

INDOOR Softball

Part 1 The Basic Game

TWO TYPES OF OUTDOOR SOFTBALL are played in the UK: Fastpitch and Slowpitch. However, over the last few years a new hybrid game has been created, commonly referred to as Indoor Softball or Indoors. Indoor Softball largely evolved as a way for the dedicated or mad to play their sport year round. There is no standard Rulebook for Indoors and because of this the game usually evolves to fit the site or the requirements of the particular players. In short, you can take the framework for Indoors and adapt it to suit your needs. This Guide deals with Indoor Softball and assumes a knowledge of Slowpitch softball - from whence it came.

Indoor Softball is played by two teams with a minimum of eight players each. Only eight players will take the field at one time, but you can have an unlimited number of batters. Indoors is seen as a mixed-sex game and the team ratio should be 4:4. However, this ratio sometimes varies and there's no reason why Indoors couldn't be played as a single-sex game as well.

The basics of Indoors are simply a variation on Slowpitch. The **PITCHER** pitches the ball to a **BATTER** who hits it and runs around as many bases as possible before the ball is

brought under the control of the defensive team. The aim of the game is to score more **POINTS** than the opposition.

Meanwhile the defensive team is trying to get batters and baserunners **OUT** in all the same ways they do in Slowpitch:

- **Strike outs.**
- **Fly outs (balls that are hit in the air and caught - including, in Indoors, balls caught off the walls or ceiling).**
- **Force outs.**
- **Tag plays.**

There is more information on all of these at the end of this Guide.

Indoors is two innings long and innings are not defined by the number of outs, but rather by time. Each half inning is usually six minutes long - the duration is flexible as long as it is applied to each half inning.

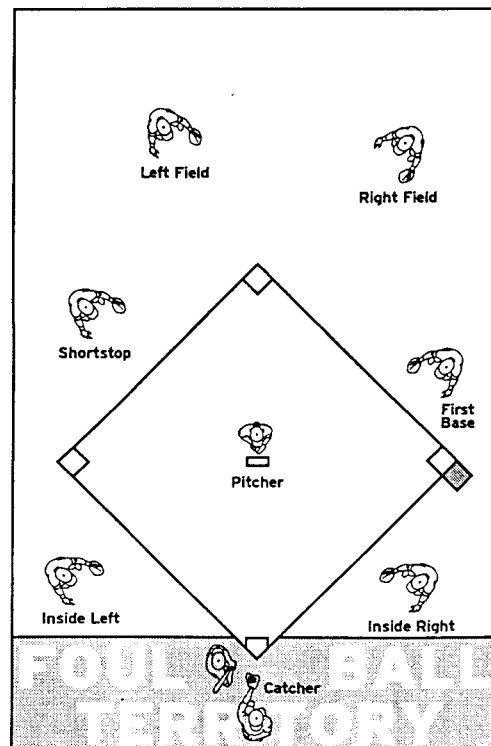
Players still bat in a pre-arranged order and in mixed-sex games the batting order should alternate male and female batters. Batters continue to bat in that order for six minutes, regardless of any outs being made.

Part 2 The Playing Area

The Indoor Softball area is usually defined by its venue. Indoors can be played in gyms, sports halls or similar. The key point is that the playing area should be contained by four walls and a ceiling (usually made of netting) as the ball continues to be 'live' (in play) off all these surfaces.

A Softball diamond should be laid out within the parameters of the venue with Home Plate, First Base, Second Base and Third Base as usual. There are no hard and fast rules about distances except that bases should be a 'reasonable' distance apart - 12 metres is fairly standard - although there doesn't have to be much space left for the **OUTFIELD**.

From the front of Home Plate a straight line is drawn across the court (see diagram) and the area behind the line is the only **FOUL BALL** territory - everything else is **FAIR TERRITORY**! The foul ball territory is where batters line-up preceding their turn at bat. Given the limitations of gyms, it's also where everyone leaves their bags, bats, water, etc. and so this general chaos can lead to **DEAD BALL** situations.



Part 3 The Defensive Team

Unlike Slowpitch, in Indoors there is little point in referring to Infielders and Outfielders. Instead, there are essentially eight fielding positions (see diagram for placement):

- PITCHER
- CATCHER
- FIRST BASE
- SHORTSTOP
- LEFT FIELD
- RIGHT FIELD
- INSIDE LEFT
- INSIDE RIGHT

Like everything else in Indoors, nothing is hard and fast, and you can place your fielders where you want. However, following the diagram is a good way of ensuring that you cover the court and once you are familiar with the game you can tailor fielding positions accordingly.

Throws to **Second Base** are usually taken by the **Left or Right Field** positions, throws to **Third Base** by **Inside Left or Shortstop**, and, when a left-handed batter comes to the Plate, **Inside Right** often takes throws to **First Base**.

Part 4 Playing the Game

- Each batter receives only one pitch from the Pitcher. The pitch is a Slowpitch pitch with an arc between 6' and 12' from the ground. If the batter does not swing and the pitch is a **STRIKE**, the batter is out. If the batter does not swing and the pitch is a **BALL**, the batter advances to First Base. If the batter swings and hits the ball into Foul Ball territory the batter is out; or if the ball rolls back into foul ball territory without any defensive player touching the ball, the batter is out. The batter is also out if he or she steps on home plate in the process of hitting the ball.
- The batter and any baserunners are out if a batted ball hits them when they are not in contact with a base.
- The batting team continues to bat in order for six minutes and then the fielding team comes into bat for six minutes (one inning). Each game is two innings long. OUTS are made in all the ways listed above.
- A **HOMERUN** is scored if the batter's hit hits the back wall without being touched by a defensive player or touching the ceiling before connecting with the back wall. A homerun can still be caught off the back wall. When a homerun is hit, which has the effect of scoring all runners on base, they simply return home (they do not have to touch all the bases).
- It should be noted that all the variations on the original game of Slowpitch have significance in terms of how the game is scored. Please refer to Part 5: Scoring the Game for this information.
- It is also worth noting that Indoors by its very nature is a fast, energetic game. The emphasis is on hitting and running which means that the umpire is much less likely to call a pitch a ball! Also, it is a game that lends itself to aggressive baserunning and the umpire will not call **TIME** until it is clear that no baserunners have a chance for further advance. If the ball is hit into Fair Territory it remains live at all times even if overthrown into Foul Ball Territory (unless it becomes tangled in the general team debris or obstructed by the offensive team waiting to bat – then the play will be called **DEAD BALL** and all baserunners will be awarded the base they were running to at the time of the overthrow plus one additional base).
- The other key difference from Slowpitch is that **BUNTING** is allowed, although leading off from bases before the pitch is hit is not.

Part 5 Scoring the Game

As Indoor Softball scoring is more complex than the outdoor game, it is usually done by a non-player who scores for both teams.

Points are scored for the following:

- **1 point** for each batter who safely reaches first base – the batter gets 1 additional point for each base he or she reaches on their turn at bat (even if they stop at each base before advancing on an overthrow or misfielded ball, etc.). Baserunners do not get points as they advance to the next base on another batter's turn

at bat, except for the following circumstance:

- **1 point** is given for each baserunner who safely comes home.
- **5 points** are scored for a Homerun + 1 point for each runner on base when the Homerun was hit (a point is subtracted if the batter is caught off the back wall).

Points are subtracted for each OUT made by the defensive team. Note that this rule makes it possible for a team to have a negative points score!

Part 6 Equipment

The standard equipment for Slowpitch softball is used, i.e. a set of throw-down bases (including the safety First Base) and the same bats and fielder's gloves. It is, however, worth remembering that gyms are usually concrete with a thin covering of green 'carpet' and you probably don't want to

be chucking your expensive bats down in this environment!

The only equipment that is different from the outdoor game is the ball. Indoor balls are 12', the same size as a standard softball, but are softer and more 'squidgy' – most equipment suppliers refer to them as practice balls.