

baggy-fitting clothes are best for hitting, running, sliding, catching, and throwing. Also, if your team plays during the heat of summer, recommend that players wear light-colored and lightweight fabrics.

All players should wear baseball or softball shoes with rubber cleats. The shoes should fit properly, and ^{players} players should double-tie their laces to prevent them from coming untied, which can cause a player to trip.

Batters and base runners should wear helmets at all times to protect their heads. Players in the field should either wear caps or have their hair gathered to keep it out of their eyes. A cap also helps block the sun.

A catcher must be outfitted with a mask, helmet, chest protector, and shin guards before getting behind the plate. Make sure that this protective equipment fits the catcher properly, that it is in good repair, and that the catcher knows how to put it on correctly.

Game Procedures

Softball is played in much the same way as baseball. If you are at all familiar with that sport, you should have no trouble learning the game. If you know little about either sport, here are some basic elements of softball as a foundation before you study the ASA rule book:

- A coin flip is often used to determine who is the home team (and thus bats second).

- In fast pitch, both teams must have nine players participating in the game at any one time. In addition, each team may have one designated hitter, who may substitute at bat for any player in the field. In slow pitch a tenth position, short fielder, is added to both team's roster.
- Pitchers must throw the ball underhand, with a very small arc in fast pitch, and a 6 to 12 foot arc in slow pitch (see Figure 6.3).
- Each batter is allowed a maximum of 3 strikes or 4 balls. Many slow pitch leagues start each batter at a 1-1 count.
- A batter makes an out by striking out (3 strikes), grounding out (the ball touches the ground before being caught and is thrown to first base before the batter arrives), or flying out (the ball is caught by a fielder before it touches the ground).
- A batter gets on base by getting a walk (4 balls or hit by a pitch), getting a hit (hitting the ball where the defense cannot catch it or cannot relay it to first base before the batter arrives), or because of an error by the defense.
- A base runner cannot leave a base until the pitcher releases the ball.
- The offensive team hits until it makes 3 outs.
- An inning is completed when both teams have made 3 outs.
- A run is scored if an offensive player

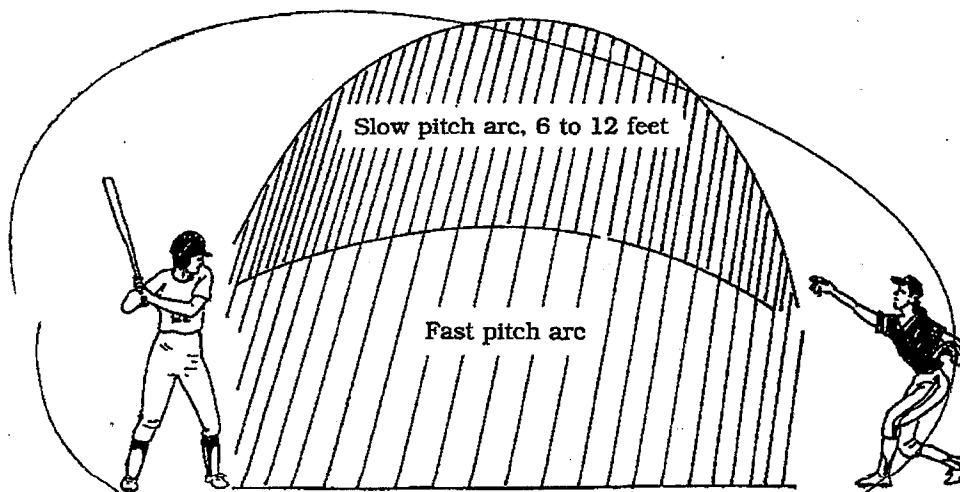


Figure 6.3 The arc of the ball in slow pitch versus fast pitch.