

## **Spearfish Youth Softball Association**

### **2026 Coaching Expectations**

The Spearfish Youth Softball Association (SYSA) is committed to providing a positive, development-focused softball experience for all players. Coaching expectations are designed to promote age-appropriate growth, balanced teams, and long-term player development across all divisions.

#### **All SYSA coaches are expected to:**

- Provide age-appropriate instruction focused on skill development and building confidence
  - Create a positive and respectful team environment
  - Encourage constant communication
    - Offense: All players actively engaged and cheering
    - Defense: Players communicating on every play; bench is standing & engaged
  - Emphasize sportsmanship and positive behavior
  - Promote being a good teammate and developing leadership skills
  - Follow SYSA guidelines for active, engaging, and development-focused practices
  - Ensure all players receive equivalent reps in practices and games
  - Support balanced teams and long-term player development over short-term results
  - Balance fun and competitiveness, especially at younger levels
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### **Division Emphasis by Age Group**

**6U** – Introduction to softball through fun, movement, basic skills, and confidence building.

**8U** – Learning fundamentals, teamwork, and enjoying the game. A strong mix of fun, movement, and positive competition is essential.

**10U** – Refining skills, learning game situations, building confidence, and developing consistency through repetition.

**12U** – Advancing skills, understanding strategy, building responsibility, and leadership development.

**14U & 16U** – Higher-level play focused on consistency, teamwork, accountability, and leadership.

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### **6U Division – Introduction to Softball**

**Primary Focus:** Fun, safety, basic movement skills, confidence, and love of the game

#### **Coaching Expectations:**

- Create a safe, positive, and energetic environment
- Focus on basic skills: throwing, catching, hitting off a tee, and base running
- Teach simple softball rules and sportsmanship

- Encourage cheering and teammate communication
- Rotate players through all positions and ensure equal participation
- Keep practices simple and engaging

**Development Philosophy:**

At 6U, development is about confidence, coordination, and enjoyment. Players are best served by learning alongside peers of the same age.

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**8U Division – Foundational Skill Development**

**Primary Focus:** Skill-building, teamwork, positive softball experience, and understanding game flow

**Coaching Expectations:**

- Teach proper throwing, catching, hitting, and base running techniques
- Introduce pitching fundamentals and defensive positioning
- Teach sportsmanship, team concepts and communication
- Encourage players to support teammates vocally and positively
- Rotate players through all positions to support overall development
- Prioritize effort and learning over wins and losses

**Development Philosophy:**

A positive experience is critical at 8U. When players are learning, encouraged, and having fun, they stay engaged and motivated.

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**10U Division – Skill Refinement and Game Awareness**

**Primary Focus:** Improving softball fundamentals and introducing competitive concepts

**Coaching Expectations:**

- Refine pitching, catching, hitting mechanics, throwing, and defensive skills
- Introduce situational awareness (force plays, cutoffs, base coverage)
- Provide the right mix of instruction, competition, and fun
- Reinforce communication and positive team energy
- Encourage accountability and leadership behaviors
- Ensure players receive equivalent reps in practices and games
- Continue position rotation while identifying developing strengths

**Development Philosophy:**

10U players need a strong, positive experience that builds confidence and skill. Consistent reps and encouragement within their age group lead to long-term growth and success.

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**12U Division – Competitive Development and Responsibility**

**Primary Focus:** Advanced fundamentals, decision-making, and team responsibility

**Coaching Expectations:**

- Advance pitching and catching skills, including pitch variety and game management
- Develop situational hitting and advanced defensive strategies
- Emphasize communication, composure, and accountability
- Encourage leadership and being a positive teammate
- Ensure players receive equivalent reps in practices and games
- Continue position rotation while identifying developing strengths
- Prepare players for the increased pace and expectations of upper divisions

**Development Philosophy:**

Development and opportunity should remain balanced across the roster. Moving players up can limit leadership opportunities for others and is only considered under exceptional circumstances.

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**14U & 16U Division – Performance, Leadership, and Team Dynamics**

**Primary Focus:** Higher-level play focused on consistency, teamwork, accountability, and leadership.

**Coaching Expectations:**

- Refine advanced offensive and defensive strategies
- Emphasize mental preparation, consistency, and resilience
- Foster strong communication and positive team culture
- Hold players accountable for effort, attitude, and preparation
- Develop leaders who model effort, respect, and teamwork
- Begin more defined positional roles while continuing to provide player development opportunities

**Development Philosophy:**

14U & 16U players refine skills, leadership, and game IQ. Balanced teams and defined roles support both individual growth and program stability. Coaches should prioritize developing depth and confidence across the roster rather than accelerating individual advancement.