# Table of Contents

Intro..................................................................................................................................p. 2

Rationale..............................................................................................................................p. 2

Objectives.............................................................................................................................p. 2

Skill Analysis.......................................................................................................................p. 3-4

Drills....................................................................................................................................p. 4-5

Competencies.......................................................................................................................p. 6

Games..................................................................................................................................p. 7-8

Safety, Equipment...............................................................................................................p. 9

Scope and Sequence, Block Plan.......................................................................................p. 10

Terms...................................................................................................................................p. 11-12

Rules....................................................................................................................................p. 13-14

Quiz.....................................................................................................................................p. 14
Introduction

In 1887 an indoor version of the game of baseball was developed by George Hancock of Chicago, Illinois. The game used a smaller playing field and a softer ball. This became extremely popular and was moved outdoors. What started as an indoor version of baseball and what we now recognize as softball, is played by over 30 million adults and youths in the United States. Softball is also the most popular youth sport with 5 million participants.

Rationale

Softball is a sport that can be enjoyed by both men and women of all ages. Moreover, it is considered one of the safest sports and has the added benefit of being a life-long activity. Softball is played by the young and old alike in church leagues, at picnics, for recreation, and in industrial leagues. For these reasons softball becomes a critical component to a physical education program.

Objectives

By the end of the unit students will:

1. Be able to perform 4 of the following softball skills at a satisfactory level: throwing, catching, fielding, base running, and hitting
2. Be able to describe the critical cues, basic rules, and strategy involved in the game of softball.
3. Appreciate the role of good sportsmanship and respect in class and in game-like situations by providing classmates with encouragement and displaying fair play.

Skills to be Covered

- Throwing
- Catching
SKILL ANALYSIS

Throwing
- Grip- three fingers on top with thumb directly below, should be space between fingers and palm
- Stance- opposite shoulder pointing to target, feet shoulder width apart, hands held at chest
- Stride- stride with toe open to 45 degrees directly at target, step should be about a foot
- Arm action- throwing arm should draw a C as the ball is brought to a 90 degree angle, glove arm should extend toward target and then pulled to side as though elbowing someone behind them
- Throw and follow-through- arm and wrist should snap down to opposite knee as the back foot steps toward the target so the person is facing the target squarely
- **Major cues**- shoulder to target, draw a C, step, throw, touch your knee

Movement Exploration
- Who can show me the correct grip for the softball?
- Can you draw a C with your arm and show me the hip twist?

Catching
- Body position- move to get directly in front of the ball
- Glove-hand- fingers up if above the belly button, fingers down if below the belly button, if to side-fingers facing that side, cushion
- **Major cues**- move in front, watch the ball, fingers, cushion

Movement Exploration
- Can you show me how to get in front of the ball?
- Show me how your fingers go when the ball is above your belly button.

Fielding
- Body position- move to get directly in front of the ball, flat back, eyes up, knees bent, glove open and on the ground, off-hand acting as a trap door above the glove
- Glove action- open, when the ball hits the glove-give it cushion
- Off-hand- trap the ball
- **Major cues**- get in front, back flat, knees bent, glove down and open, eyes on ball, catch, trap, cushion

Movement Exploration
- Can you show me the ready position?
- Show me what your off hand does.
- Who can show me where your glove goes?
Batting
- Grip - loose grip with middle knuckles lined up, bat in fingers not hands, hands chest height held like you’re going to punch the ball
- Stance - athletic stance (little wider than shoulder width)
- Trigger - shift weight and back straight back so most is on back foot
- Stride - small or none to start momentum toward the ball
- Swing - swing like chopping a tree with an ax, hands should go from chest to ball as quick as possible, twist hips to get the most power
- Watch the ball
- **Major cues** - athletic stance, trigger, stride, chop, twist, watch the ball hit the bat

Movement Exploration
- Who can show me the correct grip for batting?
- Who can show me how we stand when batting?

Drills

**THROWING & CATCHING**

**Wrist Toss**
*Purpose:* to learn to use the wrist as a part of the throw, to practice catching  
*Description:* put throwing elbow in glove, rotate the ball in a figure 8 -3 times before snapping it to a partner 5 yards away

**Butt Toss**
*Purpose:* to emphasize the arm motion, to practice catching  
*Description:* sit on butt with legs in a V, draw the C 3 times before throwing to a partner 5 yards away

**Knee Toss**
*Purpose:* to emphasize the follow through and throwing motion, to practice catching  
*Description:* kneel on the throwing knee with the other up facing the partner, draw the C 3 times before throwing it to a partner 5 yards away, follow through to the outside of the up knee

**Long Toss**
*Purpose:* to practice accuracy and arm strength, to practice catching  
*Description:* stand far away from your partner, every time you throw the ball take 2 steps back, do this until one of you can’t throw it any further

**FIELDING**
BALL ROLL (no glove)
*Purpose:* to develop basic fielding technique, and learn to use soft hands
*Description:* partners stand 5 yards apart and roll it to their partner who fields it and rolls it back

BALL ROLL (with glove)
*Purpose:* to emphasize open glove and trap door, and practice moving side to side
*Description:* partners stand 5 yards apart and roll the ball to their partner who fields it and rolls it back, they can also start rolling it to either side

GOLD GLOVE
*Purpose:* to emphasize all aspects of fielding while making it into a game
*Description:* partner stands 10 yards away from a person who stands between two cones that are 5 yards apart, the one partner rolls the ball anywhere they want between the cones, the ball must bounce at least 2 times before getting to the cones, the person between the cone tries to field as many cleanly in a row as possible, as soon as there is a fumble or error they switch, score is kept for 3 innings.

BATTING

TEE-BALL CHOP
*Purpose:* to learn hand motion, practice hand eye coordination, learn correct plane, and develop swing efficiency
*Description:* set a tennis ball on a tee belly button high, use regular stance and pretend to hold a bat, go through a swing but use the bottom hand to karate chop the ball off the tee, the ball should be a line drive, repeat using the top hand

HIP TWIST
*Purpose:* to learn to use the hips in the swing
*Description:* place a tennis ball belly button high on a tee, place a bat behind your back held in place with the elbows, make the back stick out more to the side of the hand you are batting, stand next to the tee and hit the ball off with the part of the bat that sticks out by twisting the hips

TEE-BALL HIT
*Purpose:* to practice the full swing with an immobile object
*Description:* place a whiffle ball on the tee, use the full swing to hit it into the fence, give the kids a target on the fence so they are not practicing to hit fly balls or choppers

SOFT TOSS
*Purpose:* to practice hitting a mobile object using the full swing
*Description:* batter stands 3 yards from a fence facing parallel to it, pitcher is 5 yards away against the fence on one knee, the pitcher will underhand a throw that should be thrown towards the front knee of the batter, it should have arch and be aimed to land on the front foot of the batter, the batter tries to hit line drives into the fence

SOFTBALL HIT
*Purpose:* to put it all together, hit a regular softball pitch using the full swing
Description: players take turns hitting 5 pitches from the teacher while the others retrieve balls

**COMPETENCIES**

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Games

Throw it and Run Softball-
Players=7 to 11
Supplies=softball
Skills=throwing, catching, fielding, base running
Description=Teams assume position on the field as in regular softball. The pitcher throws the ball to the “batter” but instead of batting the “batter” catches the ball and quickly throws it into the field of play. The ball is treated as a batted ball and played with normal softball rules. A foul ball is an out.

Two-Pitch Softball
Players=7 to 11
Supplies=softball, bat
Skills=most skills except for pitching
Description=A member of the batting team is designated as pitcher and will pitch to his/her team. Teams should set up a rotation so each child gets to pitch. Batters have 2 pitches to hit the ball into the field of play. A foul on the second pitch constitutes an out. When the ball is hit normal softball rules apply except for the pitcher, who does not play defense.

Pickle in the Middle
Players=3 or more
Supplies=softball, 2 bases
Skills=throwing, catching, running down a base runner, tagging
Description=To begin both fielders are on bases, one with a ball. The runner is positioned in between the bases about 15-20 feet from the fielder with the ball. The 2 fielders throw the ball back and forth in attempt to run down the base runner. A runner who secures a base safely gets to try again. NO SLIDING is permitted.

Beat ball
Players=5-12
Supplies=softball, bat, batting tee (optional)
Skills=All skills
Description=The object of the game is to hit the ball and run around the bases before the fielding team can catch the ball, throw it to first, and then throw it to the catcher at home plate. If the ball beats the hitter to home plate or if a fly ball is caught, an out is assessed. Players score by beating the ball to home plate. Only 3 pitches are allowed each hitter.
Work-up
Players=7-15
Supplies=softball, bat
Skills=Most softball skills
Description=The game is played with regular softball rules, except individuals are playing for themselves. There are at least two batters depending on the number of students left over when the field is full. Batters keep batting until out. Once out the batter assumes position in right field and all other players rotate one position.

Three-Team Softball
Players=12-15
Supplies=mask, ball, bat
Skills=All
Description=This game works well when class numbers are too few to divide into two teams. Instead class is divided into 3 teams with one team up to bat, one covering the infield, and the other covering the outfield. All softball rules apply except an inning is over when all 3 teams have batted and the catcher is part of the in-fielding team.

One-Pitch Softball
Players=8-12 on each team
Supplies=softball, bat
Skills=slow pitching and all other softball skills
Description=Regular softball rules apply with the following changes:
1. The pitcher is from the batting team and cannot play a hit ball
2. The team coming to bat does not wait for the fielding team to get set. Since each team has it’s own pitcher the pitcher gets the ball to the batter as quickly as possible. The fielding team must HUSTLE.
3. Only one pitch is allowed per batter. Foul ball is an out.
This game is great because it provides lots of fast paced activity. Teams also learn to put the batter for the next inning at catcher so that he/she is quickly able to bat.
Safety

- Organize throwing and catching drills in parallel lines.
- Players should wear proper protective gear.
- Be sure players are clear of each other for batting drills.
- Players of teams waiting to bat should be in a specific area.
- Avoid collisions on fly balls by properly calling off teammates.
- Organize drills so students are facing away from sun.
- Perfect sliding techniques before using them.
- Be sure bases and other equipment is in good working condition.

Equipment

- Bat for every student
- Ball and glove for every student
- Protective equipment for catchers/batters, etc…
- Bases
- Whiffle balls for hitting drills
## Softball Unit
### Scope and Sequence
#### Grades (K-3)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Kindergarten</th>
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I=Introduce  
R=Review  
E=Expand

*Skills are Expanded and Reviewed when an “E” is present.*

## Block Plan
Day 1
New Skills-Grip

Day 2
New Skills-Throwing
Review-Grip

Day 3
New Skills-Catch
Review-Grip and Throwing

Day 4
New Skills-Fielding Techniques
Review-Grip, Throwing, Catching

Day 5
New Skills-Batting
Review-Grip, Throwing, Catching, Fielding

Day 6
New Skills-None
Review-All Skills
Good day for actual game!!

Day 7
New Skills-Base Running
Review-All skills as needed

Day 8
New Skills-Pitching
Review-All as needed

Day 9
New Skills-Games
Review-As needed

Terminology

Appeal Play—play which an umpire cannot make a decision until requested by a player or coach.

Assist—Fielding credit for a player who throws or deflects a batted or thrown ball in which a put-out results, or would have resulted except for a subsequent error.

Battery—The pitcher and the catcher

Batting average—The number of hits divided by the times at bat.

Blocked ball—a batted or thrown ball that is touched or stopped by a person not engaged in the game, or that touches any object that is not part of the official equipment or official playing area.

Blooper—A batted fly ball that goes just over the head of the infielders and just in front of the outfielders.

Cleanup hitter—the number four batter in the batting order, a position usually occupied by the team’s heaviest hitter.

Control—The ability of a pitcher to throw the ball to a desired area when pitching.

Count—The number of balls and strikes on the batter.
Cut-off-A throw from the outfield that is intercepted by an infielder for the purpose of throwing out a runner other than the intended runner.

Double play-Two consecutive put-outs occurring between the time the ball leaves the pitcher’s hand and its return to the pitcher.

Error-A misplay or mistake by the defensive team.

Fielder’s choice-When the fielder has more than one option to put out an offensive player.

Force out-An out as a result of tagging or touching the base ahead of where a runner must go.

Fungo bat-Lightweight bat used in hitting balls during practice.

Grand slam-homerun with the bases loaded

Hit-A ball that is hit in such a way that the batter or baserunners are not put out.

Hot corner-Third base area

Infield fly-A fair fly ball that can be caught by an infielder with runners on first and second, or first, second, and third before two are out. The batter is automatically out.

On deck-the player who is next up to bat

Overthrow-A thrown ball that goes into foul territory beyond the boundary lines of the playing fielding in attempt to throw out a runner.

Passed ball-A legally delivered pitch that gets by the catcher.

Put-out-An out credited to the fielder who last handles the ball on a play that retires the batter or baserunner.

Running squeeze-A play where the runner on third base “steals” home while the batter bunts the ball.

Sacrifice bunt-A play where the batter bunts to advance the runner.

Sacrifice fly-A play where the batter hits a deep fly ball and a runner scores after the ball is caught by the defensive team.

Switch hitter-A batter that can bat either right or left handed.
Wild pitch - A legally delivered pitch that is so wide or low or high that the catcher cannot stop or control the ball, which allows the baserunner to advance.

Softball Rules

Batting

- When batting, both feet must remain in the batter's box until the ball has been hit. Failing to do so results in the batter being called out.
- Each batter gets four balls and three strikes (a ball being a bad pitch, a strike being a good one).
- If a batter swings for the pitch, it will be called a strike, regardless of whether it was a ball or strike.
- The batters must bat in the same order - failure to do so results in some horribly evil rule complications which I'm not willing to go into here...
- The on-deck batter (batter waiting to hit) must not enter the batting box or the field of play until the play resulting from the previous batter has finished.

Pitching

- The pitcher must begin the pitch with one foot on the pitching rubber.
- The pitcher must remain in contact with the pitching rubber until the pitch has been released.
- The pitch must reach an arc of between 6-12 feet from the ground.
- For a pitch to be called a strike it must be between 6-12 feet at its peak and cross the (home) plate between the batter's front knee and back shoulder. Anything else will be called a ball.
Base running

- Once the batter reaches first base, s/he is then called a baserunner.
- You are not obliged to get round all in one go to score - any runner passing home will score, even if s/he has stopped on every single base.
- You MUST touch ALL of the bases as you go round.
- The baserunner must not deviate from his/her natural running path to avoid a tag, doing so results in the baserunner being called out.
- If the ball is caught off the bat, if the baserunner has left the base s/he was occupying, s/he MUST return to that base before trying to proceed. This is called tagging up - we'll yell at you lots to tag up and go, which means hold your base until the ball is caught and then run for the next base.
- This isn't a rule but listen to your base coaches!

Fielding

- When the fielding side makes three outs, the teams switch over.
- An out is made when the batter strikes out, the ball is caught off the bat, the runner is forced out at a base or the runner is tagged. There are a couple of other ways but we won't go into them here ;)
- To force a runner out at a base, the runner must be forced to the next base i.e. the batter is forced to run to first base when s/he hits the ball and if there is anyone on first base, then s/he will be forced to second etc. To force a runner out, the ball must reach the base before the runner and the base player must have control of the ball and must have some part of themself touching the base.
- It is not necessary to "stump" the base with the ball.
- To tag a runner out, all you need to do is touch the runner with the ball or the glove with the ball in it.
- If a runner is not forced, s/he MUST be tagged in order to be called out.
- If the ball is overthrown and goes dead, the runners are awarded TWO bases from the last base touched at THE POINT OF THE THROW. This one's important!
- The ball can be caught and an out made if the ball is hit foul but NOT if the ball is hit into dead ball territory. Once the ball is caught in foul, the ball is LIVE and the runners can run if they wish - so stay aware ;)

http://www.cf.ac.uk/suon/softball/rules.html

Softball Quiz

1. T/F A batter is automatically out when he or she hits a fly ball that does not leave the infield when runners are on 1st or 2nd.
2. How many fingers do we use to grip the ball? _________

3. Batting average is calculated by?

4. Figure out this batting average. Tom had 7 at bats in the game and got 4 hits.

5. When throwing the ball what is facing your target?
   a) foot  b) throwing arm  c) the ball  d) the shoulder opposite your throwing hand

6. If the ball is coming at you above your belly button, how are your fingers placed?

Works Cited
