

FULLY LOADED T-BALL

Junior Playing Rules



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Fully Loaded T-Ball is the perfect modified game to teach children fundamental motor skills and develop physical literacy in a fun, exciting and inclusive way.

With the focus on participation outcomes, Fully Loaded T-Ball introduces children to the skills of hitting, throwing, sprinting, catching, decision making and strategy.

The game is simple, easy to understand and geared towards maximizing activity whilst learning through game play.

The rules in this document can be used for competitions but more importantly as a starting point for beginners that will potentially progress into softball. The game should be implemented using the “Games Sense” approach and where necessary the “CHANGEIT” principles.

For more information on the “Game Sense” and “CHANGEIT” principles see the Softball Batter Up Website www.softballbatterup.com.au

1 Teams

- 1.1 Team numbers can be varied depending on the size of the group. Where possible divide the players so there is equal numbers on each team.
 - 1.1.1 If it is a mixed competition, it is strongly recommended that each team have an even number of boys and girls on the field at any one time.
- 1.2 A team is not required to have a set minimum number of players to be able to play the game.
- 1.3 A good player experience is achieved where there is more participation and activity for everyone. Try to avoid large teams where individual's ability to be included in play is reduced. For this reason, if numbers of players per team exceed 10, split the group into smaller size teams and play two games so there is more action.
- 1.4 If space, equipment or number of supervisors available are restrictive to only one game, allow substitutions without restriction throughout the game and try to give all players an equal playing opportunity.
- 1.5 A team is not required to wear a uniform, but they will look good if they do!

2 Equipment

- 2.1 Shoes must be worn by all players. Metal cleats and shoes with screw in studs are not permitted.
- 2.2 Gloves must be used for all fielders.

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- 2.3 Helmets should be worn by all batters and base runners.
- 2.4 Aluminium bats can be used (if they are then helmets are compulsory). They come in sizes 24 – 30 inch. Children will be able to comfortably swing the bat and keep their balance if the size is suitable for them.
- 2.5 Softcore balls are required for use. There are several size options available. Choose a size that is suitable for your participants but make sure they are a safety ball, not a hard game ball. Sizes suitable for T-ball would be 9, 10, 10.5 or 11 inch. (Note: a full-size softball is 12-inch circumference)

3 The game

- 3.1 The recommended number of innings per game is two, taking approximately 30-40 minutes to complete a game.
- 3.2 One innings is completed when each team has batted and fielded.
- 3.3 A team's turn at bat concludes when all players have batted, regardless of the number of outs. Each batter bats once per innings.
 - 3.3.1 When the last batter hits the ball, play will stop when a fielder has the ball back to the infield and calls "TIME" or all runners are out. If a runner is between bases when "TIME" is called, they are awarded the closest base that is not occupied.
- 3.4 Batters bat in a set order. When a substitution is made, the substitute takes the batting position of the player they have replaced.
- 3.5 A tee is used so a pitcher is not required however you can have a fielder playing in the pitcher position. They should be far enough away from the batter to react on a hard hit. Have them field closer to 2nd base than to the Homeplate.
- 3.6 The fielding team nominates a back stop who stays behind the batter, out of harm's way until the play is made. When play finishes, the back stop replaces the ball on the tee for the next batter.
- 3.7 All other players can spread out in the field of play. They do not need set positions but should be further away from the batter than the pitching position.
- 3.8 The competition organiser will determine the method for deciding which team bats and which team fields first. Paper, rock, scissors or a coin toss between captains is an acceptable method to determine who bats or fields, or it could be predetermined if a draw is used.
- 3.9 The winner of the game is the team that scores the most runs.

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- 3.10 A run is scored when a batter makes their way around all four bases (touching each one) and crosses the Homeplate.
- 3.11 In the event of a tied game, the Competition Organiser awards each team equal points and declares a draw.

4 Competition T-Ball

- 4.1 In T-Ball competition where a game result must be decided, and where time permits, a tiebreaker can be played.
- 4.2 A tie breaker consists of an additional innings of play, with each team nominating three batters and three baserunners.
- 4.3 Each team can choose their three batters and baserunners.
- 4.4 The team who fielded last will remain in the field and bat second in the tiebreaker.
- 4.5 Tiebreaker innings are played until time allowed for the game is up.
- 4.6 If at the end of a tiebreaker the game is still a tie and there is no time to play another tiebreaker innings, the game result shall be determined by a *“best of one - paper, rock, scissors”*

5 Starting each innings

- 5.1 Before each game both teams set their batting order 1st – 9th. (or adjust accordingly for different team numbers)
- 5.2 At the start of each innings the batting team sends one batter to Homeplate and 3 runners to the bases – **“Loaded Bases”**
- 5.3 In the first innings the 1st batter leads off by going to bat, at the same time the 7th, 8th and 9th batters start the game on base (or last 3 batters, depending on team numbers).
- 5.4 In the 1st inning the 7th batter starts on 3rd base, the 8th batter on 2nd base and the 9th batter on 1st base.
- 5.5 Each subsequent innings the order is rotated. For example, in the 2nd innings the 4th placed batter would lead off the batting order with the original 1st, 2nd, and 3rd order batters starting on base.
- 5.6 In the third innings the 7th batter in the order would lead off the innings while the 4th, 5th and 6th ordered batters from the original order start on base.

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- 5.7 The lowest order batter starts on 1st base each innings
- 5.8 This ensures a different player gets to lead off each innings and that each player gets to start an innings as a base runner.

6 The Tee

- 6.1 A batting tee is used to place the ball on for a batter to hit.
- 6.2 A player selected as the catcher will place the ball on the tee before each batter steps up to hit.
- 6.3 For safety, until the game coordinator calls “Play Ball” the batter cannot approach the tee or swing the bat.
- 6.4 The game coordinator will call “Play Ball” once the back stop is out of the way and all fielders and baserunners are ready.
- 6.5 The back stop should be positioned behind the tee, at least 2-3 metres away before “Play Ball” is called.
- 6.6 Batters waiting for their turn at bat should be at least 4-5 metres from the tee in case a bat is thrown accidentally by a batter on the swing.
- 6.7 Once the ball is hit and the runner takes off, the backstop may approach the tee in anticipation of a play.

7 Strike

- 7.1 A strike is determined:
 - 7.1.1 if a batter swings and misses the ball or swings and contacts the stem of the tee without connecting with the ball.
 - 7.1.2 if a foul ball is hit up to two strikes. A batter cannot be struck out on a foul; however, they can be caught out if a foul ball is caught on the full by a fielder.
 - 7.1.3 The batter is out if they swing and miss with two strikes.

8 Play Ball

- 8.1 Play starts when the game coordinator calls “Play Ball”
- 8.2 Play Ball will only be called once the ball is on the tee, the backstop is out of the way, the baserunners and fielders are all ready.

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9 Fair ball

9.1 A fair ball is a batted ball that:

- 9.1.1 Settles or is touched on or between the foul lines, between the Homeplate and 1st base, or between the Homeplate and 3rd base.
 - (a) The outside of the Homeplate is considered as part of the foul lines.
- 9.1.2 Bounds past 1st or 3rd base, on or over fair territory, regardless of where the ball hits after going over the base.
- 9.1.3 Touches 1st, 2nd, or 3rd base.
- 9.1.4 While on or over fair territory, touches the person or clothing of a fielder.
- 9.1.5 First falls on or between the foul lines beyond 1st and 3rd base.
 - (a) If a home run boundary is used, if the ball lands over the boundary line over or between the foul lines, the batter is automatically awarded a home run (they must still touch all bases).
 - (b) If a line or cones are used to mark the home run boundary, and a ball that is deemed fair bounds over the boundary, the batter is automatically awarded three bases (they must still touch all bases).

10 Foul ball

10.1 A foul ball is a batted ball that:

- 10.1.1 Settles on foul territory between the Homeplate and 1st base, or between the Homeplate and 3rd base.
- 10.1.2 Bounds past 1st or 3rd base, on or over foul territory.
- 10.1.3 First touches on foul territory beyond 1st or 3rd base.
- 10.1.4 Touches the batter or the bat in the batter's hand(s) a second time while the batter is within the batter's box.

10.2 Base runners cannot advance on a foul ball.

11 Out

11.1 The batter is out when:

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- 11.1.1 the third strike is swung at and missed
- 11.1.2 the ball is hit and caught in fair or foul territory
- 11.1.3 after receiving a warning for throwing the bat dangerously and they do it again
- 11.1.4 they do not reach the base before a fielder, who is in contact with 1st base, has possession of the ball and is in control of it.
 - (a) A batter is permitted to run through 1st base. However, if they turn and attempt to run to 2nd base and then retreat to 1st base, they will be out if a fielder has possession and control of the ball at 1st base before the batter returns to 1st base.
- 11.2 A base runner is out when:
 - 11.2.1 they do not reach the base they are attempting to reach before a fielder, who is in contact with the base that the runner is attempting to reach, has possession and control of the ball.
 - (a) If a safety zone is used at 2nd or 3rd base, a base runner must reach this zone before the fielder has the ball at the base.
 - 11.2.2 they do not reach Homeplate before a fielder, who is in contact with the Homeplate, has possession and control of the ball.
 - 11.2.3 they overrun 2nd or 3rd base and a fielder has possession and control of the ball at the base before the runner returns to the base.
 - (a) If a safety zone is used (a drawn circle around the base), a runner must return to the safety zone before a fielder has possession and control of the ball at the base.
 - 11.2.4 they attempt to slide or dive into a base (no sliding or diving permitted)
 - 11.2.5 they leave the base before the ball is hit
 - 11.2.6 they interfere with or prevent a fielder from making a play. All other runners will return to the last base held at the time of the interference.

12 Advancing bases & scoring runs

- 12.1 All base runners, when forced to do so, must run on a fair batted ball.
- 12.2 A base runner can advance on a batted ball that is caught, including a foul

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ball. There is no requirement for a base runner to tag up and wait for the ball to be caught.

- 12.3 Once a base runner has reached halfway to the next base they are running toward, they cannot turn back. If they do turn back, they are liable to be put out at the base they were attempting to reach.
- 12.4 Each time a runner makes their way around all four bases (touching each one) and safely crosses Homeplate, equals one run. For example, if there are loaded bases and the ball is hit allowing all three baserunners to make it safely home, three runs will score.
- 12.5 If the batter also makes it home, a homerun is called and all four runners score. The three runners count, plus the batter if they make around all bases and touch Homeplate.
- 12.6 If a dead ball line is used and the ball crosses the line:
 - 12.6.1 On an overthrow, base runners are awarded two bases from the time of the throw
 - (a) If two runners are between the same bases, the award is based on the position of the lead runner.
- 12.7 A fielder cannot tag a runner to make an out.
- 12.8 A base runner is awarded the base to which they are running when a fielder, not in possession of the ball and not fielding a batted ball, obstructs a base runner.

13 Calling TIME

- 13.1 A fielder can call "TIME" and hold the ball in the air while inside the infield to stop play and prevent runners from advancing.
- 13.2 Baserunners must stop if a fielder is on the infield, holds up the ball and calls "TIME". If a baserunner is past half way to the next base, they are awarded that base. If they have not made it past half way, they return to the base they came from.
- 13.3 No runners can be called out if "TIME" is called by a fielder.

14 Force plays

- 14.1 A force play occurs when there is a runner on a preceding base that is forced to run when the ball is hit by a batter. For example, at the start of the

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game the bases are loaded so there is a force play to each base including Homeplate. A force out can be made to any one of the bases.

- 14.2 If there is a runner on 1st base and the ball is hit on the ground, the runner is forced to run as the batter will soon occupy that base. You cannot have two base runners on the same base at once.
- 14.3 Force plays happen to Homeplate plate when the bases are loaded, a force out can be made at any base.
- 14.4 Force plays happen to 3rd base when there is runners on 1st and 2nd base, a force out can be made at 1st, 2nd or 3rd on the play but NOT Homeplate.
- 14.5 Force plays happen to 2nd base when there is a runner on 1st, a force out can be made at 2nd or 1st on the play but NOT 3rd or Homeplate.
- 14.6 Force plays are broken when a runner is not on one of the preceding bases. For example, if there are runners on 2nd and 3rd base but not first, when the ball is hit, the runners are not forced to run, the batter can occupy the vacant base at first.

15 Ending the game

- 15.1 The game is concluded when time runs out or the designated innings are completed (2 innings should take 30-40 minutes).
- 15.2 Players should line up to shake hands at the end of the game to demonstrate good sportsmanship.
- 15.3 Any helpers should be thanked by the two teams.
- 15.4 While some games may be competitive in nature, children should be encouraged to have fun and learn, not be concerned with winning and losing. Measures of performance should only be introduced in terms of personal growth and learning for individuals.
- 15.5 Whilst rules are documented to give the game structure, organisers should adhere to the “Game Sense” and “CHANGEIT” principles. If something can be done to improve the participants experience, ***“change the game to suit”***.