

## Player Progression Softball

Little League has several levels organized around age and skill in order to help develop players from ages 5 through 16. The progression of a child will vary based on the age at which the child starts playing organized softball and the amount of time the child practices at home and school. Parents spending the time to practice with their child and a child's own athletic ability play a large role in how a child will progress through the levels.

For a child who starts play as a 5, 6 or 7 year old in Little League, a player might progress through each of the levels as follows:

### Softball progression

	T-Ball	Farm	89ers	Minors	Majors	Juniors	Seniors
<b>Child #1</b>	5	6-8	8	9	10-12	13-14	14-16
<b>Child #2</b>	6	7	8-9	9-10	11-12	13-14	14-16
<b>Child #3</b>	5-6	7-8	9	10	11-12	13-14	15-16
<b>Child #4</b>	7	8	9	10-11	12	14	15-16

The above progressions are just examples. Each child is different which is why there are age ranges that overlap between levels. For children starting later than age 5 or 6, or for those children who have not successfully demonstrated the required softball skills, it is best to let the child play down a level to gain confidence and have fun rather than place the child in a situation where he or she is playing below the skill level of their teammates.

Whatever the progression, it is important to make certain that a child is not pushed too fast where he or she is not given enough time to learn, practice and master the fundamentals of softball. Remember most children will not play Olympic level softball, but by learning how to play the game and having fun while doing it, we continue the tradition of this great American past-time for the next generation.

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## Placement Guidelines by Player Age for Ages 5-9

League Age is the child age on December 31<sup>st</sup>. For example, a girl born between January 1, 1998 and December 31<sup>st</sup> 1999 would be League Age 9 for the 2008 softball season.

- **Age 5** – All children Age 5 will play T-Ball.
- **Age 6** – Most children Age 6 will play T-Ball. Those children at age 6 that have played T-Ball at age five AND are comfortable catching, throwing, and swinging at a pitched ball may request to play Farm softball.
- **Ages 7 & 8** – Most children Age 7 and 8 will play Farm softball. A player is ready to advance out of Farm softball when the player is starting to catch the ball with the glove “up” (at face level) as opposed to basket catches with the glove “down”. The player will be successful putting the ball in play in most coach-pitch at bats. A ball thrown or hit at a Farm softball player's head will usually result in the player making the effort to catch the ball with periodic success. A softball player age 8 who demonstrates the above skills may also play 89ers level.
- **Age 9** – Most children Age 9 will play 89ers / Minors softball. It is recommended that a softball player complete one year of 89ers before advancing to Minors at age 9.

## PLAYER PROGRESSION - Softball

### **Tee Ball (Ages 5 - 6)**

Any child who will attain the age of 5 or 6 years old on or before April 30th of the current season shall be eligible to play Tee Ball. Tee Ball is coed allowing girls and boys to play together.

This division is primarily for 5 and 6 year olds who are just starting to play organized softball and want to learn the fundamentals of hitting and fielding.

Tee Ball is generally the first introduction to organized softball for most players. The primary objective by the end of the season is to ensure that each player has a "positive experience" with softball, desires to play again the following year, and has successfully demonstrated the skills listed below.

- **Warm up techniques**
  - **Names of defensive positions**
  - **How to execute a throw (proper grip)**
  - **Proper fielding position (down and ready)**
  - **How to hold a bat properly**
  - **What to do after the ball is hit (as a batter and a runner)**
  - **Knows how, why and when to run to the next base**
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### **Farm Softball (Ages 6 - 8)**

Any girl who attained the age of 6,7 or 8 years old on or before December 31<sup>st</sup> of the previous season year shall be eligible to play Farm Softball. It is recommended that a 6 year old has played at least one year of Tee Ball before playing Farm softball.

At the Farm softball level, all games will be coach-pitch or machine-pitch for all innings. A safety ball will be used at these levels since this will be the first-time children will be pitched to versus hitting off of a tee.

This division is primarily for 7 and 8 year olds who have successfully demonstrated all of the Tee Ball skills. As with Tee Ball the primary objective at this level is to ensure that each player has a "positive experience" with softball, desires to play again the following year, and has learned the skills listed below.

- **TEAM concept**
  - **Warm up techniques**
  - **Number of outs per inning**
  - **Fielding techniques (proper down and ready position)**
  - **Uses both hands to catch the ball vs. one handed or trapped catches**
  - **Understands where to make the defensive play**
  - **Proper Batting position**
  - **Proper base running (on the ground vs. in the air)**
  - **Good Sportsmanship (End each game with a High Five)**
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## **89ers Softball (Ages 8 - 9)**

Any girl who will attain the age of 8 or 9 years old on or before December 31<sup>st</sup> of the previous season year shall be eligible to play 89ers softball. A player must have played one year at the Farm softball level to be eligible for 89ers softball.

This division is primarily for 8 and 9 year olds who have successfully demonstrated all of the Farm softball skills.

At the 89ers softball level all games will allow 4 player-pitch balls, then the coach comes in and picks up the count. An 11" little league approved ball will be used for all innings (not incrediballs or safety balls).

The 89ers softball level is where the players should recognize situations and understand "HOW BEST" to make certain plays. As with Farm softball, the primary objective is to ensure that each player has a "positive experience" with softball, desires to play again the following year and has learned the skills listed below with the emphasis on "HOW BEST".

- **Advanced warm up techniques**
  - **The ball is always "LIVE"**
  - **Ground ball fielding techniques**
  - **Where to make the play**
  - **Relaying the ball from the outfield to the infield**
  - **Batting stance (closed, open)**
  - **Pitching mechanics**
  - **Bunting**
  - **Infield Fly Rule**
  - **Communication (calling for a fly ball)**
  - **Backing up plays**
  - **Pitcher position**
  - **Difference between a Force Play and a Must Tag**
  - **Good Sportsmanship**
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## **Minors Softball (Ages 9 - 11)**

Any girl who will attain the age of 9, 10, or 11 years old on or before December 31<sup>st</sup> of the previous season year shall be eligible to play Minors. A player review and draft process may be held to form teams as needed.

The primary objective at the Minors level is the same as the previous levels with emphasis on preparing players for advancement to the Majors level. The Minors level is both competitive and instructional with more emphasis on instructional than competitive during the regular season.

It is critical that the managers and coaches of this division provide sound training and good balance of playing time and position rotations for all players. Besides building upon the skills taught to them at the preceding levels, players should successfully demonstrate the following skills:

- **Coming on time to practices and games prepared to play softball**
  - **Competence in batter's box positioning**
  - **Proper grip of the bat**
  - **Acceptable level of determining ball vs. strike**
  - **Passing the bat through the strike zone**
  - **Proper base running techniques including:**
    - **Stealing after the ball crosses the plate**
    - **When to tag up**
    - **How and when to slide**
  - **Correct pitching mechanics**
  - **Proper footwork to field and throw quickly**
  - **How to go back on a fly ball**
  - **Sacrifice situations**
  - **How to rundown a base runner (pickle)**
  - **Covering bases and backing up positions after a hit**
  - **Always show good Sportsmanship on and off the field (no bad mouthing other players)**
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## Major Softball (Ages 10 - 12)

Any girl who will attain the age of 10, 11, or 12 years old on or before December 31<sup>st</sup> of the previous season year shall be eligible to play Majors. A player review and draft process may be held to form teams as needed.

The Majors level is both competitive and instructional with admittedly more emphasis on the competitive aspects of the game than at the Minors level. Managers focus on fielding a competitive team while also providing the players with a fun learning experience. All players are ensured playing time.

Players should focus on refining their softball skills with a strong emphasis on consistency. Often the difference between an average player and a good player is the ability to consistently execute the required skills.

Players in the Majors level should:

- **Come on time to practice and prepared for practice or games (including safety equipment)**
  - **Show proper batting stance, bat position, and swing execution**
  - **Reasonable competence in making contact with the ball**
  - **Know the difference between bunting for a base hit and a sacrifice bunt**
  - **Demonstrate proper base running techniques including:**
    - **Exploding off the base after the ball crosses the plate**
    - **When to tag up vs. going half way**
    - **Proper sliding techniques**
  - **Execute proper pitching motion**
  - **Use Catching skills (blocking the plate with the ball, blocking wild pitches, throwing out runners)**
  - **Cover bases correctly when receiving a throw or fielding a ball**
  - **Understand how to go back on a fly ball**
  - **Properly execute a double play**
  - **Execute a run down - both as a runner and a fielder**
  - **Know what can happen after a ball is caught in foul territory**
  - **Use the relay man from out field or throw home if needed**
  - **Cover all bases and backs up other players after a hit**
  - **Always show good Sportsmanship on and off the field (no bad mouthing other players)**
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## **Junior (Ages 12 - 14)**

Any girl who will attain the age of 12, 13, or 14 years old on or before December 31<sup>st</sup> of the previous season year shall be eligible to play Junior softball.

## **Senior (Ages 14 - 16) Softball**

Any girl who will attain the age of 14, 15 or 16 years old on or before December 31<sup>st</sup> of the previous season year shall be eligible to play Senior softball.

The Junior and Senior levels focus on strategy and situational plays, mastering specific positions and preparing for play at the Junior High and Senior High School level if desired. Managers focus on fielding a competitive team while also providing the players with a positive development/learning experience. At this level, teams compete in an interleague including 10-12 other softball leagues within the state. The level of competition varies by league, depending on the strength of the other competing programs in that area. Skill levels vary from recreational to highly competitive (select) levels of play. All players are ensured playing time.

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