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## How To Buy A Softball Bat

No matter the softball league you play in, buying a bat is a personal decision. New technology has delivered bats that not only enhance performance but also are tailored to an individual player's strengths. It is essential that you select a bat that fits your unique body configuration and skill level--height, weight, and hitting strength.

- **Understanding Bat Materials**
  - Aluminum
  - Graphite/Titanium lined
- **Determine What Bat Fits Your Body**
  - Age
  - Height and weight
- **Determining the Right Bat Weight**
- **Understanding Bat Technology**
  - Barrel size
  - Bat taper
  - Grip

## Understanding Bat Materials

The world of bats now offers a large variety of choices in materials. These can be broken into two primary categories--*aluminum* and *Graphite/Titanium lined*. Virtually no softball bats are made of wood any longer. Each provides its own unique characteristics.

### Aluminum

- This has been a player favorite for several years now
- Aluminum bats provide a lighter weight for increased control and bat speed
- Aluminum and the other metals also offer durability
- Despite generally higher costs, players can save money since the bats are extremely difficult to crack or break
- Aluminum bats come in a variety of alloys, each with a different weight. Generally, lighter aluminum alloys are thinner and more durable. These lighter weights also increase the "*sweet spot*," the hitting zone on the bat's barrel that gives the maximum place to put metal to ball.
- Aluminum bats, and those enhanced with other alloys, also come in single-layer or double-layer construction
  - Double-layer bats offer more durability and power, since the ball rebounds off the bat with more authority

### Graphite/Titanium lined

- Technology has enabled bat makers to use lighter, stronger materials. Graphite and titanium are just two of these.
- Both are usually added to thinner-wall aluminum bats, enabling bats to be lighter and increasing a player's swing speed
- These materials also increase durability and the batter's sweet spot
- Graphite and titanium also help reduce vibration and the sting of ball shock, the tingling feeling sent to the hands usually when you miss hitting the ball in the bat's sweet spot

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## Determine What Bat Fits Your Body

There are some standard rules of thumb in selecting the appropriate bat length. The charts below offer some guidelines based on age and weight and height:

### Age

Using your age as a guide, use the chart below to determine the bat length that fits your body.

<b>Determine Your Bat Length by Age</b>	
<b>Age</b>	<b>Bat length</b>
5-7 years old	24"-26"
8-9 years old	26"-28"
10 years old	28"-29"
11-12 years old	30"-31"
13-14 years old	31"-32"
15-16 years old	32"-33"
17+ years old	34"

### Height and weight

- Height and weight are usually better ways to determine what bat length may work best for you
- Once again, use the height and weight chart to give you a general idea of the length of bat that fits your body

<b>Determine Your Bat Length by Weight and Height</b>										
	<b>Your height (inches)</b>									
	36-40	41-44	45-48	49-52	53-56	57-60	61-64	65-68	69-72	73+
<b>Your weight (pounds)</b>	<b>Bat length</b>									

less than 60	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"

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## Determining the Right Bat Weight

- Most bats are weighted in ounces
- Manufacturers have done a great job in balancing the bat's weight to its length
- Many bats have a weight-to-length ratio, often shown as -4, -6, etc.
- This basically means a 34-inch bat with a -6 ratio weighs 28 ounces
- Selecting weight really depends on two critical factors--your strength and your 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 prefer a heavier bat since they get the benefits of both the heft and swing power
  - Smaller players with less strength should consider a lighter bat to generate a quicker swing
  - Younger players, too, should consider that a lighter bat increases control, great for singles hitters, while also reducing the risk of injury

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## Understanding Bat Technology

Bat technology may seem a little confusing but it's not rocket-science. There are three essential elements to a bat: *barrel size*, *bat taper* and *grip*.

### Barrel size

- This includes both the length of the barrel--top part of the bat--and its diameter
- The longer the barrel, generally, the larger the sweet spot for hitting the ball
- The standard softball bat diameter is 2 1/2 inches
- Fast pitch softball barrel standard is 2 3/4 inches
- Many players prefer a smaller barrel that lightens weight and provides more swing speed

### Bat taper

- This is the diameter of the bat's handle
- Standard bats are tapered 31/32 of an inch but can be slightly larger or smaller depending on whether you want a lighter or heavier bat
- Some players like a narrower taper for the lighter weight and to rotate their wrists faster when hitting

### Grip

- The grip is simply the covering that bat manufacturers use on the handle of aluminum bats
- Leather or synthetic leather gives a tackier feel for a surer grip
- Rubber grips absorb more of the shock

Some bats come with a cushioned grip to decrease the shock even more