) line toward the approaching ground ball in order to obtain maximum points. Any throw not made as specified should be repeated. (Note: It is important to periodically check the velocity of the throw by occasionally instructing the player to let a ball go by untouched. Throws should reach the velocity marker).

#### SCORING

Each ball cleanly fielded in front of the 18.29-meter (60-foot) end line counts five points.

A ball which is bobbed, but stopped from going past the player, counts four points.

Balls fielded behind the 18.29-meter (60-foot) line receive three points for cleanly fielded balls and two points for bobbed balls. Balls are considered to have been fielded in front of the 18.29-meter (60-foot) end line when at least the player's glove and ball are clearly in front of the line.

Any ball which is missed entirely, or touched but gets past the player, scores no points.

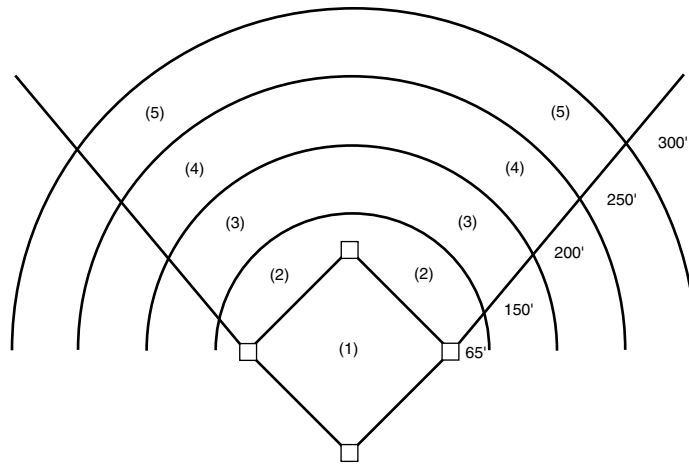
The score is the sum of all six trials.

It is recommended that the scorer stand just outside the marked area, even with the 18.29-meter (60-foot) end line.

Maximum score is 30 points.

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d. Softball Team Skills Assessment Test (SAT)  
Test Number Four — Batting

**SET-UP**

Standard softball field, 12 marking cones, softballs, bats, measuring tape.

**TEST**

The batter assumes a normal batting stance at the plate.

From the pitcher's mound, a coach will throw five hittable pitches that the batter attempts to hit as hard and far as possible.

These pitches should be within a regulation arc (6-12 feet).

Only five swings are allowed to each batter.

**SCORING**

The distance of the longest hit shall determine the athlete's final score. The distance of a hit is measured from home plate to the point where the ball first touches the ground. The distance is measured to the nearest meter; for example, one meter equals one point; 46 meters equals 46 points. If score falls between meters, scores should be rounded down; for example, 46.73 equals 46 points.