

Part 1 The Basic Game

TWO TYPES OF OUTDOOR SOFTBALL are played in the UK: Fastpitch and Slowpitch.

However, over the last few years a new hybrid game has been created, commonly referred to as Indoor Softball or Indoors. Indoor Softball largely evolved as a way for the dedicated or mad to play their sport year round. There is no standard Rulebook for Indoors and because of this the game usually evolves to fit the site or the requirements of the particular players. In short, you can take the framework for Indoors and adapt it to suit your needs. This Guide deals with Indoor Softball and assumes a knowledge of Slowpitch softball – from whence it came.

Indoor Softball is played by two teams with a minimum of eight players each. Only eight players will take the field at one time, but you can have an unlimited number of batters. Indoors is seen as a mixed-gender game and the team ratio should be 4:4. However, this ratio may vary. A split of 3:5 with a maximum of 5 male players .

The basics of Indoors are simply a variation on Slowpitch. The **PITCHER** pitches the ball to a **BATTER** who hits it and runs around as many bases as possible before the ball is brought under the control of the defensive team. The aim of the game is to score more **POINTS** than the opposition.

Meanwhile, the defensive team is trying to get batters and baserunners **OUT** in all the same ways they do in Slowpitch:

- **Strike outs**
- **Fly outs (balls that are hit in the air and caught – including, in Indoors, balls caught off the walls)**
- **Force outs**
- **Tag plays**

There is more information on all of these at the end of this Guide.

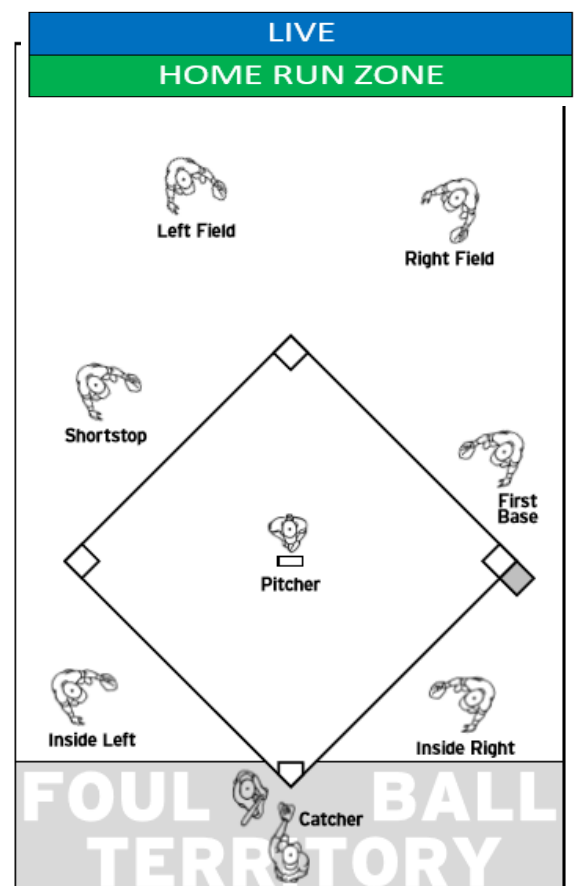
Indoors is two innings long and innings are not defined by the number of outs, but rather by time. Each half inning is usually four to six minutes long – the duration is flexible as long as it is applied evenly to each half inning. Players still bat in a pre-arranged order and in mixed-gender games, the batting order should alternate between genders as evenly as possible. Batters continue to bat in that order for the inning timing, regardless of any outs being made. During the game, there may be consecutive players of the same gender when the next batter is still on base and has not yet returned home. The overall batting order should be maintained in this circumstance.

Part 2 The Playing Area

The Indoor Softball area is usually defined by its venue. Indoors can be played in gyms, sports halls or similar. The key point is that the playing area should be contained by four sides and a ceiling as the ball continues to be 'live' (in play) off these surfaces, including the side walls. However, if the batted ball hits the **CEILING or any ceiling fixtures at any height** then the batter is out and the ball called dead (players do not advance).

A Softball diamond should be laid out within the parameters of the venue with Home Plate, First Base, Second Base and Third Base as usual. There are no hard and fast rules about distances except that bases should be a 'reasonable' distance apart – 12 metres is fairly standard – although there doesn't have to be much space left for the **OUTFIELD**.

From the front of Home Plate, a straight line is drawn across the court (see diagram) and the area behind the line is the only **FOUL BALL** territory – everything else is **FAIR TERRITORY**! The foul ball territory is where batters line up preceding their turn at bat. Given the limitations of gyms, it's also where everyone leaves their bags, bats, water, etc., and so this general chaos can lead to **DEAD BALL** situations.



Part 3 The Defensive Team

Unlike Slowpitch, in Indoors there is little point in referring to Infielders and Outfielders. Instead, there are essentially eight fielding positions (see Playing Area for placement):

- PITCHER
- FIRST BASE
- LEFT FIELD
- INSIDE LEFT
- CATCHER
- SHORTSTOP
- RIGHT FIELD
- INSIDE RIGHT

Like everything else in Indoors, nothing is hard and fast, and you can place your fielders where you want. However, following the diagram is a good way of ensuring that you cover the court and once you are familiar with the game you can tailor fielding positions accordingly.

Throws to **Second Base** are usually taken by the **Left** or **Right Field** positions, throws to **Third Base** by **Inside Left** or **Shortstop**, and, when a left-handed batter comes to the Plate, **Inside Right** often takes throws to **First Base**.



Part 4 Playing the Game

- Each batter receives only one pitch from the Pitcher. The pitch is a Slowpitch pitch with an arc between 6' and 12' from the ground. If the batter does not swing and the pitch is a **STRIKE**, the batter is out. If the batter does not swing and the pitch is a **BALL**, the batter advances to First Base. If the batter swings and hits the ball into Foul Ball territory, the batter is out if it rolls back into Foul Ball territory without any defensive player touching the ball, the batter is out. The batter is also out if they step on Home Plate in the process of hitting the ball or if the batted ball hits the batter runner off the bat or the bat hits the ball.
- During the game, there may be consecutive players of the same gender if the (potential) batter is still on base and has not yet returned home. The overall batting order should be maintained in this circumstance.
- Any baserunners are out if a batted ball hits them when they are not in contact with a base and the ball has not been in contact with a fielder.
- The batting team continues to bat in order for a set time and then the fielding team comes into bat for the same time (one inning). Each game is two innings long. **OUTS** are made in all the ways listed above.
- A **HOMERUN** is scored if the batter hits the back wall below a specified height which depends on the venue and may be a feature on the back wall or marked by tape. A homerun can still be caught off the back wall. A homerun has the effect of scoring all runners on base, they simply return to the end of the batting line-up (they do not have to touch all the bases). A homerun still counts if it touches a fielder prior to hitting the back wall.
- It should be noted that all the variations on the original game of Slowpitch have significance in terms of how the game is scored. Please refer to Part 5: Scoring the Game for this information.
- It is also worth noting that Indoors by its very nature is a fast, energetic game. The emphasis is on hitting and running which means that the umpire is much less likely to call a pitch a ball! Also, it is a game that lends itself to aggressive baserunning and the umpire will not call **TIME** until it is clear that no baserunners have a chance for further advance. If the ball is hit into Fair Territory, it remains live at all times even if overthrown into Foul Ball Territory (unless it becomes tangled in the general team debris or obstructed by the offensive team waiting to bat – then the play will be called **DEAD BALL** and all baserunners will be awarded the base they were running to at the time of the overthrow).
- The other key difference from Slowpitch is that **BUNTING** is allowed, although leading off from bases before the pitch is hit is not. Batters must NOT deliberately chop (either from a bunt position or from normal batting) which will result in being called **OUT**. Once a bunt has been indicated, the batter must NOT change to a normal bat. If the Defensive team is short of fielders and a bunt position remains without a fielder, it remains the discretion of the Offensive team if they choose to hit in that direction though we would encourage a sportsmanlike approach in this situation.
- **HOME PLATE:** for safety reasons and to avoid collisions, players may run past Home Plate without touching it. A 'safety line' may be extended from the plate with masking tape. The Catcher can still touch Home Plate when they have the ball on a forced play and the runner will be called out, or tag the player running through the 'safety zone' who will also be called out.

Part 5 Scoring the Game

All teams must provide an umpire and scorer to cover games designated to that team per session.

Indoor Softball scoring is more complex than in outdoor and points are scored for the following:

- **1 point** for each batter who safely reaches First Base – the batter gets 1 additional point for each base they reach on their turn at bat (even if they stop at each base before advancing on an overthrow or misfielded ball, etc.). Baserunners do not get points as they advance to the next base on another batter's turn at bat, except for the following circumstance:
- **1 point** is given for each baserunner who safely comes home.
- **5 points** are scored for a Homerun + 1 point for each runner on base when the Homerun was hit (a point is subtracted if the batter is caught off the back wall).
- **1 point** is deducted for each OUT made by the defensive team.
- **2 points** are deducted if the catcher (no other fielder) makes a forced or tag play at home.

Note that these rules make it possible for a team to have a negative points score.

Part 6 Equipment

The standard equipment for Slowpitch softball is used, i.e., a set of throw-down bases (including the safety First Base). Often, bases may be substituted with masking tape for safety reasons depending on the playing surface.

Bats and fielders' gloves are the same. It is, however, worth remembering that gyms are usually a hard surface such as concrete with a thin covering of green 'carpet' and you probably don't want to be chucking your expensive bats down in this environment! The only equipment that is different from the outdoor game is the ball. Indoor balls are 12', the same size as a standard softball, but are softer and more 'squidgy' for safety reasons – most equipment suppliers refer to them as practice balls. Bats should have an ASA or ISF marking.