



PONSONBY SOFTBALL

U7 AND U9 DEVELOPMENT OUTLINE

Ponsonby Recreation Club

2022

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

INTRODUCTION

1. FUNdamentals – basic softball skills
 - a. Basic athletic stance: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7zEHBe2UCqU>
 - b. Throwing: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fB6-rRxMVE&feature=youtu.be>
 - c. Catching with a glove and 2 hands: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKwgYM3Nzo8>
 - d. Fielding grounders: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TM6hnPz8-uo>
 - e. Fielding pop-fly's & **calling for the ball**:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QZ4lrNN5Pv8>
 - f. Hitting: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pUa2OEo8HSI>
 - g. Base-running: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=awBfD3Fm-y4>
 - h. Basic positioning on the diamond
 - i. See Player Position Descriptions at the end of this document
2. Activity – movement skills:
 - a. (ABC's) Agility, Balance, Coordination
3. Focus on LEARNING
 - a. Winning and Losing should not be a concern at this age
4. Develop and coach/teach all players equally

*NOTE: pitching is **not** part of the game play at U7 or U9 as the coaches provide the pitching, however, try to implement the FUNdamentals of pitching – stepping, arm motion, targets, pitcher/catcher relationship, release of the ball, etc. – into as many lessons as possible.*

STATION-BASED

- Keep kids moving and active
 - Effective skill development and time for 'teaching' of the skill
 - Low coach to player ratio
 - Uses many different tools and equipment to simulate softball skills
1. Conduct a 'team' warm-up or activity together to get everyone engaged and ready
 2. Split the players into groups with 3-5 kids per group and assign them to a station

3. Ensure one leader or coach has a detailed lesson plan prepared prior to each practice and the equipment and helpers are available to run each station
 - a. There MUST be at least one supervisor at each station
4. Conduct each station for 7 to 10 minutes – spread out the activities throughout the diamond to utilize all available space
5. Make sure you keep track of time and rotate through the stations, so each player has an opportunity to participate at each station
6. Finish your practice with a “lead-up” game as an end to the session

PROGRAM OUTLINE

Length of Season

- Season begins on May 15th for U9 and May 16th for U7
- There will be 10 weeks of softball for U7 (May 23rd is a holiday, no practice)
 - July 25th will be the last night
- The U9 season will run per the assigned schedule from the U9 convenor
 - Year end tournament will be Aug 11-14 in Arthur
- U7 will only play on Monday nights at Ponsonby Ballpark
 - there will be NO travelling at U7 division as we have 4 teams and will rotate the times and games each week
- U9 home nights are Sundays and there will be a schedule released for travelling to other centre’s within ISA

Length of Practices

- Diamond time for practices and games is scheduled for 1 hour for the U7 division
- Diamond time for practices and games is scheduled for 1.5 hours for the U9 division

Number of Players

- Each team will roster approximately 12-15 players
- Use **TeamSnap** to track your team’s availability for each game or practice

Number of Coaches/Helpers

- 4 or more adult coaches and/or helpers are required for each session
- Should aim to have 1 adult for every 3 players
- Ensure adult helpers dress appropriately and bring their own equipment, such as gloves, to be active in the skill teaching and drills

Lesson Plans

- Lesson plans are provided and available on our Coaches Resource Page on Google Drive
 - https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1fiDel7xBLBDC7KaSIUtvKs0svo_MZel-
- Each lesson plan involves activities that teach players the basic skills of softball through movement and FUNdamentals
- **PLEASE USE THESE LESSON PLANS TO PREPARE FOR YOUR PRACTICES**
- The coach has flexibility in incorporating your own drills and/or modifying activities to suit - but the goal is to have each team learning at the same level throughout the season

U7 Program

During weeks 1-4, implement the station-based approach and introduce the kids to all the FUNdamentals of softball as noted above. NO Game play during the first 4 weeks.

During weeks 5-10 utilize the first half-hour of the time to incorporate stations or group drills, then use the second half-hour to have scrimmages or games. Game schedule will be prepared by Ponsonby Recreation Club and distributed when the teams are finalized.

For games:

- keep it moving. Suggest the pitcher have a bucket of balls so that if the catcher misses you can keep the playing moving.
- Ensure players get a chance at playing all positions throughout the season
- No stealing allowed and no advances on overthrows
- Players get 3 pitches from parent; if the child does not hit the ball after 3 pitches, they get one additional swing off a tee; if the batter misses, they are out.
- Scores are not kept; the inning is complete after 7 batters per team

U9 Program

Refer to ISA rules and regulations for rules. A schedule will be prepared by the league convenor.

TIPS FOR COACHES

1. Arrive early to set-up the diamond and/or your stations and talk about the lesson with other coaches/parent helpers
2. Use name tags if needed
3. Be positive and enthusiastic – provide motivation and praise
4. Incorporate stretching and cool-downs to get the team together and educate the players on the importance of proper warm-ups and strengthening
5. Keep activities short with only 1-2 basic instructions

6. Include drills/activities that provide “Lead-up” to the games/scrimmages
 - a. these lead-up activities provide players with an introduction to the game of softball that is fun and contains an element of competition/games
7. If an activity or drill is not working, move on!
8. Adjust the lesson plans to suit your group – incorporate “favourites” as much as possible
9. Talk about safety on and off the field of play
10. Establish responsibilities with the kids about setting up the diamond and putting stuff away

EQUIPMENT

Players should have the following to bring to each practice/game:

- Helmet, Glove, Running shoes or cleats, Water bottle

Coaches and/or organization to provide:

- Indoor balls, whiffle balls, bean bags, batting tees, bases, bats, catchers gear, pylons/markers, targets, hula hoops, buckets, hitting sticks

PLAYER POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

Pitcher:

Throws the softball from the pitcher's mound to the catcher. The pitcher uses an underarm motion to pitch the ball toward the "strike zone". After making a pitch, the pitcher gets ready to field balls hit up the middle and be prepared to cover the other bases. When a runner is on 3rd and the catcher has missed the ball, the pitcher follows their pitch to home plate, so they are ready to help get the runner out.

Catcher:

Plays in a semi-crouched position behind home plate and receives pitches thrown by the pitcher. The catcher uses their glove and body to block pitches. When runners are on base the catcher is ready to throw to 1st, 2nd, or 3rd base to get the runner out. The catcher also receives throws from fielders or the cut-off, attempting to make outs at home plate.

1st Base:

Positioned just to the left of the first base. Their main role is to make fielding plays on balls hit towards 1st base. If the ball is not coming in the direction of 1st base, the player gets in position on the base, ready to receive the ball. For safety of both players, the player can only touch the white part of the base.

2nd Base:

Plays in the gap between the bag at second and the first baseman. They field “grounders” and “pop ups” hit to this side of the infield. When the ball is not hit in their direction, they go to the base and are ready to receive throws from fielders attempting to make outs at 2nd base.

Short Stop:

Fields the balls hit to the infield between second and third base. Short Stop covers 2nd base (along with the second baseman) and is often involved in force plays and “double plays” with the second baseman. Also covers 3rd base when 2nd base is fielding the ball.

3rd Base:

Plays to the left of third base and covers any plays there. Receives throws from other fielders attempting to make outs at 3rd base. When fielding the ball, the 3rd baseman tries to make outs to the closest base for a force-play (ex. Runner at first, make throw to 2nd base).

Outfielder:

Positioned beyond the infield in Left, Right or Centre, they catch and field “fly balls,” line drives, and ground balls hit into the outfield. The players also throw the balls in to make a play and cover bases for overthrows.

Batter:

Positioned in the batter’s box at home plate. Between pitches they must move out of the batter’s box for safety and to get out the field of play. If the batter hits the ball into the field of play, they run to 1st base. The batter then becomes the runner. At 1st base the runner must decide to run through or make a turn to 2nd base. If they run through the MUST touch the orange half of 1st base only.