

## 10U Major Division Coach's Handbook

*For South Central Pennsylvania Softball (SCPAS) – Youth Fastpitch*

This handbook is designed as a practical “grab-and-go” guide for a **first-time (or returning) 10U Major** coach—covering **your rules**, what to teach, how to structure practices, example drills (with video links), and age-appropriate motivation and culture building.

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### 1) 10U Major Gameplay Rules (SCPAS)

Below is a coach-friendly summary of the rules that most often impact **lineups, pitching, base running, and game management** for **10U Major**. (Full language remains in the official SCPAS rules document.)

#### A. Game Format & Timing

- **Time limit: 1 hour 30 minutes, finish the inning.** Time starts **immediately after the pregame plate meeting.**
- **Official game: 7 innings or once 4 innings are completed (3½ if home team is winning)** if the game can't continue due to conditions.
- **Ties: Major division games may end in a tie only if the game can't be completed** due to darkness/weather/field conditions. Otherwise if tied at end of regulation/time limit, **International Tie Breaker (ITB)** is used until a winner or conditions stop play.

#### B. Runs / Ending Rules

- **5-run limit per inning** for the duration of the game in **10U Major.**
- **Run-ahead rule:** Major divisions use the **approved sanctioning body “run ahead” rules** (not the specific 8/12-run minor rule).

#### C. Pitching & Field Setup

- **Pitching distance: 35 feet.**
- **Pitching rule: PIAA pitching rule is allowed** (as referenced by SCPAS).
- **Defensive players: 9 players on defense** (standard positions).

#### D. Base Running / Stealing (Big for 10U Major)

- **Stealing: One base per pitch only.**

- **Stealing home:** A runner **may steal home only if any defensive player makes a play at 3rd base.**
- **Walks:** Batters awarded first on balls **get first base only** and **may not advance to second** on that walk award.

#### E. Strike Rules (Important Differences)

- **No infield fly rule** at 10U.
- **No dropped third strike rule** at 10U.

#### F. Lineups, DP/Flex, Substitutions

- **Starting lineup:** You may start with **9, 10, or 11 batters** (including up to two EPs) and **may also bat all players** (optional).
- **DP/Flex is allowed** regardless of how many batters you start.
- **Same number of batters** must be kept for the **entire game** (except injury compression rule).
- **Defensive flexibility:** Players in the batting order may be **interchanged defensively at any time** without using a substitution.
- **Injury compression:** If batting all players and you lose a player to injury, you can **compress the lineup** by the injured player(s) **without penalty**; injured players **may not re-enter.**

#### G. Courtesy Runner (Pitcher/Catcher)

- SCPAS allows teams to use **any rostered player to run for the pitcher or catcher.**

#### H. Game Admin & Sportsmanship Expectations

- **Lineup card required** for 10U Major and must be given to the plate umpire at the pregame meeting.
- **Postgame line:** Players and coaches form a line to thank opponents; failure may be treated as unsportsmanlike conduct under SCPAS policy.
- **Zero tolerance:** Open disputing calls, taunting, alcohol/tobacco/vaping at fields, etc. have defined consequences up to ejection/suspension.

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## 2) Recommended Skill Development Priorities for 10U Major

At 10U Major, you're bridging from "learning the game" to "playing the game." The biggest win is building **repeatable fundamentals under speed.**

## A. Throwing & Catching (Every player)

### Goals for the season

- Athletic ready position → move feet first → throw with balance
- Consistent 4-seam grip & “thumb down / fingers behind ball” feel
- Catch with two hands; glove to the ball; secure and transition quickly

### Coach cues that work at 10U

- “Sideways and strong” (turning shoulders for throws)
- “Point your front shoulder” (accuracy)
- “Step to your target” (footwork before arm)

## B. Infield Defense

### Must-haves

- Ground ball approach: *small steps* → *glove out front* → *funnel to belly* → *throw*
- **Footwork to first:** right-left throw (RH) / left-right throw (LH)
- **Force plays** at 2B/3B: quick exchange and strong underhand feeds
- Tag fundamentals: sweep tag, two-hand secure, show ball

## C. Outfield Defense

### Priorities

- First step reaction (drop-step)
- Getting behind the ball; throwing through a cutoff
- Catching above the head vs. drifting under the ball

## D. Hitting (Major separation at 10U)

### Team goals

- Quality contact: line drives and hard ground balls
- Plate routine: stance, load, “yes-yes-yes” decision to swing
- Situational hitting intro: move runners with contact (not complicated signs)

## E. Base Running (Where 10U games swing quickly)

With limited stealing rules, you still win games with:

- Aggressive turns at 1B and 2B
- Reading overthrow opportunities
- Sliding basics (feet-first)

- Understanding “one base per pitch” + when stealing home is allowed

## **F. Pitching/Catching Development (Even if you only have 1–2 pitchers now)**

- Pitchers: repeatable motion, balance, wrist/whip, strike throwing
- Catchers: stance, receiving, blocking confidence, quick throw footwork

### **3) Practice Format Suggestions (10U Major)**

A great 10U practice is **high-rep, high-structure, short explanations**.  
Aim for **70–80% movement, 20–30% instruction**.

#### **Recommended 75–90 Minute Practice Template**

##### **0:00–0:08 — Team dynamic warmup**

- Light jog, skips, shuffles, karaoke, high knees
- Add 2–3 short sprints for fun/competition

##### **0:08–0:20 — Throwing progression**

- Wrist flips → K-throws → shuffle throws → longer throws
- Emphasize *feet + target + follow-through*

##### **0:20–0:45 — Defensive stations (3 x 7–8 minutes)**

- Station 1: Infield ground balls + throws
- Station 2: Outfield fly balls + crow hop throws
- Station 3: Catchers/pitchers or rapid throwing accuracy

##### **0:45–1:05 — Offensive stations**

- Tee work (mechanics)
- Soft toss/front toss (timing)
- Optional: bunting intro / slap basics for advanced players

##### **1:05–1:25 — Situations / mini-scrimmage**

- 5-run cap games feel different—practice scoring bursts and defensive stops.
- Run: runner on 1st, 1 out; runner on 2nd; bases loaded; etc.

##### **1:25–1:30 — Team close**

- “Win of the day” + shout-outs + quick preview of next practice

#### **Best Practice Management Tips**

- **Stations beat lines.** If you have a line longer than 3–4 kids, split it.
- Use **assistant coaches/parents** as station leaders with clear instructions.
- Give **one cue at a time** (10U brains can't hold 5 mechanical points).
- **End with fun:** kids remember the last 5 minutes most.

#### 4) Example Practice Drills (with YouTube links)

Below are **plug-and-play drills** organized by skill area. I included links you can share with assistants/parents.

**Note:** Always preview videos before sharing in case content changes.

##### A) Throwing / Catching

###### 1) “Shuffle, Turn, Throw” (Accuracy + Footwork)

**Setup:** Partners 30–50 ft apart; cones for “ready feet.”

**How:** Catch → shuffle → turn shoulders → throw to target.

**Coaching cues:** “Feet first,” “show your shoulder,” “finish to target.”

**Video:** Dominate The Diamond – *Youth throwing mechanics & basics* [YouTube \[youtube.com\]](https://www.youtube.com)

##### B) Infield Defense

###### 2) 3 Infield Footwork Drills (Cones + Timing)

**Setup:** 5 cones, balls, 1 coach roller/hitter.

**How:** Zig-zag approach, stutter steps, timing balance drill.

**Why:** Teaches rhythm into fielding—huge at 10U.

**Video:** MegRem Softball – *3 Infield Drills for Youth Players* [YouTube \[youtube.com\]](https://www.youtube.com)

###### 3) “Alligator” Ground Ball Series (Glove ramp + funnel)

**Setup:** Coach rolls balls, players in ready position.

**Focus:** Wide base, glove down early, two-hand secure.

**Video:** Dominate The Diamond – included ground ball basics [YouTube \[youtube.com\]](https://www.youtube.com)

##### C) Hitting

###### 4) Tee Progression (Contact → Direction)

**Setup:** Tee + net; cones for “middle,” “pull,” “oppo” targets.

**How:** 5 swings middle, 5 swings pull, 5 swings opposite.

**Add-on game:** award points for hitting cone lanes.

**Video resource (drill ideas):** MOJO – *10 best hitting drills for kids* [YouTube \[youtube.com\]](#)

### **5) Soft Toss / Side Toss (Timing + Barrel Control)**

**Setup:** Tosser at 45°; hitter into net/fence.

**Key:** Present ball, smooth tempo, toss out front.

**Video:** Dominate The Diamond – *How to Soft Toss* [YouTube \[youtube.com\]](#)

### **6) Simple Swing Teaching Cues (Load–Contact–Finish)**

**Best for newer hitters**—keeps language consistent.

**Video:** MegRem Softball – *How to teach youth to swing* [YouTube \[youtube.com\]](#)

### **D) Pitching**

#### **7) Wrist Snap Progression (Beginner-friendly)**

**Setup:** Pitcher 10–15 ft from catcher/target net.

**Focus:** Fingers behind ball, snap through, create spin.

**Video:** Plus Ultra Pitching – *Wrist snap practice* [YouTube \[youtube.com\]](#)

#### **8) Correct Wrist Snap Mechanics (Common fixes)**

**When to use:** pitcher pushing the ball / losing spin.

**Video:** Fastpitch Power – *Correct wrist snap* [YouTube \[youtube.com\]](#)

### **E) Catching**

#### **9) Blocking Foundations (Confidence + Technique)**

**Setup:** Full gear; start with tennis balls or softer balls if needed.

**Drill:** Hands up → drop and block → recover quickly.

**Video:** YouGoProBaseball – *4 blocking drills* [YouTube \[youtube.com\]](#)

### **F) Team Defense (Situational)**

#### **10) Rundown Basics (How to avoid chaos)**

Even at 10U, you'll get pickles—teach **“ball up, run hard, short throws.”**

**Resource:** Softball Tutor defensive drill library (rundown/relay/cuts) [Site \[softballtutor.com\]](#)

*(Optional deeper rundown video)* Coaches Insider rundown variations (relay/double relay) [Site \[coachesinsider.com\]](#)

## 5) Age-Appropriate Motivation, Team Building, and Character Development

10U players want three things: **belonging, fun, and competence**. Your culture should make mistakes safe while still teaching accountability.

### A. Set Your “Team Identity” in Week 1

#### 10-minute activity:

- Ask: “What kind of team do we want to be?”
- Give 3 prompts: **Effort, Encouragement, Respect**
- Turn answers into 3 team standards (short phrases kids can repeat)

This aligns well with Positive Coaching Alliance’s emphasis on building trust, praising effort, and creating a positive team culture. [[positivecoach.org](http://positivecoach.org)], [[positivecoach.org](http://positivecoach.org)]

### B. Motivation that Works at 10U (Simple + Visible)

- **“Win the inning” focus:** because of the **5-run limit**, teach the team to “win” each inning by controlling mistakes and scoring opportunities.
- **Effort awards:** give a post-practice “Hard Hat” to the player who hustled most
- **Specific praise:** “Great first step,” “Nice glove angle,” “Way to back up!” (not just “good job”)

PCA recommends a mastery-focused mindset—praising effort and reframing mistakes as learning. [[positivecoach.org](http://positivecoach.org)], [[positivecoach.org](http://positivecoach.org)]

### C. Team Building Ideas (Fast, Fun, No Cost)

1. **Buddy system** (pair a confident kid with a quieter kid during stations)
2. **Shout-out circle** (each player thanks a teammate for something specific)
3. **Team cheer creation** (kids invent it—ownership matters)
4. **“Get to know you” base tags**
  - Put fun prompts on paper plates at bases: favorite snack, pet, superhero, etc.
  - During water breaks, players rotate and answer one prompt.

### D. Character Development Through Softball Moments

Use short “character cues” during real situations:

- **After an error:** “Next pitch mentality.” (reset routine: breathe, clap, ready)
- **After a strikeout:** “Head up, glove on—defense needs you.”

- **When winning big:** teach respect—no showboating; play the right way (ties to “Honoring the Game” style concepts). [\[positivecoach.org\]](http://positivecoach.org), [\[positivecoach.org\]](http://positivecoach.org)

## E. Parent Communication (Makes Everything Easier)

Hold a 20-minute parent meeting and cover:

- Your goals: development + fun + competing the right way
- Attendance expectations
- How you'll communicate (GameChanger/GroupMe)
- Behavior expectations aligning with league sportsmanship/zero tolerance

PCA also encourages engaging parents early and making them assets to the team. [\[positivecoach.org\]](http://positivecoach.org)

### Bonus: “Coach’s Quick Game Checklist” (10U Major)

#### Pre-Game

- Lineup card ready (required)
- Remind runners: **one base per pitch**; when home steal is legal
- Defensive reminders: back up bases, communicate, know who covers 2B

#### In-Game

- Track innings: **5-run limit** changes strategy
- Use courtesy runners for pitcher/catcher when needed
- Keep dugout engaged: “1 pitch job” (everyone cheers every pitch)

#### Post-Game

- Sportsmanship line
- 60-second team huddle: 1 thing we did well, 1 thing to practice next time
- Report score per league procedure (home team responsibility)