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# TAB 1: General & Reference Information

## League Guiding Principles

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### Mercer Island Little League Mission Statement

*To teach our youth the values of Character, Teamwork and Sportsmanship through the games of baseball and softball.*

### Our Vision

Our goal is to provide a comprehensive program of baseball and softball that is noted for appealing to kids of all levels of enthusiasm and ability; for treating its players and their families in a fair and caring fashion; for rewarding effort, improvement and striving to excel over winning; for outstanding coaching, instruction and player development; and most of all, for being a fun and enjoyable program that our players, their families and their coaches want to participate in again next season.

### Our Values

Provide supervised competitive athletic games under the Rules and Regulations of Little League Baseball. The attainment of exceptional athletic skills or the winning of games is secondary and the type of leadership extended to our player members is of prime importance. Provide solid training and development for our players, coaches and umpires. Treat everyone with respect and fairness. Most of all, HAVE FUN!

### Building Character / Opportunity in Coaching

To paraphrase John Wooden: "We prefer wins with character rather than characters with wins." Players should be playing to win as a team and at the highest possible level of expertise, but coaches, and parents, should bear in mind that few, if any, of your players will even play in High School, let alone college or professionally.

- **The majority of kids (73%) never participate in organized sports after age 12**

For all kids, but especially these, the most important things they'll learn from participating in Little League are not how to turn a double play or develop the perfect swing, but how to be a good teammate, how to win – and lose – with grace and dignity (and what can be learned from each), sportsmanship and most importantly, how to set goals, work to achieve them, and strive to improve. What they will remember is not how many hits they got or games they won, but how much fun they had, the friends they made, and whether you, as their coach, were a positive – or a negative – influence on their character and development as a person.

# Coaches' Responsibilities

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**Managers/Coaches' commitment:** Managers and coaches need to be willing to attend league meetings when requested, participate in Mercer Island LL functions, such as "Show Your Stuff" day (player evaluations), Coach Development clinics, Opening Day Ceremonies, fundraising, work parties, picture day, and be willing and able to spend the time necessary with the team at practice and games. Managers and Coaches must submit a background check form as required by Little League.

**The Manager responsibilities include the following:**

## **Responsibilities to the League**

1. Fill out a Volunteer Application to be a coach or manager each year that authorizes the League to perform a "Background Check" on them as required by Regulation I of Little League Baseball, Inc by the League. Abide by the results of this "Background Check" procedure.
2. Learn and abide by the national Little League, Inc. Rules and Regulations, District 9 Rules and Policies and by the Mercer Island LL Local League Rules. Adhere to their intent and be capable of correct interpretation and implementation
3. Abide by the MI Little League Code of Conduct, and Alcohol, Tobacco and Weapon Policy (Exhibit G).
4. Read, sign and adhere to the Sportsmanship code of conduct (Exhibit H)
5. Reflect the values of Mercer Island Little League in all dealings with parents, athletes, umpires and league officials.
6. Work to assist and support League officials to build an effective umpire program for the league.
7. Attend league and/or District 9 clinics on coaching, rules and safety (including first aid training). Be willing to learn more about baseball/softball and how to teach young people the proper way to play the game.
8. Handle the administrative requirements of the team: Attend the Roster Selection Meeting (as applicable, depending on the division), obtain the team roster, medical release form for each player, league registration form, proper birth certificates and proof of residency (as needed) and other items that may be required by Mercer Island LL.
9. Review safety checklist and comply with these recommendations and rules.
10. Respect all MI Little League equipment. Pick up and return equipment in compliance with the dates/times set by the equipment manager. Make every effort to clean equipment at the end of the season.
11. Refrain from the use of tobacco and alcoholic beverages at MI Little League practices, games, and league events.
12. Attend and support required coaches meetings and clinics, including the MI Little League Player Development Program (PDP) Clinics whenever possible.
13. Share knowledge and expertise with fellow coaches in a spirit of sportsmanship.
14. All-Star coaching candidates will submit an All-Star Letter of Intent and are required to attend MI Little League Coaching Clinics (or similar coaching clinics approved by the MI Little League Coaching Coordinator) within the last 3 years.
15. Develop and maintain a program that is fair, equal and respects all members.

## **Responsibilities to Your Team**

1. Teach all players the fundamental skills, rules and strategies of baseball consistent with their developmental level.
2. Maintain and teach players (and parents) fair play, sportsmanship, team play and respect for the opponent and umpires. Encourage players at every opportunity.
3. Model team building behaviors including punctuality, sportsmanship and respect for equipment and teammates.
4. Instill in their players a respect for the authority and decisions of the umpires and other adult leaders in the League and be willing to accept the decisions of the Mercer Island Little League



Board of Directors as final - understanding that if anyone is found in violation of any rule, regulation or policy, such individual may be subject to correction, reprimand, suspension or dismissal by the Mercer Island LL Board of Directors.

5. Make-up any cancelled or rained-out games or continue them as required on the day and time assigned by the appropriate league official.
6. Create a volunteer group to support your team and your coaching staff. Recommend volunteer positions and attach job descriptions.
7. Disperse league information, equipment and uniforms to all athletes and/or parents as appropriate.
8. Constructively develop relationships with fellow coaches and coordinators and create opportunities for their individual skills to be utilized.
9. Measure your team's success by the level of effort, enthusiasm and improvement first. Scores come later.
10. Plan and execute worthwhile practices using the following Keys and Practice Dynamics:
  - Plan every practice. Don't take valuable time on the field to plan your next move.
  - Inform assistants (and volunteer helpers) what their duties will be **before** practice.
  - Be prepared to begin practice with the arrival of the first player.
  - Begin practice on time and keep it controlled but fast moving.
  - Use the same sequence for your loosening up drills at each practice.
  - Keep your best players from always pairing off during warm-ups and drills.
  - Provide as many repetitions of the basic skills as possible during practice.
  - Correct fundamental fielding and coverage errors in a specific step by step manner as they occur.
  - Finish practice on time and with one of your players' favorite drills.
  - **Be respectful of the player's and their parent's time to start and end practice on time.**
  - Remember the key elements of practice:
    1. Action: Keep your players active.
    2. Repetition: Provide many repetitions of the basic skills.
    3. Competition: Inspire players to compete with themselves and against others.
    4. Organization: Plan every practice session.

### **Responsibilities to Your Individual Athletes**

1. Prepare all athletes to compete on a physical level by stretching and on a mental level by sharing goals and strategies.
2. Protect your athletes by insisting on safety, good health practices and respect for all players.
3. Never leave a child at a practice or game field unattended.
4. Teach. Teach. Teach.
5. Grant playing time on a fair and equitable basis.
6. Let the players play the game, it belongs to them.

### **Responsibilities to Your Parents**

1. Have parents provide a signed medical release form. Have these forms in your possession at all practices, games, and athletic events.
2. Provide all parents with a signed copy of the Sportsmanship Code of Conduct and request that both they and their son/daughter read, sign and adhere to it.
3. Hold a parent meeting at the beginning of the regular season. Your agenda should include:
  - a. Introductions: Get to know each other - your parents' names, and neighborhoods (helpful for carpooling)
  - b. Recruit team support volunteers – pass around the team volunteer form. Parents like to be involved and most of these are small jobs. Review the team duties volunteer list. PLEASE **NOTE: If you are utilizing a parent volunteer in MORE than a supporting role – They MUST complete the online volunteer registration for a background check.**

- c. Discuss: Division Rules; Sportsmanship (language, care of team equipment); Practices (starting on time and being picked up on time); Games (arriving early to get warmed up); come prepared to play, always do your best, respect others, call the manager or coach when you can't be at a practice or game, and your coaching philosophy.
  - d. Ask parents to: attend games and cheer for both teams; allow managers and coaches to run the team; not holler at coaches or umpires; volunteer for the team, and express the need for volunteers at the team, division and league level.
  - e. In order to have a good parent attendance, make a reminder call the day before and stress the importance of attending this meeting. Have an alternate site (rather than the field) or time in case it is raining.
4. Communicate your expectations openly and fairly.
  5. Review the MI Little League Code of Conduct, and Alcohol, Tobacco, and Weapon Policy
  6. Send a letter to the parents of your team reinforcing your commitments to them **(see example in following 'Start of Season' section in TAB 2)**
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# General League Policies and Procedures

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## Equipment Information

**Deposit:** Coaches are responsible for maintaining and returning the equipment issued to them by the league. Coaches will be charged for equipment not returned.

**Returning Equipment / Cleaning:** It is the coaches' responsibility to clean all of their team's equipment before returning it to the league. The League Equipment Manager is not responsible to clean the gear of the 100 teams in Mercer Island Little League. The bags, catching equipment, bats and helmets get dirty and we need coaches to clean them prior to returning at the end of the season. Coaches will be charged to clean equipment returned dirty.

**Uniform Policy:** Each Mercer Island Little League team will be provided a uniform by the league. Depending on the division, this uniform will consist all or some of the following: hat, jersey, undershirt, belt, pants and socks. Each player on the field of play must wear the uniform that has been provided by the League. There shall be no alteration, replacement, decoration or unique items permanently added to any of the provided pieces (e.g., no player name or sponsor names on the jerseys, unless provided by the league). The only alteration or replacement allowed will be in the case of a sizing problem or deterioration in the uniform. In such case, the uniform piece will be replaced with an item that is substantially the same, meeting the same guidelines as outlined above.

Coaches may purchase, at their own expense, a sweatshirt, coat or other item in addition to the league provided uniform. However, that piece may not be worn during game play, and will not be considered part of the uniform. If a coach opts to purchase such items, he will be responsible for that expense for his entire team. Parents may be asked to contribute to the expense, but under no circumstance should any player be excluded from receiving this additional item because they have not personally paid for the item. Any question regarding replacement items should be addressed by the Uniform Manager.

## Private Clinics Policy

Some coaches may provide their teams with baseball clinics through private organizations. While we certainly want to see all our kids be successful, our concern is that there will be a financial obligation attached to being a coach or manager. As you know, each player pays a registration fee which covers regular practices, game time, their uniform and league sponsored clinics. Coaches do not have the authority, and Little League International prohibits requiring parents to pay for any additional costs associated with extracurricular league associated activities (such as batting cages or private clinics). We will not prohibit a Coach or Manager paying for their team to attend a private clinic. Parents may be asked for a contribution. However, no player shall be excluded from attending a private clinic because they have not personally paid for it. We would strongly encourage managers and coaches to instead utilize the league provided clinics. Arrangements can be made with the training staff to have them attend your practice or set up a special clinic for your team if you would prefer. Please contact the Coaching Coordinator for assistance with this.

## Mercer Island Little League Code of Conduct

The Mercer Island Little League Code of Conduct has been adopted by the Board of Directors. This Code is enforced by the Director of Safety, the League President, the League's Vice Presidents, and Player Agents. All league officers, participants, employees and volunteers are required to abide by this code. It is the job of the Director of Safety to author and/or make any revisions to this Code of Conduct from year to year, as necessary.

- Speed Limit 5 mph in roadways and parking lots while attending Mercer Island Little League functions. Watch for small children around parked cars.
- No Alcohol allowed in any parking lot, field, or common areas within a Mercer Island Little League complex.
- No Playing in parking lots at any time.
- No Playing on and around lawn equipment.
- Use Crosswalks when crossing roadways. Always be alert for traffic.
- No Profanity please.
- No Swinging Bats at any time within the walkways and common areas of a Mercer Island Little League complex.
- No throwing or hitting balls against dugouts or against backstop. Catchers must be used for all batting practice or bullpen sessions.
- All gates to the field must remain closed at all times. After players have entered or left the playing field, all gates should be closed and secured.
- No throwing baseballs at any time within the walkways and common areas of a Mercer Island Little League complex.
- No throwing rocks.
- No horse-play in walkways at any time.
- No climbing fences.
- No pets are permitted at games or practices.
- Only a player on the field and at bat may swing a bat (Age 5 - 12). Juniors (Age 13 - 14) on the field at bat or on deck may swing a bat. Be alert of area around you when swinging bat while in the on deck position.
- Observe all posted signs. Players and spectators must be alert at all times for foul balls and errant throws.
- During game, players must remain in the dugout in an orderly fashion at all times.
- After each game, each team must clean up trash in dugout and around stands.

**Failure to comply with this Code of Conduct may result in expulsion from the playing complex.**

## **Fan Behavior/Etiquette**

Managers and coaches are responsible for the behavior of team parents at their games.

The umpiring staff will work with coaches to monitor fan behavior and the umpire-in-chief retains the right to suspend or end play if they deem necessary due to inappropriate parent behavior.

A parent or fan may be ejected from the field area on discretion of the umpires or designated league officials. If the fan(s) do not exit the immediate area, the umpire will suspend or end play.

## **Field Etiquette**

All participants in MI Little League games will be governed by the principles of good sportsmanship. Displays of anger, frustration or the demeaning of any player, umpire or official at any time will not be tolerated. Coaches may be ejected from any game for these or other behaviors deemed inappropriate by the umpire-in-chief at any MI Little League game.

- 1) The first violation will result in an automatic one game suspension from the team's next scheduled game which cannot be appealed (in accordance with Little League rules). Pursuant to Little League rules, once a player or coach is ejected from a game they must leave the field entirely. MI Little League will allow any player who has been ejected from a game to sit in the stands only if said player's parent/guardian is not in attendance. This shall be the only exception to Little League rules governing player/coach ejections. Additionally, a suspended player/coach may not be in attendance of the suspended game, either in the dugout or in the stands.

- 2) A second suspension will require MANDATORY board review. The Board review will occur at the next regular monthly meeting of the MI Little League Board of Directors. Anyone facing a Board review is not allowed to coach until cleared by the Board.

## **Protest Filing**

Managers and coaches are responsible for understanding and correctly initiating any and all protests that might be filed. Managers and coaches are encouraged to work together with the on-field umpire(s) in a spirit of cooperation to avoid protests whenever possible.

Protests of judgment calls (safe/out, ball/strike, fair/foul, etc.) are not allowed. Protests may only be filed on violation or interpretation of the rules. (See rule 4.19 for the proper procedures in lodging a protest.) Multiple incorrect or inappropriate protests will be addressed individually by the Coaching Coordinator and may result in suspension.

## **Other Violations**

Other violations such as profanity, or other inappropriate conduct, will be addressed on an individual basis by the appropriate league official. The full range of consequences, including dismissal from MI Little League, is possible in these situations.

All disciplinary matters will be handled in accordance with the Discipline Policy of the Mercer Island Little League Local League Rules. All disciplinary decisions will be based upon the principle that the welfare of our athletes is the first priority everywhere and at all times.

## **Mercer Island LL Alcohol, Tobacco and Weapons Policy**

In view of our commitment to youth and the development of character, the MI Little League Board has determined that certain behavior is essential and non-negotiable. We require etiquette and proper behavior modeling at all times when in contact with parents, athletes and the general public.

Our policy includes zero tolerance for the following:

- 1) Physical violence or verbal abuse in any form by anyone associated with Mercer Island Little League. This includes violence or verbal abuse between or among players.
- 2) Possession of weapons or other harmful substances. (The determination of the danger present will be the responsibility of the senior MI Little League official on-site. This official may be one of the following: umpires, managers, coaches, board members or persons designated by MI Little League.)
- 3) The public use of tobacco, alcohol or other drugs at any MI Little League baseball game or practice by coaches, umpires, league officials or any other person associated with MI Little League. MI Little League will seek enforcement of all city, county laws or regulations pertaining to smoking at locations where MI Little League games or practices are held. All parents and other observers will be expected to refrain from tobacco and alcohol use at practices, games, or any other MI Little League function at which players are present.
- 4) Use of alcoholic beverages by umpires, coaches, or league officials, prior to or during, or after MI Little League games, practices or other functions at which players may be present.
- 5) Any behaviors in violation of MI Little League safety policy.

# Safety

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## **Safety is everyone's job!**

**Prevention is the key to keeping accidents to a minimum. Report all hazardous conditions to the Director of Safety or another Board member immediately. You, the coach, are primarily responsible for your team's safety.**

## **General Safety Rules for Coaches and Managers**

The Mercer Island Little League Safety Code has been adopted by the Board of Directors and is enforced by the Director of Safety, the League's Vice Presidents, and the Player Agents. All league officers, participants, employees and volunteers are required to abide by this code.

- Responsibility for Safety procedures should be that of an adult member of Mercer Island Little League.
- All managers, coaches, board members and any other persons, volunteers or hired workers, who provide regular services to the league and/or have repetitive access to or contact with players or teams must fill out an online volunteer application and pass a background check.
- Arrangements should be made in advance of all games and practices for emergency medical services.
- Mercer Island Little League requires at least one coach/manager from each team to be officially certified in First Aid and CPR. **First Aid CPR training will be held at the Boys & Girls Club at a date to be announced in March.** Mercer Island Little League will continue to require coaches/managers to attend at least once every three years for fundamentals training and first aid training. The league is required to ensure at least one coach is certified in basic CPR.
- First aid kits are issued to each team manager and must be in the dugout at all times (practices and games) and kept stocked by the Manager/Coach (i.e., bandages and ice packs) along with each player's completed and signed Medical Release form. Re-stocking supplies for first aid kits are available from the Boys & Girls Club.
- No games or practices should be held when weather or field conditions are not good, particularly when lighting is inadequate.
- Managers, coaches and umpires should inspect play area frequently for holes, damage, stones, glass and other foreign objects. This should also take place before every practice or game.
- All team equipment should be stored within the team dugout, or behind screens, and not within the area defined by the umpires as "in play."
- Only players, managers, coaches, and umpires are permitted on the playing field or in the dugout during games and practice sessions
- Responsibility for keeping bats and loose equipment off the field of play should be that of a player assigned for this purpose or the team's manager and coaches.
- Procedure should be established for retrieving foul balls batted out of playing area.
- During practice and games, all players should be alert and watching the batter on each pitch.
- During warm-up drills, space players so no one is endangered by wild throws or missed catches.
- Equipment should be inspected regularly by the manager and/or coach for equipment condition as well as for fit. Batters must wear Little League approved protective helmets during batting practice and games.
- Catcher must wear catcher's helmet, mask, throat guard, long model chest protector, shin guards and protective cup with athletic supporter at all times (males) for all practices and games. NO EXCEPTIONS. Managers should encourage all male players to wear cups and supporters for practices and games.
- On a 60-foot diamond, head first sliding is not permitted except when a runner is returning to base.
- During sliding practice, bases should not be strapped down or anchored.
- At no time should "horse play" be permitted on the playing field.
- Parents of players who wear glasses should be encouraged to provide "safety glasses."

- Player must not wear watches, rings, pins or metallic items during games and practices.
- The Catcher must wear catcher's helmet and mask with a throat guard in warming up pitchers. This applies between innings and in the bull-pen during a game and also during practices.
- Managers and Coaches may not warm up pitchers before or during a game.
- On-deck batters are not permitted.
- All pre-game warm-ups should be performed within the confines of the playing field and not within areas that are frequented by, and thus, endanger spectators (i.e., playing catch, pepper, swinging bats, etc.).

## Accident Reporting Procedures

The following reporting procedures should be used by all managers, coaches, parents, umpires, and volunteers concerning injuries.

### Emergency Phone Numbers:

Police Department	Phone Number
City Police Emergency Number:	911
City Police Non-Emergency Number:	206-236-3502

### WHAT TO REPORT:

An incident that causes any player, manager, coach, umpire, or volunteer to receive medical treatment and/or first aid must be reported to the Director of Safety. The terms "medical treatment and/or first aid" should include even passive treatments such as the evaluation and diagnosis of the extent of the injury. Any incident that (a) causes a player to miss any practice or game time; or (b) any event that has the potential to require medical assistance must be reported promptly.

### WHEN TO REPORT:

All such incidents must be VERBALLY reported to the Director of Safety within 24 hours of the incident. A written accident form must also be submitted to the Director of Safety within 24 hours of the incident.

### WHO TO REPORT TO:

Director of Safety:	Becky Shaddle
Day Phone:	(206) 436-1950
On-call Emergency Phone:	(206) 251-2210
Email:	bshaddle@positiveplace.org
Fax:	(206) 232-0930

### HOW TO MAKE THE REPORT:

Please use the official ACCIDENT FORMS located in your field manual to report any accident or incident, and return it to the club within 24 hours. Reporting incidents can come in a variety of forms. At a minimum, the following information must be provided verbally or left on a voice message within 24 hours:

- The name and phone number of the individual involved (or their parents).
- The date, time and locations of the incident.
- As detailed a description of the incident as possible.
- The preliminary estimation of the extent of any injuries.
- The name and phone number of the individual reporting the incident.

**DIRECTOR OF SAFETY'S RESPONSIBILITIES:**

The Director of Safety will receive this injury report and will enter it into the league's safety database. Within 48 hours of receiving the incident report, the Director of Safety will contact the injured party or the party's parents and:

1. Verify the information received;
2. Obtain any other information deemed necessary; and
3. Check on the status of the injured party.

In the event the injured party required other medical treatment (i.e., emergency room visit, doctor's visit, etc.), the Director of Safety will advise the parent or guardian of the Mercer Island Little League's insurance coverage and the provision for submitting any claims for reimbursement.

If the extent of the injuries is more than minor in nature, the Director of Safety shall periodically call the injured party to:

1. Check on the status of any injuries; and
2. Check if any other assistance is necessary in areas such as submission of insurance forms, etc., until such time as the incident is considered "closed" (i.e., no further claims are expected and/or the individual is participating in the league again).

**Important First Aid Do's and Don'ts****DO's...**

- Reassure and aid children who are injured, frightened or lost.
- Promptly provide or assist in obtaining medical attention for those who require it.
- Wear gloves (in first aid kit) when treating injuries to prevent unprotected contact with blood or other body fluids.
- Know your limitations in providing aid. Always ask for assistance from others if you are unsure of how to treat or otherwise deal with an injury.
- Bleeding must be stopped, the open wound covered, and the uniform changed (if blood stained) before the player may continue playing.
- Immediately wash hands and other skin surfaces if contaminated with blood or other body fluids.
- Clean and disinfect all blood contaminated surfaces and equipment.
- Properly dispose of any dressings or other articles contaminated by blood or other body fluids. Report the injury to the Safety Officer as quickly as possible following the incident.
- Carry your first-aid kit to all games and practices.
- Keep your "Prevention and Emergency Management of Little League Baseball and Softball Injuries" booklet with your first-aid kit.
- When administering aid, remember to:
  - LOOK for signs of injury (blood, black and blue deformity of joints, etc.)
  - LISTEN to the injured describe what happened and what hurts if conscious. Before questioning, you may have to calm and soothe an excited child.
  - FEEL gently and carefully the injured area for signs of swelling or grating of broken bones.
- Have your players' Medical Clearance Forms with you at all games and practices.
- Make arrangements to have a cellular phone available when your game or practice is at a facility that does not have any public phones.
- Report any present or potential safety hazard to the Director of Safety immediately.



## **DON'TS...**

- Never hesitate in giving aid when needed.
- Never administer any medications or topical ointments/creams.
- Never offer an injured individual anything by mouth other than water.
- Never move or offer anything by mouth to an unconscious individual.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help if you're not sure of the proper procedures (i.e., CPR, etc.)
- Never transport injured individuals except in extreme emergencies and only when emergency transport by trained, professional personnel is unavailable.
- Never leave an unattended child at a practice or game.

## **General Health of Athletes**

### **Physical Exams:**

With regard to the general health of its participants, Mercer Island Little League's policy is as follows:

**"While physical exams are not required by league policy, National Little League strongly recommends that participants be in good general health. If your child has a physical impairment that the league should be aware of, PLEASE note the information on the registration form, and contact your league's Player Agent. Items such as allergies, eye problems, diabetes, etc., will be kept confidential, except that your child's manager and coach will be aware of any potential problem."**

### **Medical Approval and Release**

Although not required, the Medical Approval and Release form is provided to all managers. This form contains vital information regarding the child's current general health, the child's doctor's name, address, and phone number, and any other special medical considerations (i.e. allergies, etc.). Managers are strongly encouraged to obtain a completed Release for each of the players on their team and are instructed to have these forms with them for every practice and game.

### **Communicable Disease Procedures:**

While the risk of one participant infecting another with HIV/AIDS during league activities is small, there is a remote risk other blood borne infectious disease can be transmitted. Procedures for reducing the potential for transmission of infectious agents should include, but not limited to the following:

- Bleeding must be stopped, the open wound covered and if there is any excess amount of blood on the uniform, it must be changed before an athlete may participate.
- Routine use of gloves or other precautions to prevent skin and mucous membrane exposure when contact with blood or other body fluids is anticipated.
- Immediately wash hands and other skin surfaces if contaminated (in contact) with blood or other body fluids. Wash hands immediately after removing gloves.
- Clean all blood-contaminated surfaces and equipment with a solution made from a proper dilution of household bleach or other disinfectant before competition resumes.
- Practice proper disposal procedures to prevent injuries caused by needles and other sharp instruments or devices.
- Although saliva has not been implicated in HIV transmission, to minimize the need for emergency mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, mouthpieces, resuscitation bags, or other ventilation devices should be available for use.
- Managers, coaches, umpires, and volunteers with bleeding or oozing skin should refrain from all direct athletic care until condition is resolved.
- Contaminated towels should be disposed of or disinfected properly.
- Follow acceptable guidelines in the immediate control of bleeding and when handling bloody dressings and other articles containing body fluids.



# Coaching Resources



## Coaches/Players Conventions, Seminars and Associations


All Little League coaches are encouraged to develop their skills and knowledge. Clinics and conventions are a great way to accomplish this. Mercer Island Little League requires its coaches to attend at least one of its sanctioned workshops every other year in order to coach. Recommended clinic dates can be obtained from the MILL Coaching Coordinator.

## Books



*Book is in the MILL library housed at the Boys & Girls Club available to all coaches*

<p><b>AI &amp; AI Baseball</b>            14 Golden Key Estates            Calgary, Alberta Canada T3P1A5            Phone: (403) 274-9236 Fax: (403) 516-6198</p>	<p>Little League Coach &amp; Manager Program Products:            Getting Started Manual and Passport, Basic Manual,            Basic Passport, Getting Started Pack, Basic Team            Package, Advanced Manual</p>	
<p><b>All Sports Publishing</b>            137 Walnut Ct.            Waleska, GA 30183            Phone: 800 854-1545 Fax: 770 720-1274  <a href="http://www.allsportspublishing.com">http://www.allsportspublishing.com</a></p>	<p>Pro-Series Scorebook, Scorer's Editions Scorebooks and            Line Up Forms Book</p>	
<p><b>Betterway Books</b>            Cincinnati, OH            (1996)</p>	<p>Betterway Coaching Kids Series            "Coaching Youth Baseball, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition"            By John P. McCarthy, Jr.</p>	
<p><b>Boz Imagineering, Inc.</b>            2901 Clint Moore Road, Suite 237            Boca Raton, FL 33496            Phone: 888 922-9492 Fax: 561 893-9898</p>	<p>The Box Seat Dream: A Baseball Story</p>	
<p><b>Contemporary Books, Inc.</b>            1 Prudential Plaza            130 E. Randolph Street Suite 900 Chicago,            IL 60601            Phone: (312) 233-7613</p>	<p>"Little League Baseball Guide to Tee-Ball"</p>	
<p><b>Contemporary Books, Inc.</b>            1 Prudential Plaza            130 E. Randolph Street Suite 900 Chicago,            IL 60601 Phone: (312) 233-7613</p>	<p>"Little League Baseball Drills and Strategies" and            "Managing Little League Baseball"</p>	
<p><b>Grosset &amp; Dunlap</b>            200 Madison Avenue            New York, NY 10016</p>	<p>"Little League Baseball Rules in Pictures"</p>	
<p><b>Mastervision, Inc.</b>            969 Park Avenue            New York, NY 10028            Phone: 212 879-0448 Fax: 212 744-3560  <a href="http://www.mastervision.com">http://www.mastervision.com</a></p>	<p>"Little League's Official How-to-Play Baseball"</p>	

<p><b>McGraw-Hill Trade/Contemporary Books</b> 2 Penn Plaza, 11th floor New York, NY 10121 Phone: 312 233-7613 Fax: 212 904-6096 <a href="http://www.books.mcgraw-hill.com">http://www.books.mcgraw-hill.com</a></p>	<p>"Little League Baseball Guide to Correcting the 25 Most Common Mistakes," "Little League Baseball Guide to Coaching the Little League Pitcher," "Little League Baseball Guide to Tee-Ball," "<b>Little League Baseball Drills and Strategies</b>," "Managing Little League Baseball," and "<b>Making Baseball More Fun for Kids</b>"</p>	
<p><b>Peachtree Publishers</b> 1700 Chattahoochee Avenue Atlanta, GA 30318-2112 Phone: (404) 876-8761 Fax: (404) 875-2578 <a href="http://www.peachtree-online.com">http://www.peachtree-online.com</a></p>	<p>"Play Ball Like the Pros"</p>	
<p><b>Sportsrite Publishing, LTD</b> 660 32nd Avenue, East Seattle, WA 98112-4219 Phone: 800-448-4474 Fax: 206 328-2943</p>	<p>"The Coaches Pocket Planner"</p>	

## Videos/DVDs

<p><b>AI &amp; AI Baseball</b> 14 Golden Key Estates Calgary, Alberta Canada T3P1A5 Phone: (403) 274-9236 Fax: (403) 516-6198</p>	<p>"Planning a Practice"</p>
<p><b>Mastervision, Inc.</b> 969 Park Avenue New York, NY 10028 Phone: 212 879-0448 Fax: 212 744-3560 <a href="http://www.mastervision.com">http://www.mastervision.com</a></p>	<p>"Little League's Official How-to-Play Baseball" Video </p>
<p><b>Michele Smith Inc.</b> (717) 363-1615</p>	<p>"Dynamic Pitching with Michele Smith" Vol. 1 – Beginning Pitching Softball </p>
<p><b>Official Communications</b> 2899 Agoura Road #172 Westlake Village, CA 91361 Phone: 805 373-8968 Fax: 805 496-8123 <a href="http://www.videoump.com">http://www.videoump.com</a></p>	<p>approved umpire training videos: "Behind the Plate", "See a Balk", and "How to Keep Score"</p>
<p><b>Baseball World TJE Productions, Inc.</b> PO Box 160098 Almonte Springs, FL 32716 <a href="http://www.baseballworld.com">www.baseballworld.com</a></p>	<p>Coach Tom Emanski's:  "Teaching the Mechanics of the Major League Swing II"  Dynamic Practice Organization</p>
<p><b>TPIC Company</b> 1438 Campbell Road, Ste. 106 Houston, TX 77055-4648 Phone: (713) 461-3012</p>	<p>approved video training series: Fundamentals of Hitting, Fundamentals of Baserunning, Fundamentals of Pitching, Defensive Skills by Position, Fundamentals of Fielding, Coaching </p>

## **Advanced Baseball Books & Manuals**

**101 Pitching Drills** – Bob Bennett, Coaches Choice (1999)



**Art and Science of Pitching** - Tom House, Gary Heil, Steve Johnson (February 2006)

**Baseball Clinic: Skills and Drills for Better Baseball - A Handbook for Players and Coaches** - John Stewart (April 1999)

**Baseball Defensive Drills** - Rod Delmonico, Masters Press (January 1997)

**Baseball Drill Book** - American Baseball Coaches Association, Bob Bennett (January 2004)

**Baseball Skills and Drills** - American Baseball Coaches Association, Mark Johnson, Jack Leggett, Pat McMahon (March 2001)

**Baseball Strategies Coaches Association** - American Baseball Coaches Association, Bob Bennett (December 2002)

**The Complete Book of Hitting Faults and Fixes**, Mark Gola and John Monteleone -



**Coaching the Little League Pitcher** - Randy Voorhees (April 2003)

**Great Baseball Drills: A Baffled Parent's Guide** - Jim Garland (January 2002)

**Heads-up Baseball: Playing the Game One Pitch at a Time** - Tom Hanson, Ken Ravizza (February 1995)

**Jeff Burroughs' Little League Instructional Guide** – Jeff Burroughs -



**Mental Game of Baseball: A Guide to Peak Performance** - H. A. Dorfman, Karl Kuehl (July 2002)

**Mental Keys to Hitting: A Handbook of Strategies for Performance Enhancement** H. A. Dorfman (April 2001)

**Mental Toughness: A Champion's State of Mind** - Karl Kuehl, John Kuehl, Casey Tefertiller (May 2005)

**Mind Gym: An Athlete's Guide to Inner Excellence** - Gary Mack, David Casstevens (June 2002)

**Nolan Ryan's Pitcher's Bible: The Ultimate Guide to Power, Precision and Long-term Performance** - Nolan Ryan, Tom House (April 1991)

**Offensive Baseball Drills / 68 Hitting, Baserunning, & Team Drills** – Rod Delmonico



**Pitching Edge** - Tom House, Foreword by Rod Dedeaux (November 1999)

**Pitching Like a Pro: A Guide for Young Pitchers and Their Coaches, Little League through High School** - Leo Mazzone, Jim Rosenthal, Tom DiPace (Photographer), Designed by Bonni Leon Berman, Foreword by Henry Aaron (March 1999)

**Science of Hitting** - Ted Williams, John Underwood, John W. Underwood (April 1986)



**Smart Baseball: How Professionals Play the Mental Game** - Buddy Bell, Neal Vahle, With Rick Bell, With David Mike (March 2005)

**The Baseball Coaching Bible** - Jerry Kindall, John Winkin (January 2000)

**The Mental ABC's of Pitching: A Handbook for Performance Enhancement**  
- H.A. Dorfman (January 2000)

**The Picture Perfect Pitcher** - Tom House, Paul Reddick (April 2003)

**The Pitching Clinic: A Handbook For Players and Coaches** - John Stewart  
(March 2002)

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## **Advanced Softball Books & Manuals**

**101 Offensive Softball Drills** - James A. Peterson (July 2001)

**Coaching Fastpitch Softball Successfully** - Kathy J. Veroni, Roanna Brazier (Jan 2006)

**Coaching Girls' Softball: From The How-To's Of The Game To Practical Real-World Advice--Your Definitive Guide To Successfully Coaching Girls** - Kathy Strahan (August 2001)

**Coaching Youth Softball: A Baffled Parent's Guide** (The Baffled Parent's Guides Series) - Jacquie Joseph, with Lauri Berkenkamp (Feb. 2001)

**Coaching Youth Softball** - American Sport Education Program, Ron A. Radigonda (January 2001)



**Focused for Fastpitch: 80 Drills to Play and Stay Sharp** - Gloria Solomon, Andrea Becker (February 2004)

**Softball Coaching Bible** - National Fastpitch Coaches Association, Jacquie Joseph (Jan 2002)

**Softball Handbook** - Susan Craig, Ken Johnson (March 1989)

**Softball Skills and Drills** - Judi Garman, Judy Garmen (February 2001)

**The Softball Pitching Edge** - Cheri Kempf (January 2002)

# TAB 2 : Coaches Guide

## Introduction

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To help you have the most efficient and productive practices with your team, Mercer Island Little League has developed a Coach Guide. Filled with time tested tips, techniques and drills, we hope you find this plan useful as you develop your team.

### Your Overall Goal

Your primary goal is to make sure that your kids have fun, have a great baseball experience and want to play again next season.

### Some Fundamentals to Remember

Regardless of what level you are coaching, we want to stress a few fundamentals that apply to all levels of play.

#### **Teamwork**

Critical to any team or group endeavor, teamwork is essential. No one individual is above the others.

#### **Sportsmanship**

While not every child will become a great player, every child can be a great sport. Respect for teammates, opponents, umpires, coaches and fans is a lifelong lesson that you can instill at this early age. Remember that your team is watching you to see how they should behave!

#### **Stretching and Warming Up**

Players of all ages need to stretch and warm up to avoid unnecessary short-term and long-term injuries. Please make sure to include this at the beginning of every practice.

#### **Pitching/Throwing**

For those of you teaching player pitch teams, you should be aware of a major crisis emerging in youth baseball. Literally thousands of kids are having adult type arm problems because of poor technique, over-pitching and trying to throw curveballs. Please make sure to work with every player, especially pitchers, on proper technique, and – of course – adhere to the LL regulation on pitch counts and mandatory rest days. And under no circumstances allow kids under 14 to throw curveballs or sliders. An accurate fastball and changeup is more than adequate for a successful Little League pitcher. Also, if you can, make sure each pitcher ices their arm (elbow and shoulder) after each outing.



# Getting Started

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## Start of Season Checklist

- € Attend Clinic / Orientation
  - Practice times are set
  - Official rosters distributed
  - Administrative & logistical review
  - Skill instruction/review
- € Contact Players
- € Organize Team Parents
  - Send letter to parents (see example following)
  - Schedule parents meeting – maybe in conjunction with first practice
  - Recruit Team Representatives: all administrative support for the team. Team Representative is responsible for organizing parents to handle the raffle, opening day, snack schedule, score keeper, the end-of-year party or other activities not directly related to coaching.
  - Recruit parents to help regularly at practices and games – your practices will be more productive and fun if you have extra help there.
- € Attend Division Coaches Meeting (see schedule): Collect Equipment & Field Handbooks – Notice of times will come from Division Vice Presidents – **Important to make your assigned time!**
- € Attend Mandatory First Aid Training (one coach per team must be certified)
- € Plan pre-season practices to learn/refresh all key skills
- € Distribute and collect expectation questionnaires for players and parents
- € Attend Coaching Clinic
- € Practices Start First week of March
- € Distribute Raffle Tickets to Team
- € Distribute Funding Raising Information to Team
- € Get a Team Sponsor for your Team
- € Distribute Team Photo Forms to Team

## Example Letter to Families (from the Manager)

We recommend you send a letter to parents and families of your team members at the beginning of the season to help set proper expectations for the season. We provide an example letter below. It will go a long ways towards setting the right tone as you work to coach the kids.

Dear (name of parent):

I recently learned I will be (name of child)'s coach this year in Mercer Island Little League. I am excited to have (name of child) on our team, and look forward to a great year.

Ensuring that everyone involved with our team has a great experience this year is one of my top priorities. In this letter I outline my, and everyone involved in Mercer Island Little League's, expectations for the season. Please review it with (name of child) and your other family members before the season starts.

We expect the following things from the players on the team:

1. Be on time for all practices and games.
2. Always do their best whether in the field or on the bench.
3. Be cooperative at all times and share team duties.
4. Respect not only others, but themselves as well.
5. Be positive with teammates at all times.
6. Try not to become upset at mistakes (their own or those of others). We all make our share – they are part of the process of getting better.
7. Understand that winning is a minor objectives – we have far more important objectives for the team, each player and everyone else involved.

You can expect from the coaches:

1. We are on time for the start of all practices and games, and that we finish practice on time.
2. We are as fair as possible in giving equal playing time to all players.
3. We teach the fundamentals of the game.
4. We are always positive and respectful of each child as an individual.
5. We set reasonable expectations for each child and for the season.
6. We teach the players the value of winning and losing.
7. We are open to feedback outside of practice and game times.
8. We never lose our temper with any member of our team, the opposing team, an umpire or spectator. Any confrontation will be handled in a respectful, quiet and individual manner.

We expect players' families:

1. Come out and enjoy the game. Cheer to make all players feel important. Provide only positive encouragement to all players on all teams.
2. Never express negative comments to a player (including your son or daughter), a coach, an umpire, a fan of the opposing team, or league official.
3. Support the coaches by allowing us to run the team.
4. Try not to question our leadership, knowing we too will make mistakes.
5. Bring any concerns to us as soon as possible, but outside practice and game times and away from the players and fans.
6. Assist us as much as possible at practices, games, in organizing the team and by having fun at games.

We are looking forward to a fantastic season. See you at the field!

## Identifying and Understanding Player and Parent Expectations

Increasingly, Mercer Island Little League coaches are utilizing two tools to understand the expectations of players and parents going into the season. They have proven effective in setting coaches, players and families up for a successful season by identifying early particular or exceptional needs.

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### Pre-season Player Questionnaire

- 1. How will you define a successful year at the end of the season?**
- 2. What are you most excited about this season?**
- 3. How do you learn best?**
  - Visual (by watching video)
  - Verbal (by listening to the coach)
  - Experiential/Tactile (by going out and doing something)
- 4. What are your three favorite positions?**
  - Position 1 \_\_\_\_\_
  - Position 2 \_\_\_\_\_
  - Position 3 \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. What do you want to improve the most this year?**
  - Individual Goal 1 \_\_\_\_\_
  - Individual Goal 2 \_\_\_\_\_
  - Individual Goal 3 \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. What are your goals for the team this year?**
  - Team Goal 1 \_\_\_\_\_
  - Team Goal 2 \_\_\_\_\_
  - Team Goal 3 \_\_\_\_\_

### Pre-season Parent Questionnaire

- 1. How will you define a successful year at the end of the season?**
- 2. What can you tell me about your child that might help us coach him better?**
- 3. How does your child learn best?**
  - a. Visual (by watching video)
  - b. Verbal (by listening to the coach)
  - c. Experiential/Tactile (by going out and doing something)
- 4. How does your child react to criticism? To praise?**
- 5. What are you child's baseball strengths and weaknesses?**
- 6. What are your specific goals for your child this year?**
  - Individual Goal 1 \_\_\_\_\_
  - Individual Goal 2 \_\_\_\_\_
  - Individual Goal 3 \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. What are your goals for the team?**
  - Team Goal 1 \_\_\_\_\_
  - Team Goal 2 \_\_\_\_\_
  - Team Goal 3 \_\_\_\_\_
- 8. Would you like us to email you occasionally with our observations about your child?**

## Team Volunteer Duties

Teams don't run by themselves and the entire burden shouldn't fall on coaches. The Mercer Island Little League Board adopted a policy in 2007 of requiring a minimum of 4 hours of volunteer participation from all parents, either to the team or the league.

Some team volunteer positions you will want to have filled include:

**Team Representative:** The team representative assists the teams' coaches with the administration and support of the team. Responsibilities include recruiting parents for the other volunteer responsibilities below, asking the phone parent to call parents with urgent information, arranging team functions such as a beginning or end of the season party, assisting with purchase of coaches' gift, if appropriate, assisting team players during games and practices, and distributing league information to players.

**Practice Assistant(s):** It's difficult to run an efficient practice with two coaches. Additional parents are required at each practice to help with drills. If the coaches request it, the team representative may assign parents to assist at practices on a rotating basis.

**Score Keeper:** Know how to keep score and be willing to do so throughout the games. This is the most important game day volunteer outside the dugout. Scorekeeper should be positioned just outside the dugout to communicate to the coaches. Scorekeeper is to give scorebook to coach and/or manager after game. (Need at least two volunteers able to perform this duty).

**Umpire(s):** Attend league umpiring clinics and be available to do so as requested. For those desiring to umpire at the Minor level and above, an Umpire Application and Washington State Patrol Background check must be on file with the League. All others should attend the clinics and need to have a background check done.

The following volunteer positions may be combined for efficiency:

**Equipment Volunteer:** Pick up equipment at beginning of season; clean it up and return it at the end of the season. (Assign to one of the assistant coaches).

**Telephone Volunteer:** The telephone volunteer calls team parents or players to provide them with urgent information, such as game or practice cancellations.

**Snack Coordinator:** Create and distribute a snack schedule to the team. Keep a schedule on hand to remind parents of their assignment, help with substitutions as needed.

**Picture Volunteer:** Distribute picture envelope, collect incoming envelopes, schedule picture time, organize team on picture day, pick up and deliver pictures.

**Team Photo/Videographer:** Take photos and/or videos of the team and players throughout the season, to provide to parents on a commemorative CD/DVD at the end of the season.

**Opening Day Coordinator:** Attend any required meetings pertaining to Opening Day, keep parents apprised of Opening Day plans and responsibilities, and provide assistance to league officials and league opening day coordinator as needed.

**Little League Day with the Mariners Coordinator:** Provide all team members with ticket order forms, collect money, submit order to the league and distribute tickets to families who purchase them.

**Party Coordinator:** Arrange a beginning and/or end of season party for the team.

To ensure everyone is on the same page, we recommend that you fill out this form and distribute it to all parents prior to the first game.

**TEAM NAME** .....

<b><u>Position</u></b>	<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Phone #</u></b>	<b><u>Email</u></b>
Manager	.....	.....	.....
Asst. Coach	.....	.....	.....
Asst. Coach	.....	.....	.....
Team Representative	.....	.....	.....
Telephone Volunteer	.....	.....	.....
Snack Coordinator	.....	.....	.....
Picture Coordinator	.....	.....	.....
Team Photo/Videographer	.....	.....	.....
Equipment Manager	.....	.....	.....
Score Keeper	.....	.....	.....
Umpire(s)	.....	.....	.....
	.....	.....	.....

Many teams have parents share dugout oversight and snack duties (a little food and drink for the kids after the game.) If possible, get this list filled out and distributed to parents before the season starts. Many coaches just assign snack in alphabetical order by last name.

<u>Game #</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Snack Provider</u>	<u>Dugout Manager</u>
1	.....	.....	.....
2	.....	.....	.....
3	.....	.....	.....
4	.....	.....	.....
5	.....	.....	.....
6	.....	.....	.....
7	.....	.....	.....
8	.....	.....	.....
9	.....	.....	.....
10	.....	.....	.....
11	.....	.....	.....
12	.....	.....	.....

# Skill Development Goals

Your secondary goal is to help each player on your team advance over the course of the year to the point where they all are prepared for the next level of play. To help give you a specific idea of what is required to advance, MI Little League has adopted a Skill Development Plan for each level of the league. The program provides our coaches with the skill expectations for each level of play, and provides both the techniques and drills needed to build these skills in your players.

## T-Ball: Boys & Girls

T-Ball is about learning basic techniques for throwing, catching, hitting and playing the game

<b>Pitching</b>	No pitching, tee ball		
<b>Outfield</b>	Ready Position	Proper suck up, turn and throw	Relay ball in to infield
<b>Infield</b>	Ready Position	Proper suck up, turn and throw	Proper throwing motion
<b>Hitting</b>	Address plate correctly	Correct batting grip and swing	Make contact with ball
<b>Catchers</b>	No catching, tee ball		
<b>Baserunning</b>	Know which base to run to		
<b>Situational</b>	Know which base to throw to		
<b>Sportsmanship</b>	Don't throw bat after hitting		

## Sluggers/A

Sluggers/A is meant to give players an introduction to a pitched ball, runs, outs and defense

<b>Pitching</b>	No live pitching, machine pitch		
<b>Outfield</b>	Field most balls hit slowly at them	Catch some fly balls hit at them	
<b>Infield</b>	Field most balls hit slowly at them	Catch some fly balls hit at them	Execute catch and throw correctly
<b>Hitting</b>	Consistently hit moving ball	Some lower body movement	Level swing
<b>Catchers</b>	Adult catchers		
<b>Baserunning</b>	Know how to run through first base	How to run from a base to another base	
<b>Situational</b>	Throw to right base for put outs	Advance bases per base coach	
<b>Sportsmanship</b>	Line up, shake hands with opponents after game		

## AA

AA is aimed at fully developing fundamental skills and introducing scored games

<b>Pitching</b>	Learn proper pitching technique in preparation for kid pitch		
<b>Outfield</b>	Field all balls hit slowly at them	Catch most fly balls hit at them	Throw to correct base
<b>Infield</b>	Field all balls hit slowly at them	Catch most fly balls hit at them	
<b>Hitting</b>	Make contact with machine pitch	Good lower body movement	Run to 1 <sup>st</sup> base and watch coach
<b>Catchers</b>	Maintain correct catcher's crouch		
<b>Baserunning</b>	Advance on overthrows	Lead off once ball crosses plate	Hold up on fly balls
<b>Situational</b>	Throw to right base for put outs	Don't throw ball around	
<b>Sportsmanship</b>	Learn to win and lose graciously	Behave responsibly at practice	Respect umpires calls

## AAA

AAA is designed to help young players get used to live pitching and called balls and strikes

<b>Pitching</b>	4 of 10 pitch strikes	Proper pitching mechanics	Proper backup on plays
<b>Outfield</b>	Field a ball hit slowly next to them	Catch fly balls hit next to them	Hit cutoff man
<b>Infield</b>	Field ground balls/fly balls hit next to them	Receive a throw at a base	Throw accurately after movement
<b>Hitting</b>	Drive ball through infield	Bunt correctly	Lay off bad pitches
<b>Catchers</b>	Consistently catch balls across the plate	Execute a throw to second base	Block balls in the dirt
<b>Baserunning</b>	Turn and look after three steps	Proper sliding form	Tag up on flyouts
<b>Situational</b>	Throw to right base for putouts	Learn basic coach signals	
<b>Sportsmanship</b>	Respect opponents, coaches, umpires, and coaches		

## Coast

Coast helps top younger players enjoy a more competitive opportunity, and older players advance in the league

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<b>Pitching</b>	6 of 10 pitch strikes	Pitch with location intent	Develop change up
<b>Outfield</b>	Field a ball hit sharply next to them	Catch fly ball running to both sides	Correct situational positioning
<b>Infield</b>	Field ground balls/fly balls hit sharply	Apply tags after receiving throw at base	Attempt to turn double play
<b>Hitting</b>	Drive ball past outfielder	Take pitches per coach signal	Hit behind a runner
<b>Catchers</b>	Occasionally throw out runner	Manage basic pitch signals	Catch pop ups
<b>Baserunning</b>	Run based on 3rd base coach signals	Steal on coach signals	
<b>Situational</b>	Know advanced coach signals	Play correct bunt defense	Correct field positioning
<b>Sportsmanship</b>	Help teammates improve	Set hustle example	

## Majors

Majors is competitive baseball/Softball for top caliber players, and is meant to prepare them for higher level play

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<b>Pitching</b>	8 of 10 strikes	Manage pitch count and game	Pitch to location
<b>Outfield</b>	Field balls requiring large movement	Catch balls on dead run, both sides	Throw out runners
<b>Infield</b>	Catch balls on dead run, both sides	Catch, apply tag at base, and throw ball	Turn double plays
<b>Hitting</b>	Drive a ball to or over fence	Manage batting count	
<b>Catchers</b>	How to block home on plays at plate	Hold runners at 1st and second	Call pitches using signal
<b>Baserunning</b>			
<b>Situational</b>	Execute sacrifice fly	Execute hit and run	
<b>Sportsmanship</b>	Help younger kids improve	Assist coach	Set example for team

## General Practice Guidelines

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### Teaching without Fear

When working with kids, one of the challenges is how to teach them things they don't know how to do without scaring them into thinking they can't do it. The following simple progression philosophy should help you work through these situations;

- First, teach without equipment
- Second, teach without fear
- Third, introduce pressure

For example, if teaching field ground balls (notorious for traumatizing younger kids when the ball bounces into their face,) the progression would apply as follows:

- Start with shadow practice...with no mitts or balls (just work to get the position and rhythm right);
- Add mitts and a mitt slap to replace the ball;
- Then give them a ball to slap and throw;
- Then slowly roll a ball at them, starting with a pickleball or tennis ball before moving to a baseball;
- Only when the show a lot of confidence with a slowly rolled ball (that won't jump on them) should you increase the speed. (If you get to increased speed and a kid gets hurt, you might have to take a few steps back to get the confidence back.)

With hitting (where kids battle a wide variety of fears), the progression would be:

- Start with a shadow swing to get basic mechanics correct;
- Then a pickle ball on a tee;



- Then a real ball on a tee;
- Then a soft toss from the side;
- Then a underhand toss from in front;
- Then a pitched pickle ball
- Then a baseball overhand slowly from the mound;
- Then faster overhand from the mound.

With pitching, the progression would be:

- Start with shadow motion without ball to ensure correct mechanics;
- Then shadow with ball;
- Then throw to a net;
- Then throw to a catcher without a batter from a shortened mound;
- Then from a real mound without batter;
- Then introduce a live batter with no swings;
- Then allow live swing practice pitching.

Most kids you will work with will have some fear of the game...getting hurt, embarrassing themselves etc. Applying these basic progressions will help your kids move through these fears, and progress further faster.

## What to Do With Talent Imbalances

With the exception of T-Ball (where there is no talent evaluation,) the process Little League uses to assign players to teams is designed to create parity within each division. And although each division has overlapping age ranges in order to cluster kids of similar ability, one of your challenges will be to coach a team with a range of talent. Successfully managing this situation requires that you be aware of some things.

First, there are many studies that show if practices are run incorrectly, teams can get to the point where the top kids don't want to play with the less talented kids, and the less talented kids don't even want to show up. **This is what drives young kids out of baseball and what we want to avoid.**

The good news is that there is widespread agreement on how to manage these imbalances and create the best practice environment possible. These tips are included throughout the Practice Plan section of this Coaches Guide. Please take the time to read and understand these tips, as they can make a huge difference in the morale of your team and how much fun your kids have playing.

In addition, keep in mind at all times that the Little League goal is to provide playing opportunities for all kids. We strongly encourage you to avoid setting up your team as an 8-3-1 format...with your 8 best kids starting every game, 3 of your weakest kids rotating in right field for two innings a game, and one kid not showing up for some reason or other. **We strongly encourage you to make sure that every kid plays an entire six inning game every other game (or that all players rotate out for an inning or two every game) and that every kid gets meaningful opportunities to play infield and pitch.**

## Getting the Most Out Of a Practice with Kids

As teams get older, focus will improve. But they are still kids. Getting the most out of them requires a balance of discipline and fun.

Some ideas that might help you accomplish this with your kids are:

- Keep your team active all the time by dividing practices into stations...idle kids are a handful;
- Teach, teach, teach...coaches should be providing constant instruction during practice;

- Provide at least twice as much positive reinforcement as negative. For example, always point out something they did right before saying what they did wrong. When you do point out a flaw, always show and tell them how to correct it;
- However, when a player does perform a skill incorrectly, immediately correct it. Practicing a skill incorrectly only reinforces and entrenches the bad habits. It is not "practice makes perfect"...it is **practice makes permanent**.
- Positively chart kids...find something good each kid did every practice and let the team know at the end of practice;
- Work with kids privately. Many kids are embarrassed if their skills are not as good...find some one on one time to help build their confidence.
- Constantly remind them that baseball is a team game and everyone needs to improve in order for the team to improve...including the best players
- Provide a written evaluation to each player showing them how you see their skills. Allow them to comment, and jointly set some simple goals for you to reach for together. The goal is to help each individual reach their potential as well as help the team develop.

## Making Sure Your Players Respect (and Obey) You

Gaining the respect of kids is harder than it looks. But doing so is less about how much you know about baseball or softball, than about showing them that you care about each player as a person. The first key to doing this is to LEARN THEIR NAMES! Bring name tags to the first few practices until you learn their names (tell them it's a league requirement – for safety). Get to know something about each kid. Connect with each player at every practice and game. Make the weaker players feel just as worthy to you as the strongest players. Remember, they are the ones where you can make the biggest different – both in their skills and self-esteem.

Secondly, use a few key words to convey what you need. Examples include:

Reset	When you want kids to redo something
Eyes Up	When you want your kids to look at you when talking
Circle Up	When you want kids to gather in a circle around you
Take A Knee	When gathering kids in a circle to talk

Also, when advancing to drills that may put a kid in a position to get hit by a ball, warn them in advance that it might hurt "a little bit" as opposed to "this might hurt." Let them know that things hurting "a little bit" is part of the game and something all ballplayers deal with. Since the kid may not have been hit before, they will not be able to calibrate the pain level. This will help most of them figure it only hurt "a little bit," and that is part of the game, allowing them to move past it and not regress.

## Use of Competition and Incentives

Boys especially have tons of energy and love physical challenge, especially in the 10-12 age range. Feel free to use competition to spark interest. Also don't hesitate to use pushups or sit-ups as a means of "punishment." Not only is it a good way to get their attention, but boys will thrive on this opportunity to show how strong they are.

## Equipment Choices and Lost Equipment

As a coach, you are undoubtedly going to be asked for equipment recommendations. Here are some simple rules.

- Get some **wiffle balls!** Or better yet, pickle balls. A bucket of a couple dozen waffle or pickle balls is a fantastic coaching tool, as it allows you to get a lot of batting practice in very quickly, without

requiring a cage or big field or endangering other kids and coaches on the field. Even coaches who can't throw hard balls for strikes can throw a waffle ball for a strike nearly every time and neither you nor the batter need to worry about being hit by a hard ball. Golf ball sized waffle balls are another great tool as they help the kids see and track the ball. Tell them that if they can hit a 1" waffle ball, they can hit anything they'll see in a game!

- For baseball, no kid should have a glove longer than 11 inches. If you need reinforcement, tell them that Derek Jeter's glove is 10 ¾ (this is true!) Longer gloves just make it harder for kids to handle them, making it harder for them to build confidence in their skills.
- For softball, gloves should range from 11 inches to 12 ½ inches. These gloves should have a deeper style pocket for the bigger softball. Look for good quality leather and make sure it gets properly worked in.
- Baseball/Softball cleats are required. Baseball/Softball has a bunch of side to side action, therefore, this requires a wider base cleat so kids do not roll their ankles. Soccer cleats have a narrower base since that sport requires more straight forward running. Soccer cleats should not be used for Baseball/Softball.
- Use the lightest bat you can afford. Subtract the length of the bat from its weight i.e. a 30 inch, 18 ounce bat is a -12. The recommended Little League range is approximately -10 to -12. At the younger ages, getting the bat around is key to getting hits. Also keep in mind the differences between baseball and softball bats – Softball bats cannot be used in baseball and visa versa. Keeping in mind that kids come in all sizes, some general recommendations are:

BATTER'S HEIGHT	3'-3/4"	3'5"-3'8"	3'9"-4'	4'1"-4'4"	4'5"-4'8"	4'9"-5'	5'1"-5'4"	5'5"-5'8"	5'9"-6'	6'1"-over
under 60lbs	26"	26"	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"	30"	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"
over 180	-	-	-	-	-	-	33"	33"	34"	34"

One final thing to keep in mind with equipment. Kids lose things. Kids forget things. To solve this problem quickly, make sure that every piece of equipment a kid brings has their name on it, including their mitt and bat. This will also help in assigning kids to stations.

## Throwing vs. Hitting Practice Balls

Somehow, it got into the baseball/softball consciousness that real coaches only "hit" balls. This is false... please get it out of your mind. At the pro, college and top camp levels, coaches running drills throw balls. Why? No time wasted with mis-hits, and each ball is placed perfectly for maximum training effect. Also, consistency removes the "that was unfair" chant that will quickly infiltrate your practices if you are not careful. So save yourself the trouble...throw balls rather than hitting them when running practices.

## Single Team vs. Two Team Practices

We recommend that you join up with another team for your practices. Not only does this help us with the very real issue of there being too many teams and not enough fields, but our experience has been that two team practicing together can provide significant benefits to both teams including:

- More coaches means more stations, which allows for more individual instruction and better skill development per practice;
- "Lead" coaches can better teach both kids and the other coaches, lifting the level for all and creating more uniformity throughout the system in skills being taught;
- Greater opportunities for coaches to leverage their individual strengths, specialties and interests;
- Coaches can more easily cover for one another if someone has to miss a practice;
- Better overall experience for all the kids - one coach or team experience (positive or negative) doesn't envelop a kid's entire experience for the season; and
- Players and coaches get extra social benefit from meeting and working with another team. Kids get to make and play with more friends this way.

Joint practices may require a longer practice and is a bigger logistical challenge coordinating more coaches and kids. But properly executed, we think you will find joint practices a great way to accelerate the development of your players.

Here's some more background (from another league) on what led us to the decision to move to a clinic format at the youngest ages, and to encourage joint practices for A/AA/AA/Coast/Majors:

*My son has a radical proposal.*

*First, some background: Off the field, it's been a nasty season in our league. Moms and dads are criticizing the coaches, the league commissioners, the kids, the umps, etc. The coach of the league-leading team has been accused (with some justification) of manipulating the draft to pack his team with stars. On every team, at least one mom is vowing never to let her kid play for Coach So-and-So again. Unfortunately, this sort of bile spills onto the kids. And they're fed up with it.*

*Last weekend, I asked my 12-year-old son what he thought of this mess, and he said, "Why can't everybody just let us play baseball and have fun?"*

*I asked him when he'd had the most fun playing baseball.*

*He said, "At camp." (A week of all-day baseball at the local university last summer.)*

*I asked him why the baseball at camp was so much fun.*

*He said, "Because there weren't any set teams. We got to play games, but every day you played with a different bunch of guys. So you got to make a lot of friends, and play a lot of different positions. And there weren't any parents around to show off [his words exactly] and cause trouble."*

*He pointed out that at camp, all of the kids (70 or 80) were spread out around the two fields at once. "So we could practice a lot longer we didn't have to take turns using the field with just 12 kids at a time."*

*During these practices, each coach took a small group and taught the skill he knew best. The groups rotated, and each kid practiced each skill daily. (And each kid got the benefit of each coach's strength.) Then, in the evening, the kids chose up sides and played games, with some coaches coaching and the others umping. These were usually close, exciting games, and we parents were allowed to watch. No politics, no power structure. Just spectators enjoying the games.*

*In short, the kids got to compete, but the adults didn't. My son also learned more baseball in one week than he had in the previous season.*

*My son wonders why our league can't operate in a similar way. I can't answer him. Has anybody ever tried it?*

# Running an Efficient, Productive Practice

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You are coaching kids. This is a unique challenge. More often than not, your primary challenge will be keeping the attention and focus of our players. To help you with this issue, below are some suggestions on how to get the best out of your players based on their age and ability level.

## Plan Before You Practice

In the days between practices, take a moment to schedule your practice. (A useful template is included in this guide.) Share this schedule with your assistant coaches so they know what is expected of them. And most importantly – **PLAN TO HAVE FUN!**

## Get to Practice Early

You will have limited time to practice with your team. So make every moment count. By arriving early, you not only set the tone for your team, but it gives you the opportunity to set everything upon the field for maximum efficiency. As many hands make light work, assign an assistant to meet you there early each practice.

## Finish Practices on Time

Parents don't have the time to wait around for their kids if practices runs on for 10-20 minutes longer than scheduled. Respect their schedules (and build parent support) by finishing practice at the appointed time.

## Set Up the Stations in Advance

This guide contains many drills for you to choose from. Assuming you have scheduled your practice in advance, you will know what equipment you will need to set up for your practice.

## The Secret to Getting Kids to Show Early

For most kids, their favorite thing to do is hit. So the first thing you should do at practice is drop your pickle balls in the outfield, and lean some bats against the outfield fence (or lay them down next to the balls.) Then announce to your team "first come first serve" pre-practice hitting. The first kid to touch the coach goes first, second goes second etc. Then, when more kids start showing up, set up two lines and just start pitching the pickle balls to them. Kids in line pick up balls (the coach never picks up balls.) By starting practice this way, kids are excited to come early, as opposed to dreading the first 15 minutes of practice (running, stretching etc.) and showing up late. They will put pressure on their parents to get them to practice on time. Give it a shot...you will be amazed at how effective this simple trick is.

## Keeping the Team Together

As outlined in the suggested practice agenda included with this guide, we recommend that your team stretch and warm up as a team. If possible, set up as many stretches as you have team members, and have everyone get the chance to lead the stretching (the coach takes over as captain if player is not there.) When the kids run, have them run together as a team. When they get together for stretching, align them in a circle so there is no hierarchy. Except for throw and catch, do not separate players by talent as that drives wedges in your team.

## Keeping Station Transitions Seamless

The majority of time lost in practices is lost during transitions. To keep things seamless and efficient, have an assistant coach set up the next round of stations 5-10 minutes before the transition. Then there is no down time setting things up...a time where you can easily lose control of your kids.

Finally, kids signed up for baseball/softball because they wanted to have fun!

- Fun does not mean always joking around or socializing, fun is improvement as well
- Most kids respond better to positive reinforcement than to negative

- Kids embarrass easily, especially when doing something in front of their peers
  - Specific combinations of kids can cause issues...always separate them
  - Standing around isn't fun. Use multiple stations so all kids are kept busy throughout the practice.
  - Use competition in your drills whenever possible. Kids love keeping score.
- 

## Read

**Making Little League  
Baseball More Fun  
for Kids**, by Randy  
Voorhees, in the MILL  
Library.

# Suggested Practice Template (A/AA/AAA/Coast/Majors)

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## Pre-practice

*(Coaches should arrive 15-20 minutes before practice)*

- Have assistant coaches set up equipment for practice
- Have head coach set up pickle ball batting station in outfield (be aware of other teams on field)
- First come first serve batting practice before practice based on when kids touch head coach
- Throw 20 pitches each kid (two stations) or keep throwing to early kids until others show
- Note the effect of this is that kids want to come to practice early!

## Warm-up/Stretching Exercises (10 min)

- Line up kids in a circle with no favorites or hierarchy
- Have kids stack their mitts in a pile prior to joining circle
- Have 1 stretching exercise for each team member present and assign a captain for each one
- Reinforces team and everyone gets a chance to lead

## Throwing and Catching the Ball (10 min)

- Have assistant coaches set up throwing stations
- Note coach should call out correct mechanical progression throughout
- Each station has pickle ball and real ball with mitt 7 feet apart down first base line
- Start kids with 10 shadow throws without mitts or balls
- Next, throw pickle balls with no mitt (this reinforces fundamentals) – 20 throws
- Have kids pick up mitts and practice real ball throws at 10 steps – coach calls out steps
- Have kids step back to 15 steps – 20 throws
- Have kids step back to 25 steps – 20 throws
- Have kids go to “longest throw position” where they can throw ball to within 5 feet of partner
- Return to 25 steps and finish with 20 throws
- Have all coaches observe this drill and focus on catching/throwing fundamentals. It is critical that coaches instruct and insist on perfect form for every throw and catch. Practice makes **permanent**.

## Station Based Drills (40 min)

- Six stations (Infield, Outfield, Hitting, Pitching/Catching, Base running, Situational)
- Run 3 at time with 6 minute rotations with 1-2 coaches at each, 4 kids at each
- Repetition is critical
- In fielding drills, the coach should throw rather than hit balls to ensure consistency
- Use two buckets for each fielding drill: one full with the coach and one empty at the location where the last ball is thrown (i.e. first base, home etc.) When the coach runs out of balls, switch buckets. Don't waste time throwing the ball back to the coach or having the coach/players fetch balls during the drill, as it reduces practice time.

## Strategy Talk (5 min)

- Pick one lesson for the day
- Use this opportunity to praise kids based on positive charting

## Simulated Game (25 min)

- Have your teams made up in advance so no time is lost;
- With single team practices, use 3 teams of 4 players (one team playing infield, one outfield, one batting, then rotate after three outs)
- Use coach as a pitcher to get more “hittable” pitches (this also will ensure kids’ arms are protected);
- Keep score to make it fun and motivate kids to give their best effort;
- Have coaches assigned to watch specific things – teach, teach, teach.





# Proper Techniques and Drills

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The following section provides you with the basic techniques for each major aspect of the game, plus provides some specific drills you can use to help your players develop their skills. **(T-Ball and Sluggers coaches...while many off these drills are aimed at machine and player pitch levels, every section has at least one T-Ball drill and most of the Basic drills can be adapted for your teams.)**

To help you decide which drills are right for your team, we have assigned them five levels;

- All**            These drills are suitable for all levels of play
- T**                These are T-ball specific drills
- B**                These are Basic drills, aimed at Sluggers and A/AA
- I**                These are Intermediate drills, aimed at AAA/Coast/Majors
- A**                These are Advanced drills, best suited for the Coast/Majors

To help you fine tune the drill for your team, we have added an **Additional Suggestions** section to every drill that contains suggestions on how to make the drill more difficult as your teams skills progress.

In addition, in many places we have added a **Coaching Tips** section, which provides you with things to look for or methods for addressing unique situations with your players.

We recommend that you evaluate your team’s capabilities and needs, and develop practice plans using the appropriate level of drill. In general, we recommend the following:

T-Ball	T-Ball Drills (marked with a “T”) and some Basic Drills
Sluggers/A	All Basic Drills
AA/AAA	Mostly Basic Drills with Some Intermediate Drills
Coast	Some Basic Drills with Mostly Intermediate Drills
Majors	Some Intermediate Drills with Mostly Advanced Drills

However, these are just suggestions. Tailor your drills to the level of ability and enthusiasm of your players.

One final note don’t be afraid to single out certain players and run them through Basic drills regardless of their overall talents. Even the best players need to get back to basic fundamentals from time to time.

# Stretching and Warm Up

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While young kids' bodies are pretty resilient, everyone can benefit from a little warm up, and it teaches kids that a proper warm-up and strength/conditioning work is an important part of athletics as they get older. Not only is it a good safety precaution and good for general fitness, but it is good to establish as a pre-game routine as well (helps get rid of the nerves.) Here are some suggested warm up ideas. Pick out the 12 that work for the age and skill of your team. Note that illustrations and descriptions of many of these stretches can be found in the **AI & AI Basic Baseball and Softball guide.**

## **Cardio Warm Up (30 reps for each exercise, fewer with younger kids)**

1. Jumping jacks
2. Push Ups
3. Arm Circles
4. Butt kickers
5. High knees
6. Skipping in place
7. Lunges with twists
8. Mountain Climbers

## **Stretch Legs (30 sec interval):**

1. Touch Your Toes (Wind mills are great, particularly for younger kids)
2. Cross your legs, touch your toes. (Right over lefts, left over rights)
3. Leg Crossovers (one leg flat, other leg cross over, opposite elbow behind knee)
4. Hamstring stretch, leg-in style
5. Hamstring stretch, hurdler style
6. Hip stretch
7. Groin stretch

## **Stretch Arms (30 sec interval):**

1. Overhead arm pull (both sides)
2. Behind back arm pull (Behind the back, arms behind back, pull elbow)
3. Chest arm pull (Arm in front and across chest, pull elbow, L & R)
4. Fingers interlocked in and push arms outward
5. Pull fingers back each hand/thumbs behind each back

# TAB 3 : Throwing & Catching

## Throwing the Ball

Baseball/Softball is a simple game of throw and catch. If your players can get to the point where they can all comfortably do these two basics, you have the foundation built to move on to the more complicated aspects of the game.

### Proper Throwing Technique

Proper technique for throwing the ball is illustrated in **AI & AI Basic Baseball and Softball guide**.

- a) Grip the ball with two or three fingers on the top (3 fingers for softball and smaller hands), thumb at the bottom, pinky on the side;
- b) Use a two-step throw: turn and plant the right foot (if right handed) with instep pointed at target, then lift left foot (if left handed, reverse);
- c) Point left shoulder at target so shoulders are parallel to throw and lock eyes on target;
- d) Lift both hands with ball in mitt to chest height in front of chest;
- e) Separate arms, swinging throwing arm down and back with thumb behind the ball (away from body), fingers pointed up and away, and elbow above shoulder, glove arm in front of body pointing at target
- f) Step towards target with left foot;
- g) Rotate throwing arm forward, releasing ball in front of body with wrist snap;
- h) Follow through with throwing hand towards target.

**Note:** For younger players:

- The “two-step” throw will be too complicated to learn all at once. Start them out from step c) above: get them into a T position, lift front foot and then step and throw. Then use a progression to get them to a full two-step motion by the end of the season.
- Separate throwing from catching. Lining up 5, 6 and 7 year olds playing in two rows to play catch with each other is counterproductive. Until kids learn to catch, they’ll spend much more time chasing balls than actually throwing. Give them each a bucket of balls and have them throw at a stationary target instead: a carpet square on a fence or a bucket, or – for the youngest kids – a blow up animal or toy works great. Then have all the kids run out with their buckets and pick up all the balls and repeat the drill

### Suggested Drills

**Basic Throwing (All)** Line up players in two lines (i.e. throwing partners) 10-15 feet apart  
Coach calls out steps as follows (per above throwing instructions)

- Grip
- Right Foot
- Left Foot
- Point Shoulder
- Lift
- Separate
- Step and Throw

#### **Additional Suggestions**

- Require that the ball is thrown and caught 10 times without dropping before ending drill for all
- Competition for most consecutive throws without a drop

- Competition to 10 throws without drop, sit down when they have completed 10 consecutive throws without a drop, if they drop they start over, last three teams do 10 pushups
- Have coach doing something funny (wear hat backwards, run the bases etc.) if everyone does 10 without dropping
- Have each line step back to make throws longer and harder
- Add in base tagging motion to develop kids' ability to throw low for a tag out (feel free to make it a competition with points for good throws.)

## Coaching Tips

- To help kids release ahead of their shoulder, challenge them to "see how long you can hold on to it"; have them practice throwing straight down into the ground ("see how high you can get it to bounce")
- To reinforce proper throwing motion, hold their arm in front of them, elbow up, and slowly extend arm;
- When watching kids throw, the proper motion should result in backspin;
- When a kid misses a throw, instead of going to get the ball, have a coach ready with a bucket of balls to replace it. The assistant coaches can pick up the missed balls during transition.

## Catching The Ball

Nothing builds a kid's confidence faster than the ability to catch a thrown or hit ball. It is not just the pride of accomplishment. It is also eliminating the fear of being hurt. So make sure all of your players have plenty of practice and can competently catch any ball hit or thrown in their direction.

## Proper Technique

The proper technique for catching a normally thrown ball is as follows:

- a) Position body behind the ball;
- b) Always catch the ball with two hands;
- c) Catch the ball in a circular window in front of the body;
- d) Position the hand like a clock...if ball is in top of window, mitt is pointed up with thumbs together, if at bottom of window, mitt is down with pinkies together;
- e) Stress that easiest way to catch the ball is to move your body so you are always catching ball in top half of window (i.e. mitt up); for low balls, move sideways to catch it in front of you.
- f) When ball arrives, reach out slightly to catch and squeeze the mitt to keep the ball in the glove, plus use your non mitt hand to cover the ball in the mitt to prevent it from popping out and to make transitioning to throwing easier.

## Suggested Drills

**Basic Catching (All)** Coach sits with bucket of balls  
Player stands 4-5 feet away in ready position  
Coach lobs balls to player

Teach the "**catching wheel**" progression...

- Younger players should start with ball low in front of body (position 1), then progress to glove side low (2), glove side high (3), and then in front of chest (4).
- More advanced players should progress to back hand high (5) and back hand low (6).
- Have players master each step before progressing.

Player moves to ensure that ball is caught in window using proper technique  
Player moves to ready throwing position but does not throw, runs up and puts ball into the bucket and returns to ready position  
Rotate player after 3-5 throws

**Additional Suggestions**

- Move player further back and vary location of lobs
- Add second player to catch throws allowing full completion of motion

**Coaching Tips**

- To teach kids proper catching form, have them throw and pickle balls without mitts... teaches them to catch with both hands and "suck up" ball
- Keep a mitt around with the webbing cut out...if a kid has bad catching technique (catching balls in the webbing rather than the palm), give them this mitt and make them catch balls for a while with it
- Alternatively, give the kid a car wash mitt or oven mitt to force them to learn to catch with both hands

# TAB 4 : Infield & Outfield

## Fielding a Ground Ball

Ultimately, your best fielders will become infielders. They will have the quickness, range, soft hands and strong arms required. At this level, your goal should be to help all of your players improve in these areas. The following techniques and drills should help. A good description of these techniques is available in **AI & AI Basic Baseball and Softball guide**.

- a) Player should start in ready position;
- b) Player should be in a squat type position, with back high, over the ball;
- c) Player should line up eye over mitt (left eye for right handers, right eye for left handers);
- d) Hands are out in front of body;
- e) Non mitt hand is slightly above glove (think alligator jaws) to help catch and to prevent ball from bouncing into face;
- f) Catch ball in front of body, and watch the ball into the glove.
- g) Move to basic throwing process (right foot, turn, left foot etc.)



### Suggested Drills

#### Ready Position (T)

##### **Objective: Teach ready position**

Line up team in a line down first base

Have kids stand normally

Call out "ready position"

Have coaches walk up and down line adjusting kids stances

#### Rolled Ball (B)

##### **Objective: Teach basic movement to field ball**

Put 3-4 players in a line, first player in front

Player assumes ready position

Coach rolls balls to player, start at 6 feet (move back as skills progress)

Player fields ball, and goes through throwing motions without throwing

##### **Additional Suggestions**

- Increase speed of rolled ball
- Vary ball delivery (i.e. some rolled, some little bounces, some big hops)
- Add person for player to throw to

#### Rolled Ball (I)

##### **Objective: Help players understand rhythm to fielding**

Same as Rolled Ball Station, but put ball on ground 3-4 feet left of line

Roll ball to left side of ball on ground

Player needs to move around the ball before fielding

Emphasize approaching the ball with rhythm and replacing feet before throwing

##### **Additional Suggestions**

- Increase speed of rolled ball
- Vary ball delivery (i.e. some rolled, some little bounces, some big hops)

## **Rolled Ball (A)**

### **Objective: teach players how to increase range**

Same as Rolled Ball Station

Roll balls widely to left and right of player

Player needs to crossover feet and turn hips to get to ball

In addition to emphasizing approaching the ball with rhythm and replacing feet before throwing, players need to work on evaluating the speed of the ball and taking appropriate angle to ball

### **Additional Suggestions**

- Increase speed of rolled ball
- Vary ball delivery (i.e. some rolled, some little bounces, some big hops)

## **King Of The Diamond (All)**

### **Objective: Train infielding technique in a competitive environment**

Set up 4-6 kids at 2<sup>nd</sup> base, coach at first base with empty bucket

Coach at home plate with full bucket throws balls to players

If cleanly fielded and thrown, player's moves to shortstop line, if not, stay at 2<sup>nd</sup>

If cleanly fielded and thrown at short, then to 3<sup>rd</sup> base line, if not, back to 2<sup>nd</sup>

If cleanly fielded and thrown at 3<sup>rd</sup>, player gets one point and returns to 2<sup>nd</sup> (or stay at 3<sup>rd</sup> to take increasingly difficult balls)

When player gets to 3<sup>rd</sup>, have them call out how many points they have, i.e. "one"  
Balls get harder as points increase - i.e. to get 3 points requires a very good play at 3<sup>rd</sup>

First player to three points wins

Great drill early in season to determine infield capabilities of players – also allows you to work with each kid at his level

Also, a fun way to end practice

## **Seam Drill (All)**

### **Objective: Teach player to pull 4 seams from glove (for truer ball flight)**

Encourage players to sit at home with glove and ball, and feel for seams

Lightly toss ball into air, then pull four seam grip. Goal is 20 of 20.

## **Coaching Tips**

- Encourage players to think about positioning to make easiest catch possible. More advanced players should work toward approaching ball with their momentum moving toward the base they'll be throwing to.
- Strongly reinforce on all drills fielding with both hands whenever possible
- Demonstrate "sucking up the ball" into your stomach to help develop soft hands. Their hands should follow a rounded "L" up to their stomach and then into a throwing sequence.
- If kids are having trouble throwing the ball accurately after fielding, watch their feet... very often, poor footwork is the cause of inaccurate throws – i.e. trying to rush throw and so not turning their hips and stepping toward target
- If footwork is good, watch their shoulder turn... make sure the shoulders are parallel to target before throw and aiming at the target
- Because infielders are put in a lot of situations that require judgment and knowledge of the situation, feel free to throw in pop quizzes where players are asked to define the situation and describe the right solution

# Outfield

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As kids progress through Little League, the outfield positions go from a place of banishment to an integral part of the game. By AA/Coast Softball, your kids should be able to handle some basic outfield responsibilities. By Majors/Majors Softball, they should be prepared to make multiple plays during the game and be a proactive part of your defense. To see an illustrated version of the techniques described, **see AI and AI Basic Baseball and Softball Guide.**

- a) Start in ready position;
- b) When ball is hit, first step should always be back; teach them to make a crossover step and run toward the ball rather than try to backpedal. The outfielder should be getting their hips turned ASAP to the direction they need to run to intercept the ball.
- c) Most balls hit to RF or LF tail towards the foul line, so drop step with angle to foul line;
- d) Goals is to catch ball if possible with momentum heading forward;
- e) For forehand catches, use both hands and catch ball at chest height;
- f) For backhand catches, use one hand in front of body;
- g) Run to position first, then field the ball;
- h) All running for balls should be done with mitt in, and reach for ball at last second;
- i) Outfielders should move towards backup positions on every play;
- j) When throwing, players should use a big power step and big arm motion to generate the most power;
- k) Remember baseball is a game of angles, and the best outfielders get the best angles on the ball.

## Suggested Drills

### Ready Position (T)

#### **Objective: Teach ready position**

Put outfielders in LF, CF and RF positions  
Have kids stand normally  
Call out "ready position"  
Have coaches work with players to ensure proper position

### Basic Catching (All)

#### **Objective: Teach player to get behind ball**

Two lines of 3 kids  
Coach with bucket 20 feet away, with one player for catcher  
Bring one player out at a time  
Coach throws ball in air  
Player catches with both hands and throws to catcher, move to other line

#### **Additional Suggestions**

- Vary ball angle (short, long, right and left)
- Add long toss catcher, cutoff man or man at base for player to throw to

### Cut Off Man (B)

#### **Objective: Teach player to get ball in to correct location**

One line of three kids 60 feet away  
One kid 30 feet away  
Coach with full bucket standing next to fence



Coach throws ball to far line, who catches and throws to cut off man  
Cut off man catches and throws to fence

**Additional Suggestions**

- Add bucket for cut off man to target
- Add points competition...1 point for every cut off man throw into bucket
- Conduct this drill with coach standing at 2<sup>nd</sup> base, and add 2<sup>nd</sup> baseman to catch ball from cut off man

**Over The Head (I)      Objective: Teach player to adjust to ball over head**

One line of 3 kids

Coach with bucket 20 feet away, no catcher needed

Bring one player out at a time, and player turns around

Coach throws ball over head of player and player chase for catch

**Additional Suggestions**

- Vary length of toss and side of head so player has to adjust
- Make sure players use proper footwork (first step back, crossover step)

**King Of  
The Outfield (B)**

**Objective: Train outfield technique in a competitive environment**

Set up two lines in outfield, roughly 20 yards apart, 3 kids each line

Coach with bucket stands 30-40 feet away against fence (so balls stop)

Kids call for 1, 2 or 3 level of difficulty catch

1 is easy, 2 is running, 3 is laying out

Game is to 10 points

Kids alternate lines

**Additional Suggestions**

- Set up bucket for kids to throw to, extra point if into bucket
- Set up relay thrower, extra point for hitting relay man
- Set up base coverage, extra point for great throw to base

**Seam Drill (All)      Objective: Teach player to pull 4 seams from glove (truer flight)**

Encourage players to sit at home with glove and ball, and feel for seams

Lightly toss ball into air, then pull seams. Goal is 20 of 20.

**Coaching Tips**

- Especially with younger kids, outfield is viewed as boring. So make it exciting by playing fun catching games (like king of the outfield.)
- Realistically, very few balls are going to get hit to the outfield in T-Ball, Sluggers and A. Coaches might reduce the amount of time given to outfield practice for these levels of play.
- Outfielders at older levels can occasionally drift off...use pop quizzes to stop play and ask outfielders where ball should go, game situation, where they are backing up a play etc. this will help give them tricks for staying involved in the game even when balls are not coming to them frequently
- Another way to keep their head in the game is to stress that outfielders should always be backing up plays they are not involved in.. i.e. on every play they should be moving somewhere.
- Many times, outfielders freeze when they get the ball as they don't know where to throw it. Starting at the T-Ball level, stress the need to relay the ball in via the cut off man and to either the correct base or the pitcher.

# TAB 5 : Hitting

Someone once defined hitting as “the sequential unlocking of body arcs, while arriving on time, on plane, in rhythm with maximized bat speed at the point of contact.” As your players (and perhaps you) have no idea what this means, we are breaking it down into some simpler bits.

Basic hitting technique has three elements: **Preparation, Lower Body Movement and Upper Body Movement.** Preparation puts the player into the right physical and mental position to hit. The Lower Body Movement is where power is generated. The Upper Body Movement is where quickness is generated. (Good hitters are strong downstairs, and relaxed upstairs.) To help your players make the most progress over the season, we recommend that these elements be taught separately.

When taught properly, these three elements will blend into a progressive act, starting with the mind, moving into the lower body, and finishing in the hands.

With that said, the greatest thing you can accomplish as a coach is to remove fear from the batter’s mind. This is especially true with younger players who are first experiencing a moving pitch or player pitched ball. This fear usually comes in one of three types (and frequently all three):

- A general fear of having something hard being thrown near you (apprehension);
- A specific fear of being hit by the ball (pain):
- Fear of failure: a strike out, poorly hit ball, foul out etc. (embarrassment.)

To help kids get over these fears, we have two specific suggestions:

- For the apprehension and pain fears, use the progression philosophy described earlier i.e. start without equipment, progress with fear removed, then introduce pressure;
- For the embarrassment fears, use positive reinforcement (i.e. you’ll get it next time) along with immediate training if a technique needs to be corrected.

Fear of being hit by the ball leads to a common tendency for many kids – particularly when they first move up to the wild, wild world of kid pitch, but also sometimes when they first start machine pitch – and that is stepping out of the batter’s box on any pitch that’s even remotely inside. To correct this, don’t just tell them to “hang in there – it won’t hurt”. It will hurt, maybe a lot. Instead, **teach kids how to avoid being hit, and have them practice it:**

- Throw tennis balls to them (and occasionally at them) to teach them to better judge merely inside balls from dangerous balls.
- For the latter, give them practice diving out of the way.
- For balls they can’t avoid, teach them to turn **away** from the pitch, drop the bat (so it doesn’t inadvertently get hit by the bat, resulting in a foul ball), and bend over so if they do get hit, the ball will ricochet off their back or hit them in the butt where it won’t hurt too badly.

Remember, in Little League, players must make an attempt to avoid being hit by the pitch, or it counts as a strike – so don’t teach them to stand there and “take one for the team”.

# Proper Technique – Preparation

Preparation is the key to being a good hitter. Getting in the right frame of mind is critical to believing that positive things are going to happen at the plate.

## 1. Be a confident hitter

- If you're afraid to fail and strike out, you will.
- Remember the best hitters in the game make outs 7 of 10 times
- See it, like it, rip it....keep the goal simple
- Help your players visualize success

## 2. Think Discipline

- Tell yourself you are only going to swing at half of the pitches thrown
- Try to swing only at strikes – even at the younger ages, begin teaching them good pitch selection

## 3. Bat and Equipment Selection

- Use a light bat! See Equipment Recommendations earlier in coach guide

## 4. Addressing the Plate

- Take your time... it is your at bat
- Hold up back hand until you are set
- Call time and leave the box if you are not mentally ready, then get mentally ready
- Plan to hit the ball one foot in front of the plate, test swing to make sure you are there.

## 5. Understand/Shrink The Strike Zone

- Most strikes are called between knees and waist.. so protect that area first
- Don't swing at high pitches until umpire starts calling them strikes
- Different umpires call different zones...so learn the umpire. Ask your teammates what his zone is.

## 6. Proper Grip and Stance

- Knocking knuckles (the ones you would knock on a door with) aligned
- Hold bat in fingertips, not in palms
- Keep hands and elbow low and comfortable...easier to maintain proper grip
- Stand with feet lined up towards pitcher, close enough to the plate that the bat covers the outside corner



## 7. Anticipate The Pitch

- 70–80% of pitches are low and/or outside, so be looking for this
- Look for middle-of-the-plate and away pitches, and be ready to make adjustments
- If you're looking at 2-0 or 3-1, be looking for a fastball
- Watch the pitcher while waiting to bat to see what they are throwing
- Ask batters ahead of you what they saw.

## 8. Don't Dwell On Failure

- Try to learn something if you fail, but don't dwell on it
- Move on to supporting teammates and next at bat.

## Suggested Drills

### **Plate Preparation (T) Objective: Teach batters correct bat grip and stance**

Place a group of bats and batting helmets 7 feet apart down the 1<sup>st</sup> base line  
Have players put on helmets, grip bats and assume proper batting stance  
Have coaches walk down line to adjust stance and grip

## Coaching Tips

- Show power in fingertips by putting finger in palm and squeezing, then finger in fingertips and squeezing.

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## Proper Technique – Lower Body

The lower part of the body is responsible for generating power. The better the lower body mechanics, the sharper the ball will be hit (and theoretically the farther it will go.)

### **1. Stride – Step and Coil**

- Your stride is only a timing mechanism, not a power generator
- Turn upper body away slightly as you stride
- Quiet – (think of stepping onto thin ice): 6 inches, max; no weight on front leg
- Takes us down into our legs, not out – take an athletic position
- Front leg firm – forces the hips around

### **2. Back Knee Trigger**

- Lift the back heel slightly
- Turn back knee and belly button to ball
- Should be a small and subtle movement, not a large obvious movement
- If pitch is inside, quick short turn, if outside, longer turn

### **3. Think Quick**

- Snake analogy – coil and strike
- The shorter the distance between the knees, the faster you can turn

## Suggested Drills

### **Basic Swing (T)**

#### **Objective: Develop the proper swing mechanics**

Line up bats and helmets along 1<sup>st</sup> base line, 7 feet apart  
Have players come assume correct stance and grip  
Coach calls out swing progression (stride, back knee, belly button, release)  
On release, kids should bring bat at contact point, and have weight on back leg  
Coaches walk up and down line correcting lower body mechanics

### **Balance Bar (B)**

#### **Objective: Develop a short quick stride**

Have kid stand on 36 inch raised platform and swing at tee or soft toss  
Goal is to swing with balance, thus not fall off beam

### **Volleyball (B)**

#### **Objective: Help kids keep knees together during swing**

Set up tee station  
Put volleyball between kids knees when they swing  
Don't have ball fall out during swing  
Goal is to have knees work in rhythm

**Tire (B)**                    **Objective: Teach shorter stride**  
Set up tee, soft toss or pitch station  
Have player put front foot inside car tire  
Have player swing at pitches (or off tee)  
Front foot should start and finish inside tire

**Crossover (B)**            **Objective: Teach balance**  
Set up tee station  
Player starts 2-3 feet away from ball on tee  
Player advances sideways stride to ball  
Coach calls out Right, left, swing

**Leg Lift (B)**              **Objective: Teach balance**  
Set up tee or soft toss station  
Lift front leg and balance for 3 seconds, then swing

## Coaching Tips

- Many kids will try to over-stride (or lunge at the ball) in the mistaken belief that they can generate more power with a bigger stride. The key here is to stress that power comes from rotation: a small stride with good balance and a **firm front leg** (which forces the hips around).
- Many kids will start their swing with their upper body, especially younger kids, as it is easier to swing the bat that way, and is probably what they learned in T-ball. Having kids work on lower body mechanics without swinging is a great way to help them develop good lower body movement.
- Watch for a loop or a hitch in kids swing when they start their lower body movement. They will usually raise the bat, or drop their hands, or otherwise start their upper body swing before their lower body movement is completed. Their hands should remain in front of their shoulder until their hips come around. To help solve this, simply have them keep their bat on their shoulder throughout the lower body movements (use the shirt drill, below, if necessary). If they need further help, have a coach hold their bat while they go through the lower body motions.

## Proper Technique – Upper Body

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- 1. Establish Dominant Eye**
  - Player holds out finger and points at thing in distance
  - Close one eye, then the other
  - Eye where distant object lines up with finger is dominant eye
  - Make sure dominant eye can see pitcher release point
  - At T-ball level, have players “watch the ball” with their dominant eye
- 2. Proper Arm Movement**
  - Hands stay inside ball at all times
  - Lead with front arm, barrel at shoulder, then release barrel with top hand
- 3. Elbows**
  - Front elbow must stay down (pinky finger parallel to ground)
  - Elbows down and together...the wider the elbows, the wider the swing, less likely to make contact

## Suggested Drills

**Volleyball (B)**            **Objective: Keep elbows together and create smaller, inside out swing**

Set up tee or soft toss station  
Put volleyball between elbows (alternate is to use jockstrap)

**Catch Ball (B)**  
**ball)**

**Objective: position hands so that barrel is back (i.e. like you would catch a**

Set up soft toss station  
Coach soft tosses ball  
Player catches with front hand, then back hand

**Hold Shirt (I)**

**Objective: Teaches hitting inside out and quiet hands**

Set up tee or soft toss station  
Player holds shirt and bat at same time  
Player releases shirt with swing  
This should help player keep hands inside the ball while swinging

**Bat Location (I)**

**Objective: Remove loop from swing**

Set up tee station  
Player puts bat once on shoulder and swings  
Then player lifts bat off of shoulder about 1 foot, then swings  
Then player holds bat out in front of body with hands flat so bat is parallel to ground  
This should help player level his swing

**Hum Drill (B)**

**Objective: Learning to relax through swing**

Set up tee or soft toss station  
Player starts humming in ready position  
Player continues to hum throughout swing  
Listen for umphs or acks or effort sounds  
Goal is to have player keep steady hum throughout swing

**Finger Count (I)**

**Objective: Helps kids recognize release point and pick up ball earlier**

Have coach mimic pitching with batter looking at release point  
Coach holds up different fingers and batter reads them out  
As alternate, player swings on one finger, holds on two  
Add push ups as incentive

**Toss w/Fakes (A)**

**Objective: Teaches kids to relax and wait on pitch to begin swing**

Set up soft toss station  
Coach soft tosses ball in front of batting net using a consistent motion and speed  
Every so often coach holds the ball and does not throw  
If batter starts swinging, pushups.

**Toss Change Up (A)**

**Objective: Teaches kids to recognize and wait on pitch**

Set up soft toss station  
Batter sets up in front of batting net like the 'Toss w/Fakes' drill  
Coach occasionally throws slow, lofting ball to see if the batter can adjust and hit it  
Approximately 75% of tosses should be regular speed and 25% change ups.  
Missed ball is 10 push ups.

**Closed Eyes (A)**

**Objective: Teach player to feel the swing and gauge contact point**

Set up soft toss station  
Player stands at tee and hits into soft net  
Player swings with eyes closed  
Concentrate on where the barrel of the bat is.  
Pushups for balls hit over the net (also focuses kids on swinging at top of ball)

## **Track the Ball (A)      Objective: Improve kid pitch recognition**

Set up soft toss station

Pitcher (coach) sets up 30 feet from batter who faces pitcher.

Pitcher throws ball into strike zone and objective is to NOT swing.

Batter is to keep body still and track the ball into the back of the net, quickly turning the head to see it hit the net.

If the batter swings, it's 20 push-ups!

## **Coaching Tips**

- All great hitters have three attributes (Balance, Relaxation, and Vision.) Make sure to evaluate each of your players on each of these items. Most do not possess all three... so this will help you identify which of the three each player should work on.
- As a simple rule, the contact point should be about 1 foot in front of the batter. Make sure they practice this at all times...and watch for kids trying to hit the ball at their belly button.
- Many kids, especially at younger levels (due to bad habits developed in t-ball), will try to sweep the ball to get more power. The swing will look funny... with the lead arm too straight before contact. **Arms should be bent all the way up until the instant before contact.** Reinforce that power comes from acceleration of the bat head, not the strength of the swing. Another thing to examine is bat weight: many times the bat is simply too heavy for the player... switch them to the lightest bat you can find.
- Many kids, especially at younger levels, will try to lead with their upper body to simplify making contact. To help them break this habit, focus on lower body drills without incorporating a swing, until they get the idea that the lower body and upper body are separate items.
- Watch for loops in swings... a good swing should be compact, straight and level with no loops. To help player pitch kids understand risks of looping, increase speed of pitches (they will not catch up with them.) Use the fence drill to correct a loopy swing. At younger levels, simply work on solid mechanics with no loop.
- Watch for kids allowing their bat to get ahead of their hands... this takes away their power. Teach them to keep their barrel back until the last possible second.

## **Bunting**

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Bunting is not allowed until AA/Coast Softball level and it is rarely used at this level, but this is when the teaching needs to start. By the Majors/Major Softball level, it is an integral part of the game. Detailed descriptions and illustrations of proper bunting technique are available in **AI & AI's Basic Baseball and Softball Guide**.

### **1. Front Foot Turn**

Take front foot and move slightly back and turn towards pitcher.

### **2. Back Foot Turn**

The back foot steps forward to replace the back foot, resulting in the batter facing the pitcher and both feet pointing towards the pitcher. Remember both feet must be in the batters box when the player bunts or they are out. Player should be on the balls of their feet.

### **3. Hands into Position**

Holding the bat loosely, keep the bottom hand at the bottom of the bat. Slide the other hand up to the start of the hitting zone (fat part) of the bat. Thumb and forefinger should form a V behind the barrel, thumb on top.

### **4. Just Before Contact**

Batter should lean forward on balls of feet. Bat is parallel to the ground and held at the top of the strike zone.

**5. Contact**

The hitting zone is directly over the plate, not in front of it. To bunt one direction or another, change the angle of the bat by extending or pulling back on the top hand. As the bat contacts the ball, pull both hands back towards the body to cushion the ball. To bunt a low ball, bend the knees rather than reach for the ball...keep arms stills.

## **Suggested Drills**

**Bunt Mechanics (All) Objective: Develop muscle memory for bunting**

Line up multiple players down line

Coach calls out steps "front foot, back foot, hands, contact"

**Live Bunting (All) Objective: Develop live bunting skills of players**

Player at plate

Coach with full bucket of balls 10 feet from plate

Coach calls out which line for bunt and pitches ball

**Additional Suggestions**

- Pitch ball lower in strike zone
- Move back and increase speed

## **Coaching Tips**

- For players struggling to bunt, use pickleballs until mastered
- For fast baserunners or talented bunters, consider encouraging them to drag bunt for a hit



# TAB 6 : Pitching

**“You can never have too much money, be too good looking, or have too much pitching!”**

Developing pitching talent on your team will be one of the hardest tasks you face, but one of the most rewarding. This is especially true for AA/Coast Softball coaches whose players are dealing with the challenges and pressures of live pitching for the first time.

All players on your roster should be taught how to pitch, should practice pitching in practice and on their own, and should be given opportunities to pitch in games. The more pitchers you develop who can throw strikes for you in games, the more successful your team will be. This will be especially true in baseball in the end-of-year tournaments when you might have 4 or 5 or even 6 games in 7-9 days. With the new Little League limits on pitch counts and mandatory rest days, you simply won't be able to get through these tournaments successfully with 2 or 3 or even 4 pitchers. The last thing you want is to run out of pitchers and have to put a kid out there who's never seen the mound all season. In softball, since the softball pitching motion is more natural, there are no pitch count limits, so you don't need as many pitchers, but still, you never know who might turn out to be your ace, so teach every girls to pitch and give them all some chances in games.

Although pitching is primarily a skill for AA/Coast Softball and up, pitching is a skill that kids should begin learning at the A/AA level – particularly in the AA league level where kids will be able to begin pitching the second half of the season. T-ball and Sluggers coaches do not need to worry about pitching, but it's never too early to teach kids proper throwing/pitching mechanics and have them practice throwing at a strike-zone sized target (a carpet square on a fence is great, or for the youngest players, a blow up animal or bucket).

**Two other very important notes:** curveballs are not allowed in Little League, and Little League has strict (and ever-changing) pitch count rules. Mercer Island Little League is very vigilant in enforcing these two. The number of kids under 12 having Tommy John surgery or otherwise having their baseball careers end due to throwing curveballs or overthrowing would astound you. We expect coaches to teach three pitches in this order: four seam fastball, two seam fastball, and a changeup. Your focus should be on proper technique and pitch location. We expect coaches to keep close count of kids' pitch counts (including pitches they throw for another team they may play on) and strictly follow the rules. See following section with Little League "Protecting Young Pitching Arms: publication and summary of pitch-count rules.

Softball pitching technique is not demonstrated here but we have an excellent video in the Mercer Island Little League

## Proper Technique

Proper pitching technique has six basic steps **(see AI & AI Basic Baseball and Softball pages 23-25.)**

Note for younger pitchers, we recommend you skip steps 1-2 and start the pitcher from the stretch position. Woven into these steps are the positions that pitchers should transition through (as detailed in **The Picture Perfect Pitcher**, by Tom House and Paul Reddick). Sometimes it looks like there is a great deal of variation in pitchers deliveries but most good pitchers will pass through these same (or very similar) positions and it provides a great way to understand how to coach each kid. The positions outlined in *The Picture Perfect Pitcher* are interwoven below so you can see the reference points.

### Pitching Steps:

#### 1. Set Up

- Grip the ball and hold in glove (four seam grip recommended)
- Place power foot (back foot) slightly over the edge of the rubber pointing towards home plate
- Lock eyes on target



## 2. Shift of Weight

- Take small step back with non-power foot (glove-side foot) – 4 – 6 inches step
- Bring hands to chest area with pitching hand holding ball in glove



## 3. Pivot

- Turn power foot (back foot) parallel to and step in just front of, but touching, the front edge of the rubber
- Step forward with non power (front) foot and turn hips parallel to direction of throw
- Lift knee of non-power foot to waist or higher until raised knee is above other knee
- Hands remain together
- Right hander will be facing third base, Left hander facing first base (**see Balance below**)

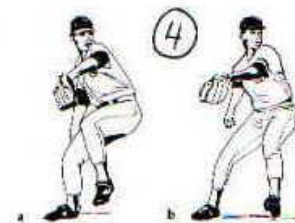


### Balance

The first absolute is balance. No matter whether the pitcher has a very flashy windup like Hideki Nomo, or a very slow deliberate windup like Nolan Ryan, they all get to the balanced position as shown in the photo at left. Balance is more than all your weight on the back foot. The front leg should be raised about waist level, and back as far as the rubber. The hips and shoulders should be cocked so that the batter can see the pitcher's numbers. This is the point most young players fail to reach. It is a little uncomfortable to almost turn your back on the batter. Also, the front foot should be relaxed and both eyes picking up the target.

## 4. Delivery

- Hands break smoothly as you thrust your front leg down
- Throwing hand with ball swings down and back with hand turned away, thumb under ball, fingers pointing up and away, elbow at or above shoulder height, elbow bent with arm pointing back (**see Equal and Opposite Elbows below**)
- Glove hand extended out towards target
- Aim towards target with lead shoulder
- Flex back leg (power leg) and start front hip turn towards plate
- Front foot steps and plants directly towards plate with foot at roughly 45 degree angle towards target – keep hips closed (parallel to direction of throw) as long as possible (**see Late Rotation below**)
- Bring arm through throwing slot as hips come around
- Release ball slightly in front of throwing shoulder
- If possible, release ball with snap of wrist and flick of fingertips



- Tuck in glove arm at release (**see Blocked-off Frontside below**)

### *Equal and Opposite Elbows*



The next absolute is pretty obvious. From the balance position, the pitcher separates his hands in a circular motion to get to the power position. At the power position, the upper arms are generally both parallel to the ground, though not required, and the elbows and shoulders should be in a straight line. A current major league pitcher that doesn't have his arms parallel to the ground is Andy Pettite. His front elbow is extremely high, but his back elbow is low to keep the elbow-to-elbow line straight. Dennis Eckersley was just the opposite. His back elbow was held high, but the front elbow stayed low. The biggest problem seen in Little League is that the front elbow never gets high enough. Kids tend to not want to block their view of the target and get their arm out of the way by keeping the front elbow too low.

### *Late Rotation*



Once the young pitcher has reached balance position, broken his hands out to power position, the next thing he wants to do is turn and face his target. However, by opening toward your target too early, you have taken away the use of your legs and hips. Late rotation means that you show your numbers to the batter as long as you can, until the body uncoils just before planting the front foot toward the batter. The pitcher should think about pointing the heel of the front foot at the batter as the pitcher dropped and started his glide to the plate. Just before impact with the ground the front foot turns to point to the plate, at the same time the body uncoils, or twists at the hips and shoulders.

### *Blocked-Off Frontside*

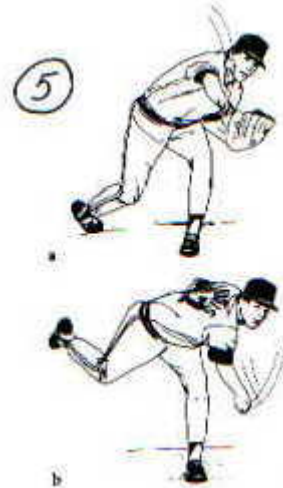


This simply means the glove comes to the chest, or chest to the glove, as shown in the photo at left. In an effort to throw harder, young pitchers will whip their glove around so that by the time they release the ball, it is down by their glove side knee, as seen in the picture at right. Once the pitcher flies open like this, all that is left to throw the ball is the shoulder and elbow, therefore both assuming a good amount of stress. By flying open, the pitcher's momentum is no longer going toward the plate, so control is a big problem if the pitcher does not block off the frontside.



## 5. Follow Through / Finish

- Power leg (back leg) pushes off of rubber
- Arm follows through to outside of glove side knee
- All weight on front foot



Once the ball is released, the pitch that the throwing elbow crosses the body and ends up on the outside of the opposite knee. To do this properly, the back has to bend, and the body extends toward the batter.

## 6. Fielding Position

- Bring power leg around to front of body and plant
- Pitcher assumes infielder position
- Hands up to protect against a 'screamer' right back to the pitcher

## Pitches & Grips:

Little League pitchers should be taught two pitches: the fastball and change-up.

### THE 4-SEAM FASTBALL

The 4-seam fastball is held with the index and middle fingers across the horseshoe of the baseball. The ball should be held out on the tips of the fingers with the thumb placed on the bottom of the ball. Keep the ball out of the palm of the hand. The 4-seamer is the pitch that can be thrown with the greatest velocity. The backward spin created when the pitch is released provides a true and accurate path. It is considered the easiest pitch to control. It is for this reason that the 4-seam grip is taught to every defensive player, due to its' accuracy.

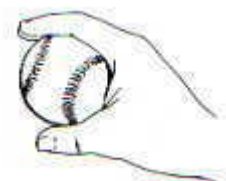


### THROW FASTBALLS!

Fastballs develop arm strength by building arm muscles. You get stronger through exercise. The fastball is the easiest pitch to control; hence a pitcher throws more strikes. Throwing strikes is the name of the game.

### THE CHANGE UP

Hitting is timing. If a pitcher throws the same pitch over and over again, regardless of its' speed, a good hitter will catch up to it. Using a change-up will add variety to your pitcher's arsenal and disrupt the batters timing. Also, the change-up is safe, unlike the dubious wisdom of teaching children the curve ball.



Think of the change-up as a fastball with a different grip. The motion, arm speed, release and follow-through are exactly the same as a fastball. In fact, this is imperative because if a pitcher tips off the change-up, it loses all of its effectiveness. In throwing the change-up, "choke" or "stuff" the ball deep into your hand. Unlike the fastball grip, you want the palm of the hand on the ball. The more skin you have on the ball, the more friction that is created and the result will be a pitch with less velocity. You may grip the ball with 2 or 3 fingers, across the seams. When releasing the ball, keep a stiff wrist. A good teaching point is to tell the pitcher to "drop" the ball onto home plate. "

The change-up must be thrown often in order to develop it. It can be a frustrating pitch at first but with repetition it will become an effective weapon. Experiment. Play around with grips until you find one that feels comfortable to you. Having a change-up causes the hitter to double his thinking at the plate. Throwing a fastball following a change always makes the fastball seem faster. The change-up disrupts timing, is easy on the arm and is great fun when you tie a batter into knots. The time you devote to practicing the change-up will pay great dividends!

### *Suggested Drills*

#### **Flamingo Drill (B)**

##### **Objective: Teach balance and transfer of power**

Player from stretch position raises front left above waist 10 times

Player adds push off and front leg plant 10 times – to Equal and Opposite Elbows

Player adds push off, front leg plant, delivery and follow through

Objective is to teach pitcher balance and transfer of power

##### **Advanced Suggestions**

- Run drill with live catcher
- Run drills with live batter and plate from regular mound

#### **Chair Drill (B)**

##### **Objective: Teach feel of finish on front foot and keep ball down**

Player places back leg toe down on chair behind him

Stretch out front foot until all weight is on front foot

Start pitching motion from T, with throwing arm back, glove arm cocked, body turned sideways

Have player throw ball at target or catcher all the way to follow through

##### **Advanced Suggestions**

- Run drill with live catcher
- Run drills with live batter and plate from regular mound

#### **Location Drill (I)**

##### **Objective: Teach pitchers to throw to location**

Coach numbers pitch locations (1–Upper Left, 2–Upper Right, 3–Lower Left, 4–Lower Right)

Coach calls out location before each pitch

Pitcher throws from bucket of balls into soft net with strike zone taped (or hang a carpet square on the fence).

##### **Advanced Suggestions**

- Have competition between pitchers for most points
- Catcher provides signal to pitcher
- Coach calls out count and situation, pitcher calls out location

#### **Bad Times Drill (I)**

##### **Objective: teach pitchers to shake off bad events**

During simulated game, allow runners to advance or score without play

This should frustrate pitcher

Teach pitcher to leave mound and focus on "safe" location...point in outfield that helps them clear their mind

### **Advanced Suggestions**

- Change count on pitcher (add strikes or balls to make situation harder)
- Teach catcher to recognize pitcher frustration and call timeout to go talk to pitcher.

### ***Coaching Tips***

- Some common basic mistakes to look for are hips opening too early, not getting the pitching arm all the way back, and not keeping the elbow above the shoulder throughout delivery. All three reduce the power and control of your pitcher.
- **If your pitcher seems to be short on power, look for too big of a loop in throwing arm motion.** Many kids drop their arm below their hip when they start their motion, creating too big a big loop. This substantially reduces their power, and can significantly impact balance and momentum. Make sure the pitcher takes their throwing arm with a small loop. You might also look for **a front foot turned sideways.** If the front foot is turned sideways when planted, the pitcher is throwing across their body, thus robbing them of 20-30% of their power. The foot should be turned approximately 45 degrees towards the plate.
- **If your pitcher is throwing high and wide, look to see if they are releasing the ball early.** The most common cause of high or wide pitches is the pitcher is releasing the ball behind their shoulder. To bring ball down and in, help them move their release point ahead of their throwing shoulder. This also reduces arm strain. **You should also look for a Short Stride** This shortens the throwing motion forcing the pitcher to release the ball early. To help lengthen the stride, mark the spot where their front foot should plant with a piece of tape or an X in the dirt.
- **If the pitcher is consistently throwing balls in the dirt, the cause may be over striding.** As with the short stride, identify the proper location for the front foot plant.
- **If the pitcher is consistently throwing low and away, they may be opening their front shoulder too early.** Look for them pulling their body open due to pulling sideways with their front arm...correct by having them pull down with front arm. They may also simply be opening up their front shoulder...work on keeping it closed until later in the motion.

# TAB 7 : Catching

Catching is an undervalued part of the Little League game. In many ways, it is the most important position on the field. While at the beginning, the hope is simply to have the catcher catch the ball, as they progress, catchers can impact pitch calls, infield management, pitcher mindset, plate blocking and throwing out would-be base stealers. Teaching kids early that catchers are important is critical to developing kids who come to love the position. Of course, there are no kid catchers at the T-Ball or Sluggers level, so this applies only to A and above.

## Stances (Half the battle!!)

- A) Signal Stance (Between Pitches)
  - 1) Feet close together and knees outside feet
  - 2) Block base coaches view with glove and legs
- B) Receiving Stance (Nobody on base)
  - 1) Feet approximately shoulder width apart and knees inside feet
  - 2) Glove starts around knee high with thump parallel to ground
  - 3) Glove arm starts around 120 degree angle
  - 4) Bare hand starts behind foot
- C) Ready Stance (Runners on base/2-strike)
  - 1) Feet slightly wider than should width apart with toes as straight to pitcher as possible
  - 2) Rear end higher than receiving stance, but no higher than knees
  - 3) Glove and glove arm start the same as receiving stance
  - 4) Bare hand starts behind glove (depending on age of player)



Signal Stance



Receiving Stance



Ready Stance



## Receiving (Centering)

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- D) Soft action and stick the pitch (give umpire the best view possible)
- E) Slight give with glove and glove arm straight line toward belly button
- F) Keep chest square to pitcher
- G) Shift weight to side of pitch to center it in front of chest
- H) Keep thumb parallel to ground as much as possible

*Drills: Tennis Ball (Bare hand), Coach/Player Toss, Angle Receive, Shadow Receive*



Receive Right



Receive Middle



Receive Left

## Blocking

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- A) Knees on ground, feet flat (laces down), glove between knees (straight up/down), bare hand behind glove, elbows to side, forearms flat to pitch
- B) Center ball in chest as much as possible, chin to chest as pitch arrives, slightly roll shoulders forward and angle upper body to absorb pitch
- C) "Half Moon" path for pitches left and right
  - 1) Angle increases the farther pitch is to side
  - 2) Control blocked pitch towards home plate

*Drills: Sit and Get Hit, Coach/Player Toss, Hands behind back, Wildcats, Shadow Block*



## Throwing

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A) 2<sup>nd</sup> Base

- 1) Jump Shift (Gain ground, back foot hits first, straight line to 2<sup>nd</sup>)
- 2) Transfer (Go get ball with bare hand, Glove doesn't come back past midline, Keep ball above waist)
- 3) At landing (Balls of feet, Chin over belly button, Glove elbow to target, Ball at its highest point and facing away from target)
- 4) Head stays on line, Chest to glove, Throw through target (low trajectory)

B) 3<sup>rd</sup> Base

- 1) Step behind to establish lane to 3<sup>rd</sup> base (Hitter doesn't have to move)
- 2) Transfer, Landing same as above

C) 1<sup>st</sup> Base

- 1) Big Jump Shift to establish lane to 1<sup>st</sup> base
- 2) Transfer, Landing same as above

*Drills: Jump Shift & Stop, Jump Shift/One Leg Hop, Coach/Player Feed, 5 Hop*



**Landing Position**



**Landing Position**

## Tag Plays

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- A) Start with left heel on front left corner of home plate, toe pointed down 3<sup>rd</sup> base line (encourage runner to wide side of home plate)

- B) Ball in bare hand with glove around it (ideally)
- C) Use right knee/shin guard to block home plate
- D) Tag runner and pop up/roll with force of runner

*Drills: Coach Feed*



**Tag Play Ready**



**Tag Play**



**Tag Play Finish**

# Bunts

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- A) Surround ball and get feet set to target prior to picking up ball
- B) Pick up ball in between feet
- C) Rake ball into throwing hand using glove
- D) Same throwing position as jump shift

*Drills: Coach Feed, 4 Corner (Player Feed)*



**A & B**



**C**



**D**

## *Coaching Tips*

- Have multiple catchers practicing drills at same time to increase catching depth... if you don't have the equipment for multiple catchers, just rotate the mask and glove between catchers, and use waffle or tennis balls for the others.
- Rotate catchers during simulated games

# TAB 8 : Baserunning

If you let it, base running can be one of the most boring parts of a practice for your kids. However, it is a critical part of the game, and often the one that makes the difference between winning or losing games. So make sure to give a little time each practice to base running. If you use the suggested drills and add some competition into each drill, your kids will have fun and you will have a better prepared team.

## Proper Technique

### 1. Pick and Flick

In general, players should run using "pick and flick" motion with their arms, not arms across body. In this motion, arms are bent at elbows and at top of motion, thumbs are near nose. (By calling it pick and flick, the kids will definitely remember this motion!)

### 2. Step on Front of Bag

Top or back of bag can injure ankle

### 3. Look at Base Coaches

Players running to first should look at and listen to first base coach. Players running to second or third should look at 3<sup>rd</sup> base coach.

### 4. Run as Straight as Possible

Players should run straight between bases and avoid big loops... just makes distance farther

## Suggested Drills

### Base running 101 (T) Objective: Help players understand the bases and where to run

Players line up at plate

Every time coach yells "hit" one player runs to 1<sup>st</sup> and stops

Then coach yells "hit" again, and player at 1<sup>st</sup> runs to 2<sup>nd</sup> and stops, and player at home runs to 1<sup>st</sup> and stops.

Continue until all players have rounded all bases.

Keep this drill going quickly otherwise hard to keep attention occupied

### Hit and Look (B)

#### Objective: Help players get at least three steps before looking

Players line up at plate

Coach yells hit

Players run three steps at full speed towards first

At three steps, player looks at hit to see if it went through

#### Advanced Suggestions

- Have coach stand at short or second base and hold up fingers (1 is fielded, 2 is through) and have players call out the number of fingers

### Run Through 1<sup>st</sup> (B) Objective: Help players learn how to handle turning at first base

Players line up at plate

Coach yells hit

Players run to first and strides (like sprinter) at base

Then continues 5-10 feet up line with no turn, slows down with stutter steps and look toward fence to see if ball got by first baseman.

### **Advanced Suggestions**

- Have 1<sup>st</sup> base coach shout stay or go...if go, runner turns to second

### **Fly Balls (B)**

#### **Objective: Teach kids what to do when on a fly ball**

Coach throws fly ball

Player takes 3 shuffle steps

Coach yells catch, and player returns to base

Coach yells tag up and player returns to base for tag up, then run to second

Coach yells drop and player runs to second.

### **Advanced Suggestions**

- Coach calls out number of outs right before throwing ball

### **Overthrows (B)**

#### **Objective: Teach kids what to do on an overthrow**

Player on first base, one coach at 2<sup>nd</sup> base, one at 1<sup>st</sup> base coach

Coach at 2<sup>nd</sup> throws ball into fence

1<sup>st</sup> base coach says go or stay

If go, player runs to second and slides in.

If stay, player stays on base, then returns to end of line.

### **Advanced Suggestions**

- Throw ball from different bases (short, 3<sup>rd</sup>, home etc.)
- Practice drill from different bases (2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup>) with overthrows into the outfield

### **Lead Off Drill (A)**

#### **Objective: Teach players how to lead off base on every pitch**

As LL does not allow lead offs until after the pitch crosses the plate, this drill is either for players who will be playing in a PONY based game, or taught as something players should do after the pitch has been thrown in LL

Player takes one crossover step plus one shuffle step

Make player do pushups every time he looks at base...never take eyes off of pitcher

### **Dive Backs**

#### **Objective: Teach players safe/effective way to return to base during pick off**

Players takes lead

Pitcher makes throws to base (without ball, then with ball)

Player dives back headfirst to outside of base (to protect face from tag or ball and to see where ball goes if overthrow

### **Coaching Tips**

- When kids are on third, they should always lead off in foul territory. This prevents them from being hit by a hit ball (thus they would be out.)

# TAB 9 : Situational

The vast majority of games lost by MITT teams, especially younger teams, are due to improper situational play. So whether you run a simulated game or have a coach walking kids through game like situations, situational game practice is critical to the development and success of your team.

In order to have the best situational experience, we recommend the following:

## **Assign Coaching Stations**

- 1 Umpire (one person in charge of calling balls/strikes and game)
- 1 Infield (focus on positioning, situational, cutoffs, steals)
- 1 Outfield (focus on positioning, situational, counts, cutoffs)
- 1 Pitching/Catching (focus on teaching location and situational)

## **Stop Play to Teach**

After each play, each coach should take a moment to reinforce the situation. Each coach should reinforce the lesson for their area of responsibility (this requires coordination among the coaches.)

## **Have Coaches Pitch**

To ensure kids are not overworked, and to keep the action moving, coaches should do all pitching during the game. Don't try to intermix pitching practice with fielding and hitting practice.

## **Train Proper Batting**

If running a simulated game, before each pitch, the batter should be reminded to step out of the box, set their mind, address the plate correctly and be fully prepared for the next pitch. This will slow the game down a bit, but teaching batting discipline and proper address at the plate is critical. If you notice that a kid is not swinging well, don't be afraid to remove them from the game or the at bat and have a coach do some soft toss work. They can always be easily reinserted later. Finally, for your better players, make things fun and interesting by challenging them to hit the ball to a certain part of the field. While very advanced, it is a great time to train them to think about hand movement, body position and pitch count.

## **Manage Every Pitch**

The catching coach should be talking to the catcher at least every at bat if not every pitch. If signals are being used, the catcher should be included in these conversations to discuss batter tendencies, pitch counts and pitch location strategies. Catchers should be encouraged to talk to the coaches pitching, and discuss situation, pitch count, batter type signals or plays.

## **Don't Overdo It**

Why some skills and situations can only be learned in a simulated or real game, it comes at a cost, because most players get very little action in any given game. So make sure the majority of every practice is spent in stations doing drills where the kids get lots and lots of repetition and individual attention.

## **Playing a Simulated Game with a Single Team**

Divide your team into 3 equal squads of 4 players each: one bats, one in the infield, one in the outfield. After 3 outs, rotate. Use coaches as pitcher and catcher (or don't use a catcher) to keep the game moving along quickly. Keep score to make it fun and competitive.

## **Situations to Look For**

As the game progresses, there will be multiple opportunities to teach fundamentals. Some specific things to look for include (need to add lessons for each):

## Skill Development Path

	<b>Skill</b>	<b>Measurement</b>	<b>Drills</b>
<b>9U</b>	Understand the game Throw to proper base Advance bases per coach Take Pitches Bunt when requested Steal when requested <b>Back up correct base</b>	Understands outs, strikes, balls and scoring Base thrown to # of advanced bases Pitches taken # of bunts # of steals <b>position of players</b>	
<b>10U</b>	Draw throws w/man @ 1st/3rd Executed Delayed Steal	# of throws drawn # of delayed steals	
<b>11U</b>	Hit and Run	# of hit and runs executed	
<b>12U</b>	Anticipates situation	Goes to position without coach input	

## Offense

- Running to first
  - Upon a hit, watch ball to see if it gets thru infield
  - If no, head down and run to base
  - If yes, run with head up watching how ball is fielded in outfield
  - If bobbled, take extra base
  - If infield makes throw to 1B, look towards foul territory at 1B to see if there is an error and if you can advance
  - Do not turn left or right until you have made a decision on your baserunning
- Taking an extra base
  - On any hit to the outfield, remind the batter to watch the first base coach for a signal on whether to take an aggressive turn or not
- Don't look when stealing
  - Head down and go
  - Decide on your type of slide before you steal
  - Always slide
  - Slide with head facing outfield to protect face and see if balls gets away
- Sliding vs. Standup
  - When heading into third look at coach for signal to slide or standup
  - Always slide when stealing
- Offensive vs. Defensive Pitch Counts
  - 2-0 and 3-1 are offensive pitch counts...meaning the batter is more likely to swing offensively, resulting in a more sharply struck ball. Baserunners should be ready to move
  - Any two strike count is more of a defensive pitch count, meaning the batter is more likely to swing defensively, meaning a less sharply struck ball. Baserunners should be ready to create fielders choice or break up play at lead base
- Fielder Assessment
  - Both when on base and when on bench, players should be evaluating the abilities of the players in the field, especially the arm strength of outfielders. If outfielder has weak arm, baserunner should be ready to challenge that arm until it is proven they can throw you out.

## Defense

- Player Positioning
  - Always stress positioning with your players

- Always discuss the situation and have players think about where they should be
- Teach players to learn opponent tendencies and make assumptions...for example, a hard throwing left handed pitcher pitching to a left handed batter will be more likely to produce a hit to the left side, so all players should shift left
- Observe opponent hitting tendencies during the game and shift players accordingly
- How Many Outs
  - The shortstop and catcher should both remind entire infield how many outs with every batter. Centerfielder reminds outfield
  - Make every player hold up their fingers with how many outs every batter....don't be afraid to ask them to do it every batter.
  - Use this simple act as a means of asking them what they should be doing for positioning and for executing the play.
- Location of Play
  - Ask your players "what happens if"...it teaches them and keeps them engaged in the game
- Establishing an on Field Leader
  - Typically, the shortstop or catcher is the leader (or both)
  - Look for someone with high energy and enthusiasm
- Man on first, less than two outs
  - Remind infield to get lead runner
  - Remind 2<sup>nd</sup> base to cover on ball hit to left side of infield
  - Remind shortstop to cover on ball hit to right side of infield
  - Remind pitcher to cover first on ball hit to first base
  - Remind catcher to back up throw to first base
  - Remind outfield to throw to third on ground ball
  - Remind outfield to throw to second on caught fly ball
  - Remind 2<sup>nd</sup> and shortstop to move to cutoff position on ball hit to outfield
- Man on second, less than two outs
  - Remind infield to try to hold runner before throwing to first
  - Remind 3<sup>rd</sup> base to be prepared for play at base
  - Remind 1<sup>st</sup> base to be prepared to throw to 3<sup>rd</sup> base
  - Remind catcher to cover home
  - Remind outfield to throw to third on fly ball
  - Remind outfield to throw to home on ground ball
  - Remind 2<sup>nd</sup> and shortstop to move to cutoff position on ball hit to outfield
- Man on third, less than two outs
  - Remind infield to try to hold runner before throwing to first
  - Remind catcher to be prepared for play at base
  - Remind 1<sup>st</sup> base to be prepared to throw to home
  - Remind catcher to cover home
  - Remind pitcher to back up throw to home
  - Remind outfield to throw to home on fly ball
  - Remind outfield to throw to second on ground ball
  - Remind 2<sup>nd</sup> and shortstop to move to cutoff position on ball hit to outfield
- Man on first, ball to right field
  - 1<sup>st</sup> baseman goes to first, backed u p by catcher
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> baseman moves to cut off location
  - Shortstop covers second base
  - Third baseman backs up cut off throw and is ready to cover third
- Sacrifice situations
  - A runner on first or second with less than two outs is a typical sacrifice situation.
  - Third base and first base should play inside the bag and be prepared for a bunt
  - Pitcher is expected to cover first base on bunt
  - Shortstop covers third base
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> base covers second base
  - Catcher should be prepared for fielding bunt



- Bunt Defense
  - A runner on first or second with less than two outs is a typical bunt situation
  - Also look for players who are speedy and might bunt to get on Third base and first base should play inside the bag and be prepared for a bunt
  - Pitcher is expected to cover first base on bunt
  - Shortstop covers third base
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> base covers second base
  - Catcher should be prepared for fielding bunt
- Pulling a pitcher
  - Pull a pitcher based on pitch count without hesitation...we don't want to injure arms
  - As part of getting to know your pitchers, look for the signs that they are tiring...it may be different for each pitcher. But typical signs are body language, high or outside pitches, and long pauses between pitches.
- Calling a pitchout
  - A pitchout is simply the pitcher throwing to the catcher outside the strike zone, with the intention of making it easier for the catcher throwing out a base stealer.
  - Pitchouts are usually called early in the count (i.e. 1-0, 2-1 etc.)
  - Pitchouts are never called with 3 balls

# TAB 10 : Standard Signs

Signs are an integral part of any baseball game. MITT has decided to use a progressive signing system that ensures that signs are the same throughout the program. This allows younger players to quickly master initial basic signs, then build on that base, progressing through more complicated signs as they get older.

The MITT Signing System is based on a basic set of definitions as follows:

Indicator	A movement that starts the sequence of signs
Sign	A movement or combination of movements signaling actions to batter/baserunner
Wipe Off	A movement that erases all previous signs and restarts the sign process
Decoy	Any movement made before the Indicator

Our process for signing is also straightforward:

- Step 1 Player stands with one foot in batters box and one foot out, and looks at third base coach, baserunners look to 3<sup>rd</sup> base as well
- Step 2 3<sup>rd</sup> base coach runs through decoys, indicator, wipe offs etc and conveys play to both baserunner and batter
- Step 3 Batter taps helmet to confirm receipt of sign or taps bat to request replay of signs
- Step 4 Batter steps into batters box to begin play

## Skill Development Path

	<b>Skill</b>	<b>Measurement</b>	<b>Drills</b>
<b>9U</b>	Hit Take Bunt Steal	Knows sign and executes Knows sign and executes Knows sign and executes Knows sign and executes	Batter/Baserunner Signs Batter/Baserunner Signs Batter/Baserunner Signs Batter/Baserunner Signs
<b>10U</b>	Delayed Steal Draw The Throw Bunt to direction	# of successful delayed steals # of drawn throws Bunts laid down in proper direction	Batter/Baserunner Signs Batter/Baserunner Signs Batter/Baserunner Signs
<b>11U</b>	Pitching Signs Sacrifice Fly	Play happens without coach input # of sac flies successfully executed	Pitching Signs Batter/Baserunner Signs
<b>12U</b>	Hit and run		Batter/Baserunner Signs

## Batter/Baserunner Signs

Stealing	Tap on the right leg
Delayed steal	Touch a finger to the chin (runner beware on this one)
1 <sup>st</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> steal	Inverted outstretched hands (runner on 1 <sup>st</sup> looks to get in pickle)
Hit and Run	Tap on the left leg
Swing Away	Touch a finger to the nose ("hit it on the nose")
Swing Away	Fist to fist
Sacrifice Bunt	Right hand to ear
Bunting for a base hit	Left hand to ear
Take the Pitch	Hand from left to right shoulder ("choke" sign) (remember to fake the bunt and pull it back every time you take a pitch)
Tap on top of head	Signs remain the same as last time
Finger Pointed Toward You	You are on your own. Be smart!
Wipe off	Tap of cap

## Pitcher Signs

- 1 – Fastball
- 2 – Changeup
- 3 – Additional pitch
- 4 – Runners on 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> play, see below
- 5 – Runners on 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> play, see below
- Fist – Runners on 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> play, see below
- Hand to waist/belly button – pitch low and inside
- Hand to chest – pitch high and inside
- Hands Extended low – pitch low and outside
- Hands Extended high – pitch high and outside

## Catcher to Pitcher and 2B/SS Signs

- 1      Fastball
- 2      Changeup
- 3      Pitchout
- 4      Runners on 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, catcher throws to 2<sup>nd</sup> baseman or shortstop cutting 15 feet in front of the bag and then looking to throw out the runner coming home
- 5      Runners on 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, catcher throws out runner at 2<sup>nd</sup> base
- Fist    Runners on 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, catcher throws hard back to pitcher, pitcher looks back runner at 3<sup>rd</sup> and then looks to throw out runner at 2<sup>nd</sup>

# TAB 11 : Softball Specific Section

## Outfield Drills

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### **Bounce Throw Competition**

Objective: Work on getting your outfielders to throw the ball to home on a bounce rather than on the fly. It is easier for the catcher to see the ball and less likely for the catcher to get hurt.

Put a base 15'-20' in front of home plate. The outfielder should hit that base with the throw, which should then bounce once or twice to home. Outfielders stand 120'-140' from home plate in a line. The ball is tossed to the outfielder who then throws home.

Make it a Game: Each player gets as many throws as time allows. High score wins. Scoring: more than two bounces = 2 points, two bounces = 3 points, one bounce = 4 points, no bounce, but good throw on the fly = 1 point

### **Relay Competition**

Objective: Work on hitting the cut off properly while making the throws and relay as fast as possible.

Divide players into teams of 3 or 4. Each team has one player at each end and one or two in the middle (relay person(s)). Each team has one ball. On "GO" the first player throws to the relay person in the middle who turns and throws to the player on the other end. The throws are then reversed. Time the process from the 1st throw to the last catch. Players then rotate, end 1 to middle, middle to end 2, end 2 to end 1, so each player has a turn in the relay position. The fastest time wins.

### **Blind Drill**

Objective: Develop the skill of picking up the ball in flight, then moving to the ball and catching it.

Outfielder starts with back to thrower. Thrower tosses fly ball into the air and yells, "GO". Outfielder turns around, picks up the ball in flight and catches it. You can run this drill with one or two outfielders.

### **Two Ball Drill**

Objective: Add-on to the Blind Drill to make the drill tougher.

As the outfielder is catching the first ball, the thrower tosses another fly ball to the outfielder.

### **Timed Release Competition**

Objective: Work on outfielders catching the ball in a good position, ready to throw, and getting the ball into the throwing position quickly.

The outfielder is 30'-40' from the thrower. The thrower tosses a fly ball to the outfielder. The outfielder catches the ball and throws to a catcher 60' away. Time the outfielder from the catch until the ball is released to help athlete see their progress throughout the season.

# Softball Olympics: Fun Game for Practice

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There are ten events in Team Games. These games are set up and run like the Olympics. You can add more events, or take some out, but the idea is to have a series of events that allow the players to demonstrate their skills. Divide the players into relatively even teams and keep score by team. Each player should participate in 3-5 events.

## **EVENT: INFIELD THROWS: SS TO 1ST BASE:**

Field a ground ball at SS thrown from the pitching machine at home plate. Throw to a target at first base. Each player gets four (4) balls. Direct hit on the target = 5 points, Bounce hit = 3 points, Miss the target or an error fielding = No points

## **EVENT: RUNNING TIME: HOME TO 1ST BASE:**

Bunt a ball pitched by the pitching machine (RH batters box). Run to first base. Each player runs twice. Lowest time = 30 points, Next low = 20 points, Next low = 10 points, Next low = 5 points. The clock starts when the ball is bunted.

## **EVENT: OUTFIELD THROWS TO HOME PLATE:**

Field a fly ball thrown from the pitching machine at home plate. Throw to a target at home plate. Each player gets four (4) balls. Direct hit on the target = 5 points, in the target zone = 3 points, outside the target zone = - 1 point.

## **EVENT: TEE HIT FOR DISTANCE:**

Hit a ball off a tee placed at home plate. The distance is measured to the landing point. Each player gets four (4) hits. Longest hit = 30 points, Next longest = 20 points, Next longest = 10 points, Next longest = 5 points.

## **EVENT: CATCHER THROWS: HOME TO 2ND BASE:**

Catch a pitched ball from the pitching machine. Throw to a target at second base. Direct hit on the target = 5 points, Bounce hit = 3 points, Miss the target or an error fielding = No points

## **EVENT: PITCHING ACCURACY:**

Pitch a ball from the pitching plate towards a target at home plate. Each player pitches ten (10) balls. Hitting inside the box on the target = 3 points, Outside box, on target = 1 point. (The target is a strike zone size box on a towel on the target.)

## **EVENT: AROUND THE HORN:**

Each team has four players participating, one player each at C, 3B, 2B, and 1B. The ball is thrown in a specific pattern around the horn. Each team gets two chances. Lowest time = 30 points, Next low = 20 points, Next low = 10 points, Next low = 5 points. The clock starts on the first throw. Pattern: C - 3B - 2B - 1B - C, then reverse.

## **EVENT: BUNTING TO TARGET:**

Bunt a ball at home plate thrown from the pitching machine. Each player gets four (4) balls. Ball stopping in target zone 1 = 5 points, in target zone 2 = 3 points, in pitchers 8' circle = -3 points. See target pattern below.

## **EVENT: THROWING RELAY:**

Each team has five players participating, one each at C, P, LF, CF, RF. The ball is thrown in a specific pattern from the outfield to the infield. . Each team gets two chances. Lowest time = 30 points, Next low = 20 points, Next low = 10 points, Next low = 5 points. The clock starts on the first throw. The throwing pattern is: C- P- LF- P- CF- P- RF- C

## **EVENT: RUNNING TIME: HOME TO HOME:**

Bunt a ball pitched by the pitching machine (RH batters box). Run home to home. Each player runs twice. Lowest time = 30 points, Next low = 20 points, Next low = 10 points, Next low = 5 points. The clock starts when the ball is bunted.

# Hitting Drills & Tips

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## **Front Barrier Drill: Compact Swing**

Have the batter stand one bat length from a barrier (I prefer a net to prevent damage to the bat, but you can use a fence). Have her take her normal swing. If she hits the barrier, she is unlocking her elbows before her shoulders and getting wide on the swing.

## **Rear Barrier Drill: Hand Position**

Place a barrier directly behind the batter and have her take her normal swing. If the bat hits the barrier, she is dropping her hands. You can use this barrier even when you are using a pitching machine or live pitching for instant feedback to the batter that she is dropping her hands

## **Basketball Drill: Follow through**

This is a great drill for teaching follow-through. Get a couple of old basketballs and take most of the air out of them. Place them on one of those orange cones you see at construction sites. Have the batter take her normal swing and follow-through right through the basketball. **HAVE THEM WEAR HELMETS!!!** Use regular sized bats for this drill.

## **Beam Drill: Balance/Stride**

Here's a drill you may find useful. Construct a batting beam with pieces of 2" x 4"s. The main piece should be about 4' long. Two cross pieces about 18" should be nailed about 16" from each end of main piece. Have player stand on this during soft toss. The player should remain on beam throughout swing.

The beam encourages the batter to be on the balls of her feet and to maintain a balanced swing. It also helps the batter to take their timing step straight to the pitcher. The players don't like this beam at first, but it does help.

## **Drop Drill: Reaction/Bat Speed**

Use some type of backstop and a bucket or old milk crate. Have one player hold the ball at shoulder height and drop it straight down into the strike zone. The batter must see the ball and react fast enough to hit it. This drill teaches the batter to take their hands straight to the ball. Have the player dropping the balls drop them at different times so the batter does not "cheat". The batter can watch the release of the ball, but cannot move prior to the ball being dropped. You could also drop two different colored whiffle balls and say a color for the batter to hit.

## **Objects Drill: Eye on the ball**

Try golf ball sized whiffle balls, pinto beans, small coffee can lids (throw it like a Frisbee) etc, anything that has them concentrating on a smaller than usual target and hitting something that moves, rather than moving in a straight line. This will improve their concentration and teach them to follow the ball all the way in.

## **Miss/Miss/Hit Drill: Eye on the ball**

Use a series of three pitches to teach them to watch the ball. The first pitch, the batter swings over the ball. The second pitch, swings under the ball. The third pitch the batter hits the ball. Repeat this drill until they can do it every time. After that, you can really fine-tune this: Pitch 1- just nick the top of the ball. Pitch 2- Just nick the bottom of the ball. Pitch 3- hit the middle of the ball.

## **Name that Number Drill: Eye on the ball**

Take 3 or 4 balls; write a number on each ball. The players' job is to see the ball well enough to tell you which number is on the pitched ball

## **Knee Hitting Drill: Hands**

Set up a net with a mat in front of it. Place a medium size orange cone on the mat. Have the hitter kneel on their back knee. The front leg should be straight out in front towards the net. Place a ball on the cone and have them hit. This allows them to concentrate on the proper hand and arm movement without worrying about the legs.

Bottom Hand: Players swing only with front hand on bat (choke up) works on strength and bat control...knob of the bat to the ball good for learning motion for inside and outside pitches.

## **Tennis Ball Drill: Compact Swing**

Toss them from the normal position a lot to make certain the mechanics are correct. Also toss them from behind the batter. This makes the batter watch the ball all the way to impact and teaches a quick, compact swing. I also like to bounce the ball into the "contact zone" from an angle.

Alternate Version: Walking-tossing drill. Using tennis balls, walk slightly in front and to the side of the batter and bounce a tennis ball into her "contact zone." The batter must load up and swing while walking. Bounce 3 or 4 balls as we walk. This is tough, but the players love it once they can hit the balls. For beginners, I recommend bouncing the tennis balls and hitting them with a regular bat, but then move to a smaller bat.

## **Hitting Game: Fielding & Hitting**

The players arrange on the field (just anywhere) and 1 player bats. If the batter hits a fly ball and if someone catches it then that person who caught it gets to bat, BUT if the batter hits a grounder and a player fields it and makes the play then she gets to bat.

## **Hitting Tip: Hand Position**

I explain and demonstrate to my players that the top hand pretty much controls your swing. If the palm faces up on the swing, chances are you'll under-cut the ball or hit a fly ball. If the palm faces down on the swing, chances are you hit down in front of you and the ball dribbles. And if you sweep or shake hands with the pitcher on the swing, chances are you hit a line drive.

## **Hitting Tip: Overstriding**

If you are having trouble with players overstriding I recommend building stride boxes using 2x4s. The inside of the box should be no longer than their bat as well as the stride should not be longer than the bat. We build a 32-inch, 33 inch and 34-inch stride box and use it during our soft toss station. The front foot hits the front of the box and it causes the players to shorten the stride. Good when hitting in doors.

## **Bunting Drills & Tips**

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### **Bunting Tip**

Keeping a players bat at an angle reduces the chance of popping it up. Players should never move the bat but instead use their body like an "elevator" at the knees

### **No Man's Land**

Draw sections in the dirt in front of home plate. In each section, write a number representing a point value based on what the coach considers the perfect bunt. For example, a two-foot diameter circle in that no-man's area between the pitcher, catcher and either 1st or 3rd base. Divide the girls up into teams. Each girl takes her turn bunting. She is awarded the point value of the section that the ball stops in (not lands in).

## **Baserunning**

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### **RELAY RACE: Footwork and speed**

Have half of the team line up at second base and half the team line up at home. On the signal, one player from each team runs the bases until she reaches the base she started out at. When she gets there, she tags the next runner in line and she runs the bases. This is done until all the runners have run. Whoever reaches their base first wins. The other team has to pick up the gear or rake the field.

### **Home to First: Reaction**

Batters can a) hit off a tee, b) bunt, or c) swing the bat and then run to first. Runners must make contact with the front edge of the base and look immediately to their right. First base coach holds a ball in their right hand...if coach drops the ball the runner takes off for second (indicating an overthrow) if coach keeps the ball, the runner turns to their right and returns to first base. After completing a perfect run to first, the runners stay behind the first base coach waiting for the rest of the team to finish and for the next base running series.

## **Pitching Drills**

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All drills should begin after a proper warm-up. Never pitch with cold muscles.

1. (1) Bucket (30 balls per bucket) of Hip Snaps
2. (1) Bucket of Knee tosses
3. (1) Bucket of Triples








4. (1) Bucket of Walk-Thru's
5. (5) Buckets of Regulars
6. (1) Bucket of Change-up's (Optional)





### **A-B-C's of Pitching:**

- A) **A**lways down the Power Line
- B) **B**e Tall.
- C) Stay in your **C**ircle
- D) **D**rive hard off the rubber
- E) **E**lbow straight
- F) **F**ollow Thru
- G) **G**enerate Arm Speed
- H) **H**ard!






### **1. Hip Snaps - Good warm-up drill.**

-  Feet shoulder width apart
-  Facing catcher
-  Full arm rotation
-  Keep shoulders level
-  Ball release at hip







### **2. Knee Drills - Isolates arm and upper body.**

-  Extend glove knee with toe @ 1:30 position on power line
-  Rear knee on power line
-  Keep shoulders level
-  Ball release at hip

### **3. Super Ks - Builds towards strong leg drive and acceleration.**

-  Toes on power line
-  Point glove at catcher and hold high
-  Ball starts at waist
-  Explode down line of force
-  Keep big

### **4. Triples - Promotes arm speed, timing & keeping arm path on line of force.**

-  Plant foot on edge of pitching rubber
-  Toes on power line
-  Point glove at catcher and hold high
-  Ball starts at waist
-  Three increasingly fast revolutions of arm
-  Keep big

**5. Walk Thru's - Promotes velocity and timing.**



- Start 3-4 strides behind pitching rubber
- Accelerate toward rubber
- Plant drive foot on rubber and explode
- Keep on line of force

**6. Long Toss - Promotes strength development & identifies problem areas**



- Start 3' behind pitching rubber
- Pitch 10 balls
- Move back in 3' increments after successfully reaching target