

Additional Considerations for Pigtail/Ponytail

The goals of the Pigtail and Ponytail divisions include having fun, creating enthusiasm for softball, and developing player skills. Catching, throwing, batting, and base running skills are things that need to be learned, developed, and practiced at all levels. The Pigtail and Ponytail divisions are generally where players are first introduced to the game of softball. These divisions are where the most fundamental skills are learned.

Please remember that the players in these divisions will range in age from 5 to 8. While some players will have previously learned some of the skills, many of them will have limited or no softball skills. What seems basic to you may not be to your player. Everything – how to hold the glove, how to throw a ball, how to put on a helmet, etc. – needs to be learned. Softball at this level must be fun for the players, but we still need to teach.

It is important, even when teaching new skills or correcting players, to **keep things positive**. Remember to complement the players, even if they don't get it exactly right. Encouraging phrases like "good try", "nice swing", and "way to hustle" will go a long way towards creating a fun learning environment. When you need to correct something a player is doing, try a phrase like "good hustle – try to keep your glove down until the ball is all the way in" or "nice try – don't forget to squish the bug".

Whether it's during practice or the games, try to keep as many players as possible involved. During practice, split the girls into several small groups to minimize the time players are watching someone else do an activity or drill.

Encourage your players and their parents to put their names on their glove, visor, water bottle, and anything else they bring. Bring a Sharpie to practice and offer to write their names for them – just don't write on anything unless the parent(s) has told you it is ok.

Some tips for parents:

- The game of softball can be very confusing, and several people shouting different things from the stands or sidelines will make it even more confusing. Let the coach do the coaching.
- Clapping and positive cheers/phrases after the play is over are encouraged.
- Avoid shouting instructions to your daughter during a play. A child will naturally look when she hears a parent's voice. This can be dangerous if a ball has just been hit in the direction of your daughter. At the very least, it can be confusing – let the coach tell her where to throw the ball.
- At this age, it is very difficult to hit a ball. Telling your daughter to "swing" makes it harder. Let her concentrate and give her a cheer when she does hit the ball.
- A batting tee is a very useful teaching tool. Many college players use tees to refine and hone their swings. Don't discourage your daughter from using a batting tee – let it help her.

SOFTBALL IS FUN – ENJOY IT!