

ECYB Field Preparation Instructions

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Getting Started

Field preparation for games and practices may seem intimidating at first, but armed with enough information and the right tools, anyone can do the job.

If you have never done field prep before, consider going to a game up to an hour before it starts and watch other field prep volunteers set up the field. If you have the first game and are uncertain of anything, ask other members of your team or members of other teams. There are many parents who have set up fields before, and they are usually willing to share their knowledge. There are also many resources on the Internet.

Get to Know the ECYB Game Fields, Equipment Needed, and Storage Areas

ECYB plays its spring games on six different fields. Shetland and Pinto teams play at Tassajara and the three smaller diamonds at Cerrito Vista. Mustang teams play at Central and Harding. Bronco teams play at Castro and Canyon Trails. Pony teams play on the large field at Cerrito Vista.

Field preparation requires some basic equipment. Volunteers will need to find the chalk machines, paint striping machines, field chalk, bases, and measuring string (or measuring tape). All of this equipment should be contained in the storage containers at each field. If anything is missing or damaged, please call Joe Takano at 510 289-2392.

Each field will have its equipment storage facilities. The storage units will have combination locks. Your team manager should help you find and unlock the equipment containers.

Home vs. Away Team Responsibilities for Games

Home teams are responsible for setting up and lining the field. Visiting teams are asked to drag the field after the game, rake the home plate area, and clean up after each game, as well as tear down the field (put away the bases) after the last game.

Installing the Bases

First and third bases are installed so that their outer edges align with the outer edge of the foul line. Permanent drop-in bases are now installed at all fields so that the bases are in the proper position. These heavy rubber bases have stems that drop into receptacles installed in the ground.

The Mustang, Bronco, and Pony teams, and the Shetland and Pinto teams at Tassajara, will install the permanent bases by first removing the rubber protective plug from the base mount and then pushing the base shaft into the mount.

If the mound is full of dirt and the base does not fit properly, a tool (resembling a long putty knife with an angled bend toward the tip) to remove the dirt from the mount should be located in a storage unit. Please keep track of the rubber plugs and replace them when putting away the bases. When you drag the field, please clean the cinder off the base plug so that it remains visible.

If you can't find the location of a base stem, either because the plug got buried or lost, please check for paint marks on the fences or use the measuring tape to determine its location. The Pinto base path length is 50 feet, Mustang is 60 feet, Bronco is 70 feet, and Pony is 90 feet. That distance is the distance from the point of home plate to the outside far corner of 1st and 3rd bases. It is also the distance from the outside far corner of 1st and 3rd bases to the center of 2nd base. If you are trying to find the stem of 2nd base, you need to know that the diamond is NOT an exact square, otherwise you will dig a hole in the field in the wrong spot.

Lining the Fields

Official Pony league specifications for chalking fields in the different divisions may be found by clicking on the following link and selecting the applicable division for your game field: [Field Specifications and Diagrams](#). At least for the younger divisions, the field diagrams on the Pony website are more elaborate than necessary. Here is a helpful video: [Lining the Field Video](#).

1. Chalking vs. Painting Lines

Chalk is only used for lines on dirt areas of the infield, and paint is used on the grass areas. Paint can also be used in the dirt in a pinch, but the paint is much more expensive. Please operate the paint and chalk machines to dispense only 2" lines. Chalk is slow to disperse and will harm the grass and cause berms to form that cause drainage problems when it rains. Excess chalk is bad for the dirt areas of the field.

Unless league volunteers have recently painted clear lines in the grass, field prep volunteers should use the striping machines, where available, to refresh faded lines as necessary for the first game of the weekend.

Fields may have either a stick sprayer or a 4-wheel striping machine and paint cans designed for those machines (the spray paint tips are different on the cans). When using the stick sprayer, shake the can of paint for a minute, and then push it into the holder so that pulling the trigger will activate the tip. Either push the sprayer on the wheel or smoothly rock the sprayer so that it creates a 2" paint line. When using the 4-wheel striping machine, shake the can, and then push it into the holder so that the wide

direction of the tip runs parallel with the axel. The machine should already be set at the right height for a 2" line.

2. The Batter's Box

The Pony league website (see above link) sets forth the official dimensions of the batter's box for each division. Templates for the batter's box should be available in the storage container. If a template is provided at the field, we suggest that it be used for uniformity. Shetland, Pinto, and Mustang divisions use a 3'x6' template. Bronco and Pony use a 4'x6' template.

Gently trace a line in the dirt along the inside edge of the template and then chalk over the line, with the outside edge of the chalk following the traced line (so if you put the template down again the chalked box would be completely inside the template). You should also lay down a chalk line to keep the catcher a safe distance from the batter.

Place the template so that the protruding metal tines line up with the front edge of the plate and the middle of the plate. The mid-point of the batter's box should line up with the middle of the plate (not the front edge).

If no template is available, a rough guideline that may be helpful is to draw the batter's box around as long as the tallest players in the age group and two-thirds as wide. It should be centered on the middle of the plate, so that players may move up or back in the batter's box.

3. The Foul Line

To chalk the foul lines in the dirt areas of the infield (**not applicable for grass infields**), extend the measuring string from the apex of home plate (the back point) over the outside edge of the base and out past the base. Lay down the chalk line so that the outer edge of the chalk line is against the string. The chalk line will go over the base (not to the outside). That way the entire chalk line is in fair territory. It will extend from the point where the string intersects the batter's box (not the point of home plate) to the place where the dirt infield ends and the grass field begins.

4. Base Coach Boxes and On Deck Circle

Other lines to be drawn may include the base coach boxes off first and third bases and on-deck circles near the dugouts. There are no on-deck circles in Pinto, as the kids are not allowed to swing the bat outside the home plate area for safety reasons. Please see the PONY field dimension recommendations for a guide to how to draw the base coach boxes.

5. Pinto Specific Lines

In the Pinto division, the rules call for lines halfway between first and second base, second and third base, and third base and home plate. There is a circle around the pitching area. There are also lines on each side of the pitching circle to indicate where the pitcher's helper should stand when a coach is pitching. The location of all of the painted lines should be visible on the field from the previous weekend. The pitching area is marked by the transition from dirt to grass. The lines should be repainted for the first game of each weekend at the field so that they remain visible the next week.

6. Touching Up Lines

For all fields, the field preparation crew for the first game (home team) should chalk all of the lines. The field preparation crews for subsequent games (home team) on the same day should not re-chalk all of the lines, because we do not want to waste chalk and excessive chalk will adversely affect the consistency of the infield dirt. Crews in the second game should only use chalk as necessary to repair the lines.

If you are unable to locate any chalk at your field, please call the field chalk delivery coordinator Joe Takano at 510 289-2392.

Installing a Pitching Mound

The pitching mounds at the Mustang, Bronco, and Pony fields need to be placed so that the rubber is exactly the right distance to the plate. A measuring tape or spool of string should be available in the field storage container to assist in this process. The distance is measured from the tip of home plate to the front of the pitching rubber. This distance is 46 feet for Mustang fields, 50 feet for Bronco fields, and 60 feet (54 feet for some games) for Pony fields.

Dragging the Field Following Games and Practices

ECYB requests that teams drag the dirt infields after every practice and game. The City of El Cerrito requires our teams to do so. Dragging the infields is super important when rain is a possibility, as it allows rain to percolate across the field instead of flowing with speed through channels.

The dirt infields should always be raked from out to in at the outside edge of the infield, so that the dirt does not build up into ridges on the outer edges of the infield or at the transition from the infield to the grass outfield. This is important for proper drainage of the field. If the dirt gets too high on the outer edges, water will remain and pond on the infield instead of sheeting off, and the field will take longer to recover after a storm and we may lose games unnecessarily.

In addition, please do not use the draggers at the outer most edges of the infield, because pushing dirt into the grass will build a ridge that can cause bad hops for fielders

and require a ton of work to remove. Please also go slowly enough that the draggers do not bounce up and down, which can cause waves to form in the infield, which will adversely affect drainage. The following video provides some instruction: [Dragging the Field Video](#).

Raking the Home Plate Area Following Games and Practices

All teams should rake the home plate areas after practices and games, which means pull some clay and cinder material into the low spots in the batter's box (up to the level of home plate) and walk on it, so the home plate area stays in good condition and the water drains across the home plate area better. Use the flat edge of the wide rakes, with one end on the plate, to check whether the material is up to the appropriate level. If the dirt drops below the top of the plate, kids may catch a cleat on the edge. The catcher area should also get leveled. Maintaining the home plate area will minimize standing water problems around home plate after the rain.

Putting Water on the Field Around Games and Practices

Teams at the Mustang and Bronco level should put water down on the fields for 10-15 minutes after practices. Harding, Castro, and Canyon Trails have an irrigation box in the center of the infield, and there is a cannister sprinkler (and hose) in the field storage box. Central currently does not have a functioning water hookup, but the City will re-install the coupler for a sprinkler/hose in the center of the infield. There is no need to put water down on the dirt at Cerrito Vista and Tassajara, because they are watered by the automatic sprinkler system.

If you have any questions, please contact Joe Takano at 510 289-2392, jxtakano@gmail.com.

We hope you find this information helpful. Thank you for your support and helping to keep our fields looking great.