



# Harris Softball Evaluations Guide

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This document provides a description of how players are evaluated and softball teams are formed at the 8U Machine Pitch division and above.

## Overview

The process of evaluating and distributing players aims to ensure that players are placed on teams that are fairly balanced and of roughly equal potential. Understand that evaluations are NOT "try-outs" as ALL registered players will be placed on a team. During the evaluation process, players will rotate through various stations which incorporate different skills necessary for softball (i.e., hitting, fielding, throwing, pitching, and catching), and players will demonstrate their current skill level performing the specified drill. See the section titled "Station Layout Plan" for a visual guide to the process.

## Evaluation Standards

At each station, one or more raters will evaluate players on each demonstrated skill. The evaluation requires a subjective determination of skill which will be recorded as a number on a scale of 1 (minimum skill level demonstrated) to 5 (most advanced skill level demonstrated). The same raters will evaluate each player in a given age division at each single station, so that the subjective rating scale remains consistent from player to player throughout the entire group. Both raters and coaches will also have an opportunity to provide additional notes based on observations of the players as a whole.

## Evaluation Process

### Check-In (1)

Players will check in with a volunteer once arriving inside the evaluation facility at the registration area. Upon check-in, players will receive a number which they will need to wear in a visible location on their outer clothing; this will be the reference that raters use to record their evaluations. They will also fill out a questionnaire regarding experience and desire to play the position of pitcher and/or catcher, as well as their general experience playing softball (years played, travel experience/team, position experience, etc.). After checking-in and receiving/affixing a number, players will move to the warm-up area.

### Warm-Ups (2)

A coach will help facilitate light warm-ups including cardio exercises and light stretching. Players will be invited to play catch with one another or with a coach. After warm-ups, players will be directed into groups of 2-3 players to proceed together to the evaluation stations.

## Evaluation Stations

### Infield Station (3)

At the direction of a coach, the small group of players will line up at an infield position with fielding glove and mask on. One at a time, each player will field a set of six simulated ground balls thrown by the coach (two routine, two forehand, two backhand). After fielding each ball, she will throw the ball home (back to the coach), return to the infield position, and repeat the process through the six ground balls. Players will rotate through the group until each player has completed fielding and throwing ground balls. They will then proceed together to the outfield station.

*Evaluation Criteria: Subjective ratings in ground ball fielding mechanics, throwing mechanics, arm strength, and throwing accuracy*

### Outfield Station (4)

At the direction of a coach, the small group of players will line up at an outfield position with fielding glove and mask (optional) on. One at a time, each player will field a set of five simulated fly balls thrown by the coach. After catching and/or fielding each ball, she will throw the ball home (back to the coach), return to the outfield position, and repeat the process through the five fly balls. Players will rotate through the group until each player has completed catching/fielding and throwing fly balls. They will then proceed together to the tee hitting station at batting cage 1.

*Evaluation Criteria: Subjective ratings in fly ball fielding mechanics, throwing mechanics, arm strength, and throwing accuracy*

### Tee Hitting Station (5)

One at a time, the small group of players will enter batting cage 1 with bat and helmet on. Players may take a reasonable amount of practice swings once inside the cage. Again one at a time, a player will position themselves at the tee (hitting into the backstop of the cage), and take five swings at balls placed on the tee. Players will rotate through the group until each player has completed their five swings. They will then proceed together to the front toss hitting station at batting cage 2.

*Evaluation Criteria: Subjective ratings in hitting mechanics, contact, and power*

### Front Toss Hitting Station (6)

In order to maintain consistency of the pitches that players receive in order to evaluate their hitting ability, players at ALL levels will hit balls thrown from a coach's front toss instead of live player pitching. One at a time, a player will enter the cage, position themselves in the batter's box, and (optionally) take a reasonable amount of practice swings. They will then receive five pitches to swing at, tossed by a coach positioned at a short distance away from behind a screen. Players will rotate through the group, one at a time, until each player has completed their five pitches. They will then proceed either to the pitching station (optional, for those interested in pitching), catching station (optional, for those interested in catching), or the check-out.

*Evaluation Criteria: Subjective ratings in hitting mechanics, contact, and power*

### **Pitching Station (7a)**

Players will queue up at the pitching warm-up area, where a coach will speak with the player to determine whether she would like brief instruction on pitching mechanics, and the player will be able to throw some warm-up pitches, which will not be evaluated. When ready, the player will then at the direction of the coach, deliver ten pitches to a catcher behind home plate.

*Evaluation Criteria: Subjective ratings in pitching mechanics, and accuracy. Raw score recorded according to how many of the ten pitches were thrown, in the rater's judgment, for strikes.*

### **Catching Station (7b)**

Players will put all catcher's gear on. One at a time, catchers will set up behind home plate to catch warmup pitches thrown by a pitcher waiting to be evaluated.

*Evaluation Criteria: Subjective ratings for blocking and receiving.*

### **Check-Out (1)**

Once finished at the front toss hitting station OR (optional) pitching/catching stations, players will exit past the registration area. They will be asked to make sure they went to all stations. A coach will collect the player's number, and the player may leave.

## **Evaluation Compilation**

After the evaluations are completed, the softball commissioner team will collect the data from the raters. After the data input is completed, the softball commissioner team will complete "composite scores" for all skill areas (fielding, throwing, and hitting) and one overall composite score. Pitching and catching scores will be maintained separately, due to not all players participating. Players will be ranked according to their overall composite score. Player evaluation scores will under no circumstances be disclosed to anyone other than league officials with a need to know.

## **Team Formation**

As previously stated, the process of distributing players into teams is done with the goal of ensuring that the teams are fairly balanced, of roughly equal potential, competitive, and established with an element of fun that will encourage players - and their parents - to want to continue coming back to play Harris Softball year after year. Coaches are encouraged to work cooperatively to help the league accomplish this goal and, in doing so, strengthen the league as a whole.

As such, the softball commissioner team will work to ensure that any players with experience playing travel softball will be evenly distributed among the teams within any given division. Additionally, any players that are identified as potential pitchers and catchers will also be fairly distributed among the teams. Beyond this criteria, the evaluation compilation of composite scores will be used to fairly, to the extent possible, fill the remaining roster spots on each team.

Rosters will be finalized, distributed to coaches, and loaded into the league Crossbar website/mobile app within ten days after the conclusion of evaluations.

## Station Layout Plan

After checking in, players will proceed to the warm-up area. After warming up, players will proceed to the infield station, the outfield station, the tee hitting station, the front toss hitting station, and finally (optionally) the pitching and/or catching stations. After completing all stations, players will “check out” by leaving their bib number with a coach/volunteer at the exit (registration area).

To help with the flow, coaches/volunteers will direct participants to the next station once they complete their current evaluation station. Please see the map below for a visual guide to the process.

