

Selecting a Baseball & Softball Bat

Baseball is one of the most popular and competitive sports in the world. With this status, comes the need for the right equipment and training for that skillful edge. Selecting a baseball bat is an individual choice, but it doesn't have to be complicated. There are a few factors to consider for finding the perfect bat. Whichever one you choose, make sure it adheres to league requirements for your division. Check with your coach or local league association for details.

The true athlete is the prepared athlete and Dick's Sporting Goods is dedicated to winning with all levels of athletes. Even the pros understand the importance of superior equipment. This tool will help with an understanding of bat construction, bat materials and establish which league you are in to find bats for your level of play.

Links to Bat Information by Player			
Youth	Adult	Fastpitch	Slow Pitch
Bat Materials	Bat Materials	Bat Materials	Bat Materials
Regulations	Regulations	Regulations	Regulations
Frequently Asked Questions			

Covering the Basics

Understanding Bat Construction

Even in America's oldest pastime, enhanced craftsmanship is vital. Dick's Sporting Goods, is constantly doing research to find the perfect blend between improved features and technologies, while staying true to sports traditions and rich histories.



Barrel Size

- The measurement of the diameter around the bat.
- Generally, the longer the barrel the larger the "sweet spot" for making substantial contact.

- Many players prefer a smaller barrel diameter that lightens the weight and provides more swing speed.
 - Barrel size varies by league.

Grip

- The grip is simply the covering that bat manufacturers use on the handle of aluminum, wood and composite bats.
 - Rubber grips absorb more of the shock when the ball makes contact with the bat.
 - Leather or synthetic leather grips give a strengthened feel for a more confident grip.
 - Some bats come with a special cushioned grip to decrease bat vibration even more.

Drop

- Also known as a bat's length-to-weight ratio or a bat's minus (-) number, i.e. -3, -5, -10, etc.
- Defined as a negative number denoting the amount of ounces the bat weighs less than the amount of inches its length. Basically stated, it's the difference between the weight of the bat minus the length of the bat.
 - Wood bats and Slow Pitch bats are not identified with a drop.
- Different leagues have different drops legal for play. Check with your coach or local league.

Selecting a Bat by Age or by Length and Weight

Selecting the correct bat weight really depends on two critical factors: your strength and hitting style. It also depends a lot on your personal preference in weight and length, so the following are simply guidelines to follow:

- Bigger, stronger players generally prefer a heavier bat since they get the benefits of substantial swing power and ball-carrying distance.
- Smaller players looking more for groundball hitting through the infield should consider a lighter bat to generate a quicker swing.
- Younger players should think about starting out with a lighter bat, where they can practice their stance, batting form, and running out base hits.

BY AGE:

YOUR AGE	BAT LENGTH
5-7 YEARS	24" - 26"
8-9 YEARS	26" - 28"
10 YEARS	28" - 29"
11-12 YEARS	30" - 31"
13-14 YEARS	31" - 32"
15-16 YEARS	32" - 33"
17+ YEARS	34"

BY HEIGHT & WEIGHT:

WEIGHT (POUNDS)	HEIGHT (INCHES)										
	< 36	36-40	41-44	45-48	49-52	53-56	57-60	61-64	65-68	69-72	73+
< 60	24-25"	26"	27"	28"	29"	29"					
61-70		27"	27"	28"	29"	30"	30"				
71-80			28"	28"	29"	30"	30"	31"			
81-90			28"	29"	29"	30"	30"	31"	32"		
91-100			28"	29"	30"	30"	31"	31"	32"		
101-110			29"	29"	30"	30"	31"	31"	32"		
111-120			29"	29"	30"	30"	31"	31"	32"		
121-130			29"	29"	30"	30"	31"	32"	33"	33"	
131-140			29"	30"	30"	31"	31"	32"	33"	33"	
141-150				30"	30"	31"	31"	32"	33"	33"	
151-160				30"	31"	31"	32"	32"	33"	33"	33"
161-170					31"	31"	32"	32"	33"	33"	34"
171-180							32"	33"	33"	34"	34"
180+								33"	33"	34"	34"

YOUTH BATS

When searching for the perfect bat, size matters. This is also an important step for promoting player safety. Youths starting out in the game need to be able to work on their form, technique, and batting stance. To do this, it's important to tailor the bat to fit their specific needs.

Tips for Beginners

- Lightweight alloy bats increase the size of the "sweet spot" on the barrel that allows for solid contact.
 - A starting player needs to learn to hit close to the "sweet spot."
 - Go for a lighter bat to maintain bat speed, which is top priority in hitting.
 - Have a light enough bat to swing with enough bat speed to hit the ball powerfully.
 - If they cannot hold the bat for 20 seconds without the arm starting to shake, it's too heavy.
- You'll see right away which ones are too small, too big, or too heavy. If your youth needs to slide his hands up from the knob end of the bat to give him more control, then go to the next inch-size down.
- It's the younger players who need more guidance to ensure they're swinging the right bat for their size, strength, and skill level.

Understanding Bat Materials for Youth Bats

Dick's Sporting Goods carries a vast assortment of brands, each with their own technologies, unique characteristics, and advantages for today's players. We are here to help you achieve success through passion for sports and our focus on performance, not trends.

Composite:

- Industry leading technology provides the best balance and largest sweet spot among all bat categories
 - Make sure to review your league bat regulations to determine legality of composite bats
 - Offer seamless balance and a controlled swinging motion

Performance alloy:

- Stronger alloys allow for thinner bat walls and improved "pop" off of the bat
 - Material is strategically placed for a more balanced feel

- A larger sweet spot than basic alloy bats
 - Thinner alloys are more susceptible to cold weather damage

Basic alloy:

- Slightly softer alloy than performance alloy bats - that require thicker bat walls to maintain durability.
 - A consistent, mid-performance bat

Wood:

- Usually made of maple, ash, bamboo, or composite wood materials
 - The quality of the wood can determine the life of the bat
 - Required in some leagues
 - Wood bats authentic feel and sound is unparalleled
- Provides more ability for a customized swing and correct batting form

Youth League Regulations

AGES 5-6			
	Barrel Size	Alloy Barrel Approved / Drop	Composite Barrel Approved / Drop
Little League: T-Ball	2-1/4"	Approved	Check your local league's waiver approved list
		-9 through -12	-9 through -12
Pony: Shetland	2-1/4" & 2-5/8"	Approved	Approved
		-5 through -12	-5 through -12
Babe Ruth: Cal Ripken	2-1/4"	Approved	Approved
		-9 through -12	-9 through -12
Dixie: A	2-1/4"	Approved	Check your local league's waiver approved list
		-9 through -12	-9 through -12
Dizzy Dean	2-1/4", 2-5/8" & 2-3/4"	Approved	Approved
		-5 through -12	-5 through -12
USSSA	2-5/8" & 2-3/4"	with USSSA stamp	with USSSA stamp
		-5 through -12	-5 through -12
	2-1/4"	Approved, "Do not require new stamp in 2012"	Approved, "Do not require new stamp in 2012"
		-9 through -12	-9 through -12

AGES 7-8			
	Barrel Size	Alloy Barrel Approved / Drop	Composite Barrel Approved / Drop
Little League: Minor	2-1/4"	Approved	Check your local league's waiver approved list
		-9 through -12	-9 through -12
Pony: Pinto	2-1/4" & 2-5/8"	Approved	Approved
		-5 through -12	-5 through -12
Babe Ruth: Cal Ripken	2-1/4"	Approved	Approved
		-9 through -12	-9 through -12
Dixie: AA	2-1/4"	Approved	Check your local league's waiver approved list
		-9 through -12	-9 through -12
Dizzy Dean	2-1/4", 2-5/8" & 2-3/4"	Approved	Approved
		-5 through -12	-5 through -12
USSSA	2-5/8" & 2-3/4"	with USSSA stamp	with USSSA stamp
		-5 through -12	-5 through -12
	2-1/4"	Approved, "Do not require new stamp in 2012"	Approved, "Do not require new stamp in 2012"
		-9 through -12	-9 through -12

AGES 9-10			
	Barrel Size	Alloy Barrel Approved / Drop	Composite Barrel Approved / Drop
Little League: Minor	2-1/4"	Approved	Check your local league's waiver approved list
		-9 through -12	-9 through -12
Pony: Mustang	2-1/4" & 2-5/8"	Approved	Approved
		-5 through -12	-5 through -12
Babe Ruth: Cal Ripken	2-1/4"	Approved	Approved
		-9 through -12	-9 through -12
Dixie: AAA	2-1/4"	Approved	Check your local league's waiver approved list
		-9 through -12	-9 through -12
Dizzy Dean	2-1/4", 2-5/8" & 2-3/4"	Approved	Approved
		-5 through -12	-5 through -12
USSSA	2-5/8" & 2-3/4"	with USSSA stamp	with USSSA stamp
		-5 through -12	-5 through -12
	2-1/4"	Approved, "Do not require new stamp in 2012"	Approved, "Do not require new stamp in 2012"
		-9 through -12	-9 through -12

AGES 11-12			
	Barrel Size	Alloy Barrel Approved / Drop	Composite Barrel Approved / Drop
Little League: Major or LL	2-1/4"	Approved	Check your local league's waiver approved list
		-9 through -12	-9 through -12
Pony: Bronco	2-1/4" & 2-5/8"	Approved	Approved
		-5 through -12	-5 through -12
Babe Ruth: Cal Ripken	2-1/4"	Approved	Approved
		-9 through -12	-9 through -12
Dixie: Majors	2-1/4"	Approved	Check your local league's waiver approved list
		-9 through -12	-9 through -12
Dixie: The "O" Zone	2-5/8"	Approved	Approved
		-5 through -12	-5 through -12
Dizzy Dean	2-1/4", 2-5/8" & 2-3/4"	Approved	Approved
		-5 through -12	-5 through -12
USSSA	2-5/8" & 2-3/4"	with USSSA Stamp	with USSSA Stamp
		-5 through -12	-5 through -12
	2-1/4"	Approved, "Do not require new stamp in 2012"	Approved, "Do not require new stamp in 2012"
		-9 through -12	-9 through -12

AGES 13-14			
	Barrel Size	Alloy Barrel Approved / Drop	Composite Barrel Approved / Drop
Little League: Junior	2-5/8"	Approved	Must be -3 BBCOR
		-5 through -12 (-3 must be BBCOR)	Must be -3 BBCOR
Pony: Pony	2-5/8"	Approved	Approved
		-5 through -12 (-3 must be BBCOR)	-5 through -12 (-3 must be BBCOR)
Babe Ruth: Babe Ruth	2-5/8"	Approved	Must be -3 BBCOR
		-5 through -12 (-3 must be BBCOR)	Must be -3 BBCOR
Dixie: Boys	2-5/8"	Approved	Approved
		-5 through -12 (-3 must be BBCOR)	-5 through -12 (-3 must be BBCOR)
Dizzy Dean	2-5/8"	Must be -3 BBCOR	Must be -3 BBCOR
		Must be -3 BBCOR	Must be -3 BBCOR
USSSA	2-5/8"	with USSSA stamp unless -3 BBCOR	Must be -3 BBCOR
		-5 through -12 (-3 must be BBCOR)	Must be -3 BBCOR
	2-1/4"	Approved "Do not require new stamp in 2012"	Approved "Do not require new stamp in 2012"
		-9 through -12	-9 through -12
NFHS	2-5/8"	Must be -3 BBCOR	Must be -3 BBCOR
		Must be -3 BBCOR	Must be -3 BBCOR

All league regulation standards are subject to change.

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ADULT BATS



If you're playing at the NFHS or NCAA level, you will need a BBCOR-certified bat. As of last January 1, 2011, NCAA schools began requiring bats to meet BBCOR-testing standards instead of the BESR standards in place since 1999. Effective January 1, 2012, the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) is also making the switch, requiring all -3 baseball bats to meet BBCOR certification standards and display a BBCOR-certified logo.

Leveling the Playing Field

It used to be that the game of baseball was only played with wooden bats, which lent to bats having the same or very similar performance factors. With the emergence of the metal bat era, and as new bat construction and technology has developed, the playing field has become uneven. BBCOR testing is a move to make all aluminum and composite bats have the same performance standards. This will improve game play with a better balance between offense and defense. It is also expected to address safety concerns that have become more prevalent during the metal bat era. Ultimately, the goal is to return to the purity of the game.

BBCOR (Batted Ball Coefficient of Restitution)

Testing analyzes the "trampoline effect" of the ball during the one millisecond when it meets the bat. More specifically, it measures the loss of energy at collision, or how much the ball compresses when the ball makes contact. BBCOR certified bats greatly reduce the trampoline effect of the batted ball. Now, according to the new standards, if the trampoline effect of the bat exceeds the BBCOR .50 limit, that bat is deemed illegal for game play. These standards are intended to provide increased uniformity in bat performance.

Understanding Bat Materials for Adult Bats

Composite:

- Industry leading technology provides the best balance and largest sweet spot among all bat categories.
 - Seamless balance and a controlled swinging motion
- When making contact with the ball outside of the sweet spot, the bat vibrates less in your hands
 - Lighter weight which increases a player's swing speed for the contact hitter

Performance alloy:

- Stronger alloys allow for thinner bat walls and improved "pop" off of the bat
 - Material is strategically placed for a more balanced feel
 - A larger sweet spot than basic alloy bats for the power hitter
 - Double-layer bats offer more durability and power

Basic alloy:

- Slightly softer alloy than performance alloy bats. Requires thicker bat walls to maintain durability
 - High-quality resilience for a long bat life span

Wood:

- Great batting cage and training bats
 - Wood bats authentic feel and sound is unparalleled
 - Provides more ability for a customized swing and correct batting form
- Usually made of maple, bamboo, ash or composite wood materials. Special features of the most popular types of wood bats:

- Maple: a high density wood providing power, maximized balance, and ease of handling, made from close-grained timber which increases durability, closed pores compress the wood to make it harder.
- Bamboo: a high density wood for power and balance, features a cupped end making it lighter for quicker and more powerful swings, exceptional durability and offering superior strength and moisture control.
- Ash: tends to flex rather than break providing a larger sweet spot, thin handle provides an extremely balanced and lightweight bat for the wider range of large barrel models.
 - Walnut: offer a better grip, superior strength and excellent durability.

Adult League Regulations

AGES 13-14			
	Barrel Size	Alloy Barrel Approved / Drop	Composite Barrel Approved / Drop
Little League: Junior	2-5/8"	Approved	Must be -3 BBCOR
		-5 through -12 (-3 must be BBCOR)	Must be -3 BBCOR
Pony: Pony	2-5/8"	Approved	Approved
		-5 through -12 (-3 must be BBCOR)	-5 through -12 (-3 must be BBCOR)
Babe Ruth: Babe Ruth	2-5/8"	Approved	Must be -3 BBCOR
		-5 through -12 (-3 must be BBCOR)	Must be -3 BBCOR
Dixie: Boys	2-5/8"	Approved	Approved
		-5 through -12 (-3 must be BBCOR)	-5 through -12 (-3 must be BBCOR)
Dizzy Dean	2-5/8"	Must be -3 BBCOR	Must be -3 BBCOR
		Must be -3 BBCOR	Must be -3 BBCOR
USSSA	2-5/8"	with USSSA stamp unless -3 BBCOR	Must be -3 BBCOR
		-5 through -12 (-3 must be BBCOR)	Must be -3 BBCOR
	2-1/4"	Approved "Do not require new stamp in 2012" -9 through -12	Approved "Do not require new stamp in 2012" -9 through -12
NFHS	2-5/8"	Must be -3 BBCOR	Must be -3 BBCOR
		Must be -3 BBCOR	Must be -3 BBCOR

AGES 15-16			
	Barrel Size	Alloy Barrel Approved / Drop	Composite Barrel Approved / Drop
Little League: Senior	2-5/8"	Must be -3 BBCOR	Must be -3 BBCOR
		Must be -3 BBCOR	Must be -3 BBCOR
Pony: Colt	2-5/8"	Approved	Approved
		-5 through -12 (-3 must be BBCOR)	-5 through -12 (-3 must be BBCOR)
Babe Ruth: Babe Ruth	2-5/8"	Approved	Must be -3 BBCOR
		-5 through -12 (-3 must be BBCOR)	Must be -3 BBCOR
Dixie: Pre-Majors	2-5/8"	Must be -3 BBCOR	Must be -3 BBCOR
		Must be -3 BBCOR	Must be -3 BBCOR
Dizzy Dean	2-5/8"	Must be -3 BBCOR	Must be -3 BBCOR
		Must be -3 BBCOR	Must be -3 BBCOR
USSSA	2-5/8"	Must be -3 BBCOR	Must be -3 BBCOR
		Must Be -3 BBCOR	Must be -3 BBCOR
NFHS: JV	2-5/8"	Must be -3 BBCOR	Must be -3 BBCOR
		Must be -3 BBCOR	Must be -3 BBCOR

AGES 17-18			
	Barrel Size	Alloy Barrel Approved / Drop	Composite Barrel Approved / Drop
Little League: Big League	2-5/8"	Must be -3 BBCOR	Must be -3 BBCOR
		Must be -3 BBCOR	Must be -3 BBCOR
Pony: Palomino	2-5/8"	Approved	Approved
		-5 through -12 (-3 must be BBCOR)	-5 through -12 (-3 must be BBCOR)
Babe Ruth: Babe Ruth	2-5/8"	Must be -3 BBCOR	Must be -3 BBCOR
		Must be -3 BBCOR	Must be -3 BBCOR
Dixie: Majors	2-5/8"	Must be -3 BBCOR	Must be -3 BBCOR
		Must be -3 BBCOR	Must be -3 BBCOR
Dizzy Dean	2-5/8"	Must be -3 BBCOR	Must be -3 BBCOR
		Must be -3 BBCOR	Must be -3 BBCOR
USSSA	2-5/8"	Must be -3 BBCOR	Must be -3 BBCOR
		Must Be -3 BBCOR	Must be -3 BBCOR
NFHS: Varsity	2-5/8"	Must be -3 BBCOR	Must be -3 BBCOR
		Must be -3 BBCOR	Must be -3 BBCOR
NCAA: College	2-5/8"	Must be -3 BBCOR	Must be -3 BBCOR
		Must be -3 BBCOR	Must be -3 BBCOR

All league regulation standards are subject to change.

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SOFTBALL BATS

Despite the game's name, the standard softball is not soft; in fact, it is harder than a baseball. Fastpitch softball bats are designed for quick and compact swings, while Slow Pitch bats are designed for slower-moving swings to enhance their "pop" off the bat.

FASTPITCH BATS

Women can play the Fastpitch and Slow Pitch game, while men's softball is primarily Slow Pitch. The Fastpitch game is one of speed and quickness. For those snap decisions in the batters box you need a strong and fast swing for consistent contact. The bat you choose should be long enough to cover the width of the strike zone, but also light enough to swing comfortably.

Understanding Bat Materials for Fastpitch Bats

Composite:

- Industry leading technology provides the best balance and largest sweet spot among all bat categories
 - Make sure to review your leagues bat regulations to determine legality of composite bats
 - Composite bats may be susceptible to cold weather damage
 - Available in single and double wall constructions
 - Seamless balance and a controlled swinging motion
 - The best blend composite materials with other various types of alloys

Basic alloy:

- Slightly softer than performance alloy bats
- Requires thicker bat walls to maintain durability
- Consistent stability and performance bat

Fastpitch League Regulations

WOMEN'S FASTPITCH LEAGUE REGULATIONS		
	Amateur Softball Association (ASA)	National Softball Association (ASA)
Barrel Size	2-1/4"	2-1/4"
Alloy Approved	Yes	Yes
Composite Approved	Yes	Yes

All league regulation standards are subject to change.

Click here to shop our great selection of [Fastpitch Bats](#).

SLOW PITCH BATS

The Slow Pitch game is known for those high-arching pitches thrown to batters. Success comes down to proper timing and the right size bat. A lighter bat is recommended for smaller and younger players, while a heavier bat is suggested for larger and more experienced players.

Understanding Bat Materials for Slow Pitch Bats

Composite:

- Industry leading technology provides the best balance and largest sweet spot among all bat categories
 - Make sure to review your leagues bat regulations to determine legality of composite bats
 - Composite bats may be susceptible to cold weather damage
 - Available in single and double wall constructions
 - Seamless balance and a controlled swinging motion

Performance Alloy:

- Stronger alloys allow for thinner bat walls and improved "pop" off of the bat
 - Material is strategically placed for a more balanced feel
 - A larger sweet spot than basic alloy bats
 - Available in single and double wall constructions

Basic Alloy:

- Slightly softer alloy than performance alloy bats
- Requires thicker bat walls to maintain durability
 - Consistent stability and performance bat

Slow Pitch League Regulations

MEN'S SLOW PITCH LEAGUE REGULATIONS	
Amateur Softball Association (ASA)	Requires a barrel size of 2-1/4" and a multiwall or composite bats are approved. Check with your local association for details.
Recreation Leagues	Some recreation leagues do not allow composite. Check with your local association for details.
Competitive Recreation Leagues	Allow any ASA bat. Most bats are multiwall composite USSSA bats (also known as "Utrip" bats) with a barrel designed to allow the ball to come off the barrel faster than 100 mph. <i>These bats are not ASA approved. Check with your local association for details.</i>

All league regulation standards are subject to change.

Click here to shop our great selection of [Slow Pitch Bats](#).

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What does the Minus mean? (Examples: -12, -8, -5). Always a minus number, it refers to the weight of the bat. Also referred to as the bat drop or the bat's length to weight ratio. Take the length of the bat and subtract the minus number and that is the weight. So a 33 inch bat that is -3 weighs 30 ounces. For example, if a bat weighs 29 ounces and is 32 inches long, it is said to be minus 3 ($29 - 32 = -3$).

2. What is a length to weight ratio? This is called "drop" and is a negative number denoting the amount of ounces the bat weighs less than the amount of inches its length.

For example, a 30-inch bat that weighs 20 ounces is a -10. The greatest differential commonly found is -12 for youth bats. Big Barrel / Senior League bats are -7, used in Senior Little League as well as Pony, and -5 is for High School.

3. Are bats sensitive to changes in temperature? Yes, composite and Aluminum bats, especially higher performance models with thinner walls, should not be used in temperatures below 50 degrees. Cold temperatures make the composition of the ball denser. This puts extraordinary stress on the bat walls which will result in denting. Bats may also be sensitive to very hot temperatures and should not be stored in areas that are exposed to high heat, such as car trunks.

4. Can I try out my new bat at the batting cage? You should not use your new bat in the batting cage. Batting cage balls are made of a more dense material than is used in regulation baseball or softball games and will cause denting.

5. What is metal fatigue? Bat Wall Flexion (allowing the bat walls to flex) is the desirable end result of the "Trampoline Effect," which is utilized by high-performance, thin-walled bats. Hitting the ball on the same side of the bat each time and in the same spot causes excessive flexing in the one area, and the metal will eventually fail (dent or split). Rotating the bat on each trip to the plate will help prevent damage due to metal fatigue.

6. What the difference between balanced and end loaded weight distribution? A balanced bat has an even weight distribution throughout where the end loaded has a half ounce to a whole ounce at the end of the bat.

7. What is the difference between a stiff bat and a flex bat? Flexible bats allow the bat handle to slightly bend on impact. Stiff bats allow the trampoline effect of the bat to be more effective, improving the bat and ball speed over a flex bat or a bat with no action to it, especially on the "sweet spot". The stiff bat lets the swing of the bat be more fluid in motion, which allows for smoother swing and bat speed. Flex bats have the same power when the ball is hit away from the "sweet spot".