

Welcome to Coaching

V3.0 February 2018



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Agenda for this Guide

- Your Coaching Roadmap
- Getting ACE Certified
- Emergency Medical Info and Safety Tips
- Equipment
- Rain
- TeamSnap
- The Parent Meeting
- PAGS Specific Coaching Guidelines
- Responsible Coaching
- Some Coaching Tips

Preface: First, A Big Thank You

- PAGS appreciates you volunteering to be a coach
- Hopefully you will look back at your tenure as a PAGS coach as something special you shared with your daughter and as a positive learning experience for both her and yourself

... And Yes We Can Relate

- You are probably thinking “what have I gotten myself into??” – e.g.
 - “I can barely handle my own kid(s), let alone a whole team of kids”
 - “I have no clue what equipment my team should have”
 - “I am not sure I can show patience throughout the season and not find myself yelling all the time”
- No worries! ... we have been there ourselves, so this guide is here to help, with the assumption that this is your first coaching experience
- The next slide – the coaching roadmap – tells you the path you should follow to get up to speed to be a PAGS coach
- The remainder of this guide gets you started on the journey
- Be sure to check out the other guides in the “Coaching Corner” on the PAGS website (e.g. “Preparing Practices”, “Preparing for Games” and the various Drill guides giving you more nitty gritty information)

Your Coaching Roadmap

Start here!



Read "Welcome to Coaching" (this document and all other docs are posted on "Coaches Corner" on the PAGES website)



Attend Coaches Meeting on **Feb. 10** to get oriented and get team assignments



Get ACE Certified



Review the various "Fundamentals" documents on the Coaches Corner



Review "Preparing Practices" and "Example Practice Plans"



- Review "Infield Drills"
- Review "Hitting Drills"
- Review "Outfield Drills"
- Review "Running Drills"



Attend Coaching Clinic on Conducting Practices and Advanced Fundamentals on **March 15**



Review "Preparing for Games"



Enjoy coaching and sign up for next year! 😊

Additional Content

- Besides content on Coaches Corner, new in 2018 is access to Practice Plans on this website:

eliteathleteconsulting.com

Select Book of Knowledge (BoK) menu

password usasoftball18

Getting ACE Certified

Getting ACE Certified

- Your first step in PAGS coaching is to get ACE Certified (ACE = “Achieve, Certify, Educate”) through the American Softball Association (ASA) → now called USA Softball
- This certification includes a background check and provides training (and testing) to ensure that “our coaches achieve a certain level of understanding of what their duties are as coach of a youth softball team.”
- Certification includes insurance coverage (liability and excess medical insurance) for coaches
- Certification is good for one calendar year, so if you were certified last year, you need to get recertified
- Because of insurance (and wanting to ensure coaches have a certain level of understanding), you cannot begin your practices until you have gotten your ACE Certification
- The PAGS Treasurer will reimburse you for the cost of the background check and certification, so keep your receipts and send to the PAGS Treasurer
- The website is <https://www.registerasa.com/>

Start the Certification Process At Least 2-3 Weeks Before Your First Practice


- Did I mention that you cannot begin practices until you have gotten your ACE Certification?
- The first thing you do when you go online to the registerASA site is register for an account and they then ask you to OK them doing a background check on you
- It may take a few days to a week to hear back regarding your background check
- Note you cannot begin the ACE tutorials and get tested and certified until you pass the background check, so at the minimum this process could take a week
- The video tutorials and testing themselves take a few hours to complete and you can stop and resume where you have left out, so based on your schedule the process of working through the tutorials and testing, this also may span another week
- So don't wait until the night before your first practice, start the process at least 2 weeks before your first practice
- Note all coaches need to get certified (head and assistants)

New in 2018: SafeSport

- Besides ACE, you must also do SafeSport (you will see link from ACE Education page)
- You need to do this before ACE. It does not require background check to be completed, so you can do this while waiting for your background check to go through
- When you create an account on SafeSport, link to USA Softball member ID
- See <https://www.registerasa.com/Content/Files/Safe%20Sport%20How%20To.pdf> for details

Background Check **ACE Education** Registration Status

ACE Education



Welcome to the new ACE Testing Dashboard. Here you'll find everything you need pertaining to ACE Education. Below are links to the ACE Testing Center, review previous tests, and if you have previous ACE tests completed a table of collected information pertaining to prior ACE Education.

SafeSport [Click Here to Start Now](#)

Beginning in the 2018 season, **all ACE coaches must first take the USOC's SafeSport courses prior to starting ACE.** SafeSport is composed of 3 individual lessons; all lessons must be completed in full before you are considered SafeSport educated. If you would like to know more about the USOC's SafeSport initiative, please [click here](#).

When creating your SafeSport account, please use the following Member ID to link your account:

For a step-by-step guide on completing SafeSport, please [click here](#). For more help, please visit our [Help Documents](#) section.
Note: **Red** = Not Started or Incomplete & **Green** = Complete

Lesson 1: Sexual Misconduct Awareness Education

Lesson 2: Mandatory Reporting

Lesson 3: Emotional and Physical Misconduct

Concussion Training – Additional Content

- <https://headsup.cdc.gov/>

Read This If First Time Registrant

Go to <https://www.registerasa.com>

If you are new (have never done this before), you'll need to Create Profile first (this will be your RegisterASA profile):

- Click on "Create Profile"
 - Create your own Username and Password
 - For Association, choose "CA - Northern California ASA"
 - For Group, choose "JO Rec 7 - Santa Clara County"
 - For League, choose "Palo Alto Girls Softball"
 - Input all of the required information (DO input your Middle Name -- it could help expedite the background check)
 - Click the appropriate box under Membership Type (probably Head Coach or Assistant Coach)
- Then click "Submit"

(If you've done it before, just go ahead and login. If you've forgotten your login info, they'll email you a link to reset your password.)

Now use the profile you just created to log back into www.registerasa.com

More Steps for First Timers

When you login, you'll be taken to the "Home Plate"

You'll likely see three categories:

- Personal steps
- Registration Status
- My Teams

The only thing you need to do anything with is "Personal Steps"

If you are new, it should give you two options:

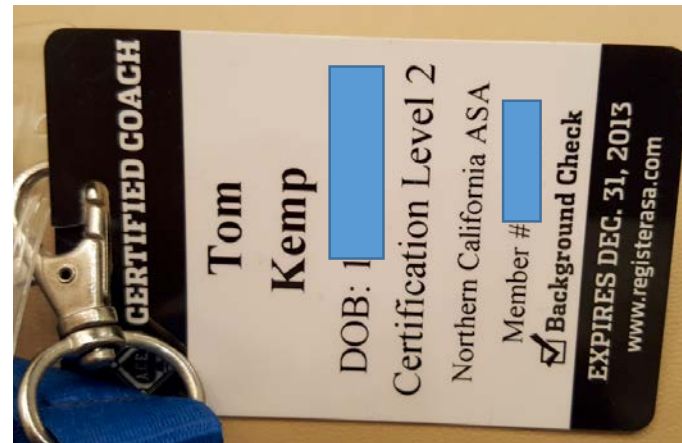
- ACE Certification w/ Background Check" (and show Status as Last Cert: None --> ACE 1 Not Complete" -- next to that should be an underlined active "Purchase" link)
- Click on "Purchase" and then follow the directions

Stuff They Send You Upon Certification

- You will eventually get sent a card like this (front and back)



- And for “Level 2” certification one like this (front and back)



Plus a nifty lanyard to hold your ID card!



What to Do with the ACE Certification Card(s) They Send You

- Some summer tournaments require coaches to have ASA Certification ID on them (i.e. the one with the picture ID), so if you plan to coach summer Palo Alto Heat team, please keep them handy
- Otherwise “file them away” as the card does have your Member ID on it, which may come in handy when you go through certification again next year

Read This Only if You Still Need Help

Here is a “help” document on signing up for the background check

<https://www.registerasa.com/Content/Files/How%20To%20Take%20A%20Background%20Check%202016.pdf>

And here is a great “help” document that shows you step by step on what happens after that

<https://www.registerasa.com/Content/Files/How%20To%20Take%20An%20ACE%20Certification%20Test%202016.pdf>

Basically, you'll click on the option to purchase the ACE Certification with Background Check. You'll go through the Background Check first. It will show "Pending" for awhile (I think they said could be minutes, hours or days). After it shows Cleared, then it will activate the link (back on the Home Plate, under Personal Steps) for you to click on to get to the ACE Certification page.

You'll then create a password to get into the ACE site (it uses for your email address you input into the RegisterASA system as your username for the ACE system. They recommend that you use the same password that you used in RegisterASA)

When you have finished your certification, please send an email the PAGS Treasurer (include your name, division, role – e.g. head coach, assistant coach, the ACE certification level you completed and the date you completed it – and the \$ amount you paid for your background check and ACE testing -- which should be \$25 for the first time, and \$20 thereafter). This is reimbursed by PAGS.

Still Need More Help with Certification?

Re-read the 2 PDFs referenced on the prior page

This FAQ should also answer most of your questions

<https://www.registerasa.com/Content/Files/FAQ-ACE.pdf>

Finally, if you are at a complete loss, then contact Sandy Scott, the Office Manager at Norcal ASA (she's the expert for everything to do with that system)

Phone: 916-962-1631

Email: sscott@norcalasa.org

Emergency Medical Info & Safety Tips

Medical and Emergency Contact Info

- Emergency and medical contact info is filled out during the online registration process and stored in TeamSnap for each player
- A coach should check each player has their emergency and medical contact info filled out and the coach should make sure they can access players' info from the TeamSnap mobile app in case an issue occurs at a practice and/or game

Safety: Yes It Comes First

Enter the season with a mantra that safety is always first. Helpful tips include:

- Always scan the field during warmups to make sure there are not significant holes in the outfield or big rocks in the infield
- Set ground rules for when girls should swing bats (e.g. away from other players) and make sure they always swing bats with a helmet on
- Catchers should always have catching gear and helmet even in coach pitch as batters can throw bats etc.
- Helmets should have chinstraps and facemasks
- Make sure the girls are using proper ball sizes, bats, etc. – see equipment section
- If girls are running the bases in a situation where balls are being thrown, they must wear helmets
- For the older girls, don't practice sliding if girls are not wearing proper "sliding pants" or if the infield appears not be properly groomed (e.g. instead practice on a slip-n-slide in the outfield)
- Always have water breaks and encourage all girls to bring water to every practice
- Proper teaching of fundamentals and paying attention is key to minimizing injury
- For younger or less experienced girls, throw/roll balls vs. hit balls to them during your practice drills
- Having a proper practice plan in place keeps things organized and decreases likelihood of players not paying attention and getting hurt (see "Preparing Practices" for more details)

More on Safety

- Be sure you have First Aid Kit in your equipment bag – more on Equipment later
- Again, make sure you have the TeamSnap app on your phone so you can access players' emergency contact and medical info
- Please review the next page for a PAGES handout on safety first

PALO ALTO GIRLS SOFTBALL

2015 Season

SAFETY FIRST



Safety must have the highest priority for our Palo Alto Girls' Softball program. Just as we emphasize positive attitudes and good sportsmanship, we urge the staff of every team at every age to ver strongly emphasize safety.

PALO ALTO GIRLS SOFTBALL
P.O. Box 60027 • Palo Alto, CA 940306
www.paloaltogirlssoftball.org
650.209.0454.

FIRST AID

Every team is provided with a first aid kit. A good friend who is an ER physician, and my certifications in First Aid and CPR have provided me a few basic guidelines you should know and follow: (1) ice is the best short term treatment to minimize swelling — use the ice pack in the kit, and replace it if used ... and, remember, ice should be applied sooner rather than later; (2) If there is an ankle injury, don't let the player walk on it, elevate the leg, and use ice ... ; (3) If you suspect that a player has suffered a broken bone, do not move her ... stop the game, make her comfortable, and call the paramedics; ... which leads us to (4) Have emergency numbers at the ready. Always opt in the direction of caution — we don't need any players 'playing through pain'. Let us know if you need additional supplies for the first aid kit.

CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

The best way to deal with injuries is to prevent them. Beginning with practices, set a standard of safety. Don't cut corners ... use the same safety standards as expected in a game. No jewelry ... always use helmets ... emphasize that bats are to be swung only in the batters box or on-deck circle ... teach them to look before they throw or swing ... organize practices and warm ups so balls aren't flying in every direction ... encourage each player to take responsibility for both their own safety, and the safety of their teammates. Coaches need to be safe too ... don't throw or hit balls harder than is appropriate for the age level you are coaching. In the batting cage, always do a practice pitch with the player out of the 'line of fire' before starting a hitting session.

Don't be a "do as I say, not as I do" coach... set a good example by following good safety practices as you coach.. And, here are three important 'nevers': **Never let a girl catch behind a batter without full catchers' gear** ...**never let a girl feed the pitching machine** ... **never let one of the girls drive the golf cart**.

EQUIPMENT

Make sure your equipment is safe ... especially helmets and catchers' gear. If equipment fails during the season, let us replace it. We believe that ***all*** pitchers must use face masks ... and they are also a good idea for infielders, especially at the corners.

COACH SAFE TECHNIQUE

Safety starts with the coach. Teach your player techniques and approaches that help protect them from injury. Do some stretching and warm ups so muscles aren't cold and tight when players are playing hard. Pitchers must be ready to turn into fielders as soon as they release the ball ... teach players how to throw with their whole body so they don't stress their arms (they are, remember, still developing physically) ... there are sliding techniques that minimize injuries ... teach players how to safely fall away from an inside pitch ... show fielders ways to field ground balls to protect themselves from bad hops (one ball in the face can make a player ball-shy for life) ... teach the girls to respect the messages their bodies send — when a pitcher's arm hurts, even a little, take her out of the game ... and, in general, don't let the kids play hurt. No game is ever worth risking a player's health or physical well-being.

Equipment

Equipment: What is Provided and What Parents Must Provide

- PAGES provides the uniforms, fields, bases, batting helmets, bats, balls and catcher's gear
 - Uniforms provided by PAGES to players include jerseys, visors and socks
 - It is completely at player discretion if they want to wear the visor (and remind parent to write the player's name on the visor!)
- Players must provide:
 - A softball glove – see upcoming slide for more details on glove size
 - Softball or soccer cleats (plastic bottomed) but sneakers are OK for 6U and 8U ... but cleats are preferred
 - Softball pants are required for 12U and above and recommended for 10U
 - We do recommend that because of lice concerns that players also get their own helmets with a chin strap and a facemask

Equipment: Optional Items Provided by Parents

- For girls that want to practice at home or have their own equipment, parents should also buy a few balls and a bat
- For girls that have a lot of gear, parents should also consider buying a baseball/softball bag to hold their player's gear (glove, helmet, glove, bat, etc.)
- Batting gloves are at discretion of player and parents – usually not needed for 6Us and 8Us
- Parents of older girls who are concerned about their player getting inadvertently hit in the face by a hit ball while fielding should consider getting a fielding face mask
- Sliding shorts are highly recommended for any players who plan or will slide (recommended for all players who play summer travel ball)

Equipment: Shoes

- Players need to bring their own shoes
- As most of the play is in the dirt infield (unlike baseball, softball infields are all dirt), shoes with cleats (e.g. softball shoes or soccer shoes) are highly preferred, but yes sneakers are OK for 6U and 8U
- Outfields can be wet, so between moisture and dirt you will find that dressier sneakers can get dirty very quickly, so you may suggest to parents that players have a separate pair of sneakers or cleats for softball vs. what they wear to school
- Nothing fancy or expensive needs to be bought for the rec season (and can be used shoes if in good condition)
- 10U and above players really should wear cleats
- Pro-Tip for drying wet cleats or sneakers: stuff a bunch of newspaper in the shoes and the newspaper will suck up the moisture

Equipment: Gloves

- Players have to supply their own gloves
- Make sure players put their name on the gloves!
- Recommended minimum sizes
 - 10" glove for 6U
 - 11" glove for 8U
 - 12" glove for 10U and above
- Glove tips to pass on to parents

Gloves

Tips for Buying a New Glove

Buy all-leather. The glove is worn on the left hand for players who throw with their right hand (known as a right-hand throw glove), and vice-versa for left-handers. Look for a hinged design, without extra padding in the palm, to make it easier for your daughter to close the glove. Don't buy a glove that feels too stiff. When buying a youth glove, remember softballs are bigger than baseballs; test how well the ball fits in the glove.

Breaking in a New Glove

Apply a small amount of mink oil or lanolin shaving cream in the pocket and spread it outward around the glove. Put a ball in the pocket, close the glove evenly on the ball, and tie it closed with a strip of cloth. Then, slide it under a mattress for a day or two. Use the glove to play catch; gloves break in naturally as they are used.

Equipment: Balls

- First understand what size ball the players will be using
- 6U is a soft 10" ball
- 8U is a 11" low compression ball (aka its soft and rubbery)
 - New in 2018: All 8U summer Travel teams will play with a 10" Dudley "Protector Series" softball at the NorCal Championship tournament
- 10U initially uses a 11" low compression ball and then typically for games midway through the season will switch to the 11" hard ball
 - We recommend 10U coaches to have 3/4 of their balls in their equipment bag to be soft balls and 1/4 the hard ones
 - 10U coaches should practice the first half of the season with the soft balls and then ease the girls into using the hard balls
- 12U and 14U use a 12" hard ball
- Be sure you get the proper sized balls for your team from the equipment shed!
- Players don't have to bring their own balls to practices or games, but you should recommend that their parents buy the proper sized balls for home practice
 - Recommend for 10U and under they get "softer" aka "low compression" balls as that is what we play with for those ages (plus less likely to break a window 😊)
 - Players can also use whiffle and tennis balls to practice hitting and catching

Equipment: Shorts and Pants

- 6U and 8U can wear shorts or sweats, and 8Us who are more active (e.g. learning to slide) should wear softball pants
- 10U and older should wear softball pants (vs. shorts or sweats) in both practice and for games
- Softball pants required for 12U and 14U
- Softball pants need to be purchased by the player
 - Black and/or grey are best colors that matches any uniform
 - We recommend pants that don't require belts
- For older girls playing on teams that will slide, it is also recommended that softball sliding shorts get purchased
 - Sliding shorts look like bicycle shorts and are worn underneath softball pants
 - For girls that like to slide a lot *and* want extra sliding protection they can also purchase knee guards (but this is more old school as sliding pants now give great protection)



Note no belt, black pants and old school knee guard on player's sliding knee

Equipment: Helmets

- Each team will get 4 helmets that the coach lugs around in the equipment bag, but parents should know that they are communal helmets that may have been in circulation for a few years
- Although team helmets are provided, personal batting helmets are highly recommended to ensure personalized fit and cleanliness
- Every helmet should have facemask and chinstrap
 - The chin strap keeps the helmet from bouncing off the player's head when running or sliding
 - The face mask protects the batter's face from foul tips
 - Almost all helmets are certified (unless someone is using a really old helmet), but one should look for a sticker on them that says "NOCSAE-approved" and/or "ASA Approved". Again most new/modern helmets are certified so no need to be too concerned about that



Note helmet with facemask and chinstrap, Also player is wearing the old school knee guard. Most players now just wear sliding shorts under their softball pants

Equipment: Bats

- The league supplies a set of bats for each team that the coach lugs around in the equipment bag
- Coach should pick different sized bats (see next slides on sizes) to address needs of full range of players on the team
- But we also recommend that if a player wants to practice at home OR wants a personal bat that is better suited for themselves, that parents the should buy their own bats or use a hand me down bat
- At the Spring / rec level an expensive bat is not needed ... no need to spend big \$\$
- Proper bat size is important – see next few slides
 - Weight – 10 second rule
 - Length – Middle of the palm/wrist rule
- Bats must be marked "ASA Softball approved" with a 2004 date or newer, i.e. if a used bat should be less than a decade old

Bat Size and Types

Our sister league MVLA has a good write up on bat sizes and types (source: <http://www.mvlags.org/page/show/1018831-equipment-requirements-for-all-divisions>), see below. Feel free to share this link with parents looking to buy a bat

Players should use 'Aluminum' and 'alloy' bats that cost \$50 or less (\$20-\$30 is fine). If you are considering buying a bat that costs more than \$50, make sure the bat isn't labeled composite, titanium or double-walled. For safety reasons, MVLAGE does not allow the composite, titanium or double-walled bats.

Choose a light bat with at least a 9 oz drop marked "official softball ASA Approved" (2-1/4-inch diameter or less) and a 2004-or-later certification.

"Drop" refers to the difference between the bat length in inches and its weight in ounces.

Popular bat sizes are:

- 25" long / 16 oz. (-9 drop) for 6U
- 26" long / 17 oz. (-9 drop) for 8U
- 28" long / 19 oz. (-9 drop) for 10U
- 30" long / 20 oz. (-10 drop) for 12U
- 32" long / 22 oz. (-10 drop) for 14U

Note: [The Batter's Box website](#) has a bat sizing chart for youth by player height and weight.

Bat Length -- As a rule of thumb, the knob of the bat should come to the player's wrist when the bat is stood upright on the floor and player's arms are hanging loosely at her sides.

Bat Weight -- The player should be able to hold the bat with one arm outstretched for 10 seconds.

- Drops higher than 10 are becoming increasingly available at affordable prices, and it is generally better to err on the side of getting a bat that is too light than one that is too heavy.
- Buying a bat that a player can grow into is a common mistake because she may perform poorly while the bat is too heavy and as a result, won't have fun.

Note that certain bats, though ASA-certified, are prohibited for play in MVLAGE intraleague games (played in Division 12U and above). Composite, titanium, or multi-walled bats are not allowed.

More on Bat Length ...

- For parents looking to buy a bat for the playerThis also is a good table you can reference for bat length, but we find that this is more geared for smaller girls, so OK to consider adding 1" to each recommendation below for slightly bigger girls

Height	3'-3'4"	3'5"-3'8"	3'9"-4'	4'1"-4'4"	4'5"-4'8"	4'9"-5'	5'1"-5'4"	5'5"-5'8"	5'9"-6'	6'1"-over
< 60	26"	27"	28"	29"	29"					
61-70	27"	27"	28"	29"	30"	30"				
71-80		28"	28"	29"	30"	30"	31"			
81-90		28"	29"	29"	30"	30"	31"	32"		
91-100		28"	29"	30"	30"	31"	31"	32"		
101-110		29"	29"	30"	30"	31"	31"	32"		
111-120		29"	29"	30"	30"	31"	31"	32"		
121-130		29"	30"	30"	30"	31"	32"	33"	33"	
131-140		29"	30"	30"	31"	31"	32"	33"	33"	
141-150			30"	30"	31"	31"	32"	33"	33"	
151-160			30"	31"	31"	32"	32"	33"	33"	33"
161-180				31"	31"	32"	32"	33"	33"	34"
181-190						32"	33"	33"	34"	34"
190 +							33"	33"	34"	34"

Bat Length by Age Guide

AGE	5-7	8-9	10	11-12	13-14	15-16
LENGTH	24"-26"	26"-28"	28"-29"	30"-31"	31"-32"	32"-33"

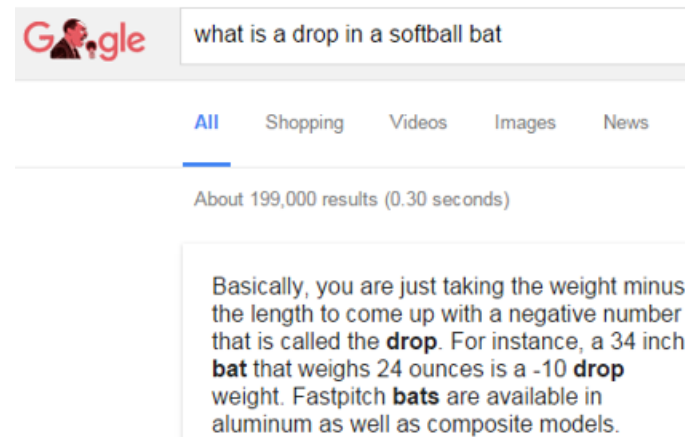
Bat Length Matters, But So Does Weight

Prior slide has the appropriate length. Next determine weight. If a player cannot hold the bat outstretched with more than one hand for more than 10 seconds, it is too heavy! Err on too light vs. too heavy. Pick something that they can swing comfortably

Length minus weight = drop. So lower drop is probably better for most beginner girls (see “Drop” definition below). Below are popular bat lengths and sizes for small to mid-size girls in their age group (bigger/stronger girls should go bigger)

- 25" long / 16 oz. (-9 drop) for 6U
- 26" long / 17 oz. (-9 drop) for 8U
- 28" long / 19 oz. (-9 drop) for 10U
- 30" long / 20 oz. (-10 drop) for 12U
- 32" long / 22 oz. (-10 drop) for 14U

Again caution parents that mileage may vary (so don't invest too much in a bat) ... for rec league it is totally ok to buy a \$20-30 bat or reuse someone else's bat (as long as it not too old)



If parent or player is not certain about bat size, then you should recommend before they buy a bat that the player should try 3 or 4 of the team bats to find the right size before they purchase

Softball (or Baseball Bag) and Batting Gloves Are Optional

- If player has a lot of gear (e.g. glove, helmet, bat, etc.) then parents should consider buying a bag
 - Nothing fancy is required (e.g. used bag from older brother who played little league is fine)
 - ProTip: consider a softball or baseball backpack for younger plays as they can be used for school or travel
- Same with batting gloves – optional, and based on personal preference. Nothing fancy/expensive is needed



Fielding Face Masks

- Purchased at parents discretion
 - Typically parents will see a player or two from other teams wearing this at the 10U level and above and believe this may be good for their daughter to wear for safety reasons, which is perfectly reasonable
 - A fielding face mask may also make players (including younger players) more comfortable when it comes to fielding
 - Coaches should defer to parents but in general we recommend for summer travel players
- Other items of note re: fielding face masks
 - PAGS or ASA does not require fielding face masks
 - Parents should know that at 6U to 10U level a low compression (soft) ball is used in the spring rec league (10U moves to hard ball for games mid-way through season), and this may influence them to defer purchase until 12U and 14U when a hard(er) ball is used and players are bigger and hitting the ball harder
- Girls playing infield for summer travel ball (where the ball is hit harder) at the 10U level and up should get a mask

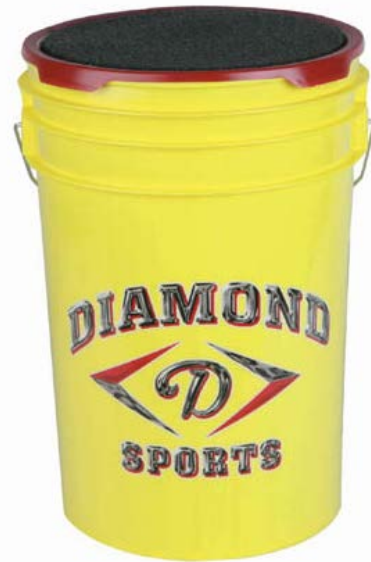
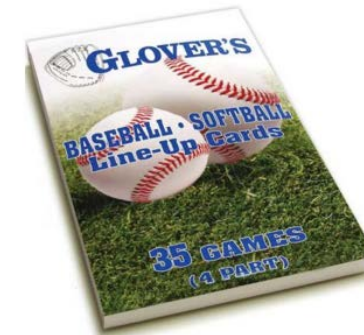


What About the Coach's Equipment?

- You will be given a big honking softball equipment bag at the coaches meeting
- In it should you should have the following items ...
 - Emergency medical kit and maybe a few dry ices
 - 4 helmets
 - 4 bats (preferably of different sizes)
 - At least one tee (tees are also great for older kids to practice hitting with!)
 - If you are playing 6U or 8U, it should have rubber bases + home plate + pitching mound
 - Balls
 - Catching gear – helmet, chest protector, and a knee/shin protector for each leg

Other Stuff You May Want to Ask For (Especially for Older Teams)

- Ask for as many practice balls as you can get, and get them in one or two buckets for easier lugging around (and sitting down on 😊)
- ASA Rule Book (if you are really into softball)
- Softball lineup cards (for 10U and above)
- A hitting stick
- Whiffles for hitting practice
- Scorebook (to keep score) – for older teams (not 6U or 8U)
- If they don't have these ask if they can purchase for you OR ask if you can purchase and expense yourself



Equipment You Might Want to Purchase on Your Own If You are Really Into It

If you see yourself coaching for a few years ...

- Bownet – great for hitting and some throwing drills
- Clip board for dugout use (e.g. put line up cards on) or buy a lineup board
- Additional balls or whiffles and a bucket to store them in
- Wagon to lug your ton of softball gear
- Any gear on prior page that you want but they won't buy for you or let you expense



Other Equipment the League Has that You Can Borrow Based on Age of Team

- Pitching machines that are in the batting cage
 - Only to be operated by ACE Certified coaches and never by players
 - Ask appropriate PAGS Board members for assistance and guidance on how to operate, as well as the combination to get into the batting cage
 - Do not share combination into the batting cage with parents or players
 - Not to be used by 6U or 8U teams
 - Coach should only carefully decide to using pitching machines based on age and experience of players
 - Players in cage must wear helmets
 - See table for recommended speeds but we recommend for PAGS spring to go on a few MPH below low range
- Sliding mattress to teach sliding

	10U	11-12	13-14	15-16 17-18 High School	College/ Pro
Fastball (a) (top speed)	37-41 (43-46)	44-47 (50-53)	46-49 (52-55)	50-56 (54-61)	59-64 (65-72)

Source: <http://www.efastball.com/fastpitch/pitching/average-pitching-speed-by-age-group/>

Rain

Rain

- To determine if fields are open, Palo Alto has a rain hotline
+1 650 329 2697
- Use the rain hotline as the neutral arbitrator to determine if a practice or game should be cancelled due to rain
- If the rain hotline says fields are cancelled, you cannot use field (we run risk of losing field privileges with violations, plus there is always player safety issues)
- Publicize the rain hotline with your parents and on TeamSnap as the way to know if practice or game is cancelled due to rain
- Obviously if it suddenly starts pouring and player safety is clearly at risk, then cancel practice or the game and contact parents via TeamSnap to pick up their kids

TeamSnap

TeamSnap

- Has player and parent contact information, scheduling, who is signed up to participate for a given event (i.e. “Availability”), emergency contact and medical information, etc.
- You also use it to message parents
- Tell parents “you don’t have to tell or email me if your kid is missing [practice or game], mark availability in TeamSnap”
- Also use it to set up Refreshment sign-ups for each game (very important!)
- Make sure parents are really using it
 - Tell them they have to have their contact information in it, so you can contact them if player needs pickup from practice and parent has not arrived, etc.
 - Tell them they must mark availability so you can plan practices and/or determine game lineups
- Also encourage use of the mobile app which is quite powerful and handy
- Learn to be a power user as it will make your life very easy
- Also use TeamSnap to set the date for end of season party ... immediately schedule that as an Event at beginning of season

The Parents Meeting

Your Parents Meeting

- Now that you are certified, got the equipment, up and running on TeamSnap, etc. you need to think about when do you go over the season with the parents
- We recommend scheduling a parents meeting after the 2nd or 3rd practice but before the first game
- Put the event on TeamSnap as an event
- Goals will be to get them to use TeamSnap, explain when practices and games will be (and how early players must show up for games), get them to sign up for snacks, tell them about the end of season party, and ask for volunteers to help the coaches
- Also broach the subject that (a) you are the coach and they should not distract the players by shouting out instructions from the stands; and (b) remind them the goal of the Spring season is to have fun and improve as a player – the real competitive season is the summer travel season

Additional PAGS Coaching Guidelines

A FEW KEY GUIDELINES

Here are a few key guidelines that should be followed by all coaches and managers:

- **All team functions should be attended by at least two adults.** This can be any combination of coach, assistant coach, manager, team parent, etc.
- **Girls cannot be left alone after practices or games.** Adults must remain with all players until they are picked up by a responsible adult or have appropriate transportation home.
- **Pitching machines are to be operated only by ASA certified adults.** Our batting cages are available for use by 14U, 12U, and 10U coaches and managers. For both basic safety and insurance reasons, the cages are to be operated only by officially registered coaches and managers. Girls must, of course, wear helmets in the batting cages.
- **Know the rules for your division.** Everyone will get the most out of their experience when all are on the same page with respect to and clear about the rules. Please familiarize yourself with the rules of your division before games begin.
- **Set a standard of positive attitude and good sportsmanship for your players, including respect for umpires and other teams, even in difficult situations.**
- **Coaches may be asked to provide player evaluations later in the season.**
- **Always make safety your first priority.** Please see our Safety handout.
- **Help us achieve our goal that every girl has a good and positive experience ... be fair and balanced as you work with your players, giving everyone ample opportunity to learn and enjoy the great game of softball through their participation on your team.**

Responsible Coaching

A Few Words on “Responsible Coaching”

- Every youth sports has their own version of “responsible coaching”, “positive coaching” etc.
- ACE Certification will walk you through ASA’s version of it
- They are all good stuff, feel free to weave in other sport’s equivalents (if you have coached other sports) into how you go about coaching in a positive and responsible manner
- At the minimum, please review the following 2 pages that are sections from the ACE Coaching Certification guidebook
- Then we will give a few tips on potential coaching philosophies you should consider adopting

Why You Should Be a Responsible Coach

Coaches are among the most influential adults in the lives of youth athletes. In conjunction with parents and teachers, coaches are key to developing character in our children.

Studies show that children who remain active in youth sports achieve better grades, are less likely to engage in dangerous behavior, and live longer, healthier lives due to improved fitness they carry forward from youth sports. One way to ensure that children gain these benefits is to offer them Responsible Coaching.

Softball provides an ideal 'virtual classroom' for teaching life lessons, if coaches prepare themselves to become Responsible Coaches.

What is a Responsible Coach?

By now you may be wondering what we mean by "Responsible Coach."

Let's begin by explaining what a Responsible Coach is not. A Responsible Coach is not:

- soft
- a source of empty, unearned praise
- satisfied with everyone just having fun.

Responsible Coaching actually is more difficult, challenging and rewarding than coaching with a win-at-all-cost approach. In addition to learning all you can about softball rules, strategy and skills and competing fiercely for wins, you also are committed to:

- Placing education and character development before wins
- Coaching beyond the Diamond
- Coaching players to master softball
- Filling "Emotional Tanks" to improve performance and instill love of sport
- Living and coaching by a code of Honoring the Game.

Coaching Beyond the Diamond

You cannot be a Responsible Coach without deep knowledge of softball. Know your rules, strategies and skills, as well as age-appropriate drills (available elsewhere within this handbook). Then, realize there is much more to being a Responsible Coach.

Understand that the life lessons you teach your athletes will carry far beyond the playing field. Preparing your players for competition entails imparting values and strategies that will impact them long beyond their playing days.

The best coaches build opportunities for character education into their program, creating, recognizing and capitalizing on teachable moments. They think about the following questions when it comes to their players:

- If they fail, will they try again?
- Do they have the character necessary to persist?
- Will they be committed to helping to make their teammates better?
- How can I encourage them to have the confidence and curiosity to ask for and welcome feedback?
- Will they compete in a way that makes their coaches, families and themselves proud?

In softball, character is constantly tested. Players often must push past what they think are their limits to stand in against an intimidating pitcher. They must refocus themselves for the next play even after an error in the field. They'll need character to endure the bumps, bruises and scrapes from bad hops or sliding into bases.

Therefore, Responsible Coaches are character educators, able to take advantage of the endless procession of teachable moments that softball provides. Beyond the diamond, Responsible Coaches teach athletes life lessons in persistence, teamwork, sacrifice, effort, empathy, discipline, leadership and overcoming adversity.

Teaching children to be better softball players is rewarding, but not nearly as rewarding as feeling that we've actually helped shape the values they will carry with them for the rest of their lives.

And Finally ...
Some Coaching Tips

Coaching Tip #1: Think About Aligning Goals

- As coach you may have a set of goals for the season, e.g.
 - “win all our games”, “spend quality time with my daughter”, “develop a set of skills so my players can be better players”, “teach life lessons like good sportsmanship and that sometimes in life you will get bad calls”, “don’t embarrass myself in front of 12 kids and their parents when they realize I don’t know what I am doing”, etc.
- ... but also think about what are the goals of the players, e.g.
 - “have fun”, “do things with my friends”, “make new friends”, etc.
- So if you can somehow figure out how to align your goals with the players’ goal then that becomes a big win, e.g.
 - Your players believing that practices and doing drills is fun that they want to keep on playing when their parents come to pick them up at the end of practice time
 - You instilling in the girls that they need to support and interact positively with their teammates eventually leads to two girls who did not previously know each other becoming friends

So How Do You Align Goals?

- Make it fun for both your players and yourself
 - But make sure the players equate fun as not being about goofing around and horseplay, but having fun is growing as an athlete, developing skills and competencies, and being part of a team that supports them
 - Make it fun for you as a coach by learning not only about the sport of softball, but learning about how to deal with parents, how to lead a team, how to properly motivate kids, etc.
- And make the goals realistic
 - The author's goal as a PAGES coach was *for all his players* (and their parents) to have such an overall positive experience with the season that they would want to sign up and play again next season ...
 - ... as opposed to winning every game, etc.
 - If you are really into winning and playing competitive games, volunteer to be a Summer Heat coach!

Coaching Tip #2: Focus on Effort and Realize Mistakes Happen

- Some girls will be able to pick up softball much faster than their teammates
- At such a young age the difference can be significant (e.g. some girl can catch a fly ball no problem, while another girl is scared and can never catch)
- Focus your team not on results, but on their effort
- Also communicate with the team that mistakes are OK
 - Mistakes are how we learn
 - Even consider a ritual, like a brush off the shoulder, or a “no sweat” by running their fingers through their brow, as a way for everyone to know that mistake happen
 - Mistakes are inevitable, it is how we react right after the mistake that matters
- Tell them an all-star player when it comes to hitting fails over 2/3rds of the time
 - Remind them that it is not about failing, it is about rebounding from failure that it is important
- Make it clear that you as a coach will make mistakes too

Coaching Tip #3: Encourage, not Discourage

- Building confidence is key, so think about how you can build your players up and not inadvertently tear them down
- When it comes to feedback, use the sandwich approach
 - Say something positive (i.e. the top piece of bread)
 - Concisely tell them what they did wrong and how to correct it (don't dwell on it)
 - Finish with encouragement, which is the bottom piece of bread
- Net net: make it positive

Coaching Tip #4: Stay Calm

- The girls are going to make mistakes, they are not going to listen all the time, etc.
- As you get upset or frustrated, and are about to say something, internally count to 10 before you say anything, i.e. always collect your thoughts
- If you lose your temper, three things can happen, all of them bad:
 - You will say things that will damage the self-worth and self-esteem of your players, opposing coaches, umpires, etc.
 - It will put you one step behind following what else is going on in your practice or game or with your team
 - It will set a poor role model on how to react, for both parents and players
- Teach this philosophy to your players
- Remember the game is not about you, it is about the kids
 - Have the parents and players remember from the last game the good plays that were made, and the fun that was had, not the coach yelling at the umpire or their players

Coaching Tip #5:

Winning Does Not Just Happen on the Scoreboard

- Ask yourself what's better: girls having fun and getting better at softball and learning to love the sport OR the score at the end of a random spring game
- Take into account that PAGS Spring is a recreation league (not an all-star or summer travel league), so winning a PAGS spring game will have no bearing if anyone's daughter plays at the high school or collegiate level, nor will it have bearing on your future coaching career
- So don't obsess about the score, it is not a reflection of you as a person or coach, especially at this level
- Are the girls have fun and learning softball and learning sportsmanship etc. are the true reflections of your coaching

Coaching Tip #6: KISS plus Talk Less and Show More

- The “Preparing Practices” document goes into this in more detail, but focus on showing vs. talking (especially in practice) – most of us learn by seeing vs. hearing
- Try to it Keep It Super Simple (KISS) when it comes to instruction

Coaching Tip #7: Keeping It Fun

- We want the girls to come back next year and play again
- Coaches need to have the right attitude that makes it fun
- Part of a fun experience is that girls are not bored in practice ... the “Planning Practice” guide goes into how to conduct a practice to make it lively so girls are not standing around

Coaching Tip #8: Dealing with Parents

- Get parents to help you out and have a sense of pride and ownership in your team
- Make it clear in a nice way in the parents meeting that you are in charge and leave the coaching to the coaches during games – nothing worse than having a bunch of people yelling at you to do different things at the same time (and that's what happens when a player is asked to make a play)
- If they have a problem or issue, encourage to have them talk with you offline, vs. share their concerns with their daughters or other parents
- Level set their expectations about winning vs. having fun and getting better at the game
- Communicate to them that the real competitive league is during the summer, for girls who want to play at a higher competitive level that spring is pre-season for that
- More tips are on the next page (source: ACE Coaching Certification Manual)

Coach-Parent Relations

The following are some key tips in dealing with coach-parent conflicts:

Always Do What You Believe Is Best For Your Team

Know what your goals are and be firm about them. Do not let the parents dictate your values. Keep your team and their needs first in your mind and on your priority list. Let the parents know that this is how it is right from the beginning. Do not be rude or unapproachable, but be firm. The team belongs to you and your players—not the parents. So do not let their opinions and pressures make you feel like you should change your decisions. Do what you think is best for your team, and stick to your decision.

No Coach Can Please Everyone So Don't Try

Just be yourself. Be firm, be fair, but be consistent. If you try to make everyone happy, you'll end up changing your rules and decisions, and that's going to get you in trouble faster than anything.

Handle Confrontations One-On-One, Not In Front Of A Crowd

Avoid being put on the spot in front of a crowd, and do not embarrass a parent in front of their peer group. People tend to become very defensive when embarrassed or put on the spot, so avoid putting anyone in this situation. When you are confronted by a parent, try to practice the following:

1. Pull the parent off to the side where no one can overhear your discussion.
2. Try not to be defensive.
3. Let the angry parent talk—you listen. This will allow them to blow off steam and give you time to figure out why they are mad. An angry person will often talk the problem away, but only if you let them.
4. After listening to their viewpoint, thank them for it. Thanking someone for their criticism can often turn a critic into a supporter.

Resist Unfair Pressure

You are the coach and it is your responsibility to make the final decision. Do not let parents pressure you into decisions you do not want to make. And remember, although you should resist pressure from parents when making decisions, it doesn't mean you can't listen to them.

Ask Parents Not to Criticize Their Child During Practice Or Games

Do not let your players be humiliated by anyone, not even their parents. Explain that you must be in complete control of your team when they are under your responsibility. Remember, you can't ask parents not to criticize their child if you turn around and are negative during games and practices. Set the example – be consistent in a positive manner.

Try Not To Blame Parents For Their Attitudes

Maintain as fair an attitude as possible. Keep in mind that, even though their actions might be a little difficult for you to understand at times, parents are simply trying to do what they feel is best for their child. Parents tend to become a little over anxious when it comes to their children. Remind the parents that your #1 priority is the well-being of each child on the team.

Be Consistent

You may be in trouble if you change a rule or philosophy during the season. Think your rules through before the season begins to avoid this problem. But if you do change something, make sure the parents are informed as soon as possible.

Be Fair

If you treat all the players the same, you will gain respect from your players, and their parents. What goes for the "star" must go for the "subs," or you are in big trouble.

Parent-Player Relations

Conflicts between coaches-parents, coaches-players, and players-parents are bound to happen. Sometimes the most difficult conflict for the coach to deal with is the one between the player and his/her parents. Parents may think they are doing the right thing, but they really know very little about what they can do to help their child have a positive sports experience. Sad to say, but a parent can ruin, and "ruin" is a strong word, a child's love of sports.

Coaching Tip #9: Teach Sportsmanship

- Teach them that this is a team sport, it is not about individuals
- Teach them to encourage each other, not discourage or tease each other, and that all players will make mistakes
- Teach them that they should always say “good game” after a game is over and mean it
- Teach them that no snack until the dugout is completely cleaned out, even if that means picking up trash that you did not leave in the dugout
- Teach them that umps are human, and will make mistakes, and that is part of the game
- Teach them to respect the game, themselves, their teammates, their opponents and the umps
- Teach them that we value effort and good sportsmanship over winning

All Done (for now)!

- Now that we overloaded with you with information 😊 ...
- ... Don't worry! You will get the hang of this!
- Next step on your journey is right before your practices begin please review “Preparing Practices” and starting looking at some of the drills to get a feel for how you can conduct your initial practices
- Then a few days before your first game review “Preparing for Games”
- Good luck and have fun!