

Development Progression: HS

Features of this age group:

- Body approaching full growth.
- Learn better by breaking a skill into components.
- Sense of competition developing.
- Role of parents is diminishing.

Principles:

- Focus on developing more intricate motor skills.
- Begin moderate strength training.
- Increase attention to mental skills.
- More intricate strategy and tactics.
- Increase competitiveness.
- Ensure good practice/learning habits.

Softball Skills:

Physical Skills:

Ensure the players can correctly perform the most fundamental skills in softball.

Throwing:

- By this age players should have the basic mechanics - but review and check periodically.
- Review crow hop and leg drive.
- Teach different throws: sidearm/scoop, shovel, backhand.
- Do not allow sloppy throwing mechanics during warm ups.

Fielding:

- Expect "quick release".
- Expect anticipatory movement on every pitch.
- Practice running with glove.
- Ensure lots of practice judging fly balls.
- Teaching reading wind and blocking sun with glove.
- Practice diving for balls to side and in front.

Defensive Play:

- Players should be settled into 1 or 2 positions.
- Teach positions specific play.
- Teach and practice defensive play:
 - Run downs.
 - Getting the lead runner.
 - Double play at 2b.

- Defending against runners at 1b and 3b.
- Catchers should be calling pitches.
- Know ALL position expectations.

Pitching:

At this level, pitchers should be able to hit corners about 50% to 80% of the time.

- Focus on strategic pitching.
- Continue to develop speed, control and change up.
- Introduce and practice drop ball.
- Advanced pitchers should be developing a roll over drop ball or rise ball.

Catching:

- Able to block balls in dirt.
- Continue to work on quick release to 2b.
- Begin study of batter weakness and pitch selection.
- Discuss catcher - umpire relations.

Running and base running:

- Practice bent leg slide; “fade away” or “back door” slide, and retreat slides.
- Introduce head first slide.

Hitting:

- Expect “smart hitting”.
- Introduce/practice running slap to left handers.
- Recognize pitches - know their best pitch!
 - Hit where the ball is coming from “outside pitch to opposite side of field”.

Bunting:

- Practice bent leg or drag bunt and fake and slap.
- Bunt for hit.

Fitness:

- Introduce core strength conditioning in off season and specific strength training in very early preseason.
- Continue to develop flexibility and speed.

Mental Skills:

- Expand strategy: hit and run, squeeze and suicide squeeze, r1/r3 defense.
- Ensure mental prep for each play.
- Continue to develop and practice imaging/visualization.
- Expand concept and use of self-talk.
- Introduce and practice “relaxation” and “energizing” techniques.
- Encourage keeping a journal.
- Continue individual goal setting (skill development).
- Team goal setting and planning (reduce role of parents).
- Players take on more administrative and set up responsibility.

- Players should be coaching each other.
- Expect 100% in practices and games.

Rules:

- Know the exceptions to the rules; not just the rules!