

**Softball** is a game [similar](#) to [baseball](#) played with a larger ball on a smaller field, with only underhand pitches (where the ball is released while the hand is primarily below the ball) permitted. Softball is played competitively at club levels, the college level, and the [professional level](#). The game was first created in 1887 in [Chicago](#) by [George Hancock](#).

There are two rule sets for softball generally: *slow pitch softball* and [fastpitch](#). Slow pitch softball is commonly played recreationally, while women's fastpitch softball is a [Summer Olympic sport](#) and is [played professionally](#).

Depending on the variety being played and the age and gender of the players, the particulars of the field and equipment vary. While distances between bases of 60 feet are standard across varieties, the pitcher's plate ranges from 35 to 43 feet away from home plate, and the home run fence can be 220 to 300 feet away from home plate.<sup>[1]</sup> The ball itself is typically 11 or 12 inches (28 or 30 centimetres) in circumference, also depending on specifics of the competition.

Softball rules vary somewhat from those of baseball. The game moves at a faster pace than traditional baseball due to the field being smaller and the bases and the fielders being closer to home plate. Softball is pitched underhand from flat ground, with fastpitch using a windmill arm motion, while baseball is pitched overhand from a small hill called a mound, which changes the flight of the pitch. Additionally, the entire infield of a softball diamond is dirt, without grass around the pitcher's plate.