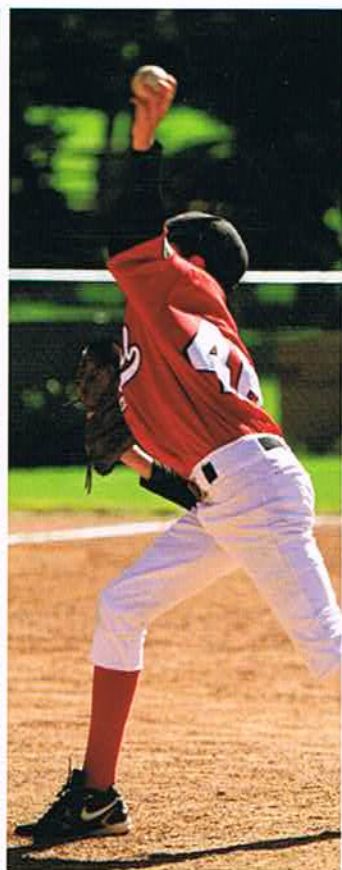




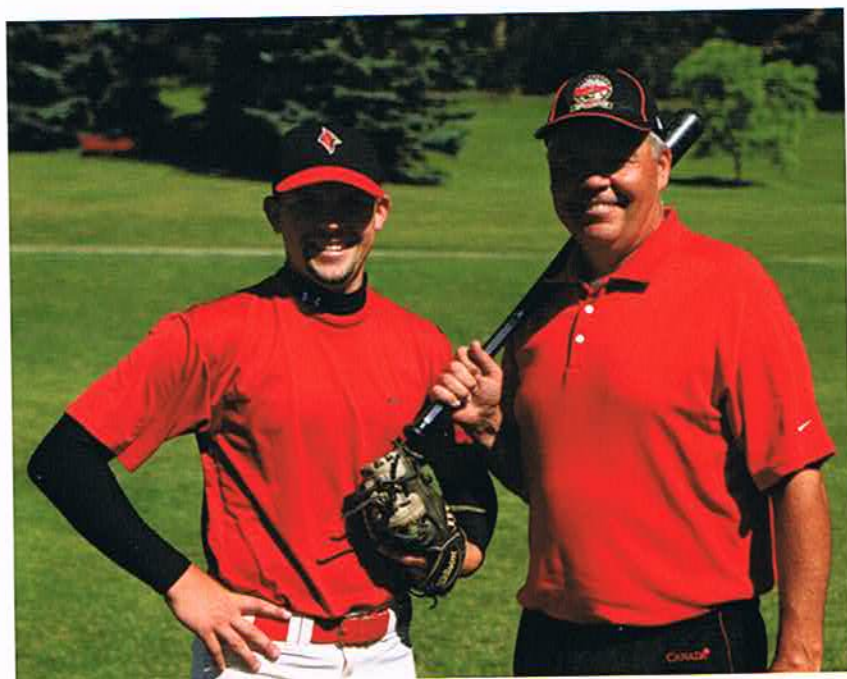
COACHING

9 to 12 year olds



Focus on Player Development

MEET THE AUTHORS



Big AL with son Scott

AL PRICE

A Player

- Competed in multiple Provincial and National Championships
- All-Canadian catcher of National Championship team in 1976
- Member of Canadian National Team in 1977 and 1980
- Competed in Canada, the United States, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Korea & Japan internationally

Teacher / Trainer

- Professional High School educator, athletic director and coach 20+ years
- Principal of the National Sports School in Calgary, Alberta
- Presented coaching clinics to 100,000+ baseball and softball coaches

Coach

- Coached from youth to elite levels for 30+ years
- Coached teams to League, District, Provincial and National Championships
- Coached team to the Sr. Little League World Series in 2003
- Provided training sessions to 50,000+ players

Author

- Co-authored training resources used by thousands of leagues and over 1 million coaches, managers, players and their parents

SCOTT PRICE

A Player

- Competed in multiple Provincial, Western Canadian and National Championships
- Member of Canadian Championship Team in 2003
- Member of the Canadian Team at the Sr. Little League World Series 2003
- All Canadian SS at Canadian College Championships in 2006
- Graduated (Fall 2009) from University of Texas at Brownsville (SS/2B)

Teacher / Trainer

- Graduated with a Bachelors in Kinesiology and Education (Certified All-Level Physical Education Teacher)
- 6 years coordinating and running summer baseball camps for players 9-16
- Has assisted his father Al at Coaching Clinics over the past 3 years

Author

- Co author of the Big Al Baseball training resource



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Kylar Marriott, Connor Compton, Tyler Scott,
Alex Bishop, Russell Ronsky, Matthew Lloyd,
Danton Oliver, Michelle Smith
and Jillian LaFrance.

This 9-12 Coaching Manual was written to help you teach the game to 9-12 year olds and at the same time create a safe and fun experience for all of the players on your team.

Players at this age typically have some playing experience. They need to continue to work on the fundamentals but are also ready to learn more advanced skills and game strategies. It is very important to recognize that some of your players may lack confidence and strength and that other players are quite advanced in their development. The coach needs to create experiences in practices and games designed to help all players improve.

This 9-12 Coaching Manual and the matching player handbook are designed to help the coach, the players and their parents have fun this season learning the game.

Coaches, each of the skills pages in this manual provide you with a photo sequence of the skill being performed the proper way, extra coaching tips and specific information on how to correct common mistakes. I have also included warm-up exercises, a practice planner, instruction on the Pitching and Catching positions and tips on how to get you parents involved.

The player handbooks are a great way to get the players and the parents learning the game together. When you hand out the handbooks make sure that you take a moment to tell the parents and players how to use them. First have them print their name and the team name in the front of the handbook. Point out where their photo fits inside the cover. Encourage the players to look carefully at the skills progressions. As you know, if players practice the proper technique at home they will improve and have more success during the season.

Your job as a coach is to find a way to help every player on your team feel comfortable and safe, improve and ultimately develop a passion for the game this season. These instructional materials are designed to help along the way.

teaching the game the big AL way

The key role a coach has in any sport is to teach the fundamental skills of the game. It is important at every level of play and critical for the development of young players.

If you survey players on what they would like to do at practice, they would all rather "hit" or play games than "learn fundamentals".



Every coach needs to teach the fundamentals in an effective and fun way to have an impact. One of the biggest mistakes coaches make is to assume young players know the fundamentals even if they have played on their team previously. Even professional players re-visit the fundamentals every spring training.

Your teaching timeline is from the first practice to the last game of the year, so be patient and create a plan that extends through the season.

Here is the approach I use when I coach. I call it the: **"TEACH IT - TRY IT - GAME IT APPROACH"**.

I have learned the best time to teach a new skill is about 30 minutes into a practice. Here is how I fit teaching fundamentals into my practice sessions:



First, have the team get warmed up completely; jogging, stretching, baserunning and playing catch from short, medium and long distances. On my field this usually takes 20-25 minutes. They are completely warmed up, they have worked out a bit and have burnt off some of their energy, but are not physically or emotionally drained.

Second, send players to the dugout for quick drink break, and at about the 30 minute mark they jog back onto the field ready to go.

Third, tell them it is time to learn how to "Field Ground Balls" and remind them that as soon as you are done it will be time to HIT. Having hitting practice scheduled immediately after the teaching part helps keep all of the players focused because they don't want to lose any time from hitting.

teach it - try it - game it - **approach**

TEACH IT (5 minutes)

For example, teach the fundamental skills progression for ground balls. Teach the skill without a ball by having the players follow along and simulate the ground ball technique. Repeat the "RELAXED, READY, MOTOR, APPROACH THE BALL, FIELD IT, STEP AND THROW IT" technique several times. Your goal is to have every player understand the key parts of the skill by demonstrating the skill in slow motion without a ball.

TRY IT (5 minutes)

Organize your players into a drill at a safe short distance and have them practice the technique. In order for players to make progress it is very important to keep fear of failure and fear of getting hurt out of the TRY IT phase. Rolling a ground ball softly and at a short distance provides all players a chance to practice exactly what you have taught. If you hit hard ground balls at a line of players out at shortstop during this phase, fear becomes an issue and players immediately forget what you have just taught them.

GAME IT (5-10 minutes)

Organize your team into a fun competition or game that matches their skill level so they can see how the technique works under a little pressure. Players love this phase as long as they can find some success during the game. Initially you might challenge the players to see who can field the most ground balls in a row using the proper technique. Later in the season you may have them compete in the "King of the Diamond" contest.

Move through the phases without wasting time and make sure you don't over teach during the **TEACH IT** phase.

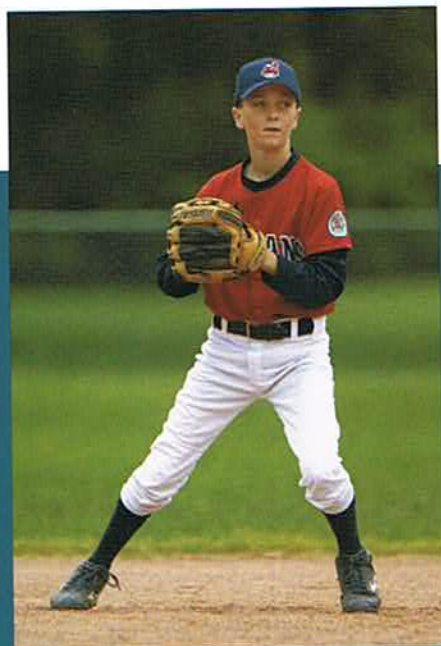


After the players have been through the phase for ground balls, replace it with a 1-2 minute **REVIEW IT** phase in future practices.

Once your players clearly understand how to perform the skill properly you need to provide them with thousands of opportunities to practice the skill in drills and game activities and encourage them to practice the skill at home any chance they get.

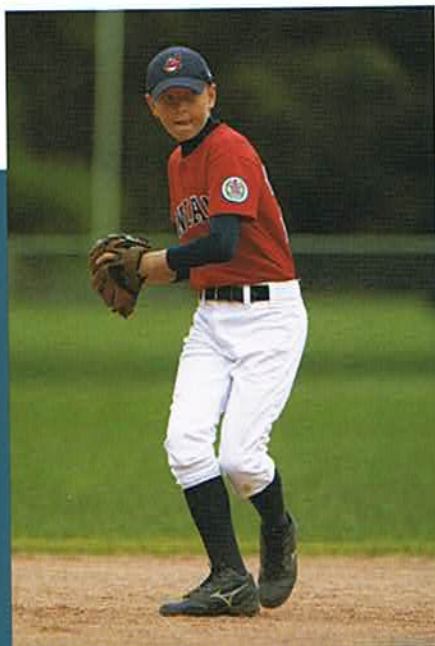
This approach has worked for me and my players over the years. Give it a try and see how it works for you.

throwing 3 angles



1. Catch and Grip

Legs bent, glove leg forward
Catch ball in palm
Cover it and grip it



2. Power Step Forward

Stride forward instep to target
Hands together until power
foot lands
Eyes on target



3. Power Step Left

Swing power foot in front with
instep to target on left
Shoulders and hips coiled for throw

coaching tips

- Every player on your team needs to learn to how to throw properly straight ahead and to the left and right.
- Use the power foot as the "steering wheel" and reinforce striding with instep to the target to set up to throw
- Remind everyone to catch the ball in the palm with 2 hands and to keep hands together until the power foot hits the ground.



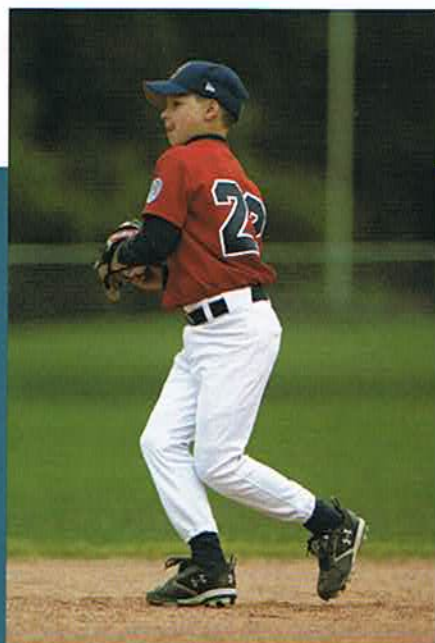
Catchers need to work on all 3 throwing angles

When a catcher makes throws to 1st, 2nd or 3rd base the "power step toward the target" technique should be used. Instep to the target helps coil your hips and shoulders for the throw.

Players at all positions need to be able to throw to all 3 angles

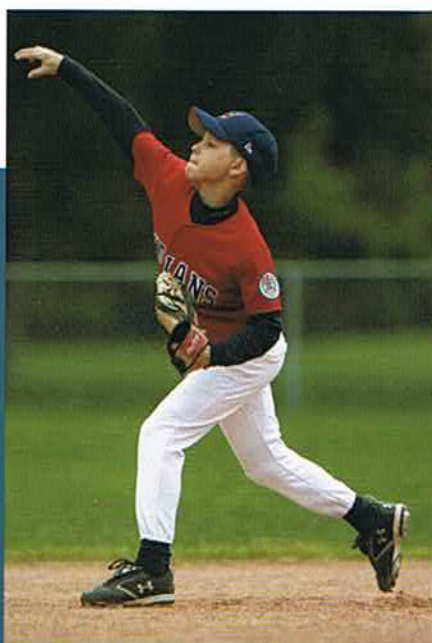
When a 1st baseman fields the ball on a double play the "power step to the target" technique is used to make the throw to 2nd base.





4. Power Step Right

Lean ahead, step out front with instep to target on right
Swing shoulders and hips around to set up for throw



5. Step and Throw

Eyes on the target
Arm down and back
Overhand throw with fingers on top



6. Follow Through

Cross seam release
Throwing shoulder to the target
Push off power foot

correcting common mistakes



Breaking hands to soon

Don't bring your throwing hand out of the glove until the power foot hits the ground. Young players often panic and bring the ball out of the glove before the body is in position to make a strong accurate throw.



Stepping without turning the instep to target

Don't step forward with power foot toes pointing at target. When striding forward with instep to the target the players hips and shoulders are able to turn and set up for the long strong throw.



Cutting the ball with lazy release

Don't rotate your fingers and the ball down to side on release. This reduces power and puts stress on the arm. At release the fingers are on top and immediately after release the thumb turns counter-clockwise to reduce stress on arm.



catching backhand



1. Ready

Wide stance, legs bent
Hands out front, palm facing target
Glove leg forward
Eyes on the ball



2. Step Out & Plant

Step out on power foot
Chest behind the ball, stay low
Watch ball into glove
Backhand 2 handed catch



3. Step and Throw

Eyes on the target
Find the Grip
Step to the target
Throw and follow through

coaching tips

- Reinforce catching the ball in the palm so players can find the X-seam grip quickly.
- To do the footwork quickly players must catch with 2 hands. Have players play catch, barehanded or with open mitt on the glove hand to develop the proper technique.
- Glove size for 9 and 10 year olds should be 10 1/2 to 11" and for 11 and 12 year old players I recommend 11 1/2 " or less. Many young players have gloves larger than MLB players.

Proper footwork for a ball on glove side where you are able to catch it out front



1. Step Out and Forward

Step out with foot closest to the ball
Chest behind ball
Catch with two hands
Find the grip



2. Step in Front

Bring power foot out front
Instep to the target
Set up for throw

3. Step and Throw

Step at target
Eyes lock on target
Step and throw and follow through

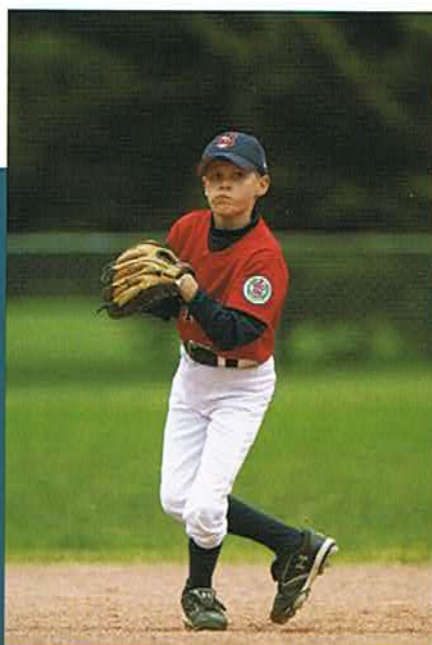


forehand



4. Step Out

Step out with glove foot
Chest behind the ball stay low
Watch the ball into glove
Forehand 2 handed catch



5. Step in Behind

Plant power foot in behind
Find the grip
Eyes to the target
Weight on balls of feet



6. Step and Throw

Eyes on the target
Find the Grip
Step to the target
Throw and follow through

correcting common mistakes



Don't reach to make 1 handed catch

Don't be lazy and just reach out to catch the ball.
Move your body in behind the ball and catch with 2 hands.
Less chance for errors and this action gets a player quickly into position to make a throw.



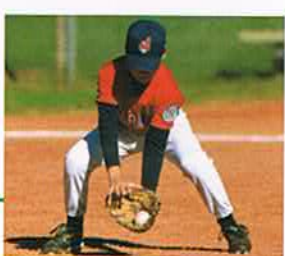
Catching the ball in the webbing

Don't try to catch the ball in the webbing at the end of the glove.
Young players often miss this ball with it going off the tip of the glove.
Have players practice catching the ball in the palm where it makes a little popping sound just like the pros.



Catching a low throw by reaching down

Don't just reach down and try to catch the ball in front of the knees.
It is difficult to watch the ball into the glove and the player is off balance. Practice catching a low ball by moving to a wider stance with hands out and low.



fielding fly balls



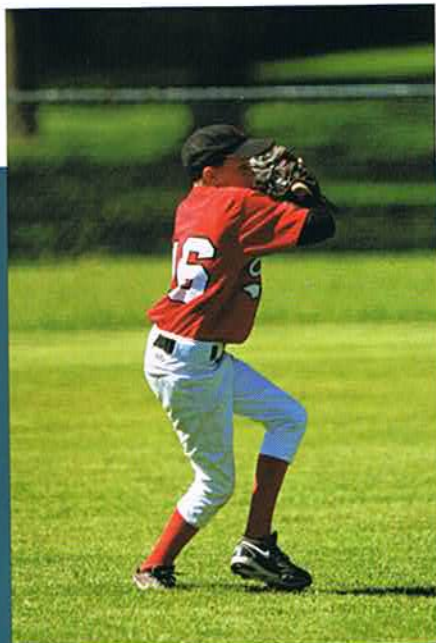
1. Ready Position

Eyes fixed on the ball
Feet shoulder width apart
Weight on the balls of feet
Glove leg ahead for balance



2. Move behind Ball

Eyes on the ball
Run smooth, arms pumping
Catch the ball with Glove
Leg forward



3. Setup to Throw

Catch with two hands, grip the ball
Stride forward on power foot
Glove shoulder and hip to target
Arm down, back, overhand throw

coaching tips

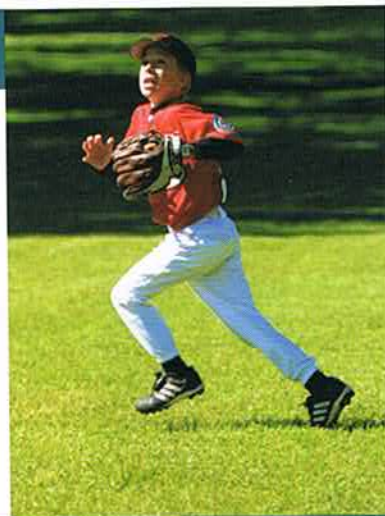
- Every player should develop the skills of an outfielder at this age.
- Remember, run smooth with legs bent, a little weight on the heels but mostly on the balls of the feet.
- Don't run with the glove in the air when chasing down a fly ball. It slows you down.
- Remind players to hustle to get in behind the ball and set up to throw.
- Outfielders just like infielders need to go through the "RELAXED-READY-MOTOR-RE-SET" routine on every pitch.



Drop step to get the proper angle on the fly ball

On balls hit to back left or back right stay low and take a directional step first to get the proper angle on the ball.

Then crossover and pump your arms and sprint to make the play.





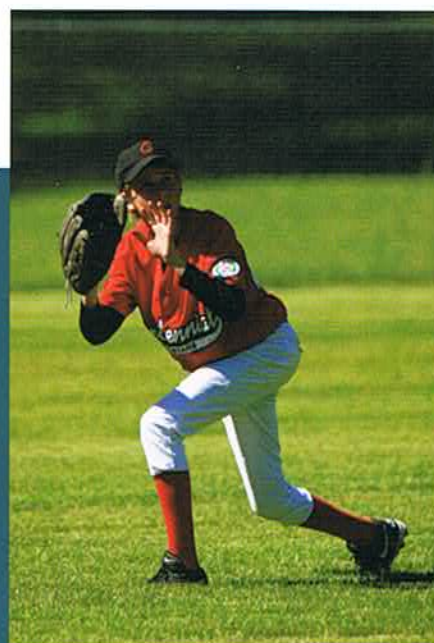
4. Ball in the Gap

Crossover and stay low
Eyes on the ball
Keep glove down and pump your arms



5. Backhand Catch

Run on balls of feet - run smooth
Watch ball into your glove
Keep the glove down until you get to the ball



6. Forehand Catch

Run on balls of feet - run smooth
Watch ball into your glove
Keep the glove down until you get to the ball

correcting common mistakes



— Scooping a ground ball with 1 hand

Don't field the ball outside the body with one hand, unless it is a "do or die" play. Get low behind the ball with glove leg forward and hands out front to make the play. If necessary go down on the knee of the power leg to block the ball.



— Throwing in an upright position

Don't throw the ball using just your arm from the outfield. Stay low and take a long stride, use the long "arm-down, arm-back step and throw motion" and throw right over the top. Follow through with throwing arm swinging past glove leg.



— Sidearm throws from outfield

Don't throw from the side because the ball will tail away and often miss the target. Throw using an overhand motion so the ball carries, bounces straight and stays on line to the target.



fielding ground balls



1. Ready Position

Seat down - head up
- eyes on the ball

Hands out front, palm of glove
facing ball



2. Active Feet

Weight forward on balls of feet
Take little motoring steps on the
release of the pitch

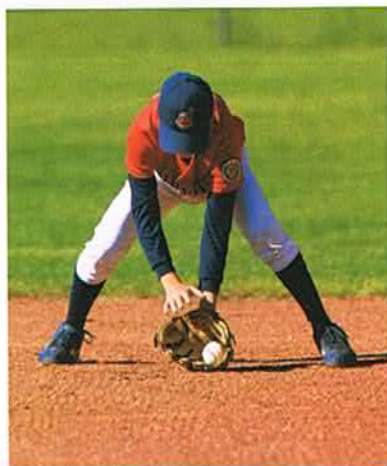


3. Approach the Ball

Move quickly behind the ball
Hands out front and low
Palm of glove open to ball
Throwing hand on top

coaching tips

- Next to hitting, fielding ground balls is the 2nd most difficult skill. It will take thousands of ground balls to learn how to approach the ball, pick the hop, field the ball with 2 hands with glove foot forward, and finish with a strong 2-step throw.
- Remember players need to get into a ready position as soon as the Pitcher starts the windup and take little motoring steps on the release of the ball.
- If the hitter doesn't swing, take a few steps back to re-set and get ready to start over with the "RELAXED - READY - MOTOR - RE-SET" fielding routine.



Watch the ball into glove

Glove leg forward with hands out front and low.
As a coach, all you can see is the top of players hat
with head down tracking the ball into the glove.

Cushion the ball

Stay low with weight shifting forward.
As you cover it up bring your hands in.
Funnelling with soft hands reduces errors.





4. Field & Cover it Up

Funnel ball in with 2 hands
Find cross seam grip
Lean forward
Eyes to target



5. Power Step

Stay low hands together
Power step at target
Set up to throw



6. Step & Throw

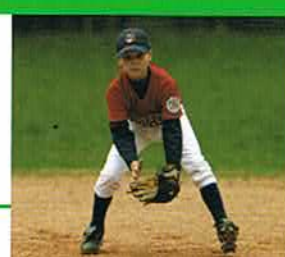
Step at the target
Overhand throw
Throwing shoulder turns to target
Snap wrist and follow through

correcting common mistakes



Standing waiting until the ball is hit

Don't have players wait until the ball is hit to move their feet. If they sit back, they have less range and often get a bad hop. Just as the hitter steps and coils getting ready to hit, all infielders should take little steps forward getting ready to field.



1-handed scoop

Don't reach down outside the body to scoop the ball up. Hustle and get behind the ball on every chance you get. Hands out front and low, time the hop and field it with 2 hands.

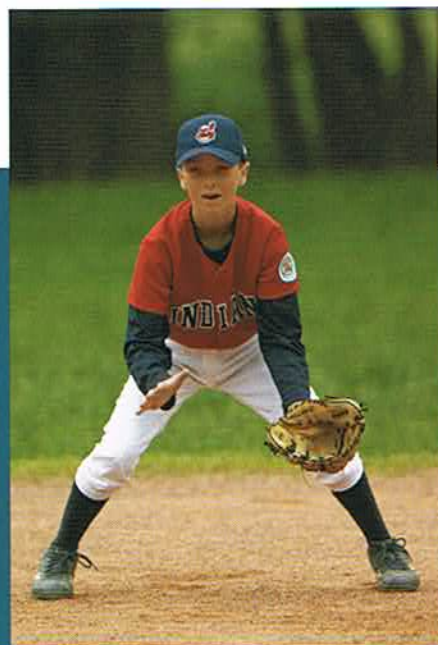


Rushing the throw

Don't panic when fielding. It takes the hitter 4-5 seconds to get to first. Move in and field the ball with your glove leg forward and set up to make a strong accurate throw.



ground ball forehand



1. Ready

Sit down - head up
- eyes on the ball

Active footwork on each pitch
Weight forward on balls of feet



2. Cross-over

Stay low and stride across in front
with power foot

Hustle and keep eyes on the ball



3. Forehand

If possible field the ball out front
in the palm

Watch ball into glove
Grip it and make a balanced
2-step throw

coaching tips

- Players need to learn to be aggressive and get to every ball they can. Even if they cannot make the throw, keeping the ball in the infield will often keep base runners from advancing.
- If the ball is more than 1 or 2 steps to the side, infielders should cross over and hustle to set up behind the ball.
- It takes the runner 4-5 seconds to get to first base, so it is important to take your time, use the proper footwork and make a strong throw.



Forehand - Step and Throw

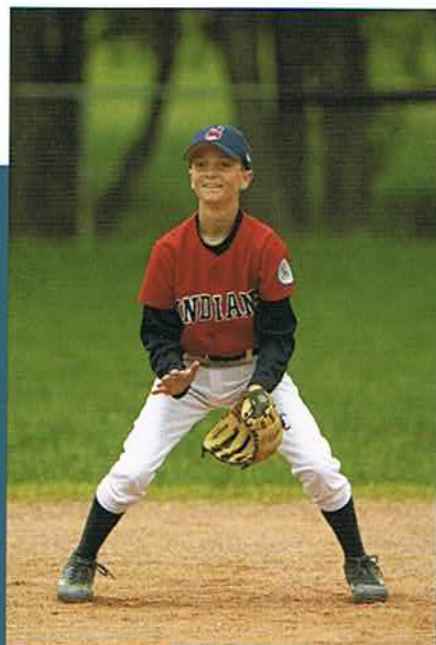
Field it, grip it and set up to throw.
Use the power foot in-behind step and
throw technique.
Drop throwing arm down to release from 3/4 angle.

Backhand - Step and Throw

Field it with one hand and bring hands together
to grip it.
Set up to throw by planting on the power foot and
stepping at target.
This is a long throw and requires a very strong arm.



backhand



1. Ready

Sit down - head up
- eyes on the ball

Active footwork on each pitch

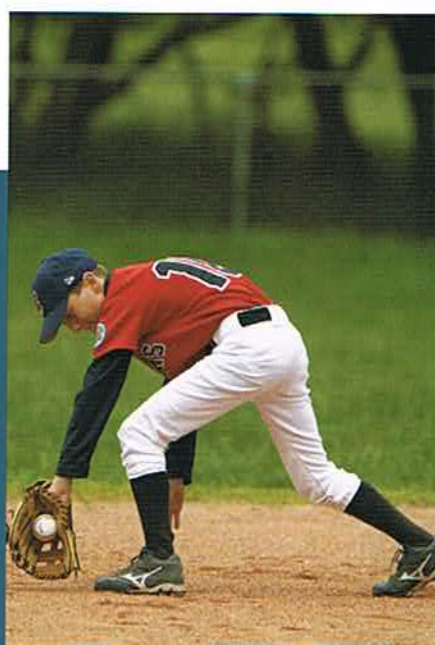
Weight forward on balls of feet



2. Cross-over

Stay low and stride across in front
with glove foot

Hustle and keep eyes on the ball



3. Backhand

Bring glove forward to the ball
to catch with one hand

Watch ball into glove

Grip it, plant on power foot,
step and throw

correcting common mistakes



Fielding with the wrong foot forward

Don't field with the power foot forward or your feet even. Time your approach to the ground ball and then shoot your glove leg forward to field it in a wide staggered stance. This sets up the player up for a smooth 2-step throw.



Breaking hands to soon

Don't bring your throwing hand out of your glove until after your power foot hits the ground. Field with 2 hands, find the grip and after you stride toward the target with your power foot start the throw.

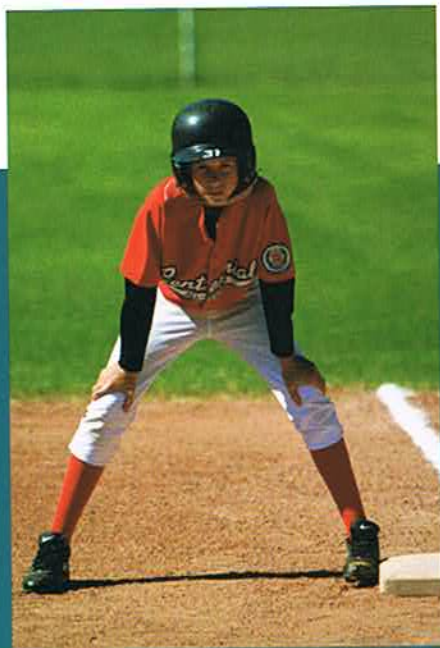


Fielding with hands between legs

Don't field in an upright position with your hands pointing straight down. Get your butt down, hands out front and low with the palm of the glove facing the ball.



baserunning stealing a base



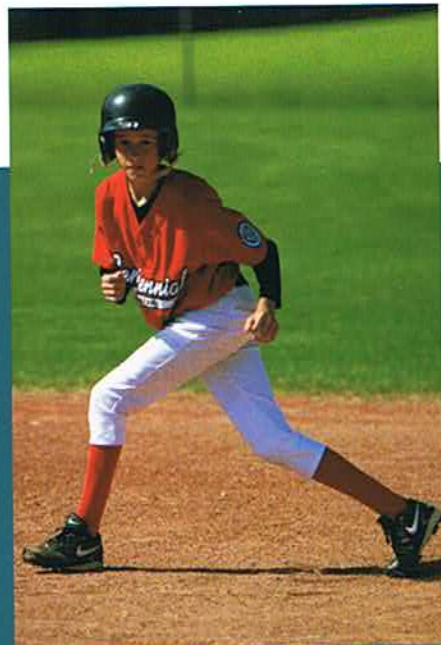
1. Relaxed

Before the pitcher is on the mound
Feet wider than knees
Head up, eyes forward



2. Ready

As pitcher starts wind-up
Arms bent, hands out front
Weight forward onto balls of feet
Watch the play



3. Cross-over

As ball crosses plate swing left leg in front and toward next base
Stay low, pump your arms to steal a base

coaching tips

- Every player on your team, regardless of their running speed should learn how to be a good base runner. A hustling team puts a lot of pressure on the defense and makes the game a lot more fun.
- Teach every player on your team how to run through a base and round a base early in the season.
- Introduce the "RELAXED - READY - SHUFFLE OFF - GO (OR BACK)" routine before your first game.



Bent leg slide

Run hard & begin your slide early
Kick one leg up and tuck and bend the other one under
Throw both hands into the air and slide on your seat and back
Heel of the lead leg touches base

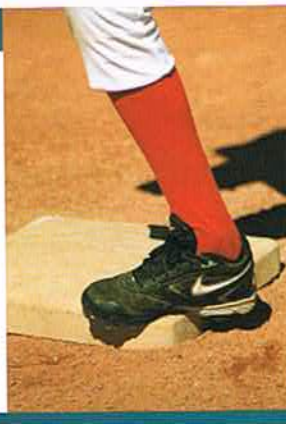


Base hit - rounding a base

Curve out before you get to the base
Run hard - watch the base not the ball
Run a few strides directly toward 2nd base and react to the play

Contact base on the inside

Contact the base on the inside with either foot
Run in a straight line toward 2nd base
If ball is fielded cleanly, quickly return to first base



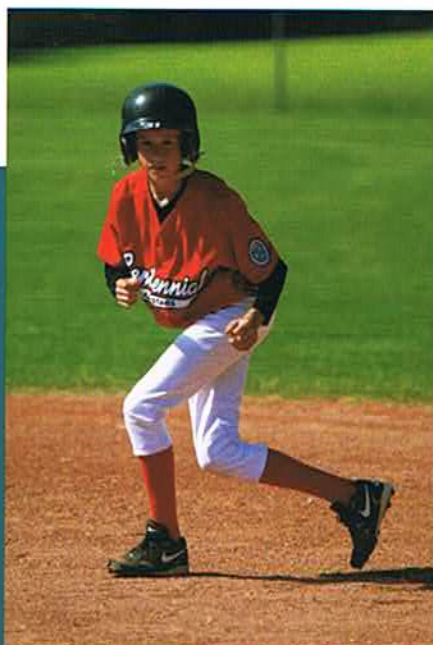
secondary lead - react



1. Shuffle

Shuffle.. left - right, left- right to secondary lead

Watch the ball, stay low lean on right leg ready to react



2. Go!

React to a hit or an error - GO!

Crossover and sprint to advance to the next base



3. Back!

React to the catcher receiving the ball - BACK!

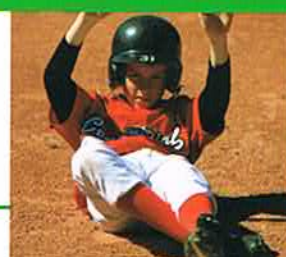
Crossover and hustle to return to the base

correcting common mistakes



Slide on side with 1 hand on the ground

Don't reach down with one hand to cushion your body when you slide. This can result in a scrape on your hip and knee. Players need to throw both hands in the air and slide on their butt and lower back to reduce chance of injury.



Leaping to get to first base

Don't stutter step or leap to contact 1st base. Both options are slower and if you leap you may jam your leg and injure it. Run hard, hit the front of the base with either foot and try not to break stride.



Running into foul territory after crossing 1st base

Don't veer out to the right after you cross first base. This makes it 2-3 steps longer to 2nd on an overthrow. Run straight down the line and 1-2 steps down the line look over your right shoulder to see if the 1st baseman missed the throw.



hitting side angle



1. Grip

Loose and relaxed grip
Line up the second set of knuckles
Wrap thumbs around bat



2. Stance

Feet wider than knees
Extend your arms and bat away from the body in front of back shoulder
Eyes level



3. Step and Coil

On the pitch, extend your front leg to a straight position
Shift weight to the back foot
Coil hands and upper body back

coaching tips

- Hitting is probably the most difficult skill in any sport. Even professional players fail 7 out of 10 times so be patient.
- Teach the fundamentals to every player and then give them as many repetitions as you can during the season.
- If the player is afraid of the ball, don't say "Hang in there it won't hurt" it is better to help the player out by having them move deeper in the box and more off the plate. As they gain confidence they will move back to the middle of the box.



The contact point

Contact the ball out in front of the hips
Just before contact the back hip snaps forward
Barrel of the bat below your hands for power

Wrist roll - follow through

On contact top hand is in palm up position
After contact wrists roll over
Follow through with both hands on the bat





4. Contact

Push off back leg, brace front leg
Arms extended
Pivot on ball of the back foot
Drive through the ball



5. Follow Through

Head down until after contact
Hips and upper body finish facing pitcher
Keep both hands on the bat
Finish in a balanced position



6. Break out of Box

After contact, stay low, crossover and run to first
Set the bat down on the way to first base

correcting common mistakes



Lunging on the swing

Don't stride forward with lead foot pointing at pitcher and weight over a bent front leg when you swing. Keep your front closed when you step and coil and remember at this point most of the weight is shifted to the back foot. On the swing, shift your weight into a firm front leg.



Hitching your hands before the swing

Don't move your hands straight down at start of the swing. Hands should line up in front of the hitting side shoulder loose and relaxed. On the release of the pitch turn your upper body and hands back when you take the timing step.

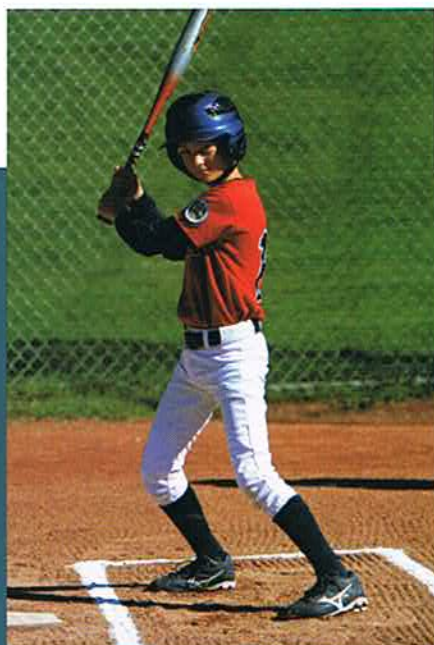


Sweep swing

Don't make your hands and the bat go straight back to start the swing. Bring your hands and bat directly to and through the ball when you swing. Practice the compact swing and technique with an old bat facing a fence.



bunting sacrifice



1. Open Stance

Front foot further away from base
Back foot closer to base
Move to front of box to bunt



2. Pivot Position

Pivot as soon as pitcher starts windup
Lean ahead onto front foot
Pivot onto the ball of back foot
Eyes on pitcher



3. Bunting High Strikes

Bat starts top of the strike zone
Bat level and over plate
Arms, bat and hands extended forward
Use bottom hand to angle bat

coaching tips

- All players need to learn to sacrifice bunt. This bunt is used to move base runners into scoring position.
- It is not a secret, so tell your players to move to the front of the box and get into a bunting position as soon as the pitcher starts winding up.
- Remind your players to bunt strikes only, if they don't like the pitch, pull the bat out of the strike zone.
- A good bunt needs to be 3-4 steps toward 1st or 3rd base and 1 or 2 steps inside the foul lines.



Gripping the bat

Keep bottom hand at the end of the bat
Slide top hand up to top of the bat handle
Loose relaxed grip ready to cushion at contact

Stance in front of box

Get ready to bunt at front of box
Extend arms forward and lean ahead
Bat is now in a great position to bunt the ball fair





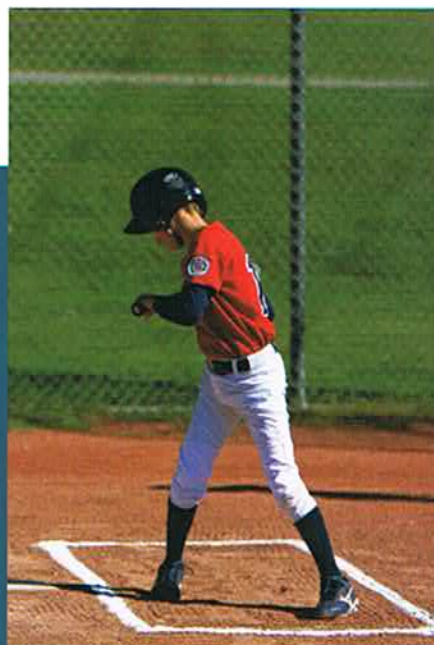
4. Bunting Low Strikes

Bend your knees
Eyes close to bat level
Watch ball onto bat
Bottom hand angles bat



5. Cushion the Ball

Angle the bat to bunt towards 3rd or 1st base using bottom hand
Catch the ball on the bat by pulling both hands back at contact



6. Bunt Strikes Only

If the pitch is not a strike, pull the bat out of the zone

correcting common mistakes



Stepping out of the box and bunting the ball

Don't step out of the batters box when you square around to bunt. If a player makes contact with the ball fair or foul the umpire will call the player out. The pivot technique helps eliminate this mistake:



Bunting with bat in front of the body

Never attempt to bunt the ball with your bat in front of your body. This can result in serious injury. Remember, your hands are in front of your body and the barrel of the bat needs to be out over the plate.



Tipping the bat up to bunt

Trying to bunt a ball with a bat tipped up can result in a foul ball and serious injury to the face. Remember to keep the barrel of the bat level and out over the plate to bunt.



pitching baseball



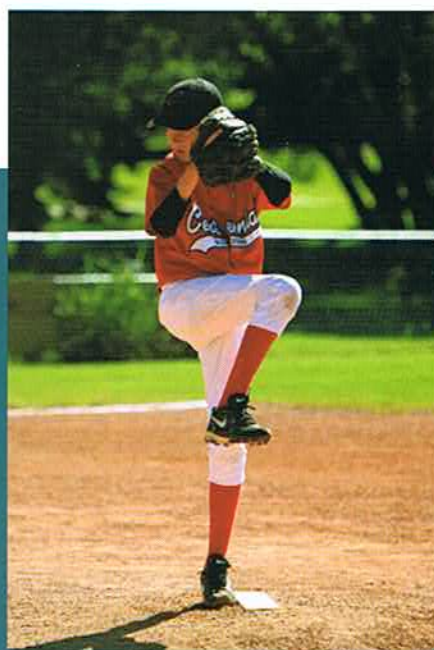
1. Starting Position

Grip the ball in glove
Power foot on rubber
Glove side foot to side & back
Eyes on target



2. Shift Weight

Brings hands to belt or over head
Take small step back
Look down and slide power foot in front of rubber



3. Pivot - Coil up

Lift glove leg to knee over knee
Keep shoulders in line with target
Eyes locked on catcher's mitt

coaching tips

- Teach every player at this age how to pitch, so they have the confidence to throw strikes if you need them in a game.
- Protect young players arms by limiting the number of pitches they throw in games and by removing them from the mound at the first sign of fatigue or soreness in the arm.
- Pitching from the Set Position is a great way to start with young pitchers. Introduce the full-windup later when they have mastered the Pivot - Coil up position. Work on fastballs and change-ups at this age.



Fielding position after every pitch

After release, keep eyes on the ball
Bring hands and glove up in front of the face
Stay low with balls on the feet and be ready to react to a hit

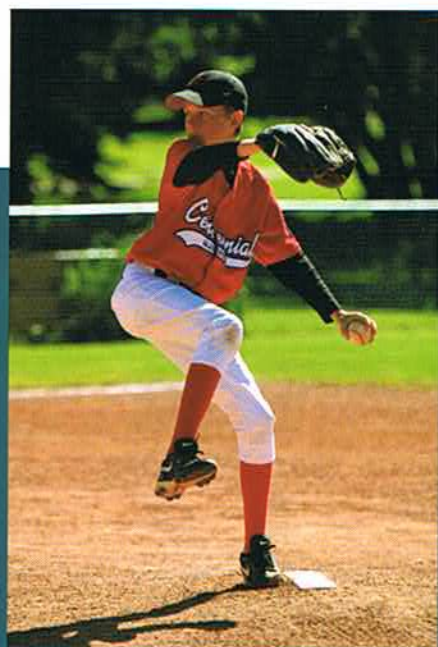
Fastball grip

2 fingers on top
Pads of fingers on a seam
Thumb at bottom-no seam
Held in fingers away from palm

Change-up grip

Make a circle at side of ball with thumb and 1st finger
Move ball back into palm
Use fastball throwing motion





4. Arm Down & Back

Bring ball down to hip
Flex power leg
Arm extends straight back
Push off rubber with power foot



5. Step and Throw

Stay closed on stride
Over hand throw with fingers on top
Snap fingers down on release
Bring glove in to chest



6. Follow Through

Turn throwing thumb under on release
Arm loose and relaxed
Throwing shoulder to target
Chest over glove knee to finish

correcting common mistakes



Short arm throw

Don't bring the ball straight up out of your glove to pitch. The arm needs to go straight down to the hip then over the top for a long strong throwing motion.



Big step back

Don't take a big step back off the mound to start pitching motion. If you take a big step back it is difficult to get into the full pivot and coil-up position prior to pitching the ball. This reduces the power in the throw.



No follow through

Don't stand up and release the ball out front without follow-through. On release, turn your thumb under and continue to swing your arm down and past the throwing side hip, palm facing in. This adds power and reduces the stress on the arm.



pitching softball



1. Ready Position

Power foot on plate
Glove foot at back of plate
"Present the Ball" hand and ball in glove



2. Shift Weight Forward

Lean forward, glove leg up
Stride to plate
Palm down extend arm into large windmill circle



3. Arm Straight - Reach

Stride forward with glove arm at target
Extend pitching arm up in windmill action
At the top body in "X" position

coaching tips



Grip

Place pads of first 3 fingers across seam
Fingers on top, thumb at bottom
Firm grip, not too tight

Release

Release ball next to hip with palm forward
Snap the wrist on release
Drag power foot forward



Big Al would like to thank Michele Smith for providing the details for the softball pitching progression.

Michele Smith is a two time Olympic Gold Medalist and eight time MVP and Champion of the Japan Professional League. Michele runs camps and clinics for both coaches and players teaching all aspects of

the game of softball. She also chairs the Softball Advisory committee for Little League Baseball and Softball.

Michele has created an outstanding educational DVD library on beginning pitching, advanced pitching, hitting, and training for softball. She has also authored 2 softball books.



FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO ORDER GO TO
www.michelesmith.com or call 727-363-1615



4. Turn Hips & Shoulders

Open up hips and shoulders
Bring arm down in big windmill circle
Fingers on top palm facing down



5. Kick Step and Throw

Push off power leg into planted
glove leg
Bend glove arm, pull it toward body
Bring back hip forward to 45 degrees



6. Follow Through

Snap wrist, palm forward next to hip
Drag power foot into firmly planted
glove foot
Hip to the target hands out front for
defense

correcting common mistakes



Leaning too far back in ready position

Be sure to load with your weight forward and on your toes not your heels. Lean forward with legs bent and prepare to explode towards home plate.



Hips facing home plate on release

Don't over rotate your hips. Bring your back hip forward to 45 degrees on release.



Weight and body too far forward on release

Don't lean too far forward on release. Maintain a strong upright position as you drive into a firmly planted front leg.



catching position



1. Relaxed

Body balanced square behind plate
Weight on balls of feet, seat down, shoulders up
Hand behind power foot or glove
Glove out front facing pitcher



2. Ready

Glove foot slightly ahead in staggered stance
Seat up - shoulders down
Weight forward on balls of feet
Hand fisted behind glove



3. Catch above Waist

Palm down glove position
If hitter does not swing, arms and hands extended
Weight forward to receive ball

coaching tips

- This is one of the most challenging and important positions on the field. Choose coachable, hard working players with great attitudes and then teach them the skills.
- Adjust the catcher's gear for each player to make sure the straps are snug and the gear is positioned to provide proper protection.
- Any player who catches a pitcher in practices and games should be wearing a cup and full catchers gear for safety.



Blocking the Ball

Quickly drop to your knees and stay square behind the ball.
Throwing hand behind glove covering up space between legs.
Chin to the chest and lean ahead.
Don't try to catch it - block it to keep it out front.

Catching a foul ball

With a right handed hitter - turn back to right.
Take off your mask - locate the ball - call it - toss your mask.
Move under it with your back to the infield, catch with 2 hands above your shoulders.





4. Catch Below Waist

Palm up glove position

If hitter does not swing, arms and hands extended

Weight forward to receive ball



5. Power Step

2 hands - catch and grip

Step with power foot instep to target

Turn glove shoulder and hip to target

Stay low - quick feet



6. Step and Throw

Arm back elbow above shoulder

X-seam grip - fingers on top

Glove arm and shoulder to target

Step and throw over the top

correcting common mistakes



Blocking the plate - standing on baseline

It is against the rules to block the runner by standing on the baseline without the ball. It is unsafe for both the runner and catcher. Take a low stance, heels in front of the plate facing the ball.



Throwing hand exposed

Don't give a target with your throwing hand out front next to the glove. Protect it from foul tips by resting it on the throwing side foot or making a fist in behind the webbing of the glove.



On-step throw

Don't throw without stepping forward on your power foot. Catch with 2 hands, grip it and quickly step forward with instep to the target. Glove shoulder to the target, arm to throwing position overhand throw.



warm-up exercises

Players should warm up before they play at home, at a practice, or before a game. Start every practice or game with a 6-8 minute team warm-up routine. Have each player lead 1 exercise.



Team Jog - Post to Post to Post

Meet on the outfield grass, stack gloves, and have the team jog. Players touch the right field post then the left field post and back to the right field post.

Cork Screw

Bend and lift 1 leg over the other leg. Hook your opposite elbow over the knee and push on the knee and coil to look behind you. Place other hand on the ground behind you for balance. Three stretches, 5 seconds each way.



Knee's High and Butt Kick Running

Start in 3 lines of 4 players. Players jog about 10 steps with knees up to waist. Continue until all players have run up and back. Then up and back with heels up - butt kick running.

Arm Circles

Feet comfortably apart, begin to rotate arms in big circles forward with no bend in the elbows, then rotate them backwards 10 to 15 each way. For fun, try rotating one arm each way.



Jumping Jacks

Start with feet together, hands at side, legs slightly flexed. On 1st jump, hands go above the head and feet wide apart. On 2nd jump, hands go above the head and feet wide apart. Repeat without stopping 15 to 20 times.

Elbow Pulls

Bring one elbow in front of the neck with hand toward opposite shoulder. Take free hand, grab behind the elbow and pull for 5 second count 3 times each way for 5 second count.

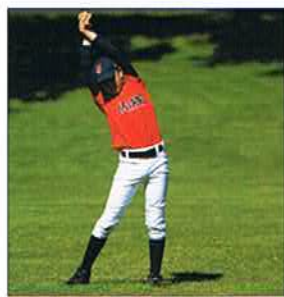


Toe - Touches

Take a wide stance toes facing forward. Bend your knees slightly. Arms stretched out straight. Swing arms down past your toes and at same time reach high above head. Repeat 15 - 20 times.

Elephant Stretch

Feet comfortably apart, lock hands out front with reversed grip. Stretch arms and hands over and behind the head, if possible, and squeeze elbows together. Then lean side to side at the waist for a full body stretch. Repeat 4-5 times.



Spider Pushups

Take a wide stance with toes facing forward and bend your knees slightly. Walk out on your hands to a pushup position do 1 pushup and walk back and stand up. Walk out and do 2 pushups in a row and stand up, then 3 in a row then 4 and finally 5.

Mountain Climbing

Move to a push-up position with thumbs touching & stretch one leg straight back, the other is bent & both are on the ball of the foot. Point the bent knee outside the same side elbow. Call "switch" to reverse positions of legs. After 4 switches, repeat 10 times without stopping.



coach's checklist

THROWING:

- Catch and grip
- Eyes on target
- Take power step
- Arm down and back
- Step and Throw
- Snap the wrist
- Follow through
- 3 angles - 3 distances

CATCHING:

- Glove size
- Wide stance glove leg forward
- Eyes on ball
- Arms and glove out front
- 2 hands, above - below waist
- Catch ball in palm - cushion
- Forehand - backhand

FIELDING GROUND BALLS:

- Relaxed position
- Ready position
- Active feet
- Approach the ball
- Glove out front stay low
- Glove leg forward
- Cover it up and funnel it
- Power step to target
- Grip it arm down back
- Step and throw
- Follow through
- Straight on, forehand, backhand

FIELDING FLY BALLS:

- Relaxed position
- Ready position
- Eyes on batter
- Active feet
- X-over on balls in gap
- Run on balls of feet and arms pumping
- Forehand, backhand
- Drop step on deep fly balls
- Outfield ground balls
- Outfield throws

THE CATCHER:

- Receiving the ball:
 - Relaxed and ready position
 - Distance from batter.
 - Target and hand position
 - Cushion the ball
 - Catch in palm
- Throwing progression
- Catching pop-ups
- Blocking the ball
- Throwing to a base
- Tag play at the plate

PITCHING: BASEBALL

- Grip - fastball and change up
- Starting position
- Eyes on target
- Shift of weight
- Look into pivot
- Coil up
- Arm down and back
- Step and throw to target
- Release and follow through
- Fielding position

BASERUNNING:

1. Through the Base
 - Run straight down the line
 - Touch front of base either foot - shoulder check
 - Continue down the line
2. Rounding a Base
 - Run 2/3 of way down line and veer out
 - Round the base toward second base with 4 or 5 strides
 - Face the fielder and return to first if not safe to advance
3. At a Base
 - Relaxed
 - Ready
 - Secondary lead - react
 - X-over and steal
 - X-over shuffle - Back
 - X-over shuffle - GO

SLIDING:

- Run aggressively
- Throw front leg up
- Tuck second leg under
- Throw hands high
- Stay low
- Slide on bent leg, seat and back

HITTING:

- Bat selection
- Open and straight-away stances
- 3 positions; middle, back, front
- Stance and grip
- Line up knuckles, base of fingers
- Step and coil
- Contact
- Follow through
- Break out of the box
- Hitting off a tee
- Bat coverage of plate
- Hitting live

BUNTING:

- Sacrifice bunt
- Move to front of box
- Open stance
- Pivot and lean forward
- Hand position on the bat
- Extend arms and bat
- Bat level to the ground
- Barrel over the plate
- Use bottom hand to angle bat
- Cushion ball with bat
- Bunt strikes only
- Bunt high strikes, low strikes

PRACTICE SESSIONS:

- Pre-practice pickle ball hitting
- Start on time
- Warm-up and stretch
- Short - Medium - Long toss
- Review skills from last practice
- Teach a new skill
- Keep all players active
- 90 minute practice maximum
- Be patient, be positive
- Use competitive, fun drills
- Finish on time

practice planning template

Team:

Date:

Pre - Practice (early bird hitting, 1 - 1 tutor sessions with players)

Pre-Practice Team Meeting: (announcements, here is the plan for today)

Fun Warm-up Activities (jog, stretch)

Baserunning Routine

Review a Skill

Throwing and Catching (Short - Medium - Long Toss)

Teach a New Skill (TEACH IT - TRY IT - GAME IT)

Hitting

Fun Games and Competitions

End of Practice Team Meeting

getting parents involved

IDEAS FOR YOUR LETTERS TO PARENTS

To set the stage for a successful season with players and their parents, it is very important that you have a pre-season meeting. I strongly suggest you send a letter home to the parents to outline the expectations of all participants: manager, coach, players and family members. Then walk through it at your meeting and have the parents sign it and hand it back to you.

What do I expect from my players?

- To be on time for all practices and games
- To always do their best, whether in the field or on the bench
- To be cooperative at all times and share team duties
- To respect not only others, but themselves as well
- To be positive with teammates at all times
- To try not to become upset at their own mistakes or those of others
- To listen to the coaches, umpires and teammates
- To hustle at practices and games
- To have fun

What can you and your child expect from me?

- To be on time for all practices and games
- To be as fair as possible in giving equal playing time to all players
- To do my best to teach the fundamentals of the game
- To be positive and respect each child as an individual
- To set reasonable expectations for each child and for the season
- To teach the players the value of winning and losing
- To be open to ideas, suggestions and help
- To always be positive with my team, the opposing team and the umpires
- To make the season a fun experience for all

What do I expect from you as parents and family?

- To come out and enjoy the game
- Cheer and be positive with all players
- To try not to question my leadership; all players will make mistakes and so will I
- Be positive with coaches, players and umpires.
- Please contact me if you have great feedback or if you have any concerns
- Please volunteer for off field activities

Team Name: _____

Manager: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____

Coach: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____

getting feedback from your players

Coaching young players presents many challenging situations and a great number of opportunities to develop strong character, courage and loyalty. As managers we are in an excellent position to influence the development of our youth by acting as positive role models and mentors.

Use this feedback form to get feedback from players and their parents a couple of times during the season. It will help you connect in the most positive way possible with all of the players on your team and at the same time will identify your approach and the kind of coach and person that you are working to be.

Character Feedback for the Coach

There is a tremendous amount to learn from you, as players, in the form of feedback. In order to be the best coach I can be, your honest feedback to the following statements is appreciated.

Please use the scale below when responding and add your own comments at the end as well.

A - ALWAYS B - USUALLY C - NOT USUALLY D - NEVER

(Please circle A, B, C or D for each comment)

My Coach ...

A B C D Expects me to be early for practice

A B C D Expects me to be prepared for practices and games

A B C D Expects us to warm up before we start to practice or play

A B C D Treats me as an individual who is important to the team

A B C D Puts me in the starting lineup

A B C D Takes time to help me when I am having difficulty

A B C D Teaches the skills of the game

A B C D Makes the practices fun

A B C D Shows an enthusiasm and interest in baseball

A B C D Knows when we do not understand what is being taught

A B C D Is patient

A B C D Is polite with parents

A B C D Is polite with umpires

A B C D Tells me how I am doing

A B C D Is there to help me out when I make a mistake

A B C D Is honest

A B C D Knows how to work with players who are not behaving

A B C D Is concerned about my safety

A B C D Is prepared for each practice

A B C D Uses my first name

A B C D Cheers for me in practice and games

A B C D Treats me fairly

A B C D Is fun to play for

A B C D Notices the improvements I make

A B C D Notices the improvements that the team makes

A B C D Tells us what we do wrong

A B C D Tells us what we do right

A B C D Is positive when we win

A B C D Stays positive when we lose

A B C D Takes me aside when he needs to correct my behavior

A B C D Is a good person and a role model

I enjoy playing Little League Baseball because:

big AL program Curriculum guide

The training program has been divided into 3 major age groups. At each level, the curriculum is designed to guide coaches toward teaching the skills at the appropriate level and in the proper sequence.

COACHING PLAYERS 5-8

WARM-UPS

- Fun exercise routine

THROWING

- 1 and 2 step motion

CATCHING

- Above and below the waist
- Catching wheel

FIELDING GROUND BALLS

- Safe and proper technique for receiving ground balls straight on

FIELDING FLY BALLS

- Safe and proper technique for catching fly balls

BASERUNNING

- From a base, through a base, around the bases

PITCHING

- Grip and throwing motion from set position

THE CATCHER

- How to wear the equipment
- Catching position, receiving the ball
- Making the play at the plate
- Throwing to each base

HITTING

- Fundamentals of hitting, hitting off a tee

DRILLS AND FUN ACTIVITIES

- For each of the skills

HOW TO ORGANIZE A PRACTICE AND GAME

- how to make practices and games fun

FUN PRACTICE PLANNER

- A practice planning framework

COACHING PLAYERS 9-12

WARM-UPS

- Full stretching and exercise routine

THROWING

- Grip and 2-step motion, for short, medium, long throws
- Throwing at 3 angles

CATCHING

- High, low forehand, backhand
- Throwing and catching combined footwork

FIELDING GROUND BALLS

- Fielding straight on, forehand and backhand

FIELDING FLY BALLS

- Catching fly balls on the run; forehand, backhand

BASERUNNING

- From a base, through a base and around a base
- Stealing a base and secondary lead - react

PITCHING

- Fastball and change up grips
- Full wind-up motion; baseball, fast-pitch softball

THE CATCHER

- Relaxed and ready positions, blocking a ball straight on
- Throwing technique to each base, tag play at the plate
- Catching a pop-up, making a play on a pass ball

HITTING

- Grip, stances; straight away, open
- Distance from the plate and bat coverage
- The technique of the complete swing

BUNTING

- Sacrifice bunt; square around and pivot technique

PRACTICE DRILLS

- Multiple drills for each skill
- TEACH IT - TRY IT - GAME IT activities

PRACTICE PLANS

- Practice planning framework and sample set of plans

COACHES CHECKLIST

- Coaching tips sheet for all skills

curriculum guide cont.

COACHING PLAYERS 13+

WARM-UPS

- pre-game and pre-practice routine

FIRST BASE

- Footwork at 1st base and technique for receiving throws
- Fielding positions, cut-off and relay technique
- Defending the bunt, double play technique
- Cover responsibilities

SECOND BASE

- Fielding positions, cut-off and relay technique
- Double play footwork and throws
- Pick-off play techniques
- Receiving throws at 1st and 2nd base
- Fielding straight, backhand and forehand

THIRD BASE

- Fielding positions, cut-off and relay technique
- Double play footwork and throws
- Pick-off play techniques
- Receiving throws at 3rd, defending the bunt technique
- Cover responsibilities

SHORTSTOP

- Fielding positions, cut-off and relay technique
- Double play footwork and throws
- Pick-off play techniques
- Receiving throws at 2nd and 3rd
- Fielding straight, backhand and forehand
- Cover responsibilities

BASERUNNING

- Taking a lead-off, secondary leads
- Stealing from each base

SLIDING

- Straight in, pop-up and fade away

PITCHING

- Grip and throw: fastball, change-up, curveball
- Pitching from full wind-up and set positions
- Plays for pitchers (defense)
- Pick-off plays to 1st, 2nd and 3rd base
- Cover responsibilities

THE CATCHER

- Receiving and framing the pitch, giving signs
- Blocking the ball; to the left and right
- Fielding bunts, double play foot work, intentional walks
- Throws to each base

HITTING

- Pull hitting, hitting straight away, hitting to the opposite field

BUNTING

- Sacrifice, drag, push and squeeze bunt techniques

OUTFIELD PLAY

- Fielding ground balls in the outfield; safety, do or die play
- Technique for going back right, back left, straight back, and catching a fly ball at the fence
- Outfield throws to each base, to cut-offs
- Cover responsibilities

PRACTICE PLANS

- Practice planning framework and sample set of plans

DEFENSIVE GAME STRATEGIES

- Complete defensive system of play, multiple situations

OFFENSIVE GAME STRATEGIES

- Complete system of play, multiple situations

COACHING AT 1ST AND 3RD

- Coaching base runners
- Coaching signals
- Making a line-up