

10U Minor – Lower Division Coaches Handbook

(Youth Fastpitch Softball — “coach-pitch after 3–0 / 4 balls / HBP”)

Welcome! This handbook is designed to help a **new 10U Minor Lower** coach run safe, organized, and fun practices while developing confident players and a positive team culture.

1) Gameplay Rules (Specific to 10U Minor – Upper & Lower)

Below are the **division-specific rules** pulled from your SCPAS rules document.

Game Structure & Scoring

- **Official game:** 7 innings OR at least **4 innings** (3½ if home team is winning) if the game can't continue due to weather/darkness/field conditions; if stopped early and tied, **it may be completed** and can end in a tie.
- **5-run limit per inning.**
- **Run-ahead rule (minor divisions):** Game complete if a team is ahead by **8 runs after 5 innings** or **12 runs after 4 innings.**

Base Running / Live Ball

- **No stealing** in 10U Minor.
- **Ball becomes dead** when any **infielder controls the ball and makes no play** on a runner.
- If the defense **makes an attempted play**, the ball becomes **dead on an overthrow**; runners must stop at the base they were attempting to reach.

Defense (Positioning & Players)

- **10 players** may play defense (one additional player).
- Only **six defenders** (including **pitcher and catcher**) may be in the **infield**; all others are outfielders and must be at least **15 feet beyond baselines.**

Hitting / Pitching (Key “Minor” Rules)

- **No infield fly rule.**
- **No dropped third strike rule.**
- **Batter is NOT out** for stepping on home plate when making contact with a batted ball.
- Teams use a **continuous batting order** of all players with **free defensive substitutions.**

When the coach enters to pitch

Coach pitch occurs when:

- The player pitcher reaches **3 balls / 0 strikes, OR**
- The count reaches **4 balls, OR**
- The batter is **hit by a pitch**.

Additional hitting/pitching notes:

- **All batters must hit or strike out** — batters do **not** take first on a walk or HBP.
- The **pitcher must be in the circle** during coach pitch.
- **Pitching distance: 35 feet.**

Equipment (10U)

- 10U uses an **11-inch yellow optic ball** (.47 COR, 375 max compression).

Sportsmanship & Conduct (Worth emphasizing to families)

- SCPAS has a **Zero Tolerance Policy** covering arguing calls, disrespect, profanity, throwing equipment, etc.
- Postgame: teams line up to thank the opponent (sportsmanship expectation).

2) Recommended Skills Development (10U Minor Lower)

At “Minor Lower,” your north star is **fundamentals + confidence + love of the game**.
Priorities:

A. Throwing & Catching (Most important at this level)

Goals by season end

- Consistent **grip** (4-seam), **step to target**, and **follow-through**
- Catch with “**thumbs together**” (above waist) / “**pinky together**” (below waist)
- Introduce **glove-to-throw transfer** (quick but controlled)

Key coaching points

- “Sideways, step, throw” (hips/shoulders help power)
- Emphasize **accuracy over velocity** (you’ll get outs via clean catches and throws)

B. Fielding Fundamentals

- Athletic ready position: “**feet wide, glove out front**”

- Ground balls: **alligator** (glove down, two hands, belly to ball)
- Fly balls: **move first**, then catch (avoid “statue catches”)
- Basic team defense: **who covers which base**, and **backing up throws**

C. Hitting (Coach pitch transition readiness)

- Stance & balance, eye discipline (“see it, hit it”)
- Short path to the ball; introduce **contact-first** approach
- Simple cues: **“load, stride, swing”**
- Controlled aggression—swing at strikes during coach pitch

D. Base Running (No stealing, but lots of smart running)

- Running **through first** hard
- Turns and **“big turn”** on overthrows (within your dead-ball rules)
- Tagging basics (even if limited): run on contact, listen to base coach, locate ball safely

E. Catcher/Pitcher Development (Rotational)

Even if you don’t have specialized pitchers/catchers:

- Pitchers: balance, underhand motion basics, **safety & composure**
- Catchers: stance, receiving, blocking basics (with soft balls early)

3) Practice Format Suggestions (Highly Recommended)

10U attention spans improve when practice is **fast-moving, station-based, and predictable**.

Ideal practice length

- **75–90 minutes** is a sweet spot.

“Same Rhythm” Practice Template (90 minutes)

1. **5 min – Team huddle + goal of the day**
2. **10 min – Dynamic warm-up** (skips, shuffles, karaoke, arm circles)
3. **10 min – Throwing progression** (close → medium; emphasize form)
4. **35 min – Stations (3 x ~11–12 min)**
 - Station 1: Infield / ground balls + throws
 - Station 2: Hitting (tee + soft toss/front toss)
 - Station 3: Outfield / fly balls + throws OR baserunning
5. **15 min – Team defense / situational**

- “Ball to SS—where’s the play?”
 - Force-outs at 1st / 2nd, simple cutoffs
6. **10 min – Competitive fun game**
- “Hit the cone,” relay races, throwing accuracy contests
7. **5 min – Closing circle** (shout-outs + reminder)

Staffing rule of thumb

- 1 adult per station is ideal. If you only have 2 adults, do 2 stations + team defense together.

Practice behavior best practices

- Keep lines short: **no more than 3 players waiting**
- Use “**coach words**” that are consistent (“Ready position,” “Alligator,” “Step to target”)
- Praise **effort + improvement**, not just outcomes

4) Example Practice Drills (with YouTube links)

I’m including reliable, coach-friendly videos you can share with assistants/parents.

Throwing Progression (8 minutes)

Drill: “Knee → Power position → Step and throw”

- Focus: wrist snap, elbow up, step to target
Video: *Throwing Progression Before Practice or Game* (MegRem Softball)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=53JNddN4KXk> [youtube.com]

Infield: Quick Hands / Footwork (10 minutes)

Drill: Cone quick-feet fielding (roll/toss grounders)

- Add: field → shuffle → throw to coach
Video: *Quick Hands, Quick Feet Infield Drill* (MegRem Softball)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gr8pqOu73Eo> [youtube.com]

Infield: 3 Youth Ground Ball Drills (12 minutes station)

Drill set: Zigzag / stutter / timing drills

- Great for building “feet before hands”
Video: *3 Infield Drills For Youth Players* (MegRem Softball)
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sk6hQSa0_s4 [youtube.com]

Outfield: Catching Fly Balls (10 minutes station)

Drill: Kneeling catches + self-toss get-under-it

Video: *2 Outfield Drills To Work On Catching Fly Balls For Youth Players* (MegRem Softball)

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sDhB2fAoQsA> [youtube.com]

Hitting Station: Soft Toss Done Right (10 minutes)

Drill: Side soft toss with rhythm + strike-zone focus

Video: *How to Soft Toss | Youth Baseball & Softball* (Dominate The Diamond)

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rV3EQ5tHcNE> [youtube.com]

Optional add-on: Front toss mechanics (if you use an L-screen)

- *Soft Toss and Front Toss Done RIGHT!*
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQNiTnBEA10> [youtube.com]

Baserunning: Game-like “Read It & Run” (10–12 minutes)

Drill: “World’s Best Base Running Drill” (situational reads, turns, tagging concepts)

Video: *Easy Softball Drills*

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gf11YkU9fnY> [youtube.com]

Bonus: “Whole-Team” Competitive Drill (5–8 minutes)

Drill: Throwing accuracy knockout

- Set 2–3 buckets/cones; teams earn points for hits
- Keeps energy high and builds arm accuracy

5) Age-Appropriate Motivation + Team Building & Character

10U athletes thrive on **belonging, fun, and small wins**. Here are practical tools:

A. Motivation that works at 9–10 years old

- **“Effort points”:** award points for hustle, listening, helping teammates (not just hits)
- **Skill streaks:** “3 good throws in a row” = celebrate
- **Role rotations:** every player gets a chance at infield/outfield, some catching reps
- **Short feedback loops:** correct one thing, then let them try again quickly

B. Team-building rituals (simple, powerful)

- **Win or lose: “One good thing” circle**
Each player says one teammate who helped them or did something well.
- **Buddy system**
Pair a confident player with a quieter one for warmups and drills.
- **Team jobs**
Line leader, equipment captain, cheer captain, cleanup captain (rotates weekly).
- **Shared team cheer + values**
Pick 3 values: *Hustle, Kindness, Courage*. Use them daily.

C. Character development “micro-lessons” (1 minute)

Add a 60-second theme at the end of practice:

- **Courage:** trying a new position
- **Resilience:** “next pitch” mentality
- **Respect:** umpires, opponents, teammates
- **Accountability:** “I forgot my glove—how I fix it next time”

D. Recognition ideas (avoid “best player” awards)

- **Helmet sticker system** (hustle, teamwork, coachability)
- **Player of the day** for: encouragement, focus, improvement
- **Opponent compliment** after games (fits SCPAS sportsmanship emphasis).

Quick-Start: Your First 2 Practices (Plug-and-Play)

Practice 1 (90 min): “Foundations”

- Warm-up + throwing progression (15–20)
- Stations: ground balls / hitting tee / fly ball basics (35)
- Team defense: where to throw on a ground ball (15)
- Fun game: throwing accuracy contest (10)
- Close: team values + shout-outs (5)

Practice 2 (90 min): “Game Movement”

- Warm-up + throwing (15)
- Stations: infield footwork / soft toss / baserunning turns (35)
- Situational: force at 1st, force at 2nd, cover bases (20)
- Fun: relay race with ball transfers (10)
- Close: “one good teammate moment” (5)