



Sugar Land Little League Player Development Guidebook

Never let the fear of striking out get in your way - Babe Ruth



Table of Contents

Double-Goal Coach	2
Additional Resources	2
Hitting Philosophy.....	3
Throwing and Pitching Philosophy	4
Pitch Count Limits & Rest Charts	6
Fielding	7
Fly Balls – Basic Outfield	8
Base Running	9
Goals by Level	10
Skill Assessment Guideline	10
Tee Ball (4-5)	12
Pee Wee (6-8).....	13
Minors (9-10).....	14
Intermediate (11-13).....	15
Juniors (13 and older).....	16
Drills.....	17
Base Running Relays.....	17
Big League Base Running.....	18
Head-to-Head	19
First Base	20
Hitting Ground Balls	21
Bunt Defense Drill	22
Rolled Ground Balls	23
Throwing After the Catch	24
Z Drill	25
Thrown Fly Balls	26
Thrown or Machine Ground Balls	27
Communication Drill.....	28
Lite Flite Elimination.....	29
Pass Patterns	30
3 Deep Drill.....	31
High Five (Underhand Flip).....	32
Drop Step Drill	33
Cutoff Relay Race	34
Twenty-One.....	35
Other Throwing Games	35
First and Third Drill.....	36
Hat Drill	37
Practice Plans.....	38
Ages 4-5.....	38
Ages 6-8.....	39
Ages 9-10.....	41
Ages 11-13.....	44
Ages 13-14.....	47
Working with Parents	50



Double-Goal Coach® Job Description

As coaches, you determine the kind of experience our athletes have with sports. We are committed to the principles of Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA). We expect you to be a Double-Goal Coach, who strives to win (one goal), while pursuing the more-important goal of teaching life lessons through sports. PCA's Double-Goal Coach Job Description includes:

Model and teach your players to Honor the Game.

- Teach ROOTS – respect for Rules, Opponents, Officials, Teammates, and one's Self.
- Hold a parent meeting and distribute PCA's Parent/Guardian Letter to help parents Honor the Game.
- Appoint a parent to be "Culture Keeper" for the team.
- Drill Honoring the Game in practice.
- Seize teachable moments to talk with players about Honoring the Game.

Help players pursue mastery of their sport, not just scoreboard wins.

- Teach players the ELM Tree of Mastery (Effort, Learning, and bouncing back from Mistakes).
- Use a "Team Mistake Ritual" (like "Flushing Mistakes") to help players quickly rebound from mistakes.
- Reward effort, not just good outcomes. Recognize players even for "unsuccessful" effort.
- Encourage players to set "Effort Goals" tied to how hard they try.

Fill your players' Emotional Tanks.

- Use encouragement and positive reinforcement as your primary method of motivating.
- Achieve the "Magic Ratio" of five positive reinforcements to each criticism or correction.
- Use the "Buddy System" to teach players to fill each others' Emotional Tanks.
- Learn to give "Kid-Friendly Criticism," such as criticizing in private, asking permission, using the Criticism Sandwich, and avoiding criticism in non-teachable moments.

Have conversations with your players at every practice and game.

- Review Honoring the Game, the ELM Tree and the Emotional Tank throughout the season.
- Ask questions and encourage players to speak and contribute during team meetings.
- Use PCA's *Talking Points* e-mail series to guide discussions with your players.

Your adopting these philosophies and actions will contribute to a positive, character-building youth sports experience for all the children our organization serves. Thank you for all your time and effort!

This guidebook is a good start for coaches to begin their understanding but is by no means the only resource available. Here are some additional resources that may prove to be valuable to you as a coach in SLLL.

Additional Resources

www.baseballpositive.com

www.chrisoleary.com

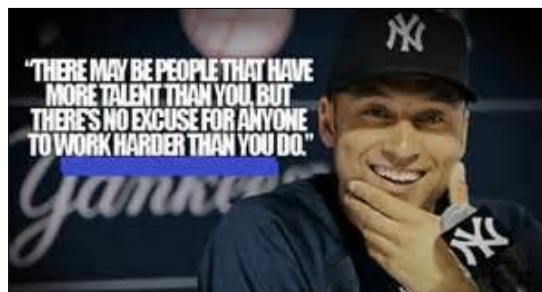
www.littleleagueu.org

Hitting Philosophy

Approach - Never enter the box without a plan, And the ability to change that plan

SLLL Players will:

- Do Our Job
- Sacrifice AB for the Team
- Wear Pitches
- Be a Tough Out Every AB
- Run Everything Out
- Have a Plan



Contact Points

- I** Pitch on the inside corner
- M** Pitch Middle
- O** Pitch on the outside corner

Hitting Check List

- ✓ Wide stance beyond shoulders
- ✓ Feet parallel / toes straight or in
- ✓ Square to the pitcher
- ✓ Knees bent
- ✓ Knuckles lined up
- ✓ Hands at top of the strike zone
- ✓ Deep breath

7 Steps to hitting

1. Load hands
2. Stride
3. Back hip explosion
4. Rotate hips
5. Allow hands to follow
6. Contact
7. Extension
8. Follow-through



Throwing and Pitching Philosophy

We all have dreams. But in order to make dreams come into reality, it takes an awful lot of determination, dedication, self-discipline, and effort.

Jesse Owens



Throwing a baseball

Finding the seams promotes backspin to give "ride & carry"

- Top of the wide mouth of seams
- Thumb directly underneath
- No palming
- Don't "squeeze"--It decreases the ability to control the ball

Throwing progression to promote good mechanics*

1. Flick wrist
 - a. Feet square and stable
 - b. Arms 90°
 - c. Elbow above shoulder
2. Power position (focus = hip power)
 - a. Glove-side elbow point at the target
 - b. Hand to the wall
 - c. Follow through with the throw
3. Throw – follow-through
4. Footwork (focus = create momentum)
 - a. Start square
 - b. Lead with throwing foot
 - c. Power position
5. Fluid movement (focus = fluid)
 - a. Arm angle for position
 - b. Speed up step 4

**Receiver should be in a good athletic stance with fingertips up and thumbs pointed to one another.*

**Back up 5 steps with each progression (distance age and ability dependent).*



Pitching Mentality

- ✓ Be Aggressive
- ✓ No Walks
- ✓ Throw Strikes
- ✓ Establish Both Sides of the Plate
- ✓ Ground Balls are more valuable than Strikeouts
- ✓ Attack Weakness

Pitching Mechanics

3 constants

1. Equal arm angle front and back + finishing in the box
 - ✓ Rotation of core
 - ✓ Front arm in the box allows for balance and drive
2. Front rotation during the pitch
 - ✓ Good mechanics = better possible velocity
3. Elbow above shoulder
 - ✓ Less strain on the scapula and surrounding muscles

Front shoulder closed

- ✓ Drive towards the plate for power

Front leg stays stiff acting like a "pole vault"

- ✓ Maintains forward energy
- ✓ Land on toes or outside of foot--landing on heel first stops body motion

Follow-through

- ✓ Spine = gun aimed at catcher

All pitches should be thrown at fastball arm speed

- ✓ Grip does the work



Pitch Count Limits & Rest Periods

With the rise in elbow and shoulder injuries in youth baseball pitchers, the adult community needs to take steps to prevent these injuries. Research points to overuse as the principal risk factor along with poor pitching mechanics poor physical fitness. Also, a youth pitcher may not have enough physical development, neuromuscular control, and proper coaching instruction to throw a curveball with good mechanics, so teaching curveballs is discouraged at younger ages.

The recommendations for preventing injuries in youth baseball pitchers are:

1. Watch and respond to signs of fatigue (such as decreased ball velocity, decreased accuracy, upright trunk during pitching, dropped elbow during pitching, or increased time between pitches). If a youth pitcher complains of fatigue or looks fatigued, let him rest from pitching and other throwing.
2. No overhead throwing of any kind for at least 2-3 months per year (4 months is preferred). No competitive baseball pitching for at least 4 months per year.
3. Do not pitch more than 100 innings in games in any calendar year.
4. Follow limits for pitch counts and days' rest.
5. Avoid pitching on multiple teams with overlapping seasons.
6. Learn good throwing mechanics as soon as possible. The first steps should be to learn, in order: 1) basic throwing, 2) fastball pitching, 3) change-up pitching.
7. Avoid using radar guns.
8. A pitcher should not also be a regular catcher for his team. The pitcher-catcher combination results in many throws and may increase the risk of injury.
9. If a pitcher complains of pain in his elbow or shoulder, discontinue pitching until evaluated by a sports medicine physician. Inspire youth pitchers to have fun playing baseball and other sports. Participation and enjoyment of various physical activities will increase the youth's athleticism and interest in sports.

Rest Period for Pitchers

Maximum pitches per day

League Age:

13-16 – 95 pitches per day

11-12 – 85 pitches per day

9-10 – 75 pitches per day

7-8 – 50 pitches per day

(d) Pitchers league age 14 and under must adhere to the following rest requirements:

If a player pitches 66 or more pitches in a day, four (4) calendar days of rest must be observed.

If a player pitches 51-65 pitches in a day, three (3) calendar days of rest must be observed.

If a player pitches 36-50 pitches in a day, two (2) calendar days of rest must be observed.

If a player pitches 21-35 pitches in a day, one (1) calendar day of rest must be observed.

If a player pitches 1-20 pitches in a day, no (0) calendar day of rest is required.

Exception: If a pitcher reaches a day(s) of rest threshold while facing a batter, the pitcher may continue to pitch until any one of the following conditions occurs: (1) that batter reaches base; (2) that batter is retired; or (3) the third out is made to complete the half-inning or the game. The pitcher will only be required to observe the calendar day(s) of rest for the threshold he/she reached during that at-bat, provided that pitcher is removed, or the game is completed before delivering a pitch to another batter."

Fielding

Groundballs – Basic Fielding

- ✓ Feet wider than shoulders
- ✓ Forward on toes--balls of feet on delivery
- ✓ Torso upright so you can go in any direction*
- ✓ Bent knees/Flat Back
- ✓ Always attack the baseball

**limited ability to move laterally if bent over*



“Baseball Ready”

Proper fielding position

- ✓ Open hands = soft hands
 - 6 o’clock and 2 o’clock--no alligators!
- ✓ Present glove arm--glove in front of the head means you are not bending at the waist
 - Create equilateral triangle
- ✓ Butt down with chest & eyes up
- ✓ Field ball on glove half--gets both eyes behind baseball
- ✓ “Squash” ball in glove



Fielding position to throwing position

- ✓ Body goes to the ball, not ball to the body-- “getting through the baseball”
- ✓ Replace glove with throwing foot
- ✓ When the throwing foot goes forward, the throwing hand goes back
- ✓ Chin goes to glove shoulder



Fly Balls – Basic Outfield

Body Position

- ✓ Feet--Glove side foot forward*
- ✓ Hips/body--square to the ball
- ✓ Glove/hands--within shoulders
- ✓ Arm--palm up and thumb-to-thumb**

**Allows for quicker two-step throw*

**Don't let glove or arm turn*



Open Step

- ✓ Open hips and get plant foot set
- ✓ Athletic position
- ✓ Get the best angle to the ball
- ✓ Allows you to get behind the ball
- ✓ Come through the ball to get momentum towards the target
- ✓ Pinch the baseball



Base Running

Basics

- ✓ Know how many outs there are (what's the situation)
- ✓ Take signs from the base coach
- ✓ Check the outfielders
- ✓ Be aggressive but smart (make the defense make plays)
- ✓ Know when to tag up
- ✓ Know when and how to slide

The ultimate goal is to score!

Taking a lead from first

Before taking lead

- ✓ Check signs from the coach
- ✓ Know how many outs
- ✓ Check outfielders

Primary lead

- ✓ Step left, right then shuffle-shuffle (don't let feet come together)
- ✓ Eyes on pitcher

If pickoff move

- ✓ Head-first slide with the right hand to the front back corner of the bag
- ✓ Head up in case of a pass ball

Secondary lead

- ✓ Two low strides being hard on the right foot--don't get caught late
- ✓ If the catcher sticks it, take two hard steps back to the bag



Goals by Level

Skill Assessment Guideline

Skill/Age	T-Ball (4-5)	Pee Wee A (5-6)	Pee Wee AAA (7-8)	Minors (9-10)	Intermediate (11-13)	Juniors (13-14)
Catching						
Athletic position	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert	Expert
Glove placement	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert	Expert
Position Off-side hand	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert	Expert
Footwork	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert	Expert
Transfer to throw	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert	Expert
Throwing						
Four-seam grip	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert	Expert
Hand/Glove wall to wall	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert	Expert
Follow thru	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert	Expert
Power V	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert	Expert
Footwork	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert	Expert
Hit the chest	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert	Expert
Offense/Hitting						
Stance relation to home	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert	Expert
Grip/Hands	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert	Expert
Setup w/ movement	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert	Expert
Load	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert	Expert
Launch	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert	Expert
Contact	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert	Expert
Extension	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert	Expert
Balance/Finish/Follow thru	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert	Expert
Bunting	N/A	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert	Expert
Drag Bunt	N/A	N/A	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert
Hit n Run	N/A	N/A	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert
Hit behind runner	N/A	N/A	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert
Hitters count	N/A	N/A	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert
Pitch Recognition	N/A	N/A	N/A	Proficient	Expert	Expert
Defense/Fielding						
Setup	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert	Expert
Force outs	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert	Expert
Catching Pop fly	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert	Expert
Run Down	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert	Expert
Backhand fielding	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert	Expert
Fore hand fielding	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert	Expert
Tag a runner	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert	Expert
Relays/Cutoffs	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert	Expert
Pop up priority	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert	Expert
Double play	N/A	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert	Expert
First and third stealing	N/A	N/A	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert
Bunt defense	N/A	N/A	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert

Legend:

Introduction
Proficient
Expert
N/A



Skill/Age	T-Ball (4-5)	Pee Wee A (5-6)	Pee Wee AAA (7-8)	Minors (9-10)	Intermediate (11-13)	Juniors (13-14)
Base Running						
Running to first	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert	Expert
Sliding	Introduction	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert
Making your turn	N/A	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert
First to third	N/A	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert
Tagging up	N/A	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert
Pop flies when on 1st	N/A	Introduction	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert
Pop flies when on 2nd	N/A	Introduction	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert
Pop flies when on 3rd	N/A	Introduction	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert
Stealing	N/A	N/A	Proficient	Proficient	Expert	Expert
Delay Steal	N/A	N/A	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert
Hit and Run	N/A	N/A	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert
1st and 3rd stealing	N/A	N/A	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert
Pass balls	N/A	N/A	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert
Straight lead	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Introduction	Expert
Walking lead	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Introduction	Expert
Pitching						
Stance	N/A	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert	Expert
Fastball	N/A	Introduction	Proficient	Proficient	Expert	Expert
Full wind up	N/A	Introduction	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert
Stretch	N/A	Introduction	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert
Covering 1st	N/A	Introduction	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert
Covering 3rd	N/A	Introduction	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert
Change up	N/A	N/A	Introduction	Proficient	Expert	Expert
Curve/slider	N/A	N/A	N/A	Introduction	Proficient	Expert
Covering home	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Introduction	Expert
Holding/Picking 1st base	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Introduction	Expert
Holding/Picking 2nd base	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Introduction	Expert
Holding/Picking 3rd base	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Introduction	Expert

Legend:

Introduction
Proficient
Expert
N/A



Tee Ball (4-5)

1. Learning the basic rules:

- ✓ The right direction to run when the ball is hit
- ✓ Where the bases are, and runners must touch the bases
- ✓ How to record outs (catch the ball in the air, throw to first, or tag the runners)
- ✓ Running past first base
- ✓ Concepts of TEAM
- ✓ Three outs constitute a half an inning

2. Throwing Mechanics:

- ✓ Turn the body so the front elbow points toward the target
- ✓ Keep the throwing elbow above the shoulder
- ✓ Step toward the target with the non-throwing foot and release the ball

3. Tracking:

- ✓ Follow the ball with the eyes into the glove
- ✓ Whether on the ground or in the air use softer balls
- ✓ Use two hands to catch and field
- ✓ Try to catch the ball out in front of the body

4. Hitting:

- ✓ How to hold and swing a bat
- ✓ Batting safety! When not to swing bats and wearing batting helmets
- ✓ Hitting off a tee
- ✓ Hitting softly tossed pitches

5. Learning Position Play:

- ✓ If the ball is hit to a teammate let him or her field it
- ✓ Proper fielding position (down and ready)



Pee Wee (6-8)

1. Learning the basic rules:

- ✓ Concept of TEAM
- ✓ Force outs
- ✓ Tagging up
- ✓ What is a double play
- ✓ Baserunning --When you have to run; Not running into outs; stay in the base paths -running with two outs
- ✓ Balls and Strikes
- ✓ Good Sportsmanship

2. Throwing Mechanics

- ✓ Introduce the pitching progression to improve mechanics

3. Catching and Fielding

- ✓ Fingers up versus fingers down
- ✓ See the glove and the ball
- ✓ Use two hands
- ✓ Forehands and backhands
- ✓ Introduce the underhand flip
- ✓ First-base fundamentals
- ✓ Cross over and drop steps

4. Hitting

- ✓ Introduce the hitting checklist and 7 step swing.

5. Learning Position Play

- ✓ Learn the positions and the areas each player should cover
- ✓ Cover the nearest base when the ball is not hit to you.
- ✓ Basics of cut-offs and relays

Minors (9-10)

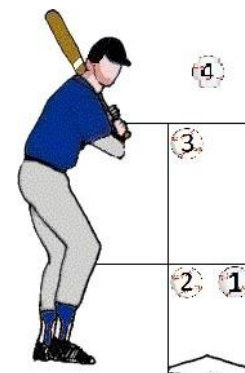
1. Continue to Learn the Basic Rules

2. Base Running

- ✓ Leads
- ✓ Stealing
- ✓ Extra-base hits
- ✓ Tagging up and going halfway
- ✓ Proper Sliding techniques

3. Pitching & Throwing Mechanics

- ✓ Wind-up versus stretch
- ✓ Master throwing progression with good mechanics
- ✓ Pitcher covering first
- ✓ Begin working locations 1 & 2

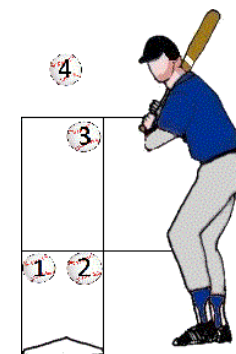


4. Hitting

- ✓ Repetitions
- ✓ Situational hitting
- ✓ Bunting

5. Learning Team Fundamentals

- ✓ Cut-offs and relays
- ✓ Basic bunt defenses
- ✓ Basic first and third situations
- ✓ Double plays
- ✓ Defending the steal
- ✓ Infield and outfield communication and priorities
- ✓ Backing up bases



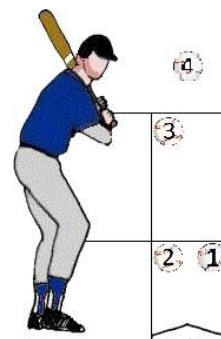
Intermediate (11-13)

1. Base Running

- ✓ First and third situations
- ✓ Steal Breaks
- ✓ Delayed Steals
- ✓ Reading situations and reacting to them

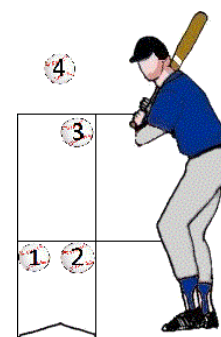
2. Throwing Mechanics and Pitching:

- ✓ Hitting 3 of 4 locations with 75% of accuracy
- ✓ Emphasis on generating momentum toward the target and following the throw
- ✓ Pitching Mechanics and using the body effectively
- ✓ Pick-off mechanics
- ✓ Recognize which swings are good vs. bad
- ✓ Introduction to long toss



3. Hitting

- ✓ Introduce situational hitting
- ✓ Learning hand position for pitches
- ✓ Inside-out swing -hitting behind runners -hit and run -productive outs
- ✓ Begin working on approach
- ✓ Sacrifice bunting versus bunting for a hit
- ✓ Understanding the count



4. Fielding

- ✓ Generating Momentum back toward the target on throws when necessary
- ✓ Cross over and drop steps
- ✓ Backhands and when to use them
- ✓ Double play depth
- ✓ Pitcher covering first
- ✓ Infield communication

5. Learning Team Fundamentals

- ✓ Pick-off plays
- ✓ Full bunt defenses
- ✓ Full first and third defenses
- ✓ Pop-up and fly ball priorities
- ✓ Double plays and underhand flips



Juniors (13 and older)

1. Throwing Mechanics and Pitching

- ✓ Long toss
- ✓ Balance drills
- ✓ Introduce breaking and off-speed pitches
- ✓ Master throwing for accuracy
- ✓ Generating momentum toward the target and following the throw
- ✓ Pickoff mechanics

2. Hitting

- ✓ Mental aspects -Hitter's count versus pitcher's count
- ✓ Two strike hitting
- ✓ Aggressive versus defensive swings
- ✓ Situational hitting
- ✓ Productive outs
- ✓ Advanced game situations and defenses

3. Base Running

- ✓ One-way leads
- ✓ Going on the first move
- ✓ Reacting to batted balls
- ✓ Tag-up situations
- ✓ Third-base rules
- ✓ No out, one out, and two out rules

4. Fielding

- ✓ Understanding and adapting to playing conditions
- ✓ Crossover and drop steps
- ✓ Do or die plays at the plate
- ✓ Preventing runners from taking extra bases
- ✓ Communicating between pitches

5. Learning Team Fundamentals

- ✓ Cut-offs and relays
- ✓ Advanced pickoff plays and when to use them
- ✓ Double plays
- ✓ Advanced game situations and defense
- ✓ Attend and watch 4 Varsity Baseball games



Drills

Base Running Relays

Objective

- ✓ To learn how proper turns at each base can help players get to their destination faster

Setup

- ✓ Field with bases (preferably pegged bases), a stopwatch

Execution

- ✓ Have groups of two or four players compete by running around the bases to see who can finish with the fastest combined time
- ✓ One player circles the bases and then as soon as he or she touches home plate, the next player in the group starts
- ✓ You'll find that the groups that run the bases the best fundamentally can and will beat the groups with the faster players
- ✓ You can use cones to show the path for the proper turns at each base



Big League Base Running

Objective

- ✓ To work on various base running situations and conditioning

Setup

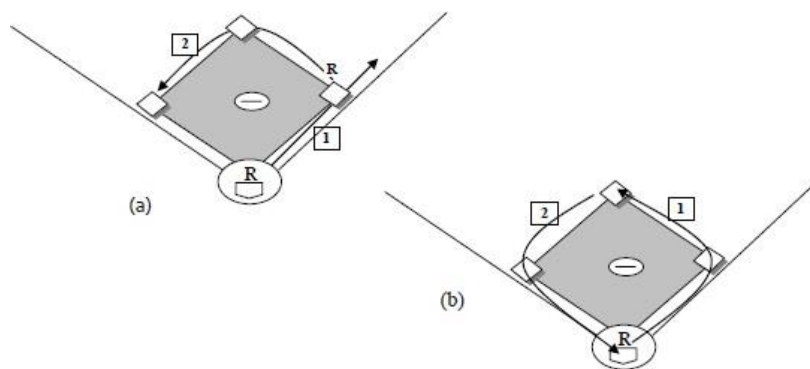
- ✓ Field with bases (preferably pegged bases)

Execution

- ✓ Players line up at home plate and run home to first, all the way through the bag
- ✓ They shuffle off of first, take a crossover step, and run first to third before jogging to home plate (a)
- ✓ Players line up at home again and run out a double
- ✓ They then simulate scoring from second on a hit (b)
- ✓ Then have them run out a triple or a home run if you wish
- ✓ Emphasis should be on making a proper turn at each base as well as stepping on the inside of the base and using the bag to push off (like a starting block) toward the next base

Coaching Keys

- ✓ If players are having trouble making correct turns and taking a proper route to the next base, set up cones to mark the proper path. Players will take a path to the outside of the cones





Head-to-Head

Objective

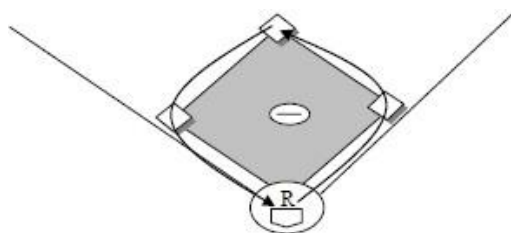
- ✓ To demonstrate that the fastest player isn't always the best base runner; to understand how to make a proper turn when going from home to second and second to home

Setup

- ✓ Field with bases (preferably pegged bases)

Execution

- ✓ One player starts at second and the other starts at home
- ✓ The coach stands on the pitcher's mound and yells, "Go!"
- ✓ Player from second is simulating scoring on a hit
- ✓ Player at home simulates running out a double
- ✓ Whoever gets to his or her destination first, wins
- ✓ Point out players who adhere to proper fundamentals when running the bases well





First Base

Objective

- ✓ To develop proper mechanics when receiving throws at first base

Setup

- ✓ A bucket of balls, a player or coach to throw, first basemen, an empty bucket

Execution

- ✓ Players line up in foul territory near first base.
- ✓ The coach sets up anywhere in the infield with a bucket of balls
- ✓ An empty bucket is placed near first base
- ✓ The first player comes to first base and puts the heel of the throwing-side foot on the base
- ✓ The coach throws the ball to this player
- ✓ The player sees the ball coming across the diamond and takes his or her glove and glove-side foot directly toward the ball together
- ✓ The ball should hit the glove at the same time the foot lands. This prevents stretching too soon
- ✓ Stress that first basemen get to the bag quickly, stand tall, square shoulders to the infielder making the throw, and take the glove and glove-side foot toward the ball together. Remind them not to stretch prematurely.
- ✓ You can also have players work on receiving errant throws and short hops

Coaching Keys

- ✓ If players are stretching too soon, make them exaggerate the step with the glove foot so that the foot lands on the ground at the exact same time the ball enters the glove

Hitting Ground Balls

Objective

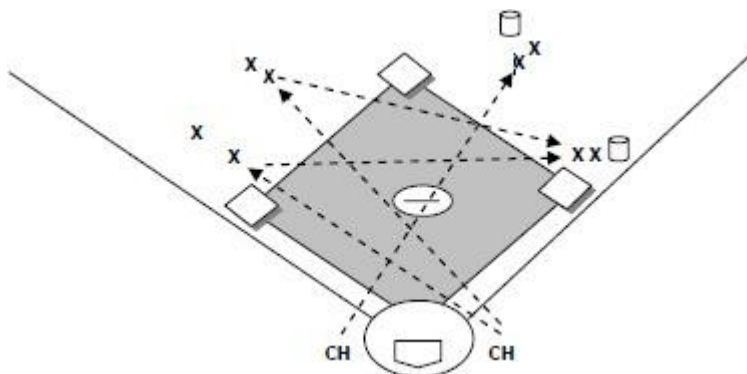
- ✓ To get a more realistic sense of fielding ground balls coming off a bat

Setup

- ✓ A bucket of baseballs, a fungo bat (or another type of bat), a coach to hit balls

Execution

- ✓ At some point, it becomes necessary to hit ground balls to your team. Before you do this – at any level – make sure you have introduced the players to the basic ground ball fundamentals and given them a chance to get comfortable fielding balls the proper way
- ✓ Use common sense when hitting ground balls. If the field is not in good condition, take it easy. Adapt the speed of the balls to each player's skill level. Players getting beaten up with bad hops in practice are not getting better
- ✓ If you have more than one coach who can hit ground balls accurately, here's a way to maximize repetitions: One coach hits to the third basemen and shortstops from the first-base side while the other hits to second and first from the third-base side. After a few minutes, one coach goes "live", with the players fielding his or her balls throwing to first. The other players just lob the balls back to their coach on one hop or place the balls in a bucket. The first basemen take throws and stop fielding ground balls at this point. Each position gets to go "live" before the drill ends.
- ✓ As players get older, they can hit ground balls to each other if there aren't enough coaches. Having one person hit to each position is ideal but not always possible





Bunt Defense Drill

Objective

- ✓ To perfect the infield's ability to defend the bunt play

Setup

- ✓ Baseball field, baseballs, bats, and batting helmets

Execution

- ✓ Place a defender at each infield position, including one pitcher on the mound. The remainder of the pitching staff will be in foul ground, ready to take their turns on the mound. Use your outfielders to run the bases
- ✓ Direct the drill from one of the batter's boxes
- ✓ The drill begins with the pitcher on the mound throwing a strike
- ✓ The coach responds by rolling a simulated bunt to various parts of the infield and observing the defense accordingly

Coaching Keys

- ✓ Depending on the location and speed of your "bunts", you can create any situation you desire
- ✓ Work on the most common situations first and foremost
- ✓ As a variation, you can use outfielders or extra players to do actual bunting, depending on their abilities and roles as hitters. For best control, a coach works just fine



Rolled Ground Balls

Objective

- ✓ To help infielders become comfortable with the proper mechanics of fielding a ground ball

Setup

- ✓ A bucket of balls and a coach to roll them

Execution

- ✓ This drill is simple and appropriate for all ages. Balls can be rolled as soft or as hard as necessary; the type of hop the ball takes can be controlled
- ✓ Players assume the ground ball position with a wide base, butt down, and hands out in front (the glove-hand wrist is relaxed so the coach can see inside the glove and the fingers are pointing down)
- ✓ Use a flat surface to prevent bad hops and bad habits
- ✓ At first, the ball should be rolled directly into a player's glove from about 10 feet away
- ✓ Have players hold the ground ball position for five reps so that they can feel a little burn in their thighs
- ✓ As players get comfortable fielding ground balls properly, the coach can move back and roll balls harder. For conditioning, older players can be asked to hold the position for more reps
- ✓ The ball must be caught out in front so that the eyes can follow the ball into the glove

Coaching Keys

- ✓ If the ball doesn't stay in a player's glove or if the player seems to be getting handcuffed quite a bit by bad hops, check if the player's glove positioning and angle. The glove should be out in front of the body with the wrist relaxed to the point that the fingers of the glove are pointing almost straight down
- ✓ If a player is having trouble getting the glove into the proper position, have him or her reach back between the legs and scrape dirt forward with the glove until it's in the proper position in front of the body
- ✓ If the glove is out in front and the wrist is relaxed, a player is more likely to see the bad hop early and move the glove to a position in which the ball can still be caught



Throwing After the Catch

Objective

- ✓ To understand and apply the concept of using the body's momentum to make a stronger throw

Setup

- ✓ A bucket of balls, a coach or player to receive throws, a coach or player to roll ground balls (optional), a target (optional), three cones or markers

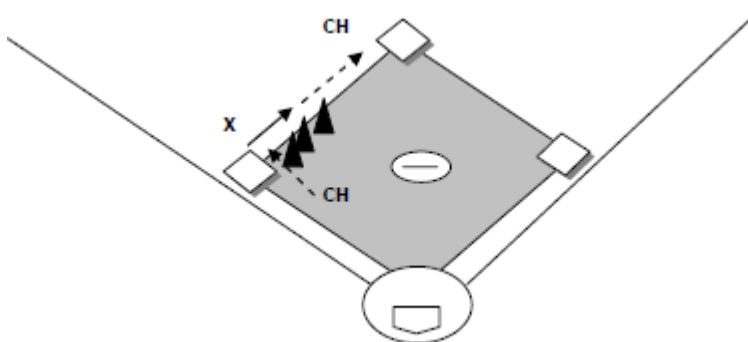
Execution

- ✓ This drill reinforces the concept of catching the ground ball first, generating momentum toward the target, throwing the ball, and following the throw
- ✓ Set up three cones several feet apart, placed in a line toward the target to where the throw will be made (easiest to set up as a simulation of the 5-4 force out at second base). Cones should be placed so that the distance is appropriate to accomplish the intended result for the age group involved
- ✓ A player sets up with the right foot next to the first cone and assumes the ground ball fielding position (wide base, butt down, hands in front)
- ✓ A ball is rolled by the coach to the player, who fields it, or the player starts with a ball and simulates the fielding position
- ✓ The player shuffles the feet to the second cone, releases the ball, and follows the throw past the third cone and toward the target
- ✓ Emphasize the four-seam grip. The ball can be thrown to a coach or another teammate. The player should stay low and not stand straight up after fielding the ball
- ✓ This drill can be turned into a contest by placing a chest- or head-high target at second base with a net or screen behind to catch errant throws
- ✓ Players who hit the target stay alive and those who miss are eliminated. If there's nobody to roll the balls, players can get a ball out of the bucket, assume the ground ball fielding position, and then execute the drill

Throwing After the Catch cont...

Coaching Keys

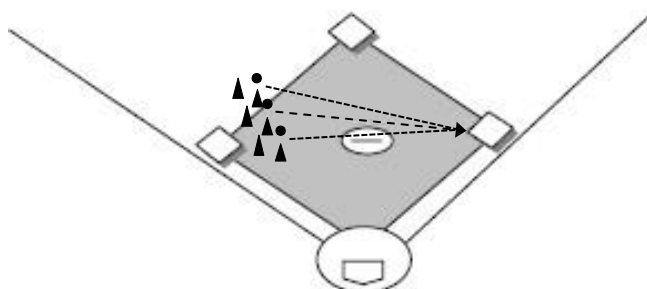
- ✓ Players who aren't throwing the ball accurately are likely dropping the elbow below the shoulder or are peeling off away from the target before following the throw all the way past the third cone.
- ✓ For players making the latter mistake, set up another cone about five feet to the left of the third cone and make them follow the throw all the way through the last two cones before peeling off.
- ✓ Players who are throwing the ball high or low are likely standing up before shuffling and throwing. Remember: stay low and go low.
- ✓ The first movement upon catching the ball is toward the target
- ✓ Players should shuffle in that direction, keeping the knees bent in an athletic position instead of standing straight up. This keeps the head, shoulders, and eyes level, which makes it easier to stay focused on the target.



Z Drill

Coaching Keys

- ✓ Cones set up in zig zag
- ✓ Place a baseball on each forward cone
- ✓ Players work footwork towards cone and throw
- ✓ Work all 3 cones





Thrown Fly Balls

Objective

- ✓ To learn to catch fly balls with two hands above the head in a controlled environment

Setup

- ✓ A bucket of balls and a coach to throw balls to players, soft or sponge rubber balls for younger players

Execution

- ✓ To prevent injury and embarrassment, players must be comfortable catching fly balls properly before fly balls are hit to them
- ✓ The proper way to catch a fly ball is with two hands above the head so that eyes can follow the ball into the glove
- ✓ The simplest way to teach proper execution is to throw fly balls to players and force them to do it correctly
- ✓ Start with short, easy tosses and then adjust the height of throws to the skill and comfort level of players
- ✓ You can start younger players out with soft baseballs or sponge rubber balls to avoid injury and build confidence
- ✓ You can turn this drill into an elimination contest for the youngest players
- ✓ Stress getting to the spot where the ball is coming down and catching with two hands above the head

Coaching Keys

- ✓ Players who regularly miss fly balls are most likely not watching the ball and should perform the drill, again and again, attempting to catch the ball with two hands above the head so they can see the ball travel all the way into the glove
- ✓ Many players catch fly balls while backpedaling or moving away from the infield
- ✓ Try to get them to learn to catch the ball while moving slightly forward when executing this drill



Thrown or Machine Ground Balls

Objective

To learn how to field ground balls properly in a controlled environment

Setup

A bucket of balls, a pitching machine (optional), a coach to feed machine or throw balls

Execution

- ✓ Like infielders, outfielders should field a ground ball with a wide base, the butt down, and the hands out in front of the body
- ✓ Get wide by stepping toward home with the glove-side leg forward and glove in front of that foot
- ✓ Players should get comfortable with proper fundamentals before fielding hit balls
- ✓ It's okay to use a pitching machine for outfield ground balls right from the start
- ✓ Roll or feed players ground balls one at a time. Have them get to the spot quickly, get under control, field properly, generate momentum toward the coach, and throw
- ✓ Don't allow players to walk or run through ground balls. They need to slow down and get under control to field properly

Coaching Keys

- ✓ Young outfielders have a tendency to "run through" ground balls. That is, they try to get to the spot quickly and then try to field the ball while still running at or near full speed
- ✓ Remember that their main goal is to field the ball quickly and throw it to the proper cutoff or relay person to prevent base runners from advancing. Thus, fielding the ball cleanly is the most important responsibility
- ✓ Players should come to almost a complete stop if they have to so that they can be sure to field the ball cleanly

Communication Drill

Objective

- ✓ To understand the importance and mechanics of proper communication in the outfield

Setup

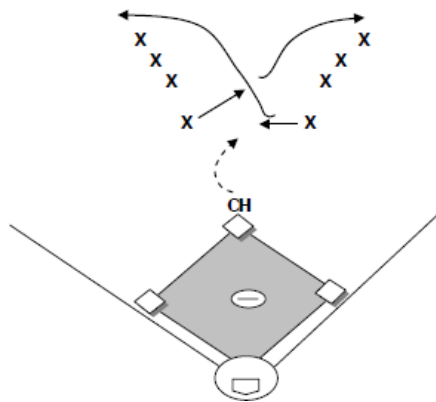
6. A bucket of baseballs, a coach to throw fly balls, soft or sponge rubber balls for younger players (optional), pitching machines (optional), a player to serve as a cutoff for throws (optional)

Execution

- ✓ Outfielders form two lines at least 20 feet apart
- ✓ The first players in each line step forward
- ✓ The coach throws fly balls in between the two fielders, who must communicate and make the play
- ✓ The player fielding the ball yells, "I got it!" at least 3 times
- ✓ The other player then backs up the other player
- ✓ The player who catches the ball should deliver a strong, accurate throw to the coach or cutoff player (a player who rotates out of the drill)
- ✓ For younger players, use soft baseballs, sponge rubber balls, or tennis balls
- ✓ Use pitching machines to throw higher fly balls to more advanced players, ensuring the ball will reach about the same height and distance each time

Coaching Keys

- ✓ The age-old outfield communication problem arises when two players call for the ball at the same time. Teach players that if there's any uncertainty as to who will make the catch, they should continue to call for the ball
- ✓ If two players call for the ball at the same time and then one continues to call for it, that player should make the play
- ✓ As players get older, this drill can be done by designating one player as the centerfielder, who has priority over any ball that he or she calls. In this format, a third player can be added to simulate a game situation in which there are three outfielders. Again, the centerfielder is the quarterback and should call for any ball that he or she can easily get to





Lite Flite Elimination

Objective

- ✓ To develop the proper technique for catching fly balls in a fun, competitive setting

Setup

- ✓ Soft or sponge rubber balls, pitching machine (optional), coach to throw fly balls or to feed machine

Execution

- ✓ Use soft or sponge rubber balls. Each player is thrown a fly ball (or fed a fly ball through a pitching machine)
- ✓ Younger players can use their gloves. Balls are so light that players have to catch the ball with two hands over the head
- ✓ Older players and more advanced younger players can use bare hands
- ✓ If players catch the ball, they stay in, but if they miss, they're out of the drill
- ✓ This competition can also be done using the pass-pattern drill that follows or with real baseballs (when appropriate)
- ✓ When not using gloves, players should attempt to catch the ball with the glove hand only over the head. This makes them focus on proper hand positioning and watching the ball into the hand

Coaching Keys

- ✓ Players who miss fly balls regularly usually aren't using proper technique and are likely taking their eyes off the ball
- ✓ Make sure they catch the ball above their heads so they can watch the ball travel all the way into the glove or hand

Pass Patterns

Objective

- ✓ To develop proper crossover steps and drop steps and learn to catch fly balls on the run

Setup

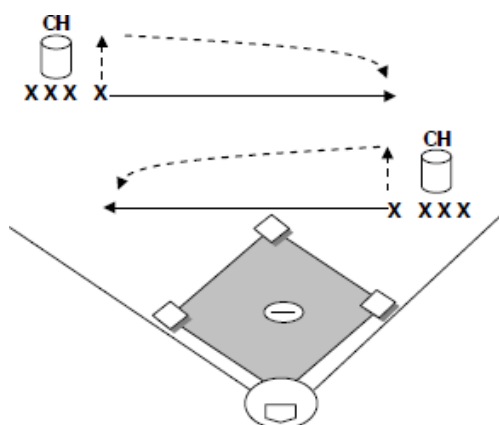
- ✓ A bucket of balls, a coach to throw “passes”

Execution

- ✓ A coach or player (this can be a long toss for pitchers) serves as the quarterback
- ✓ The fielding player tosses the ball to the quarterback and then uses a crossover or drop step in the appropriate direction before running a “pass pattern”
- ✓ The quarterback throws the ball high enough for the “receiver” to run under the ball and make a one-handed, over-the-shoulder catch
- ✓ Have the player start over if the initial step is not executed correctly

Coaching Keys

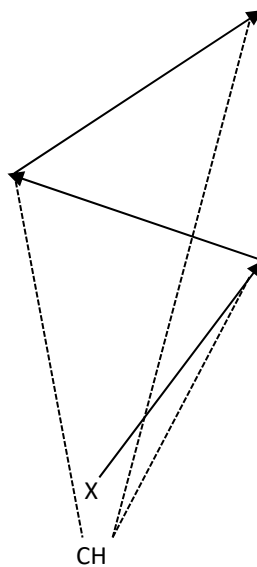
- ✓ The crossover step is the most efficient method of moving laterally on a baseball field. The crossover should be used by base runners, infielders, and outfielders
- ✓ To execute the step, a player pivots the foot nearest to where the ball is traveling while at the same time crossing the other foot over the first foot in the direction of the ball
- ✓ If players are picking up the foot nearest the ball first and then crossing over, stop them immediately without throwing the pass and start over
- ✓ The drop step is a combination of a step back toward the ball hit over a player’s head followed by a crossover in the direction of the ball
- ✓ Again, stop the drill immediately and begin again if a player does not execute the initial step properly



3 Deep Drill

Coaching Keys

- ✓ Focus Ball tracking
- ✓ Catch the ball and then drop
- ✓ Turn shoulders inside
- ✓ No open step



High Five (Underhand Flip)

Objective

- ✓ To understand and apply the concept of generating momentum toward the target when executing an underhand flip and to develop the habit of leaving the hand at face level after the flip

Setup

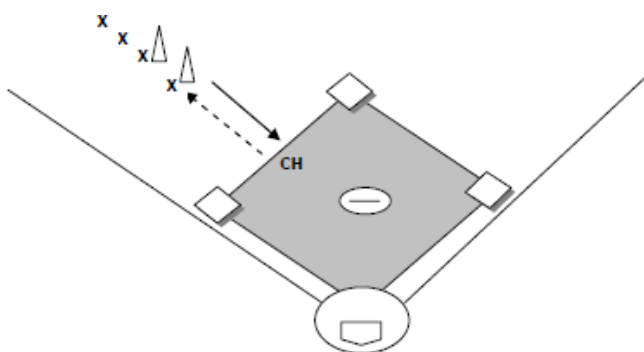
- ✓ A bucket of balls, a coach to roll balls, cones, or markers (optional)

Execution

- ✓ The underhand flip is used by virtually all infielders at some point, so it should be introduced at a young age and practiced.
- ✓ Players line up opposite the coach, 10 to 15 feet away.
- ✓ One at a time, players assume basic ground ball position (wide base, butt down, hands in front).
- ✓ The coach rolls balls to the first player. The player catches the ball first, generates momentum toward the target, uses an underhand flip, and finishes by following the flip toward the coach with the hand held high at the head level.
- ✓ When the player gets to the coach, he gives the coach a high five (hand should not drop below head level until high five is completed). The Player uses body momentum to carry the toss to the target. Wrist remains stiff. Avoid letting the ball roll off the fingers.

Coaching Keys

- ✓ This drill reminds players to keep the hand held high after the flip. Failure to keep the hand high is one of the most common mistakes when it comes to executing the underhand flip.
- ✓ Generally, wherever the hand ends up is the direction in which the ball is going to travel, and it's easier for the person receiving the flip to catch the ball if it's at chest or head level.





Drop Step Drill

Objective

- ✓ To develop a fundamentally sound drop step

Setup

- ✓ Bucket of balls and a coach to throw them

Execution

- ✓ This drill is much like the drill for the crossover step but a bit more advanced.
- ✓ Players line up. The first player steps forward, tosses the ball to the coach, and assumes a ready position.
- ✓ The coach says "Go!" and the player performs a drop step (drop one foot back, turn the body, and cross the other foot over in the direction of the ball).
- ✓ The coach throws the ball directly over the player's head, high and close enough that he or she can catch it with two hands above the head.

Coaching Keys

- ✓ Have players take time to get footwork correct before tossing. As with Pass Patterns, stop this drill and start over if players do the drop step incorrectly.
- ✓ The goal of this drill is to force the player to get to the spot quickly and catch the ball with two hands over the head. More difficult over-the-shoulder catches are practiced using Pass Patterns.

Cutoff Relay Race

Objective

- ✓ To work on catching with two hands, making a quick transfer, and proper footwork when receiving and making throws

Setup

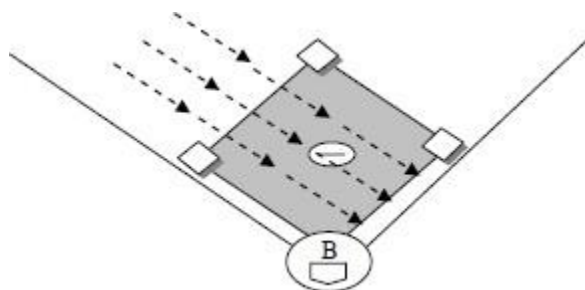
- ✓ Bucket of balls, small groups of players

Execution

- ✓ Create groups of three, four, or five players to race.
- ✓ Players stand in a straight line with the others in their group, beginning at the spot where the ball is picked up, spaced evenly.
- ✓ All groups go at the same time. An outfielder picks up a ball lying on the warning track next to the fence and throws it to his first teammate.
- ✓ That teammate turns his body, catches, generates momentum, and throws to the next teammate. This continues until the ball reaches the last player.
- ✓ The team that finishes first wins.

Coaching Keys

- ✓ The most common problems you'll find when executing relay throws are with kids who turn the wrong way before throwing (they turn toward the throwing side instead of the glove side) and kids who catch the ball flat-footed.
- ✓ Remind these players to turn toward the glove side as the ball approaches and to start moving toward the next target as they receive the ball. When they receive the throw, they'll already be moving in the right direction, so all they'll have to do is throw the ball and follow the throw.





Twenty One

Objective

- ✓ To improve throwing accuracy

Setup

- ✓ Two players and a baseball

Execution

- ✓ This is a game played by baseball players at all levels.
- ✓ As players play catch, 1 point is awarded to the thrower for each ball caught at chest level.
- ✓ Two points are awarded for a ball caught at head level.
- ✓ Points can be deducted for uncatchable throws.
- ✓ If a throw is accurate but the receiver misses it, points are still awarded to the thrower.
- ✓ The first player to 21 wins.
- ✓ Stress proper mechanics.
- ✓ Set up a team competition in which winners move on and losers are eliminated. To speed things up, play to 15 instead of 21.

Other Throwing Games

Objective

- ✓ To make basic throwing drills more fun

Setup

- ✓ A bucket of balls and a target

Execution

- ✓ Just about any throwing drill can be turned into a contest by adding a target.
- ✓ Players can throw at a painted, taped, or drawn target on a fence, wall, or screen. Or they can try to knock a ball off a batting tee.
- ✓ Try anything that makes players concentrate and attempt to throw with accuracy.
- ✓ Stress proper mechanics at all times: four-seam grip; get the ball down, out, and up; elbow above the shoulder; point the front shoulder; step toward the target; follow the throw.

Coaching Keys

- ✓ When players are struggling with their accuracy, check for a proper four-seam grip, the front shoulder points toward the target, that the step is toward the target, and that the elbow is staying above the shoulder.
- ✓ Remind players to follow their throws toward the target after releasing the ball.



First and Third Drill

Objective

- ✓ Works First and Third situation
- ✓ Works both the offense and defense

Setup

- ✓ Baseball field, baseballs

Execution

- ✓ Split up your team into two teams with a complete infield
- ✓ One of the teams will play defense in the field, while the other team runs the bases
- ✓ The team running the bases will begin with a runner on both first and third, with the object being to score a run
- ✓ Defensively, the object is to stop the runner from scoring while also attempting not to give the runner second base on an easy steal

Coaching Keys

- ✓ The catcher calls the play before the pitcher pitches the ball
- ✓ The runner on first has only three pitches in which he must attempt to steal second base
- ✓ A successful steal of second base will be worth one point, and a run scored will be worth three points
- ✓ You need to work on defensive and offensive strategies before running this drill



Hat Drill

Objective

- ✓ Arm strength
- ✓ Player accuracy
- ✓ Catching one hop
- ✓ Focus

Setup

- ✓ Place hat 10-15 feet in front
- ✓ Players stand 20 feet away from the hat

Execution

- ✓ Throw ball on line at the hat
- ✓ The first player to 9 points wins!
- ✓ Hit hat = 1 point
- ✓ Move hat = 2 points
- ✓ Flip hat = 3 points





Practice Plans

Ages 4-5

5 min	Run the bases
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Explain that first is the only base you can run past✓ Explain that you must touch the bases or be called out✓ Play follow the leader
5 min	Stretch
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Stretch in a circle around the pitcher's mound. The routine should be quick and simple✓ Layout the day's practice plan
30 min	Practice in stations, 10 minutes per station, then rotate
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Hitting off the tee and tossed balls✓ Fielding and catching✓ Throwing
15 min	Play a scrimmage or other instructional game
5 min	Run the bases and review
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Sprint around the bases. Incorporate races or chases✓ Let kids slide into home to finish



Ages 6-8: Three Day Practice Plan – Day 1

5 min	Dynamic warm-up
	✓ Skipping, high-knee skipping, high-knee jogging, bounding, backward running, jogging
5 min	Baserunning
	✓ Big League Base running (controlled, follow the leader)
5 min	Stretching
	✓ Hamstrings, quads, groin, back, shoulders, triceps
10 min	Throwing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Power Position Drill with coaches (5 min); with teammates after a few sessions ✓ One-Knee Drill with coaches (5 min); with teammates after a few sessions ✓ As the season progresses, you can replace these drills with playing catch and any fun throwing drills.
10 min	Basic rules session or any fun drill
5 min	Base Running
	✓ Big League Base running or any fun Base running drills (run hard)

Ages 6-8: Three Day Practice Plan – Day 2

5 min	Dynamic warm-up (same as day 1)
	✓ Skipping, high-knee skipping, high-knee jogging, bounding, backward running, jogging
5 min	Baserunning (same as day 1)
	✓ Big League Base running (controlled, follow the leader)
5 min	Stretching (same as day 1)
	✓ Hamstrings, quads, groin, back, shoulders, triceps
15 min	Throwing & Catching
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Power Position Drill with coaches (5 min); with teammates after a few sessions ✓ One-Knee Drill with coaches (5 min); with teammates after a few sessions ✓ Catch coach's throws with two hands in front (5 min); use bigger balls, Lite Flite balls, or soft baseballs ✓ As the season progresses, you can replace these drills with playing catch and any of the fun throwing drills.
30 min	Stations (3 groups, 10 minutes each station)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Hitting (Short Toss from the Front); as the season progresses, you can substitute any fun or regular hitting drills. ✓ Infield and throwing (review fielding ground balls and throwing after the catch; include backhand drills); as the season progresses, you can substitute any fun or regular infield or throwing drills. ✓ Outfield (Thrown Fly Balls, Thrown or Machine Ground Balls); as the season progresses, you can substitute any fun or regular outfield drills.
15 min	Controlled game, game situations, or rules session



Ages 6-8: Three Day Practice Plan – Day 3

5 min	Dynamic warm-up (same as day 1)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Skipping, high-knee skipping, high-knee jogging, bounding, backward running, jogging
5 min	Baserunning (same as day 1)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Big League Base running (controlled, follow the leader)
5 min	Stretching (same as day 1)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Hamstrings, quads, groin, back, shoulders, triceps
10 min	Throwing & Catching
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Players play catch; stress mechanics and catching with two hands in front of the body.✓ Play Twenty-One✓ As the season progresses, you can replace these drills with regular or fun throwing drills.
30 min	Stations (3 groups, 10 minutes each station)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Hitting (Free Hitting or Line Drive Home Run Derby); as the season progresses, you can substitute any fun or regular hitting drill.✓ Infield and throwing (review backhand, High Five Drill); as the season progresses, you can substitute any fun or regular infield or throwing drills.✓ Outfield (Pass Patterns); as the season progresses, you can substitute any fun or regular outfield drills.
15 min	Controlled game, game situations, or rules session



Ages 9-10: Three Day Practice Plan – Day 1

5 min	Dynamic warm-up <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Skipping, high-knee skipping, high-knee jogging, bounding, backward running, jogging✓ Big League Base running or general Base running can be done as jogging
5 min	Stretching <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Hamstrings, quads, groin, back, shoulders, triceps
10 min	Throwing & Catching <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ One-Knee Drill with teammates (4 min)✓ Power Position Drill with teammates (4 min)✓ Play catch or play Twenty-One with teammates (2 min)✓ Emphasize proper mechanics and accuracy on each throw; focus on catching the ball out in front with two hands.
20 min	Team Fundamentals <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Choose from cutoffs and relays, first-and-third offense, and defense, defending the steal, infield and outfield communication, and priorities.
30 min	Stations (3 groups, 10 minutes each station) <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Hitting (Tee work, Soft Toss); any hitting drill can be substituted as the season progresses.✓ Infield and throwing (Rolled Ground Balls, Throwing After the Catch Drill); any infield or throwing drills can be substituted as the season progresses.✓ Outfield (Thrown Fly Balls; use soft baseballs until skills are developed); any outfield drills can be substituted as the season progresses.
5 min	Base Running <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Big League Base running (full speed) or another base running drill



Ages 9-10: Three Day Practice Plan – Day 2

5 min	Dynamic warm-up (same as day 1)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Skipping, high-knee skipping, high-knee jogging, bounding, backward running, jogging ✓ Big League Base running or general Base running can be done as jogging
5 min	Stretching (same as day 1)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Hamstrings, quads, groin, back, shoulders, triceps
10 min	Throwing & Catching
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Review One-Knee Drill and Power Position Drill (5 min) ✓ Play catch or play Twenty-One with teammates (5 min) ✓ Emphasize proper mechanics and accuracy on each throw; focus on catching the ball out in front with two hands. ✓ Any throwing drill can be substituted as the season progresses. ✓ Pitchers can work on throwing and pitching drills.
20 min	Team Fundamentals
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Choose from cutoffs and relays, first-and-third offense, and defense, defending the steal, infield and outfield communication, and priorities.
30 min	Stations (3 groups, 10 minutes each station)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Hitting (Short Toss from the Front); any hitting drill can be substituted as the season progresses. ✓ Infield and throwing (review; backhand drills; High Five Drill); any infield or throwing drills can be substituted as the season progresses. ✓ Outfield (review; Thrown or Machine Ground Balls; Communication Drill); any outfield drills can be substituted as the season progresses.
5 min	Base Running
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Big League Base running (full speed) or another base running drill



Ages 9-10: Three Day Practice Plan – Day 3

5 min	Dynamic warm-up (same as day 1)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Skipping, high-knee skipping, high-knee jogging, bounding, backward running, jogging✓ Big League Base running or general Base running can be done as jogging
5 min	Stretching (same as day 1)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Hamstrings, quads, groin, back, shoulders, triceps
10 min	Throwing & Catching
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Other Throwing Games✓ Emphasize proper mechanics and accuracy on each throw; focus on catching the ball out in front with two hands.✓ Any throwing drills can be used as the season progresses.✓ Pitchers can work on throwing drills.
20 min	Team Fundamentals
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Choose from cutoffs and relays, first-and-third offense, and defense, defending the steal, infield and outfield communication, and priorities.
30 min	Stations (3 groups, 10 minutes each station)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Hitting (Free Hitting); any hitting drill can be substituted as the season progresses.✓ Infield and throwing (Box Drill or 4-6/6-4 Drill with First Base Drill); any infield or throwing drills can be substituted as the season progresses.✓ Outfield (Pass Patterns); any outfield drills can be substituted as the season progresses.
30 min	Controlled game, soft toss game or T-ball game, or game situations
5 min	Base Running
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Big League Base running (full speed) or another base running drill



Ages 11-13: Three Day Practice Plan – Day 1

5 min	Dynamic warm-up
	✓ Skipping, high-knee skipping, high-knee jogging, bounding, backward running, jogging
5 min	Stretching
	✓ Hamstrings, quads, groin, back, shoulders, triceps
10 min	Throwing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ One-Knee Drill with teammates (early in the season) ✓ Power Position Drill with teammates (early in the season) ✓ Play catch or play Twenty-One with teammates ✓ Any throwing or pitching drills can be substituted as the season progresses ✓ Emphasize long tossing throughout the season
20 min	Infield & outfield work
	✓ Rolled Ground Balls, Throwing After the catch Drill, Hitting Ground Balls, Thrown Fly Balls, Rolled or Machine Ground Galls, Hit Fly Balls or Machine Fly Balls
20 min	Team Fundamentals
	✓ Choose from cutoffs and relays, pickoff plays, first-and-third offense and defense, full bunt defenses, pop-up, and fly ball priorities, and defending steals.
60 min	Hitting stations, 15 minutes per station
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Soft Toss, Tee Work, Short Toss from the Front, Free Hitting ✓ Any hitting drills can be substituted as the season progresses ✓ Infielders and outfielders can take more ground balls and fly balls during this time slot. Pitchers can get in bullpen throwing or do flatwork (pitching and throwing drills).
10 min	Pitcher's fielding practice (PFP) and Big League Baserunning
	✓ Pitcher Covering First Base Drill, Bunt Drill



Ages 11-13: Three Day Practice Plan – Day 2

5 min	Dynamic warm-up (same as day 1)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Skipping, high-knee skipping, high-knee jogging, bounding, backward running, jogging
5 min	Stretching (same as day 1)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Hamstrings, quads, groin, back, shoulders, triceps
10 min	Throwing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ One-Knee Drill with teammates (early in the season) ✓ Power Position Drill with teammates (early in the season) ✓ Play catch or play Twenty-One or long toss with teammates ✓ Any throwing or pitching drills can be substituted as the season progresses ✓ Emphasize long tossing throughout the season
20 min	Infield & outfield work
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Backhand Throwing Drill, 4-6/6-4 Drill, First Base Drill, Hitting Ground Balls, Thrown Fly Balls, Rolled or Machine Ground Balls, Hit Fly Balls or Machine Fly Balls, Communication Drill ✓ Any infield drill can be substituted as the season progresses.
20 min	Team Fundamentals
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Choose from cutoffs and relays, pickoff plays, first-and-third offense and defense, full bunt defenses, pop-up, and fly ball priorities, and defending steals.
60 min	Hitting stations, 15 minutes per station
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Short Toss from the Front, One-Arm Drill, Lob Toss, Stickball Drill, Free Hitting ✓ Any hitting drills can be substituted as the season progresses ✓ Infielders and outfielders can take more ground balls and fly balls during this time slot. Pitchers can get in bullpen throwing or do flatwork (pitching and throwing drills).
10 min	Pitcher's fielding practice (PFP) and Big League Baserunning
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Pitcher Covering First Base Drill, Bunt Drill



Ages 11-13: Three Day Practice Plan – Day 3

5 min	Dynamic warm-up (same as day 1)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Skipping, high-knee skipping, high-knee jogging, bounding, backward running, jogging
5 min	Stretching (same as day 1)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Hamstrings, quads, groin, back, shoulders, triceps
10 min	Throwing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Play catch, play Twenty-One, or long toss with teammates.✓ Other throwing games (optional)✓ Any throwing or pitching drills can be substituted as the season progresses✓ Emphasize long tossing throughout the season
20 min	Infield & outfield work
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Box Drill, backhand drills, Hitting Ground Balls, Backhand Throwing Drill, Drop Step Drill, Pass Patterns, Fence Drill✓ Any infield drill can be substituted as the season progresses.✓ Drills can be turned into contests on the third or final day of a week.
20 min	Team Fundamentals
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Choose from cutoffs and relays, pickoff plays, first-and-third offense and defense, full bunt defenses, pop-up, and fly ball priorities, and defending steals.
60 min	Game situations, controlled scrimmage, soft toss game, or T-ball game
10 min	Big League Baserunning



Age 13-14: Three Day Practice Plan – Day 1

5 min	Dynamic warm-up
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Skipping, high-knee skipping, high-knee jogging, bounding, backward running, jogging
5 min	Stretching
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Hamstrings, quads, groin, back, shoulders, triceps
10 min	Throwing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ One-Knee Drill with teammates (early in the season) ✓ Power Position Drill with teammates (early in the season) ✓ Play catch or play Twenty-One with teammates ✓ Any throwing or pitching drills can be substituted as the season progresses ✓ Emphasize long tossing throughout the season
20 min	Infield & outfield work
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Rolled Ground Balls, Throwing After the Catch Drill, Hitting Ground Balls, Thrown Fly Balls, Rolled or Machine Ground Balls, Hit Fly Balls or Machine Fly Balls
20 min	Team Fundamentals
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Choose from cutoffs and relays (introduce trailer), advanced pickoff plays (daylight plays, plays put on by fielders) and situations, advanced game situations (throwing to proper base in certain situations, decoys, and so on), full bunt defenses, pop-up and fly ball priorities, first-and-third offense, and defense, and defending steals.
60 min	Hitting stations, 15 minutes each
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Soft Toss, Tee Work, Short Toss from the Front, Free Hitting ✓ Any hitting drill can be substituted as the season progresses ✓ Infielders and outfielders can take more ground balls and fly balls during this time slot. Pitchers can get in bullpen throwing or do flatwork (pitching or throwing drills).
10 min	Pitcher's fielding practice (PFP) and Big League Baserunning
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Pitcher Covering First Base Drill, Bunt Drill



Age 13-14: Three Day Practice Plan – Day 2

5 min	Dynamic warm-up (same as day 1)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Skipping, high-knee skipping, high-knee jogging, bounding, backward running, jogging
5 min	Stretching (same as day 1)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Hamstrings, quads, groin, back, shoulders, triceps
10 min	Throwing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ One-Knee Drill with teammates (early in the season) ✓ Power Position Drill with teammates (early in the season) ✓ Play catch or play Twenty-One with teammates ✓ Any throwing or pitching drills can be substituted as the season progresses ✓ Emphasize long tossing throughout the season
20 min	Infield & outfield work
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Backhand drills, 4-6/6-4 Drill, First Base Drill, Hitting Ground Balls, Backhand Throwing Drill, Thrown Fly Balls, Rolled or Machine Ground Balls, Hit Fly Balls or Machine Fly Balls, Communication Drill ✓ Any infield drill can be substituted as the season progresses.
20 min	Team Fundamentals (same as day 1)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Choose from cutoffs and relays (introduce trailer), advanced pickoff plays (daylight plays, plays put on by fielders) and situations, advanced game situations (throwing to proper base in certain situations, decoys, and so on), full bunt defenses, pop-up and fly ball priorities, first-and-third offense, and defense, and defending steals.
60 min	Hitting stations, 15 minutes each
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Soft Toss, Tee Work, Short Toss from the Front, Free Hitting ✓ Any hitting drill can be substituted as the season progresses ✓ Infielders and outfielders can take more ground balls and fly balls during this time slot. Pitchers can get in bullpen throwing or do flatwork (pitching or throwing drills).
10 min	Pitcher's fielding practice (PFP) and Big League Baserunning
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Pitcher Covering First Base Drill, Bunt Drill



Age 13-14: Three Day Practice Plan – Day 3

5 min	Dynamic warm-up (same as day 1)
	✓ Skipping, high-knee skipping, high-knee jogging, bounding, backward running, jogging
5 min	Stretching (same as day 1)
	✓ Hamstrings, quads, groin, back, shoulders, triceps
10 min	Throwing
	✓ Play catch or play Twenty-One, or long toss with teammates ✓ Other throwing games (optional) ✓ Any throwing or pitching drills can be substituted as the season progresses ✓ Emphasize long tossing throughout the season
20 min	Infield & outfield work
	✓ Box Drill, backhand drills, Hitting Ground Balls, Backhand Throwing Drill, Drop Step Drill, Pass Patterns, Fence Drill ✓ Any infield drill can be substituted as the season progresses. Drills can be turned into contests on the third or final day of a week.
20 min	Team Fundamentals (same as day 1)
	✓ Choose from cutoffs and relays (introduce trailer), advanced pickoff plays (daylight plays, plays put on by fielders) and situations, advanced game situations (throwing to proper base in certain situations, decoys, and so on), full bunt defenses, pop-up and fly ball priorities, first-and-third offense, and defense, and defending steals.
60 min	Game situations, controlled scrimmage, soft toss game, T-ball game
10 min	Big League Baserunning



Working with Parents

Pre-season meeting

A pre-season meeting with the PARENTS is a must! Here are some topics that should be discussed with parents:

1. Introductions
2. What can they expect from the COACHES
 - ✓ Fundamentals
 - ✓ Development of proper techniques
 - ✓ Playing time
 - ✓ Communication: how it will be done / why decisions are made
 - ✓ Sportsmanship
 - ✓ League Expectations / Policies and Procedures
3. What you expect from the PLAYERS
 - ✓ Listen – have the desire to improve
 - ✓ Work hard / maximum effort
 - ✓ Teamwork attitude – no individuals
 - ✓ Sportsmanship – no negative comments to umpires or other players
 - ✓ Work on skills at home
 - ✓ Have fun
4. What you expect from PARENTS
 - ✓ Have players there on time – call if they need to miss a practice or game
 - ✓ Keep it positive – recognize players success – encourage players efforts
 - ✓ Communicate any issues immediately – pick the right time
 - ✓ Sportsmanship – no negative comments to umpires, players, or other parents
 - ✓ Understanding – there are many decisions a head coach must make
 - ✓ Volunteer to help
5. Miscellaneous
 - ✓ Get email addresses
 - ✓ Distribute coupon books/sponsorship opportunities
 - ✓ Distribute team rosters
 - ✓ Distribute practice and game schedules
 - ✓ Distribute Policy and Procedure Information if needed
 - ✓ Signup sheets for help – assistant coaches, bookkeeper, treats...



Handout for Pre-Season Meeting

HEAD COACH:

ASST COACH:

COMMUNICATION: Every Sunday night I will be e-mailing our weekly schedule to you. Rainouts happen so I will get that info out ASAP.

SEASON INFO: Most practices and games will be at “ ”.

GOALS: **Have fun.** improve as individuals and as a **TEAM**, work on the fundamentals of baseball, hustle and respect the game of baseball, be competitive, play all kids and play different positions, make new friends, help these kids keep playing baseball next year, learn how to deal with failure and learn from our mistakes, build **TEAM** chemistry, develop leadership with our **TEAM**, and understanding and performing our role with this **TEAM** (coach, player, fan/parent)

ROSTER:

PRACTICE/GAME DAY: Please have your son ready to start practice at least 5 minutes before practice and 30 minutes before our games. Please let me know if your son will miss any games or practices. We are looking for a parent to take care of post-game treats.

RULE CHANGES:

EQUIPMENT: All players need to have cleats, an athletic supporter (cup), glove, bat (shared?), batting helmet (recommended), and water bottle.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: Play catch with your son every day for 15 minutes (proper form will be shown)
Watch Major League/College baseball games with your son and help them pay attention to the fundamentals of how players field, throw, swing, and bunt.



Handout for Pre-Season Meeting - What Kids Say about Playing Sports

The tremendous growth in organized youth sports has resulted in many positive outcomes for kids. Athletics creates an atmosphere that both supports and enhances what kids want and need. Surveys have revealed the top reasons why young people want to play organized sports:

- "I want to have fun."
- "I want to do something I'm good at."
- "I want to be with friends and make new ones."
- "I want to get fit and stay in shape."
- "I want to learn new skills and improve on existing ones."
- "I want to play and participate as a member of a team."

Coaches and parents should pay attention to these reasons, using them as the foundation for youth sports experiences. "Having fun" is at the top of the list and should be the focus of any athletic environment.

Note that winning does not make the top reasons for youth participation in organized sports. It consistently ranks toward the bottom on surveys that ask young people why they play sports. This surprises many adults who value outcomes – winning – more than the experience – fun, friends, and fitness.

While being competitive and striving for excellence are an important part of athletics, sports provide many other teachable moments whose effects last longer than the temporary rush of victory. Learning how to accept defeat and exhibiting positive sportsmanship skills, especially in defeat, are valuable life lessons.

Coaches also need to put youngsters' needs and wants ahead of their own. Coaches should ask themselves, "Am I doing everything possible to help kids meet their goals?" If the answer is "No," they need to consider changing the focus of the athletic experience to meet their young athletes' aspirations.

Parents and coaches need to work together and remind each other that kids join teams to have fun and be part of a team, not to win. Whether kids find their sporting experience positive and worth repeating depends on whether the adults in their lives really listen to them and ensure that fun, fitness, and friends are the season's priorities.

Adapted from **Competing with Character: Let's Put Sportsmanship and Fun Back in Youth Sports, by Kevin Kush, M.A., with Michael Sterba, M.H.D., Boys Town Press.*



10 Things Kids Say They Don't Want Their Parents to Do

- ✓ **Don't yell out instructions.** During the game, I'm trying to concentrate on what the coach says and working on what I've been practicing. It's easier for me to do my best if you save instructions and reminders for practice or just before the game.
- ✓ **Don't put down the officials.** This embarrasses me and I sometimes wonder whether the official is going to be tougher on me because my parents' yell.
- ✓ **Don't yell at me in public.** It will just make things worse because I'll be upset, embarrassed, or worried that you're going to yell at me the next time I do something "wrong".
- ✓ **Don't yell at the coach.** When you yell about who gets to play what position, it just stirs things up and takes away from the fun.
- ✓ **Don't put down my teammates.** Don't make put-down remarks about any of my teammates who make mistakes. It takes away from our team spirit.
- ✓ **Don't put down the other team.** When you do this, you're not giving us a very good example of sportsmanship, so we get mixed messages about being "good sports".
- ✓ **Don't lose your cool.** I love to see you excited about the game, but there is no reason to get so upset that you lose your temper. It's our game and all the attention is supposed to be on us.
- ✓ **Don't lecture me about mistakes after the game.** Those rides home in the car after the game are not a good time for lectures about how I messed up – I already feel bad. We can talk later, but please stay calm and don't forget to mention things I did well during the game.
- ✓ **Don't forget how to laugh and have fun.** Sometimes it's hard for me to relax and have fun during the game when I look over and see you so tense and worried.
- ✓ **Don't forget that it's just a game.** Odds are, I'm not going to make a career out of playing sports. I know I may get upset if we lose, but I also know that I'm usually feeling better after we go get a pizza. I need to be reminded sometimes that it's just a game.



Sample Parent Letter

Sugar Land Little League Baseball Parents,

Thank you for participating in Sugar Land Little League. Our organization is made up of parent volunteers, from the director of the board to the parent placing a ball on a tee, and we are all parents willing to give our time and energy to benefit all players. The success of our program is directly related to the amount of involvement and support parents are willing to provide. If you haven't found a way to help already, please let us know and we will provide opportunities.

Our main goals are:

1. Teach the game of baseball (in the right way)
2. To be a positive impact on the players
3. Do all of this with class

We expect the players to play with respect for their teammates, the opposition, and the umpires. Win or lose, our program will have the classiest coaches, players, and parents. If there are concerns about another parent, player, coach, umpire, game strategy, etc..., please be respectful with how the issue is resolved. Please remember this experience is all about the players and their growth as individuals. The appropriate chain for issue resolution is head coach, commissioner, director. Their names and contact information can be found by using the information resources available on our website slll.org and they are there to help if needed.

There will be times when a conflict causes your son to miss a practice or a game. Please be considerate of the rest of the team and let us know as soon as possible. If your son misses games or practices, please be aware there may be repercussions out of respect for the players that consistently making it.

We ask for the players to show up, on time, and ready to play every time they come to the field—Shirts tucked in, hats on straight. From the first step outside the dugout, they will hustle. They will hustle to their position, to the plate, and back to the bench. We will run out every hit and will learn to always back up a play to help our teammates. Every single play, every player will move to a spot. The game of baseball is very boring when players are not thinking about the next play and what they can do to help the team. Players on the bench will not be messing around. There is as much to learn on the bench as there is on the field if the boys want to learn.

Please refrain from “coaching from the stands.” If you would like to actively participate during practices and games (on the field), please ask your head coach how to help and he/she will provide instruction on how to in a way consistent with the programs coaching philosophy.

We will talk with the players individually and have them tell us what their favorite position(s) are. As the season progresses, there is a chance that your son may be playing a position they don't necessarily like, but we need your support about their role on the team—the same goes for batting order. We will develop each player individually and will give them a chance to learn and play any position they are interested in.

Let's have some fun and play ball!

Thank you,

Sugar Land Little League Baseball Coaches

