

# How to Choose the Correct Fastpitch Softball Glove



Softball gloves, designed to assist a player in catching softballs while protecting a player's hand from the impact of the ball, are larger and longer than baseball gloves to accommodate the larger size of a softball. Today's softball gloves incorporate modern technology and tend to be highly specialized tools capable of enhancing a player's performance.

Softball gloves are available in an abundance of styles and brands. Consider the position and level of play the glove will be used for when choosing a softball glove. Most importantly, if you know how to find a glove that fits well and is the proper size for the player, you will be on your way to finding a game-winning glove.

## Construction of Softball Gloves

At first glance most softball gloves seem to be remarkably similar in construction. However, each softball glove is comprised of three major design elements that work together to build a glove with unique capabilities. Softball gloves are made up of the following parts.

### Heel

Padded palm area connected to a padded lower portion

### Webbing

The webbing connects the thumb of the glove to the fingers, and comes in two distinct designs: open and closed. Open web gloves feature leather loosely woven into a cross pattern with spacing wide enough to see through. This open design gives players better visibility when catching pop flies and allows for faster ball transfers to the throwing hand. Softball gloves with a closed design use a tightly woven pattern of leather to create a strong, solid web that gives added stability and support when catching.

### Pocket

The indentation in the palm of a softball glove is called the pocket. Once caught, the ball rests here until the player retrieves it. Whether a pocket is shallow or deep has an impact not only on the player's hold on the ball, but on how long it takes the player to transfer the ball to her throwing hand. A deeper pocket is preferred for catching fly balls and hard hit shots, while shallow pockets are better for making fast plays.

### **Catchers**

To prevent injury and enhance performance, catchers require specialized catcher's mitts. With heavier padding and thicker leather than even a first baseman's mitt, catcher's mitts offer maximum protection for a demanding position. Catcher's mitts are wide, rounded, and have shallow pockets. These features help the catcher block pitches that land in the dirt and make fast transfers for quicker throws. When considering sizes for catcher's mitts, bear in mind that mitts are sized by circumference rather than length. Adult mitts are generally 32 inches and above, while youth mitts are under 32 inches.

### **Glove Sizing and Length**

Softball gloves come in an array of sizes and styles. Finding the right size glove means choosing one that fits both the player's hand and position. Since younger players typically have smaller hands, they need smaller gloves to be able to control both glove and ball effectively. In general, teenagers and adults have larger hands and can therefore wear a larger glove. Outfielders typically use longer gloves than infielders. Fastpitch softball gloves are designed with shorter, narrower fingers to better fit women's hands.

### **Right Handed or Left Handed Glove**

In order to keep a player's dominant hand ready to retrieve and throw the ball, softball gloves are designed to be worn on the non-dominant hand. A player who throws with the left hand should wear a glove on the right hand. Be aware that a glove that fits on a player's right hand is sometimes called a "left hand thrower," while a glove that fits on a player's left hand is called a "right hand thrower." Occasionally a glove may be referred to as a "full right," which is another term for a left hand thrower, or a glove that fits a player's right hand.

### **Sizing A Softball Glove**

In order to maintain control over the ball a player needs to be able to properly open and close the glove around the ball and to keep the glove from falling off the hand. The key factor in a player's ability to effectively use her glove is the glove length. A youth glove should not extend more than one inch beyond the tip of the player's fingers. Any more than this and the player will not be able catch the ball properly. For high school players and adult players, it is recommended that an infielder's glove extend no more than 1 ½ inches beyond the tip of the fingers, and an outfielder's glove should be no more than 3 inches beyond this point. First basemen and catchers should keep gloves to around 1 inch past the fingertips to maintain a greater amount of control. Also, catchers need to be certain their softball mitts are designed with a distinct type of hinge, specifically for softball and more flexible than the hinge on a baseball catcher's mitt.

### Length Guidelines for Softball Gloves

The table below gives recommended glove sizes, in inches, according to the age, gender, and position of the player.

Age	Infield	Outfield	Catcher
Under 8 years	9"-10.5"	10"-11.5"	31"
9 - 13 Years	10.5"-11.5"	11.5"-12.5"	31"
Over 13 Years	11.75"-12.5"	12.75"-14"	32"

Keep in mind that these are only guidelines.

### Getting a Good Fit

Field position and the size of a player's hand are the two most critical factors in selecting a softball glove. Proper fit is essential for a player to maintain control of the glove and the ball. A softball glove should fit snugly, and a player should be able to easily open and close the glove around the ball. A glove should be stiff enough to stop a ball while remaining flexible enough to allow for quick retrievals and throws. A player should try on several models to find one that feels comfortable and is easy to open and close.