

# HCYP Recreational Softball Skills Expectations

## Player Progression Softball

The progression of players will vary based on the age at which the player starts playing organized softball and the amount of time the player practices with their team and at home. The HCYP Rec levels are compared in the table below to the standard National USSSA Levels.

## Softball Progression

USSSA Levels	8U	8U	10U	10U	12U	12U	14U	14U	16U	16U	18U	18U
HCYP Rec Levels	8U		10U		13U*			14U – 17U				
AGE	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18

## Player Expectation by Age

### 8U (8 and Under)

Most children age 7 & 8 will play 8U softball. Any girl who attained the age of 7 or 8 years old on or before December 31 of the previous year is eligible to play 8U softball.

At the 8U Softball level, all games will be machine pitched for all innings. A safety ball will be used at these levels.

The primary objective at this level is to ensure that each player has a **“positive experience”** with softball, desires to play again this 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 positions)
- Uses both hands to catch the ball vs. one handed or trapped catches
- Understands where to make the defensive play
- Proper Batting position
- Proper Baserunning (ball on the ground vs. in the air)
- Good Sportsmanship (Each game should end with a handshake)

A player is ready to advance out of 8U when the player has learned the skills listed above and is starting to catch the ball with the glove “up” (at face level) as opposed to basket catches with the glove facing down. The player will be successful putting the ball in play in most machine pitched at bats. Balls thrown or hits batted at a softball player will usually result in the player making the effort to catch the ball with periodic success.

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## 10U (10 and Under)

Any girl who will attain the age of 9 or 10 years old on or before December 31 of the previous season year is eligible to play 10U Softball. Players at this level should successfully demonstrate the skills expected for graduating out of 8U. Players that are NOT able to demonstrate the skills required to graduate out of 8U may be waived back into 8U with the approval of the 8U, 10U Age Commissioners and the REC Softball Commissioner.

This division is primarily for 9 & 10 year olds who have successfully demonstrated all of the 8U Softball Skills. At 10U softball level, all games are player pitch until 2 walks are surrendered in the inning. After two walks, subsequent batters are player pitched until a 4<sup>th</sup> ball is issued. At that time the Coach of the team at bat comes in and picks up the existing count. No further walks are issued that inning.

Base stealing is introduced at 10U. During player pitch, base runners are permitted to attempt to steal 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> base once the pitched ball crosses home plate or either foul line. Stealing of home is not allowed. Stealing is also not allowed when a Coach is pitching.

It is critical that the managers and coaches of this division provide sound training and a good balance of playing time and position rotations for all players.

At 10U 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 :

- 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
- Base running (advancing beyond 1<sup>st</sup> base on balls hit to the outfield)
- Base stealing
- Batting Stance (closed, open)
- Pitching Mechanics
- Communication (calling for a fly ball)
- Backing up plays
- Pitcher Position
- Difference between a force play and a tag
- Good sportsmanship

# HCYP Recreational Softball Skills Expectations

## 13U (13 and Under)

Any girls who will attain the age of 11, 12, or 13 years old on or before December 31 of the previous season year shall be eligible to play 13U. The 13U level is both competitive and instructional with more emphasis on the competitive aspects of the game. Coaches 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 13U Level should:

- Come to time to practice and be prepared for practice or games
- Show proper batting stance, bat position, and swing execution
- Understand the Dropped 3<sup>rd</sup> Strike Rule
- Understand the Infield Fly Rule
- Reasonable competence in making contact with the ball
- Know the difference between bunting for a base hit and a sacrifice bunt
- Know Proper Baserunning Techniques
  - Exploding off the base after the ball crosses the plate
  - When to tag up vs. going half way
  - Proper sliding techniques
  - Taking a secondary lead
- 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 fielder and as a runner
- Know what can happen after a ball is caught in foul territory
- Understand the “Catch and Carry Rule”
- Use the relay man from outfield or throw home if needed
- Cover all bases and back up other players after a hit
- Always demonstrate good sportsmanship on and off the field (no bad mouthing other players)

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### 14/17U (17 and Under)

Any girls who will attain the age of 14, 15, 16, or 17 years old on or before December 31 of the previous season year shall be eligible to play 14/17U.

The 14/17U level focuses on strategy and situational plays, mastering specific positions and preparing for play at the High School level. Coaches focus on fielding a competitive team while also providing the players with a positive development/learning experience. All players are expected to have learned the skills required to compete at the 13U level. All players are ensured playing time.