



BSF REQUIREMENTS FOR UNDER-18s IN SOFTBALL PLAY

In 2012, the BSF Executive published minimum requirements that must be met in order for young people aged under 18 to play, coach, or umpire in adult softball teams, whether slowpitch or fastpitch. A vote at the BSF AGM in February 2013 made these requirements mandatory rather than voluntary.

These requirements remain in force and are set out below. However, the section on **Equipment Requirements** at the end of this paper has now been extended to cover Under-18 players playing in youth competitions as well as adult competitions.

Introduction

Everyone who participates in softball is entitled to do so in a fun, enjoyable and safe environment. These principles apply to all participants, but young people in particular are entitled to a higher duty of care.

The requirements below should be read in conjunction with BSUK Child Protection and Safeguarding policies and procedures, which are in place to protect young participants and promote good practice (see: <https://www.baseballsoftballuk.com/safeguarding>).

To encourage the continued development of best practice, the British Softball Federation has produced requirements for slowpitch and fastpitch leagues and clubs when considering whether young people under 18 years of age are competent to play in an adult team or to coach or officiate in an adult game.

While no minimum age is given in this guidance, the younger the player, the more rigorous the assessment of competence needs to be.

These requirements are minimum standards to be followed by all BSF-affiliated teams, whether competing in local leagues, in tournaments, or internationally. Teams, leagues, and tournaments can introduce additional requirements governing the participation of young players on adult teams as they see fit.

Safeguarding Requirements

- Each team with under-18 players shall appoint a Safeguarding Officer who will ensure that the appropriate safeguarding procedures and checks are followed and that there is a process in place to assess whether a young player is competent to play, umpire or coach at the level at which the team is competing.
- Each player who is under 18 shall be assessed for this purpose by the Team Coach. If the team does not have a nominated coach, the Team Captain shall undertake the assessment. Where the Coach or Captain is under 18, an authorised club member or BASU member shall make the assessment.
- Four areas shall be considered when deciding if a young player is competent to take part in an adult team or game:
 - General physical capability.
 - Social development.
 - Emotional development.
 - Softball skills and ability.
- A brief record of the player's name, date of the assessment, competency for all or specified positions and any observations or comments shall be made in the Team Coach's notebook.
- The young person's parent or guardian shall complete a Permission to Play form in all cases where the young person is competing with an adult team or taking part in an adult game. A sample form can be found on the BSUK website at: <http://www.baseballsoftballuk.com/resources/download/permissionform>. If a parent / guardian is unfamiliar with softball, a club representative shall explain the risks of the sport to them. The completed form shall be retained by the Team Captain.
- The Team Captain must ensure the young person is included on the team roster and is therefore covered by BSF Civil and Public Liability insurance, and by Personal Accident and Injury insurance if taken out by the team.
- The team shall arrange regular training and coaching sessions which young players should attend in order to progress their softball development and skills.
- The Team Coach or Captain shall review a young player's competence to continue playing should game conditions change – for example, due to adverse weather, a change in the level of play, or the conduct or aggressiveness of the opposing team.
- If an Umpire is unsure about the competence of a young player, he or she shall make his concerns known to the Team Captain.

Equipment Requirements

(now extended to cover Under-18s playing in youth as well as adult competition)

- Players under the age of 18 shall wear a helmet with a built-in faceguard when batting and baserunning in slowpitch as well as in fastpitch softball. Also, in accordance with WBSC rules, all players under 18 who are coaching, umpiring or acting as batboys or batgirls shall wear a helmet with a faceguard when on the field.

- Young players shall wear a gum shield if playing in any position in the infield in either fastpitch or slowpitch.
- Young players must wear a catcher's mask or some form of faceguard if playing at the positions of pitcher, catcher, first base, or third base in both slowpitch and fastpitch softball.
- The above equipment requirements can only be waived on the basis of an express written request from a player's parent or guardian based on medical considerations. Any other reasons given for a player not wearing the equipment will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
- Young players shall wear appropriate sports footwear.

- The Team Coach or Captain shall review a young player's competence to continue playing should game conditions change – for example, due to adverse weather, a change in the level of play or the conduct or aggressiveness of the opposing team.
- If an Umpire is unsure about the competence of a young player, he or she shall make his concerns known to the Team Captain.

Advice and compliance

If a team requires assistance in assessing players 18 and under, it should first seek advice from its local league.

Should further support be required, please contact BSUK Safeguarding Officer Mark Caress on mark.caress@bsuk.com or BSF Safeguarding Officer Stella Ackrell on stellaackrell@yahoo.co.uk.

Each team using under-18 players in adult competition is responsible for ensuring it complies with these requirements.

If a team is not following the requirements, the team's club or league, as appropriate, should resolve the issues with the team's Captain and Coach. If this is not possible, then the matter should be referred to the BSF Executive through BSF Administrator Bob Fromer on: bob.fromer@britishsoftball.org.