

SOFTBALL 101

Learn how to improve your game with a few simple steps brought to you by the Texas Rangers Youth Academy. Former Youth Academy athletes, current college softball stars, and Youth Academy coaches, Erin Ledesma and Gabi Quintanilla, use their years of softball experience to simplify key elements of the game.

In this lesson, Ledesma focuses on how to hit, and Quintanilla breaks down a softball pitch in a few simple steps.

To learn more about the Texas Rangers Youth Academy, follow @RangersYA on Twitter and Instagram. To register your child for free baseball and softball programming, visit texasrangers.com/academy.



HOW TO HIT



Stance

Position yourself in an athletic stance with your feet slightly wider than shoulder-width apart and knees slightly bent to establish a strong base. Keep your feet parallel with your toes pointing toward the plate. Properly grip the bat by lining up your hands with your dominant hand on top. Your fingers should be wrapped around the bat with your “door knocking knuckles” facing out.



Load

Load your swing by pulling your hands back and shifting your weight to your back foot. As you load your hands, keep your elbow up and your eyes forward. Before you strike the ball, stride forward with your front foot to time your swing and generate power.



Swing/Extension

As you watch the ball enter the strike zone, bring the knob of your bat toward the ball and swing the barrel through while keeping your head down and eyes on the ball. As you swing your barrel, extend your arms for a complete swing with more power.

To avoid pop-ups, keep your bat level. To ensure your bat is level, your top hand should have its palm facing up, while the bottom hand should have its palm facing down.



Follow Through

Maintain your balance as you swing through the ball and finish with your bat high above your head. From start to finish, the alignment of your chin will transition from your front shoulder to back shoulder as your arms, shoulders, and hips complete the swing.

SOFTBALL 101

HOW TO PITCH



Grip

In this example, you will utilize a fastball grip. Your thumb and index finger should form a C shape around the horseshoe of the ball's laces. Wrap your remaining fingers around the ball for additional control.



Stance

Stand in the pitcher's circle with one foot placed on the rubber and the other behind the rubber. If you are right-handed, your right foot should be on the rubber, and if you are left-handed, your left foot should be on the rubber.

When positioning your foot, place your heel on the rubber with your toes on the turf.



Load

As you prepare to throw your pitch, gain momentum by briefly shifting your weight to your heels before pushing off your back foot to begin your forward motion. Lean forward as you take your first step to build momentum as you step into your throwing motion.



K/Windmill

As you begin your forward step, bring your hands straight out in front of your body and continue to bring your throwing hand up, over your head, and back around as you prepare to release the ball.

As you complete your throwing motion with your forward step, your body should form a K shape with your legs, your throwing arm above your head, and your glove pointed out toward the catcher.



Follow Through

As you bring the ball around to complete your pitch, keep your elbow tight to your side and drag your back foot forward, bringing your legs together. Release the ball at your hip while snapping your wrist as it rolls off your fingertips. Make sure to keep your arm and wrist tight to your side, and refrain from releasing the ball too high or low as that can all result in a wild pitch.