



# Softball Field Guidelines

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## Overview

In determining the dimensions of a softball field, you must first decide whether the field will be designed for fastpitch or slowpitch competitions. Fastpitch is played in sub-elite and elite international, national and state competition, as well as in many association and club competitions. Slowpitch, which is also played competitively, is very popular as a recreational or social sport.



## A softball field

### Infield

The playing field is divided into fair territory<sup>1</sup> and foul territory<sup>2</sup>. Fair territory is further divided into the infield<sup>3</sup>, and the outfield<sup>4</sup>, and the territory beyond the outfield fence.

The infield consists of the diamond and the adjacent space in which the infielders normally play. The outfield is the remaining space between the baselines and between the outfield fence and the infield. The infield is usually 'skinned' (dirt), while the outfield has grass in regulation competitions.

The infield is a square (called a diamond) with a base at each corner: home plate, 1<sup>st</sup> base, 2<sup>nd</sup> base and 3<sup>rd</sup> base. The distance for pitching is measured from the rear point of the home plate to the front edge of the pitchers plate, which is centred in a 1.8m (6ft) radius circle.

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<sup>1</sup> Part of the playing field within and including the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> base foul lines, from home base to the extreme playing field fence

<sup>2</sup> Any part of the playing field that is not included in fair territory

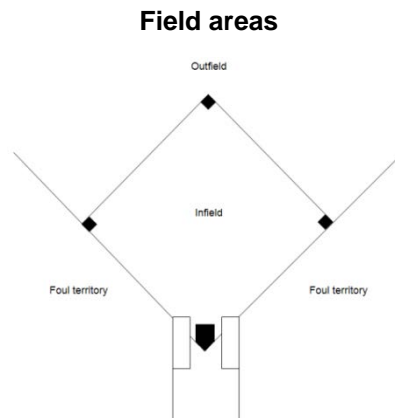
<sup>3</sup> The diamond-shaped area in fair territory, formed by the 3 bases and home plate, is normally covered by defensive players (known as infielders)

<sup>4</sup> The area outside the diamond but still within the foul lines, covered by defensive players (outfielders)



## Outfield

The outfield is the grass area beyond the infield which extends the entire width of the field and all the way to the outfield fence, if there is one. The outfield is in the shape of a quarter-circle and is between the two foul lines. The minimum distance from the apex of home plate to the boundary is 67.06m (220ft) for Women's Fastpitch Softball.



## How to lay out a Diamond

This section serves as an example for laying out a diamond with 18.29m (60ft) bases and a 14.02m (46ft) pitching distance used in open and junior men's competitions (see [Softball field distances](#) for additional dimensions).

- 1 To determine the position of home plate, draw a line in the direction it is desired to lay the diamond. Drive a stake at the corner of home plate nearest the catcher. Fasten a cord to this stake and tie knots or otherwise mark the cord at 14.02m (46ft), 18.29m (60ft), 25.86m (84ft 10¼ in) marker and at 36.58m (120ft).
- 2 Place the cord (without stretching) along the direction line and place a stake at the 14.02m (46ft) marker – this will be the front line at the middle of the pitcher's plate. Along the same line, drive a stake at the 25.86m (84ft 10¼ in) marker. This will be the centre of 2<sup>nd</sup> base. For the 19.81m (65ft) base distance, this line will be 28.02m (91ft 11 in).
- 3 Place the 36.58m (120ft) marker at the centre of second base and, taking hold of the cord at the 18.29m (60ft) marker, walk to the right of the direction line until the cord is taut and drive a stake at the 18.29m (60ft) marker – this will be the outside corner of 1<sup>st</sup> base and the cord will now form the lines to first and 2<sup>nd</sup> bases.
- 4 Again, holding the cord at the 18.29m (60ft) marker, walk across the field and in like manner, mark the outside corner of 3<sup>rd</sup> base. Home plate, first base, and third base are wholly inside the diamond.
- 5 To check the diamond, place the home plate end of the cord at the 1<sup>st</sup> base stake and the 36.58m (120ft) marker at 3<sup>rd</sup> base. The 18.29m (60ft) marker should now check at home plate and 2<sup>nd</sup> base.
- 6 In laying out a 19.81m (65 ft) base path diamond, follow the same procedure with the following substitute dimensions: 19.81m (65ft), 39.62m (130ft), and 28.02m (91ft 11 in).

- 7 A field is officially supposed to have a warning track between 15 and 12ft (5m and 4m) from the outfield fence. However, if the game is being played on a field larger than required, no warning track is required before the temporary outfield fencing.
- 8 Check all distances with a steel tape whenever possible.

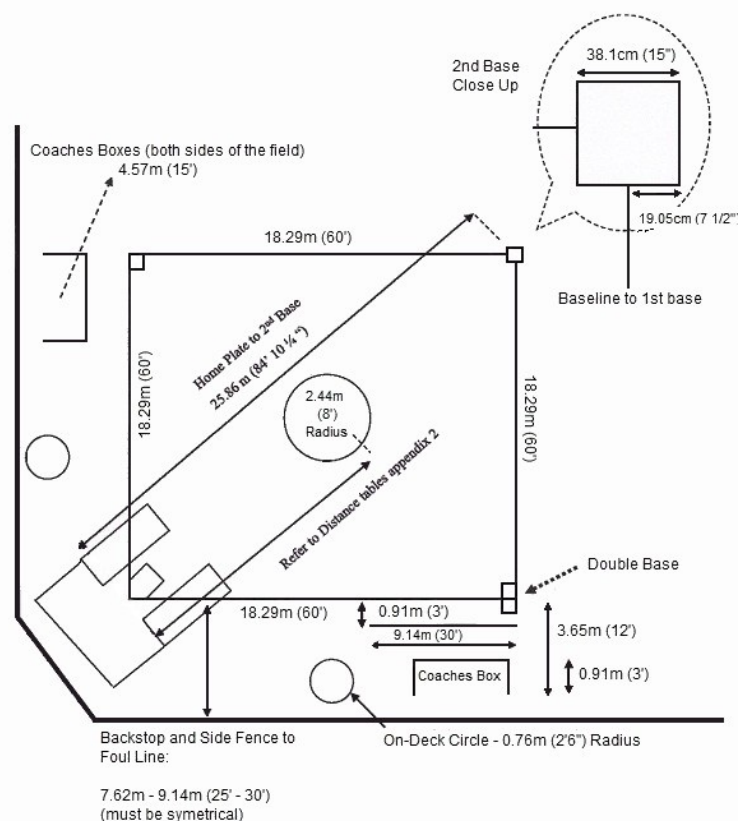
## Making the playing surface

How you make the actual playing surface of your softball field will depend on whether you have your own land to use or if you need to place your field on an already existing multi-sport field or a football field.

Before we discuss playing on a dirt infield versus an all grass infield, let's look at some diagrams of how you layout an actual softball field – keeping in mind the distances that we just looked at in the previous tables.

### Playing field layout and dimensions

The following diagram (Diagram 1) shows the field layout and distances for a women's fastpitch game using a 13.11m (43ft) pitching distance, 18.29m (60ft) bases and no outfield fence. Please remember that the pitching rubber, the base and outfield fence (if you have one) distance all can change according to the previous chart and the age group and sex of the teams playing.



**Diagram 1**

What **will not change** about the following diagram, no matter who is playing on the field, are the distances that the playing field sits from the backstop. You might not be in a position to have a backstop 7.62m-9.14m (25-30ft) from home plate and the two foul lines – that's okay. But just know



that if the backstop is too close to home plate, balls that get past the catcher will rebound back too quickly. If the backstop is too far from home plate, you're going to spend a lot of time chasing after balls. You can still play softball under these conditions; it just becomes a little more challenging.

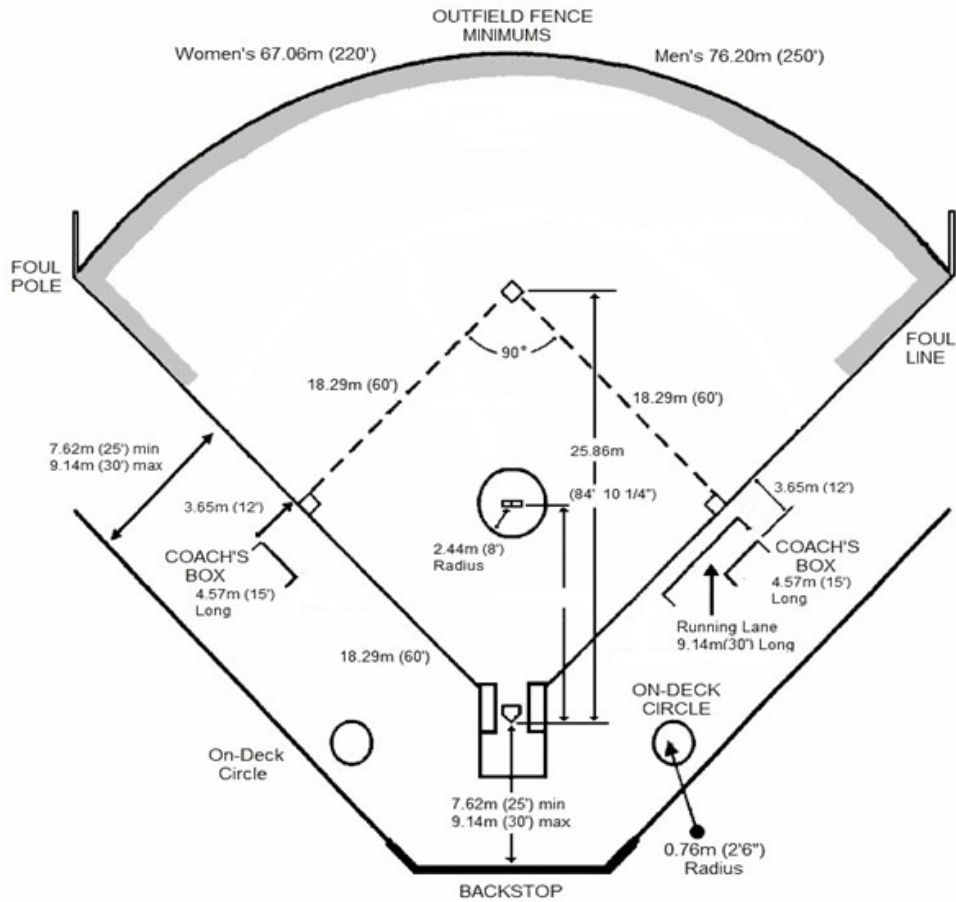


Diagram 2



## Skinning the infield

If you're lucky enough to have your own land to use then you will probably want to have an all dirt infield, and to do so means you're going to have to remove all the dirt from the infield area which is called 'skinning your infield'.

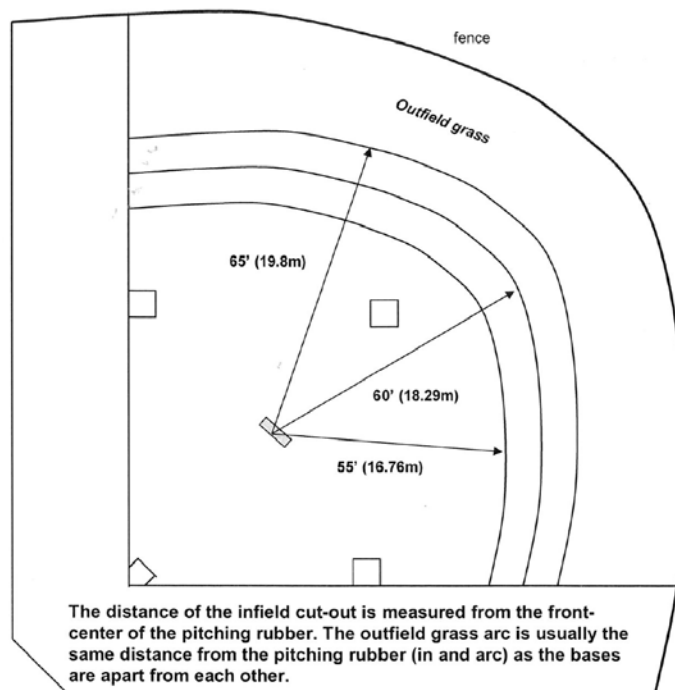


Diagram 3

**Note:** If you are using your softball field for both adults and children's games, which means you will be using different base distances, then your outfield grass arc should be at 19.8m (65ft) which is where it would go for the adults. The children won't care if the grass starts too far away. This is much better than being too close to the adult infielders.

## Adding a sprinkler system

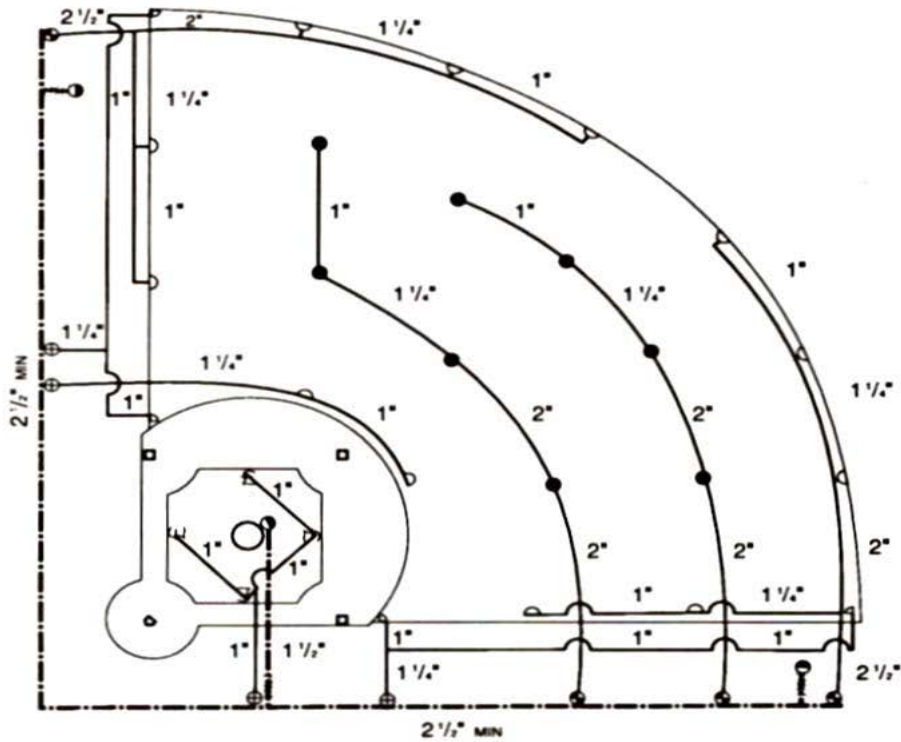
If you're really serious about making a good looking softball field and then keeping it in good condition, you're going to need to have a sprinkler system underneath both the outfield grass and the infield dirt. While this might not be possible for many of you reading this, that's understandable. If you can somehow provide a sprinkler system, you will really see the benefit in the form of a beautiful softball field.

The diagram below shows the typical layout for a softball field irrigation or sprinkler system. Most of the sprinkler heads will be placed in the outfield to water the grass, but there will be at least one head placed in the infield (usually just behind the pitching rubber) to allow a hose to be attached and the infield dirt watered. This watering of the infield dirt prevents it from drying out and then blowing off your field every time the wind blows.

When you place the sprinkler heads in the ground make sure that they lay below the surface when they aren't in use so that outfields won't trip over them. You want to make sure that your playing field is as safe for your teams as possible.

## Irrigation layout

### TYPICAL IRRIGATION LAYOUT



#### Legend:

- I40-36S-42 Pop-up Sprinkler
- I40-ADS-42 Pop-up Sprinkler
- ⊕ HBV-151EP 1 1/2" Electric Valve
- ⊕ HBV-101EP 1" Electric Valve
- ⊕ HV-151-RL 1 1/2" Quick-Coupling Valve
- PVC Mainline (per local code)
- PVC CL200 (size as noted)
- ⊕ I20-ADS-07-LA Rotor Pop-up
- ⊕ 1 1/2" Gate Valve

#### Notes:

1. Maximum circuit gallonage - 62 GPM
2. Minimum mainline operating pressure at field - 65 psi
3. 8 controller stations required
4. Full-circle sprinklers require approximately twice the watering time as half-circle sprinklers and four times the watering time as quarter-circle sprinklers.
5. Check local codes for backflow requirements.

Diagram 4





## Softball field distances

### International standard distances

The distances set out below are measured from the rear point of home plate to 1<sup>st</sup> base and the front edge of the pitchers plate.

Division	Age group	Bases	Pitching	Outfield fence	Ball size
<b>Adult</b>					
Fastpitch	Men	18.29m (60ft)	14.02m (46ft)	76.20m (250ft)	30.5cm (12in)
Fastpitch	Women	18.29m (60ft)	13.11m (43ft)	67.06m (220ft)	30.5cm (12in)
Slowpitch	Men	19.81m (65ft)	15.24m (50ft)	91.44m (300ft)	30.5cm (12in)
Slowpitch	Women	19.81m (65ft)	15.24m (50ft)	83.82m (275ft)	27.9cm (11in)
Slowpitch	Co-ed	19.81m (65ft)	15.24m (50ft)	83.82m (275ft)	30.5cm (12in)
Division	Age group	Bases	Pitching	Outfield fence	Ball size
<b>Youth</b>					
Fastpitch	Jr Women (18 under)	18.29m (60ft)	13.11m (43ft)	67.06m (220ft)	30.5cm (12in)
Fastpitch	Jr. Men (18 under)	18.29m (60ft)	14.02m (46ft)	76.20m (250ft)	30.5cm (12in)
Fastpitch	Jr. Women (16 under)	18.29m (60ft)	12.19m (40ft)	67.06m (220ft)	30.5cm (12in)
Fastpitch	Jr Men (16 under)	18.29m (60ft)	14.02m (46ft)	76.20m (250ft)	30.5cm (12in)
Slowpitch	Jr Women (18 under)	19.81m (65ft)	15.24m (50ft)	80.77m (265 ft)	27.9cm (11in)
Slowpitch	Jr Men (18 under)	19.81m (65ft)	15.24m (50ft)	91.44m (300ft)	30.5cm (12in)
Slowpitch	Jr Women (16 under)	19.81m (65ft)	14.02m (46ft)	80.77m (265ft)	27.9cm (11in)
Slowpitch	Jr Men (16 under)	19.81m (65ft)	14.02m (46ft)	91.44m (300ft)	30.5cm (12in)

### School age programs (suggested distances)

Now, for those of you that will possibly be using this field for school-aged programs, while the ISF does not currently offer World Championships in age groups below 16 years of age (or a Junior. Boys' World Cup), we do encourage younger aged children to learn to play softball. The following table shows the suggested distances and ball sizes for young children.

Age	Pitching	Bases	Ball size
6 and under	T-ball	7.6m (25ft)	tennis ball
8 and under	T-ball	13.7m (45ft)	22.8cm (9in) or tennis ball
10 and under	10.66m (35ft)	16.76m (55ft)	27.94cm (11in)
12 and under	10.656m (35ft)	18.28m (60ft)	30.48cm (12in)
14 and under	2.19m (40ft)	18.28m (60ft)	30.48cm (12in)

The minimum length of the baselines varies depending on the classification of play as follows:

Fastpitch baselines	18.29m (60ft)
Slowpitch baselines	18.29m (60ft) or 19.81m (65ft) or more depending on the association and level of play
Wheelchair baselines	15.24m (50ft)

## Specific components of a softball field

Although softball field dimensions may differ depending on the game being played, the components of a softball field remain the same:

- Backstop\*
- Bases (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup>)
- Batter's boxes
- Coach's boxes (1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup>)\*
- Foul lines (1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup>)\*
- Home plate
- Pitching circle
- Pitching rubber

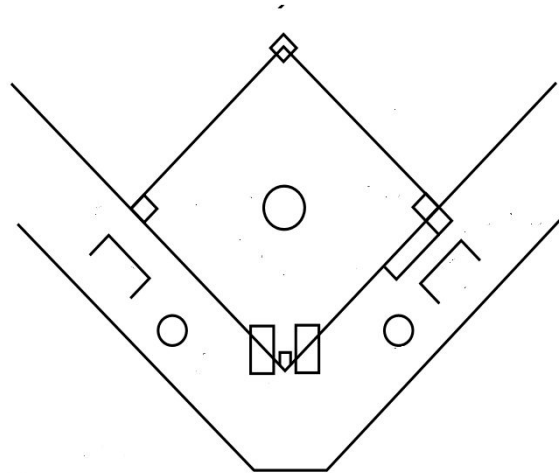


Diagram 5

### Backstop

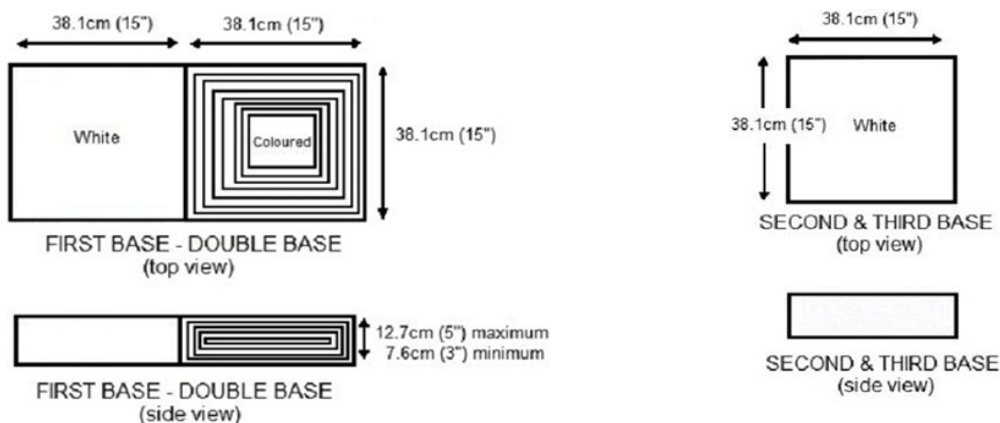
The backstop is the area behind home plate.

*Dimensions: Between 7.62m and 9.14m (25ft and 30ft) behind home plate depending on the type of division that is playing.*

### Bases

At one corner of the diamond is the home plate with bases at each of the remaining corners.

The bases are numbered counter clockwise as 1<sup>st</sup> base, 2<sup>nd</sup> base and 3<sup>rd</sup> base and usually securely fastened to the ground. In ISF Championships, a contrast coloured 'double base' or 'safety base' is required.





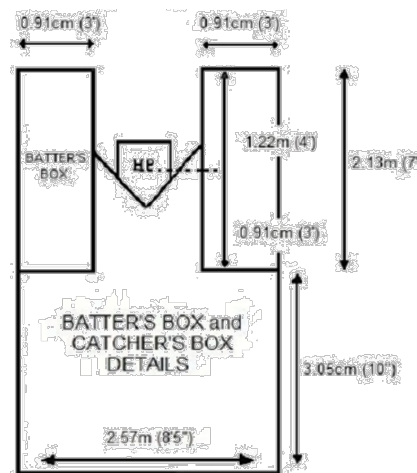
Baselines distances vary depending on the classification of play. Refer to [Softball field distances](#).

### Batter's and catcher's box

The batter's boxes are the rectangular area beside home plate where the batter must stand to hit the pitch.

*Dimensions:*      *Batter's box*  
                                  *0.91m (3') x 2.13m (7')*

*Catcher's box*  
*2.57m (8' 5") x 3.05m (10")*



### Coach's boxes

The coach's boxes are located in foul territory outside both baselines.

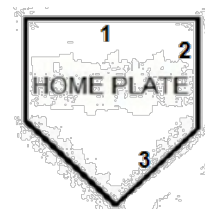
*Dimensions:*      *Two boxes located behind a line 5m (15ft) long located 3m (12ft) from each baseline.*

### Home plate

The home plate is the 5-sided piece of whitened rubber that the batter stands beside while at bat and the area the pitch needs to pass over to be judged a strike pitching circle.

*Dimensions:*

1	43.2cm (17in)
2	21.6cm (8.5in)
3	30.5cm (12in)

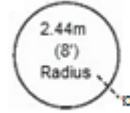




### Pitching circle

In fastpitch, the skinned circle (pitching circle) is around the pitching rubber.

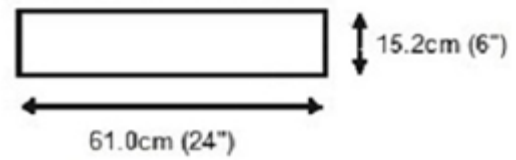
*Dimensions:* 2.44m (8') radius



### Pitching rubber (plate)

Near the centre of the diamond is the pitching rubber.

*Dimensions:* Width of 6.10cm (24in)  
Depth of 15.2cm (6in)





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