



CANADIAN OLYMPIC ACTIVITY CHALLENGE



SOFTBALL

Softball is a game similar to baseball, but played with a larger yellow ball on a smaller field. It was included for women at four Olympic Games between 1996 and 2008. Softball and baseball were dropped from the Olympic Games in 2012 and 2016, but will make their return in 2020. Softball has been on the Pan Am Games program since 1979. The Canadian men's team won all seven Pan Am gold medals awarded from 1979 to 2003, and added another in 2015 after men's softball was left off the program in 2007 and 2011. The men's team saw their gold medal streak come to an end at the Lima 2019 Pan Am Games after failing to qualify.

On the women's side, Canada took silver in softball at the Peru 2019 Pan Am Games after winning gold on home soil in Toronto in 2015, giving them a total medal count of two gold, six silver and a bronze from all past Games. Canada is considered a serious medal contender at all international men's and women's softball competitions.

Softball is played between two teams on a large field. There are four bases on the infield, called first base, second base, third base and home plate, and they are arranged equal distances apart in a diamond shape. Near the center of the diamond is the pitcher's circle. A batter from the offensive team stands at home plate, and a pitcher from the defensive team throws the ball underhand towards the catcher behind the plate. The batter tries to hit the ball and run around the bases, while the defensive team tries to field the ball and get the runner out.

There are several ways to get an out. If the batter swings and misses three pitches, they are out. If the ball is thrown to someone touching the base before the runner arrives, they are out. On an unforced play (when the runner doesn't have to run to the next base), a fielder holding the ball can tag them. After three outs, the teams trade positions, with the fielding team up to bat. The objective of the game is to score more runs than the other team by getting to home plate.

There are three types of softball: slo-pitch, fast pitch and orthodox. Softball rules vary somewhat from those of baseball. Two major differences are that in softball, the ball must be pitched underhand and from a shorter distance, and that seven innings are played instead of nine. The infield in softball is smaller than in a baseball diamond and the bases are closer.

To learn more about softball and to find a local club please visit www.softball.ca.

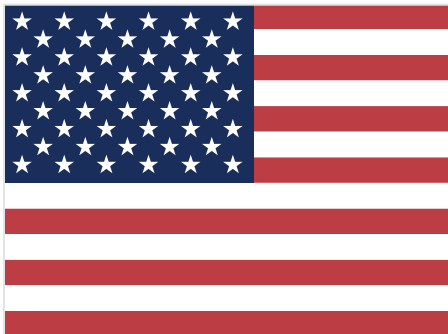


SCHOOL PROGRAM



FEATURED COUNTRY

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



Softball was invented in Chicago in 1887 as an indoor game to help baseball players maintain their skills during the winter. At first it was called “indoor baseball.” Within a year, it moved outside, and within two years the first rules were published. It wasn’t until 1926 that the game was called “softball”. A tournament held in 1933 at the Chicago World’s Fair helped to spur interest and spread the game to other countries.

The American women’s softball team largely dominated Olympic competition, winning gold in 1996, 2000, and 2004. At the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, Japan upset the U.S., winning gold in the final game.

FEATURED ATHLETE



KALEIGH RAFTER

FOUR-TIME PAN AMERICAN GAMES MEDALLIST
OLYMPIAN, BEIJING 2008

Kaleigh started her sports career playing baseball and then made the switch to softball, winning gold at her first two Canadian Fast Pitch Championship appearances. One of Canada’s longest tenured players, she has represented Canada at five Women’s Softball World Cups and four Pan Am Games. In 2008, Kaleigh competed for Canada at the Olympic Games in Beijing, where she and her teammates finished fourth.

To learn more about Kaleigh please visit olympic.ca

SOFTBALL


ACTIVITIES

Described below are Daily Physical Activity softball activities that can be used in the classroom and gym. Have fun!

THE 7TH INNING

The 7th inning of a close softball game can be an intense time when the game is on the line and players are tired. Strength, coordination and focus at this point in the game can often make the difference. This activity will explore the variety of movements an athlete would experience throughout a softball game.

 **Participants:** Individuals

 **Space:** Classroom

 **Equipment:** None required

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

The teacher calls out the phrases below at random, and students do the given action. In between actions, do “fast feet” by running on the spot as quickly as possible.

As students become familiar with the actions, the teacher can call out the phrases more quickly.

- “Run bases” - Run with high knees to hands
- “Catcher” - Squat low to the ground and mimic catching a ball in front of face
- “Pop fly” - Touch toes then stretch arms high up in the air to catch a pop-fly
- “Long ball” - Squat as low as possible then jump as high as possible to catch a long ball
- “Grounder Right” or “Grounder Left” - Side lunges to the right or left to pick up a ground ball
- “Batter up” - Clasp hands at shoulder height, elbows bent, and rotate hips towards the front, keeping hands directly in front at all times
- “Get warm” - Arm swings, backwards and forwards (in order to throw the ball on target)
- “Play of the Game” - Pick up an object with the left hand and quickly transfer it to the right hand (since after catching the ball you have to throw it)

ACTIVITY EXTENSIONS:


- Combine the movements of “Batter up” and “Run Bases”, followed by jumping on the plate and giving three people high fives. We’ll call this hitting a “Grand Slam”.
- Come up with new names for combinations of movements.

AROUND THE HORN

To be successful in their sport, softball athletes have to be skilled at throwing, catching and running. Athletes must focus on performing one skill at a time in order to perform it to the best of their ability. If an athlete starts to think about where they are going to throw the ball before they catch the ball, they may drop the ball. Focusing on the task at hand is critical.

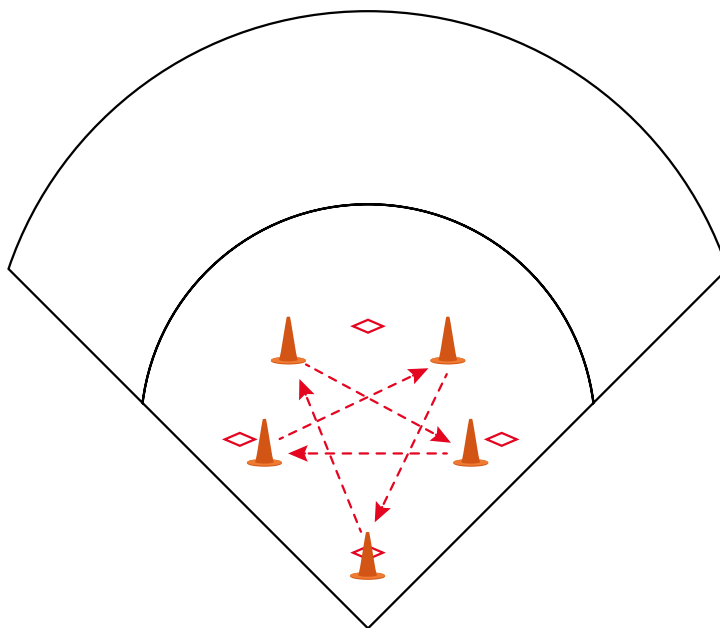
 **Participants :** Groupes de 10

 **Space :** Gym or large space

 **Equipement :** Each group needs 1 ball, 4 bases, 5 pylons and a batting helmet

SETUP:

- Set up four bases. Place one pylon at home plate and one pylon in the starting position of the 1st baseman, 2nd baseman, short stop and 3rd baseman (see graphic)
- Divide into 2 groups of 5 players. Decide which team will be the throwing team, and position one person at each pylon.
- The other team is the running team. Position one person at home plate, and the rest of the team in a line off to the side, awaiting a turn to run.



ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

- The object is for the runner to run around the bases before the ball can be thrown “Around the Horn”. This means the ball has to go from the catcher to short stop, from short stop to 1st base, from 1st base to 3rd base, from 3rd base to 2nd base and back to the catcher. Say “go” to start the activity.
- The team who gets back to home first gets a point. Award a point to the team who gets back to home plate first. If the runner runs the bases and reaches home plate before the ball, the runner’s team is awarded a point. If the throwing team completes the “Around the Horn” and throws to home plate first, the throwing team receives a point.
- Remember to rotate throwing players so each student throws from each position.

ACTIVITY EXTENSIONS:


- Pour calculer le pointage, comptez le nombre de buts touchés par un coureur avant que l’équipe qui lance relaie la balle au marbre.

FUNGO

Timing is everything in softball. Split second decisions and movements can make a difference in whether you get to a ball in time to catch it and make an out or whether you hit a ball. Improving accuracy and timing comes with hours and hours of practice. This activity lets you practice making contact with the ball to hit a target.

 **Participants :** Pairs

 **Space :** Gym or large space

 **Equipment :** 1 bat and ball per pair

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

- Self-toss and hit the ball towards your partner, the fielder. Focus on ball placement, throwing the ball high enough to allow for a proper swing
- If the batter completes a hit within 3 tries, the batter gets a letter in “FUNgo”
- If the fielder catches or fields the ball cleanly, the fielder gets a letter in “FUNgo”
- The first player to spell “FUNgo” wins
- Switch positions so both players get a chance to field and FUNgo hit

ACTIVITY EXTENSIONS:

- Use whiffle balls to help the batter control their hits.
- Challenge the students to alternate between ground balls and fly balls. Remind them that foot positioning and timing differ depending on their target.

BRINGING IT TO THE CLASSROOM

Sometimes sports are dropped from the Olympic Games schedule to make room for other sports that might be played in more countries. Write a letter to the International Olympic Committee either asking for softball and baseball to be brought back to the Olympic Games, or suggesting another sport that you think should be in the Olympic Games.

The rules for softball can be complicated. Draw a picture or diagram to explain how the game is played.