

Softball (Lob Ball/Slo Pitch/Three Pitch)

SECONDARY - INTERSCHOOL 2023

- Consult [Risk Management](#).
- The safety standards for this activity must be presented to the activity provider prior to the activity taking place. The activity provider must meet the minimum requirements listed in the safety standards. For more information on planning trips using outside providers, consult [Outside Activity Providers](#).
- Consult curricular [Fitness Activities](#) and curricular [Weight Training](#) when involving participants in weight training and/or training and fitness development activities.

Equipment

- Determine that all equipment is safe for use (for example, no sharp corners, cracks, or splinters). Students must be encouraged to report equipment problems to the coach.
- Protective equipment must not be altered (for example, cutting a portion off the back of mouth guards).
- Wooden bats must not be cracked. All bats must have proper grip.
- The bats must comply with the current [Slo-Pitch Ontario Association \(SPO\)](#) rules (for example, Amateur Softball Association bat policy [ASA2004]).
- The pitchers, catchers, infielders and outfielders must wear softball/baseball gloves when a regulation/official or hard, flight-restricted softball is being used.
- Helmets equipped with chin straps must be done up; otherwise, the helmet must fit such that it will stay on the head.
- Student umpires must wear a mask and a chest pad when positioned behind home plate.

- The catchers must wear shin protectors, a chest protector and a mask with a throat protector.
- The catcher must wear suitable protection for the pelvic area.
- Use softballs appropriate to the skill level of the students.
- The batter, on-deck batter, bat person, base runners and base coaches (located behind first and third base) must wear a properly fitted (as per manufacturer's guidelines) and properly worn batting helmet with flaps, covering both ears certified by a recognized safety standards association
- The bases must be properly secured.
- A safety bag must be used at first base.
- All of the equipment not being used must be kept out of the practice/playing area.
- Where pitching machines are being used they must be inspected prior to use and be under the direct supervision of a teacher/coach.

Refer to the [First Aid](#) section for first aid equipment requirements.

Clothing/Footwear/Jewellery

- Appropriate clothing and footwear must be worn.
- If wearing cleats, no metal or compound cleats. Molded cleats only.
- The wearing of jewellery during practices and competitions must meet the rules of the governing body of the sport/activity, [OFSAA](#), and local athletic association. Consult the [General Safety Standards for Clothing, Footwear, and Jewellery](#) when jewellery is not addressed by the governing body of the sport/activity, OFSAA or the local athletic association.
- When long hair poses a safety risk it must be secured. Devices (for example, hair pins, elastics and barrettes) used to tie back long hair must not present a safety concern.
- Students must not participate when the length of fingernails poses a safety risk to themselves or others.

Facilities

- Determine that all facilities are safe for use. Students must be encouraged to report facility problems to the coach.
- Playing surface and surrounding area must be free of all obstacles and must provide safe footing and traction.
- Prior to use, backstops, fences and fields must be checked for hazards. Any hazards found must be reported to students and appropriate officials.
- Modify the activity to avoid hazards (for example, mark hazards with cones, cover hole in fence with mat).
- The field of play must never be located near an open roadway onto which an active player might run.
- If more than one activity is going on, determine that there is a safe distance between the activities.
- If, in the opinion of the umpire, after consultation with both coaches, the field is deemed to be unsafe for play, the game must be rescheduled.
- For indoor practices, playing surface must provide safe footing and traction and surrounding area must be free of all obstacles (for example, tables, chairs).
- Goalposts must be padded if in field of play.
- Practices: Holes, hazards (for example, glass, rocks, sprinkler heads, sewer grates), and severely uneven surfaces must be identified. The conditions must be made safe or the activity must be modified or moved to a safe location. Hazards which cannot be removed must be brought to the attention of the students. Coach must notify principal/designate of unsafe field conditions.
- Competitions: Where hazardous conditions that cannot be avoided are identified by the coach and/or officials the conditions must be made safe or the competition must be cancelled or moved to a safe location. Coach must notify principal/designate of unsafe field conditions.
- Walls, stages, equipment, trees, and posts must not be used as turning points, finish lines, end zones, or boundaries. Establish a clearly delineated boundary line away from the hazards, using visual markers (for example, lines, pylons), to prevent contact/collision.

- When running takes place off school site for a warm up, conditioning run and/or is an integral part of the activity:
 - Coaches must do a safety check 'walk through' in order to identify potential problems prior to initial use of route or course.
 - Coaches must outline to the students the route or course (for example, notice of areas to approach with caution) before the start of the run.
 - Coaches must determine that students are not crossing busy intersections unless directly supervised.

Environmental Considerations

- When environmental conditions may pose a risk to student safety (for example, thunderstorms [lightning] or student(s) with asthma, triggered by air quality), coaches must take into consideration their school board/school's protocols and procedures related to:
 - environmental conditions (consult [Weather](#)); and
 - insects (for example, mosquitoes and ticks [consult the school/school board's protocols and/or regional Public Health Department's website]).
- Students must receive instruction on safety procedures related to environmental conditions and be made aware of ways to protect themselves (for example, sun burn, heat stroke).
- At all times the school board's weather and insect procedures are the minimum standards. In situations where a higher standard of care is presented (for example, outside activity providers, facility/program coordinators), the higher standard of care must be followed.

Special Rules/Instructions

- Be aware of students whose medical condition (for example, asthma, anaphylaxis, casts, previous concussion, orthopaedic device) may affect participation. Consult [Medical Conditions](#).

- Prior to participation students must receive concussion information through the appropriate Ministry of Education's Concussion Awareness Resource or the school board approved concussion resources. Students must also receive information on:
 - the Concussion Code of Conduct;
 - concussion prevention strategies specific to the activity and inherent risks of the activity (that is, outline possible risks and ways to minimize the risks);
 - procedures and rules for safe play; and
 - the importance of reporting symptoms related to a suspected concussion.
- Students must confirm their review of the concussion awareness resource and Concussion Code of Conduct prior to participation.
- Refer to school board policies and procedures (i.e., transportation, excursion/field trip) for communication with parents/guardians, the location of an off-site activity, means of transportation, supervision ratios, and parent/guardian permission.
- Previous training, fitness level, and the length of time and intensity of physical activity must be taken into consideration.
- Activities must be based on skills that are taught.
- Skills must be taught in proper progression.
- A proper warm-up and cool-down must be included.
- Emphasize controlled movement when requiring students to walk or run backwards. Backward-running races are not permitted.
- When involved in practice drills, students must not be required to close their eyes or be blindfolded.
- Fair play and rules of the sport must be taught and strictly enforced.
- Adequate liquid replacement (personal water bottles, water fountains) must be accessible for students before, during, and after physical activity to prevent dehydration.
- Students must be informed that they are not to share water bottles.

- Training must include flexibility, strength and cardiovascular-enhancing activities.
- Players must be physically prepared for contact.
- The players must be informed about the importance of keeping their eyes on the flight of the ball when playing offense (for example, running bases) and when playing defense (for example, pitcher, infielders and outfielders).
- Players must be instructed to drop or lay the bat down after hitting, not release it during the follow through of the swing.
- To avoid dangers of a slipped bat, non-fielding players must stand well back of the batter's box, must be on the bench, or must be behind a screen or fence, with fingers kept away from screen. On deck batter circle, if used, must be located in a designated area away from the batter and other non-fielding players to avoid interference with the play and on deck batter being hit by a swinging bat.
- A commitment line on the third-base line must be used.
- Appropriate sliding techniques must be taught to minimize the risk of injury before sliding is permitted.
- All plays at home plate must be force plays. Tagging at home plate is not permitted.
- When practicing indoors with a regulation bat:
 - use a batting cage;
 - use a pitcher behind a protective cage or batters hit off a tee (in each case batters hit into a cage); and
 - all non active players must be behind cage, no fielders allowed.
- Parents/guardians must be informed of the school board's policy related to initiation/hazing activities.
- The presence and location of spectators must not present a safety concern. A school is responsible for supervising its own spectators. The ratio of supervisor to spectators must address safety concerns.

Supervision

- All activities must be supervised.

- The level of supervision must be commensurate with the inherent risk of the activity. The level of risk is related to the number of participants, the skill level of the participants, the type of equipment used, and environmental conditions.
- On-site supervision is required.
- Students must be informed that the use of equipment and the gymnasium are prohibited without supervision. In addition to verbal communication, the doors must be locked or signs must be posted indicating that students are not allowed to use the gym unless appropriately supervised.

Qualifications

- Game/match official(s) must be certified and/or experienced in officiating the sport.
- The head coach must demonstrate knowledge of the sport, skills, and strategies to the principal or designate.
- All coaches must be familiar with and implement, where applicable, the criteria outlined in [Coaches Expectations](#).

First Aid

- A fully stocked first aid kit must be readily accessible. (Consult [Sample First Aid Kit](#))
- A working communication device (for example, cell phone) must be accessible.
- An individual who takes responsibility for providing first aid to injured students must be knowledgeable of the school board's concussion protocol and must follow the school's first aid emergency action plan, including accessibility to a vehicle for transportation of a student to hospital (consult [First Aid Plan and First Aid Emergency Response](#)) and be present during the entire practice/competition.

Definitions

- **Coach:**

- Any individual approved by the principal or designate (consult [Coaches Expectations](#)). All new coaches must go through an approval process by school administrator/designate to determine the coach's knowledge, experience and, where appropriate, qualifications (for example, higher risk sports) to safely coach the sport.

- **Coach Liaison:**

- A teacher, principal, or vice-principal with a current certification from the Ontario College of Teachers and under contract by the school/school board. Consult [Coaches Expectations](#) for more information.

- **Supervision:**

- The vigilant overseeing of a sport for regulation or direction. All facilities, equipment, and sports have inherent risks, but the more effectively they are supervised, the safer they become.
- The Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education designate three categories of supervision, Constant visual supervision, On-site supervision, and In-the-area supervision. The categories take into consideration the risk level of the activity, the participants' skill level and the participants' maturity. The three levels of supervision described are not hierarchical but represent the type of supervision that an activity requires and the type of supervision that is inherently possible.

- **Types of Supervision:**

- **Constant visual supervision:**

- The coach is physically present, watching the activity in question. Only one activity requiring "Constant visual" supervision may take place while other activities are going on.
- For example, during a track and field practice, some students are involved in high jump, some in relay, and others in distance running. For high Jump, the coach is at the event and is observing the activity.

- **In-the-area Supervision:**

- The coach could be in the gymnasium while another activity is taking place in an area adjacent to the gymnasium. In-the-area supervision requires the coach to be readily accessible.
- For example, In-the-area supervision occurs:
 - in activities in which students may be out of sight for periods of time and the location of the coach is not nearby (for example, alpine skiing, cross-country running). At least one of the following criteria must be in place:
 - The coach is circulating
 - The location of the coach has been communicated to students and volunteers
 - in single activities and those that may be combined (for example, other in- the- area activities such as badminton, table tennis, handball – wall) with the following criteria in place:
 - The coach must be circulating between the activities and readily accessible
 - The coach informs the students of the location of the activities
- **On-site Supervision:**
 - Entails coach presence but not necessarily constantly viewing one specific activity. Momentary presence in adjoining rooms (for example, equipment room) to the gym is considered part of “on-site supervision”.
 - For example, during a track and field practice, some students are involved in high jump, some in relay, and others in distance running. For the relay, students are participating on the track/field and can be seen by the coach.

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