



SBU FOR COACHES AND TEACHERS



FUN COMMUNITY DIVERSITY
EXCELLENCE TEAMWORK

WELCOME

Welcome to the Softball Batter Up program.

The Softball Batter Up (SBU) program is aimed at children from kindergarten age to Year 6. It is a national participation program designed to create a fun, active and engaging atmosphere for all participants, and an enjoyable, rewarding experience for coaches.

Participants are introduced to the fundamental skills of softball through a variety of activities and games designed to develop physical fitness, social skills and an understanding of the game. The program has been designed to be flexible in its delivery and to reflect the abilities and experience levels of each participant.

The program highlights the need to provide a fun and interactive environment within the early stages of childhood development. It enables coaches to assist children to lay the foundations of physical literacy with a view to reaching their full potential, whatever that may be.

It is a privilege to coach, and have an opportunity to guide young people towards long-term participation in sport. Whether you're new to coaching or an experienced coach, the Softball Batter Up Coaching Manual aims to present the fundamental knowledge that is essential to coaching young people.

The Manual is very practical, builds on best coaching practice and provides guidelines to developing fundamental movement and softball skills in a fun and flexible format. It is a starting point from which to build your knowledge of coaching. The content has been influenced by the principles of long-term athlete development and integrated with the knowledge of experienced softball coaches.

As a coach, you will continue to learn from your own experiences by reflecting on what works and what you need to do differently. Successful coaches are those who can learn new skills and are flexible enough to change, if and when required. The program offers you an opportunity to introduce young children to an active and healthy lifestyle through softball.

To our new coaches – congratulations on taking the first step to becoming a Softball Batter Up coach. I encourage you to keep learning, using all the resources that are available to you.

Fabian Barlow

Head Coach, Australian Women's Softball Team
Softball Australia

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OVERVIEW OF SOFTBALL BATTER UP

Softball Australia's national participation program, Softball Batter Up, is designed to be fun, flexible and engaging for children from kindergarten age to Year 6, focusing on fun activities while learning basic throwing, catching and striking skills.

You don't need to be an experienced softball player or coach to deliver a successful program, which can be adapted for all ages and abilities using the Game Sense and CHANGE IT approach.

Softball Batter Up activities align with the national health and physical education curriculum and are written with coaches and teachers in mind. Detailed information is provided on each activity's learning intention, band levels, and skill focus, together with questions to encourage participant engagement.

With more than 60 different softball activities and games on offer, you can design your own softball sessions, or even design your entire program allowing for repetition over time to maximise learning and development opportunities.

BENEFITS

The aim of conducting a program is to provide Member States, clubs and associations with an opportunity to increase junior participation. There are many benefits to hosting a Softball Batter Up program, which includes access to free, quality resources for coaches and teachers.

CLUB COACHES AND TEACHERS

- › A specially developed session planner to design and conduct your own session
- › Numerous resources, including:
 - › Information about Games Sense and the CHANGE IT approach
 - › Important safety considerations
 - › A softball glossary, explaining many of the terms used in softball



ROLE OF THE COACH OR TEACHER

Coaches play a vital role, a role that extends far beyond teaching the skills of the game. A coach assumes the responsibility of ensuring all participants have a fun, safe and enjoyable experience.

The coaching resources are designed to be informative, stimulating, comprehensive and easy to follow and will provide any coach with the ability to develop creative sessions and develop strategies to keep participants engaged. Any coach will feel confident conducting a fun Softball Batter Up session.

The coach must ensure that the program is planned weekly and communicate with the coordinator if there are any issues or problems that may need rectifying.

Key responsibilities

- › Provide a safe environment and quality softball experience
- › Adequately plan activities to ensure everyone has an equal opportunity to participate
- › Develop and maintain a fun atmosphere in all activities at all times
- › Provide opportunities to participate in interesting and challenging ways that simulate game situations
- › Maximise participation and support players to develop skills during the course of the activity
- › Ensure equipment is safe, kept in good order and adequately repaired when necessary
- › Closely supervise all activities
- › Develop clear rules for training and general conduct



COACHING PHILOSOPHY

The SBU objectives are to provide opportunities to participate in games and activities in a learning environment that is fun, safe and embodies the principles of fair play. The following key elements are a guide to ensure sessions are conducted in accordance with the program's objectives.

Maximum participation

Children like variety and action. Aim for sessions that keep them moving. Minimise the amount of time participants are waiting for their turn by having smaller teams or more equipment. Provide an enjoyable environment.

Learning through modified games

Children love learning new skills. When working with entry level participants, it is recommended that skill development occurs during modified games or game-based activities. By involving participants in games, they will not only be active for longer – therefore improving their skills – but will gain more enjoyment from the experience.

Be a facilitator

Coaches play more of a facilitator role than an instructor role. Rather than instructing participants how to perform a particular skill, coaches provide key coaching points and allow participants to learn through exploration. Present them with challenges, for example:

- › How many times can you catch the ball in 30 seconds?
- › Where will you stand to field the ball?
- › How could this activity work better?

This fosters a Game Sense approach and engages players in the activities at a level that suits their ability. Participants learn through self-discovery rather than coach direction.

Ask the participants

Asking questions is a valuable strategy to engage participants in changing the activity to increase participation and make the activity more or less challenging. Ask questions that will draw either a physical response, for example show me how you should stand when you are waiting to field the ball?

Provide a safe environment

Providing a safe environment is essential. Prior to each session, check facilities and equipment and remove any potential hazards. If there is a potential risk of injury to anyone, the session should be delayed until the risk has been removed and a safe environment restored.

Before starting a session, make sure there is adequate distance between activities to ensure the safety of participants. Explain any potential dangers and enforce safety hits and rules to participants before commencing. For more safety information, refer to Safety considerations.

Supervise

Remember – it is your responsibility to supervise activities and to make modifications where appropriate to ensure the safety of all involved.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- › Is the game safe?
- › Are all the players being engaged in the game?
- › Is the objective of the game being achieved
- › Are all the players being included
- › Is participation being maximized?
- › Is the game appropriate to the ability level of each player?
- › Are all players being challenged?
- › If the answer to any of these is 'No' then CHANGE IT

CHANGE IT

Coaching style

- › Deciding when to direct activities and when to ask the players
- › Knowing when to provide discrete instruction and when to 'just let the kids play'
- › The use of player questioning is a valuable strategy to engage the players themselves into changing the activity to increase participation and to make the activity more or less challenging

How you score to win

- › Introduce zones for batting or target activities

Area

- › Make the playing area bigger or smaller, alter distances to targets or between players

Number of players

- › Consider different team sizes to keep all players active. Have several activities of 2 v 2 or if focusing on defensive skills change to 3 v 2 or 2 v 1 etc.

Game rules

- › Allow 2 bounces before catching or stopping a ball or introduce a no go zone

Equipment

- › Use a larger or softer ball; no bat or foam bat, bins of markers for targets

Inclusion

- › Modify the activity to maximise the involvement for all players. Ask the players how to change the activity

Time

- › Reduce or extend the time to perform actions, change the number of passes within a time limit, vary the length of time a player can hold the ball

SOFTBALL FOR ALL ABILITIES

Thousands of Australians get involved in sport each year. It's part of our culture and way of life. For people with a disability, the motivation to play sport is the same as for everyone else: fun, fitness, self-esteem, to increase skills and social contact. As individuals, young people with a disability also have a right to participate in sport and physical activity and maximise their potential.

There are many more similarities than differences in teaching and coaching athletes with and without a disability. Athletes are athletes first and foremost.

A fundamental component and attribute of being a good coach is inclusion. Inclusive coaching does not require any special skills or knowledge – just enthusiasm, a flexible attitude and a willingness to try.

As every young player is unique, a good coach should always conduct activities that cater for individual differences and as such, a young athlete with a disability should be seen as just another member of the team.

Coaches should have the ability to assess individual strengths and weaknesses, set challenging and achievable goals, communicate effectively and provide accurate and positive feedback.

Young people with a disability can be active participants in sport and physical activity. In fact, in many cases, they can be included with little or no adaptations or modifications to the activities already being undertaken within a program. However, if necessary, an activity or game can be adapted or modified using CHANGE IT.



SOFTBALL BATTER UP RESOURCES

The SBU program contains a comprehensive set of resources for teachers and coaches.

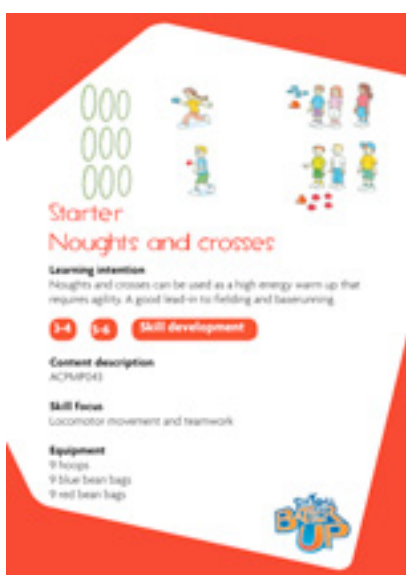
The resources are free to download from the Softball Batter Up website or you can purchase hard copies of the SBU card set.

The set contains:

- › An overview of the SBU program
- › How to use the SBU activity cards
- › Planning and conducting a program
- › Information about Game Sense and CHANGE IT
- › How to quickly and easily form groups
- › A softball glossary explaining many commonly used softball terms
- › 22 Starter activities
- › 285 Get into it activities
- › 15 Game application activities

DESIGN YOUR OWN LESSON PLANS

The SBU website contains a Session Planner where you can select the activities you want to include in your session and generate your own session. Or you can plan your sessions for the whole program. To access the Session Planner and all the activities, simply register your club or school as a SBU provider.



PLANNING AND CONDUCTING A PROGRAM

Tips for conducting fun and engaging lessons that maximise participation

Plan, plan, plan

- › Walk through the planned activities in your mind before the session. Pay particular attention to organisational aspects and the flow of activities.
- › Anticipate what you might do if things aren't working
- › The better prepared you are, the more confident you will feel about some spontaneity on the day
- › Plan for repetition over several weeks to allow for learning and consolidation
- › Plan for variety to cater for short attention spans
- › Provide variety within a game, (CHANGE IT) or different games

Setting up

- › If you don't know the venue, visit a few days before to determine what space you have available
- › Know what you need and where it is to be placed before you arrive
- › Set up ahead of time
- › Involve players with specific setup tasks

Transition activities

- › An energising transition is to have players touch each corner or each side of the playing area and reassemble in the centre
- › Using different individuals or group locomotor movements between activities

Instructions

- › Be brief and explicit
- › Instructions linked to demonstrations are best

Demonstrations

- › Make sure everyone can see the demonstration
- › Avoid having the group look into the sun
- › Use positioning to avoid distractions
- › Encourage questions
- › Start activities as soon as possible

Let the kids play

- › Avoid too many interruptions and too many corrections
- › Make sure most of the session is used for participating in activities and games
- › Avoid over-coaching
- › Let the players take the game in a different direction or to another level
- › After playing an activity, challenge players to come up with a CHANGE IT variations
- › Provide a lead if necessary, eg 'Think of another way of scoring'

Rules for relays

- › Relays can highlight a player's lack of proficiency with a particular technique or understanding of an activity
- › Pay particular attention and choose a relay that accommodates varying abilities

Equipment

Use age-appropriate equipment

Have alternatives available to suit varying abilities

Balloons work best indoors



Tips for fun and lots of activity

- › Effective planning
- › Simple instructions
- › Variety
- › Maximise participation time
- › Encourage skill development
- › Ensure you have enough equipment
- › Use CHANGE IT

The plodders, the youngest and the smallest

- › Make allowances
- › Praise small improvements openly
- › Ask how they are feeling
- › Ask their opinion on an activity
- › Give them small challenges

The more proficient

- › More proficient children will need challenging:
- › Use them as a role model, eg changing partners often
- › Use CHANGE IT to challenge them, eg they can only pass below shoulder height or score in a confined area
- › Defend a larger area or maybe a 2 v 1 activity

BEFORE THE LESSON

- › This Manual provides an introduction and understanding of the SBU coaching philosophy and the program structure
- › Read through the Lesson Plans and activities to make sure you understand the objectives and requirements for each lesson
- › Organise an appropriate and safe playing area and the necessary equipment (based on the number, ability levels and experience of the players)

DURING THE LESSON

- › Deliver each session using the activities and instructions provided
- › Keep group sizes to a minimum to ensure maximum participation for all children. Run the activity with several groups at once, or set up stations with various activities and rotate regularly. Remember to ensure there is adequate supervision at all times. It is recommended that the program is conducted with a ratio of one coach/teacher per 10-12 participants.
- › Use the 'easier' and 'harder' variations to modify the games to suit the ability levels of all players. If necessary, use CHANGE IT to modify activities.
- › Encourage participants to have a go and be involved. Maximise participation and provide one-on-one coaching support where required.

AFTER THE LESSON

Review the lesson immediately afterward so you can identify what worked well and what didn't, what level the players are at and what you need to remember for next time. The outcome of this review will influence what you include in the next lesson and the best method of delivery.



SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

General

Duty of care

As coaches and teachers, you have a duty of care to provide a safe environment for children in your care.

Responsibility

Coaches and teachers should assist children to develop a sense of responsibility for their own safety and to understand the consequences of their actions for themselves and others.

Hitting or pitching a ball

Have the pitcher stand to one side. In hitting and fielding games this is a useful strategy for players who don't have sufficiently developed fielding skills or reaction time. Batters must hit toward the fielders, not at the pitcher.

'Play ball'

A coach, teacher or umpire must call 'PLAY BALL' before play starts.

Traffic flow

Effective group management regarding the movement of players between activities involves:

- › Ensuring you have everybody's attention
- › Providing a clear short message about what to do
- › Choosing traffic flow arrangements that prevent participants from running into one another
- › Ensure everyone knows about the traffic flow arrangements

Check the venue

Coaches and teachers should arrive at the training venue early to check for any possible hazards such as pot holes and wet areas, clearly mark these areas as out of bounds with marker cones and advise players at the start of training that these are 'NO GO' areas. If a ball enters that area, it must stay there.

Shared venue

If a training venue is shared with another team or sport, check with the other coaches regarding where they are setting up and what type of activities they will be conducting. This will ensure that teams and players do not encroach on each other's space.

Batting safety

Batting helmets

A batting helmet must always be worn by players during all training sessions and games, except when foam balls and bats are used.

Batting helmets with cracks or missing internal padding must be replaced.



Keep a safe distance around the batter at all times

A player waiting to bat should be at least 4 metres away from the player swinging the bat. This area should be clearly marked with a hoop or cones. When a player picks up a bat for practise swings, they must check the space around and behind them to make sure the area is clear.

Batting team

Players on the batting team should be seated in foul territory well away from the batter. Make sure that players waiting to bat are watching the ball at all time as foul balls could be hit towards them.

Make sure fielders are all watching

Make sure all fielders are watching the batter before the ball is pitched or hit off a batting tee.

Ensure players are aware of their own safety

Reinforce that players also need to be aware of their own safety. Chatting on the sidelines is fine but they need to be watching the ball and the batter at all times.

Batting stations

Always allow sufficient space between batting stations. Consider having them all hitting in the same direction or away from each other.

Players must drop the bat after they have hit

Players must not throw the bat after they have hit the ball. There is a danger they can hit the catcher or any other players in close proximity. If the bat is thrown the batter will be called out by the umpire.

Minimum 4 metres away



Waiting Batter



Batter

Fielding safety

Pairs throwing

Warm-up throwing should always be done in pairs, throwing parallel to each other. Allow at least 3 metres between pairs. If there is an odd number, do not allow players to throw in a triangle. A missed throw could hit the other players throwing in pairs. If there are three players, they should throw up and back to the same person.

Make sure the person you are throwing to is looking

Players should not throw the ball to someone if that person isn't looking at them. The player receiving the ball should provide a target by holding up both hands.

Catching fly balls

Players should be encouraged to call for fly balls. Players about to catch the ball should loudly call out 'MINE' to avoid collisions with other fielders.

If a ball is going to land between the infield and the outfield, the outfielder must learn how to judge who could catch the ball. The outfielder has right of way as they can see the play in front of them. If they can catch it, they should loudly call, 'MINE' so the infielder can get out of the way. If the outfielder cannot get to it, they should call the name of the infielder. The infielder then calls 'MINE' and attempts to take the catch.

Pay attention in games and during training

Players should always be facing the field of play. If they are distracted or not watching the balls being hit or thrown, there is a risk they could get hit by an errant throw. Players that pay attention and watch the field of play will have time to react and avoid being hit accidentally. For example, players should not stand directly behind someone receiving a throw unless they are anticipating or expecting that the ball could be overthrown or missed.

Other safety considerations

- › Match children according to physical maturity and skill level
- › Provide adequate water and adopt a SunSmart policy. Encourage players to wear sun protective clothing, sunglasses, SPF 30+ sunscreen and a hat.



COACHES CODE OF CONDUCT

In addition to Softball Australia's values and general Code of Conduct, as a coach appointed by Softball Australia, a Member State or an association or club you must meet the following requirements in regard to your conduct during any activity held by or under the auspices of Softball Australia, a Member State or an association or club.

1. Respect the rights, dignity and worth of, and refrain from any discriminatory practices against, any person regardless of age, gender, ethnic origin, religion or ability
2. Endeavour to ensure players' time spent with you is a positive experience
3. Respect the talent, developmental stage and goals of each individual player
4. Treat each player as an individual and help them reach their full potential
 - › Provide training programs that are planned and sequential and suitable for the age, experience and ability of the players
 - › Be fair, considerate and honest with players
5. Be reasonable in your demands on your players' time and ensure there is an appropriate balance between sporting involvement, education and career objectives.
6. Implement clear rules for players in training and general conduct
7. Be professional in your appearance and manner and accept responsibility for your actions
 - › Display high standards in language, manner, punctuality, preparation and presentation
 - › Display control, respect, dignity and professionalism to all involved with softball, including opponents, coaches, officials, umpires, scorers, administrators, the media, parents and spectators
 - › Encourage your players to demonstrate the same qualities
8. Make a commitment to providing a quality service to your players, your affiliated club, association and state, and to Softball Australia, by continually improving your coaching knowledge and skill
 - › Maintain and improve your NCAS accreditation
 - › Seek continual self-improvement through performance appraisal and ongoing education
9. Operate within the rules and spirit of the sport
 - › Abide by and respect the policies governing softball and sport generally and the organisations and individuals administering those policies
 - › Reject the use of performance enhancing drugs in sport and abide by the anti-drugs policies of the relevant national and international sporting organisations and government regulatory bodies
10. Ensure physical contact with players is appropriate to the situation and necessary for the player's skill development. Inappropriate physical contact is a form of sexual harassment

11. Refrain from any form of personal abuse. This includes verbal, physical and emotional abuse
12. Refrain from any form of sexual harassment. This includes explicit, implicit, verbal and non-verbal sexual harassment.
13. Refrain from initiating a relationship with a player and also discourage, in a sensitive manner, an attempt by a player to initiate a sexual relationship with you
14. Provide a safe environment for training and competition. Ensure that equipment and facilities meet safety standards and are appropriate for the age and ability of the players
15. Show consideration and caution towards sick and injured players
 - › Provide a modified training program where appropriate
 - › Allow further participation in training and competitions only when appropriate
 - › When necessary, follow the advice of a reputable doctor or physiotherapist when determining when a sick or injured player is ready to recommence training or competition
16. Be a positive role model for softball and your players
17. Do not tolerate acts of aggression.
18. Refrain from engaging in any behavior that is in breach of Softball Australia's Member Protection Policy.





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