

Developmental Progression: 8U

Features of the age group:

- Starting to develop self concept.
- Learning social skills and how to interact with peers.
- Starting to understand the idea and unpredictableness of rules of a game/sport.
- Fine-muscle motor skills NOT developed.
- Limited ability to react quickly to stimulus.
- Primary method of learning physical skill is imitation.

Principles:

- Focus on large muscles and simple motor skills.
- Emphasize development of confidence, self esteem, teamwork and cooperation.
- Emphasize having fun and making 100% effort.
- Focus on major, fundamental skills.
- Simplify the rules.
- Focus on developing good practice/learning skills.

Softball Skills:

Physical Skills:

Focus on the most fundamental skills in softball: throwing and catching the ball, and running. Hitting should deal only with the most basic technique, focusing on development of hand eye coordination and ensuring bad hitting habits are not developed (e.g. swinging up). Try to teach the whole motion of a skill. Break down components only to correct a specific problem.

Throwing:

- Focus on “full motion” (body rotation, big “C” or “pet the dog” with the arm).
- Check the following:
 - Stride with the correct foot.
 - Elbow higher than shoulder.
 - Eyes of target - throw at a specific target, not just towards it (e.g. at the receiver’s glove or chest).

Catching a thrown ball:

- Focus on safety and confidence (they go hand in hand).
- Work without gloves frequently.
- Check the following:
 - Facing the thrower (square up).
 - Using both hands.

- Never point fingers at the ball (glove should always be perpendicular to path of the ball)
- Move to the ball, trying to catch it in the vertical center line of the body.

Running:

- Practices running for speed over short distances (e.g. home to first).
- Emphasize “fast feet” (feet touching ground for the least amount of time).
- Running through 1b.
- Check the following:
 - Running in a straight line to target.
 - Arms moving fore and aft (not to sides).
 - Arms in sync with legs (opposite limbs).
 - Push with your toes.

Hitting:

- Focus on developing hand eye coordination (contact rather than power) - emphasize watching the ball all the way.
- Develop a desire to hit (no base on balls).
- Check the following:
 - Smooth swing directly to ball (no hitches or dropping of hands).
 - “Level” swing to produce line drives (avoid swinging up).

Fitness:

- Develop flexibility skills (how to stretch).

Mental Skills:

- Teach basic rules of the game.
 - How to score a run.
 - How to get out.
 - Fair/Foul ball.
- Focus on the importance of teamwork (usually takes two players to get an out).
- Focus on sportsmanship.
 - Appreciation of opponents and officials (cheers and handshakes with opponents and umpires).
 - Support of teammates (no put downs).
- Teach why and how to practice.
- Introduce and practice the concept of focus.
- Introduce importance and techniques of warming up, general fitness, and nutrition.
- Develop the ability to give 100%.
- **Rules:**
- Tag ups

- Force out
- Fair/Foul ball