

Below is a **Coach's Handbook** designed specifically for a **10U Minor – Upper Division** youth fastpitch team. It's written so a brand-new coach can pick it up and confidently run a season: rules, priorities, practice structure, drills, and kid-appropriate motivation/team culture.

10U Minor – Upper Division Coach's Handbook

South Central Pennsylvania Softball (SCPAS) | 2026 Season

Quick “What matters most” at 10U Minor Upper

At this level, players are transitioning from “learning the game” to “playing the game.” Your goals:

1. **Safety + Fun + Confidence**
2. **Foundations** (throw/catch, fielding posture, basic hitting mechanics)
3. **Game understanding** (where to go with the ball, backing up, simple baserunning)
4. **Lots of reps** (short lines, stations, keep them moving)

1) Gameplay rules (10U Minor – Upper Division)

The items below are taken from the SCPAS Playing Rules document.

Game format & time

- **Time limit: 1 hour 30 minutes, finish the inning** (applies to 10U major and all minor divisions).
- **Minor division games end after 7 innings or 1½-hour limit** (no tie breaker; score can stand).
- **Official game: 7 innings OR at least 4 innings** completed (3½ if home team is winning) if the game can't continue due to darkness/weather/field conditions.
- **If rained out before 3½ innings: game starts over** when rescheduled.

Run limits / mercy (minor divisions)

- **5-run limit per inning** for 10U Minor (Upper & Lower).
- **Run-ahead (minor divisions):** game is complete if **+8 after 5** or **+12 after 4** innings.

Lineups & substitutions

- **Continuous batting order of all players with free defensive substitutions.**

Defense (10U Minor specifics)

- **10 defensive players allowed** (1 extra fielder).
- **Only 6 defenders may be in the infield** (including pitcher & catcher).
All other defenders are **outfielders** and must be **at least 15 feet beyond the baselines.**

Stealing / special rules

- **No stealing** in 10U Minor (Upper & Lower).
- **No infield fly rule.**
- **No dropped third strike.**
- **Batter is NOT out** for stepping on home plate when making contact.

Coach-pitch transition rules (player pitch → coach pitch)

In 10U Minor (Upper & Lower), the coach enters to pitch when:

- the count reaches **3 balls 0 strikes, OR**
- the count reaches **4 balls, OR**
- the batter is **hit by a pitch.**

Additional hitting/advancement rules:

- **No walks** and **no HBP award** of 1st base: batters **must hit or strike out.**
- During coach pitch, the **pitcher must be positioned inside the pitcher's circle.**

When the ball becomes dead / overthrows

- Ball becomes **dead** when any **infielder has control** and **makes no play** on a runner.
- If the defense **attempts a play**, the ball becomes **dead on an overthrow**, and runners **stop at the base** they were trying to reach.

Equipment reminders (10U)

- **10U uses an 11-inch yellow optic cover ball** (.47 COR, 375 max compression).
- Bat standards and other equipment rules follow the league's stated bat requirements.

Sportsmanship / conduct (important coach responsibility)

- SCPAS uses a **Zero Tolerance Policy** (warnings → ejections/suspensions for escalations, profanity, throwing objects in protest, etc.).
- Postgame: teams line up to thank opponents (unsportsmanlike penalties can apply).

2) Recommended skills development for 10U Minor Upper

Think of this level as **building “reliable basics under light pressure.”** Prioritize:

A. Throwing & catching (top priority)

Outcomes by mid-season

- Most players can throw **with a consistent grip** and **step toward target**
- Can play catch **10–15 yards** with reasonable accuracy
- Can receive with **two hands** and “give” with the glove

Coaching cues

- “Side to target, step, throw, follow to your target”
- “Thumb to thigh, show the ball, finish long”
- Avoid over-coaching: pick **one cue** per rep

B. Fielding fundamentals

Outcomes

- Athletic ready position every pitch
- Ground ball: **move feet first**, glove out front, “alligator” (two hands)
- Fly balls: first step back/angle and call “Mine!”

Team defense basics

- Force play understanding (runner on 1st → out at 2nd/1st depending)
- “Where is the easiest out?”
- Backups: 1B backs up overthrows to 1st, SS covers 2nd, etc.

C. Hitting (contact + confidence)

Outcomes

- Balanced stance, basic load/stride

- Contact in front of plate, eyes track ball
- Use tees and front toss for volume reps

At 10U Minor, prioritize:

- **Consistent contact**
- **Hitting hard ground balls/line drives**
- **Simple strike-zone awareness** (“hit your pitch”)

D. Baserunning

Outcomes

- Run hard through 1st; break down in foul territory
- Proper rounding technique
- Listening to base coaches; “freeze on line drive”

Even with **no stealing**, good baserunning wins games at this level.

E. Catching (optional specialization)

If you have a developing catcher:

- Stance and glove presentation
- Blocking basics (especially with player pitch/HBP scenarios)
- Throwing footwork can wait—don’t overload early

3) Practice format suggestions (highly recommended)

The “10U practice rule”: short lines, constant movement

A great target is **75–90 minutes**.

Sample 90-minute practice template

0:00–0:08 | Dynamic warm-up

- Jog, skips, side shuffle, high knees
- Add 2–3 short sprints

0:08–0:20 | Throwing progression (partner work)

- Wrist/one-knee → step-and-throw → small crow hop

- Finish with 5 “hit the coach’s glove” throws

0:20–0:45 | Stations (3 x 8 minutes + transitions)

- Station 1: Ground balls (forehand/backhand)
- Station 2: Hitting tee/front toss
- Station 3: Baserunning or fly balls

0:45–1:05 | Team defense / situational

- “Ball hit to you = where’s your play?”
- Run 3–5 common situations: runner on 1st, bases loaded, etc.

1:05–1:22 | Competitive game / scrimmage

- 2-out inning game, or “defense vs offense” points

1:22–1:30 | Cooldown + character moment

- Recognize hustle/teammate award
- Quick team break: 1 takeaway, 1 cheer

Best practice habits at this age

- Use **clear audible start/stop** cues (whistle or “GO/RESET!”)
- Keep instruction to **30 seconds or less**
- More reps, fewer lectures
- Use **assistant coaches/parents** for stations

4) Example practice drills (with YouTube links)

Below are **plug-and-play drills** you can use immediately. I included video references to help new coaches teach the movements correctly.

Note: Always preview videos before sharing with players.

Throwing Mechanics Drill (team-wide)

Drill: “Mechanics breakdown + simple drill set”

Why: Most 10U errors come from inconsistent throwing mechanics.

- Video: **Full Breakdown of Softball Throwing Mechanics (Coach Dan Blewett / Snap Softball)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zrr7OwTJnXY> [youtube.com]

How to run it (6–8 minutes):

- Pair up 20–30 feet
- 5 reps: “step to target, elbow up, finish”
- 5 reps: “quick catch → throw” (simulate game tempo)

Infield Ground Ball Footwork Drill

Drill: Youth infield footwork progressions

- Video: **3 Infield Drills For Youth Players (MegRem Softball)**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sk6hQSa0_s4 [youtube.com]

Setup: cones + rolled balls

Coaching cues: “Feet first, glove out front, two hands”

“Gold standard” ground-ball fundamentals (coach learning)

- Video: **Ground Ball Work – Mike Candrea**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XDwFdR4gluQ> [youtube.com]

Use this as a **coach education** clip—then simplify into 10U-friendly cues.

Hitting: Teaching the swing simply

- Video: **How to Teach Youth Players How to Swing (MegRem Softball)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J0IbU7CluDM> [youtube.com]

10U-friendly cues:

- “Load... step... swing through”
- “Head down, hit it hard”

Hitting: Timing / rhythm drill (front toss variation)

- Video: **“Double Toss” Softball Hitting Drill to Improve Timing (Championship Productions)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TQnHDQc2Xpk> [youtube.com]

Why: Helps kids who “freeze” or rush.

Baserunning circuit (fun + efficient)

- Video: **World’s Best Base Running Drill (Easy Softball Drills)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gf11YkU9fnY> [youtube.com]

How to run it (8–10 minutes):

- Station runners at home/1st/3rd
- Coach simulates “pitch,” then hit balls to OF
- Runners practice: rounding, reading, tagging

Catcher Blocking (if you have developing catchers)

- Video: **Top 5 Blocking Drills for Catchers (Catching Made Simple)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tjzv5anKEe0> [youtube.com]

Keep it short (5 minutes). Emphasize **safety** and “keep it in front.”

5) Age-appropriate motivation & team building (10U)

10U kids thrive on **belonging**, **recognition**, and **fun competition**. Keep it positive and specific.

A. Simple team culture rules (kid-friendly)

Post these and repeat often:

1. **We hustle** (to positions, on/off field)
2. **We encourage** (no eye rolls, no blaming)
3. **We learn** (mistakes are information)
4. **We respect** (umpires, opponents, teammates)

This aligns well with SCPAS’s sportsmanship emphasis and Zero Tolerance expectations.

B. Motivation that works at 10U

1) “Player of the Day” (process-based)

Instead of “best hitter,” use:

- Best teammate
- Biggest hustle

- Most improved
- Bravest mistake (tried something new)

2) Sticker chart / beads / helmet decals

Reward controllables:

- Loud communication
- Backing up
- Sliding into the correct base (when taught safely)
- Picking up gear / being ready

3) Mini-challenges (practice competitions)

- “Infield clean reps” challenge (team vs standard)
- “5 perfect throws” ladder
- “Hit the cone” accuracy contest

Keep prizes tiny: first pick of team cheer, fun sunglasses for warmups, etc.

C. Team building ideas (fast + free)

“Buddy system”

Pair an experienced kid with a newer kid for:

- warmups
- gear checks
- cheering during games

“Team job board”

Kids rotate responsibilities:

- lineup helper (with adult)
- equipment captain
- dugout cheer leader
- “ball finder” after warmups

“One good thing” circle (2 minutes)

At end of practice: each player says **one teammate** who helped them.

D. Character development (short, meaningful)

Keep it **2 minutes**, once per practice or once per week:

- **Effort:** “What does hustle look like?”
- **Integrity:** “We own our mistakes”
- **Resilience:** “Next pitch mentality”
- **Respect:** “How we talk to umpires/opponents”

Tie it to a moment you saw in practice that day—kids remember stories.

Appendix: Game-day coaching checklist (10U Minor Upper)

Before the game

- Arrive 45–60 minutes early
- Safety check: field hazards, bases secure
- Quick warm-up plan (throwing + 5-minute infield/outfield)
- Confirm lineup (continuous batting order)

During the game

- Keep dugout simple: 2–3 cues total
- Rotate players to build development (especially minors)
- Teach “where’s the play?” between innings, not mid-play
- Reinforce: **no stealing** (avoid accidental violations)

After the game

- Line up and thank opponents (sportsmanship expectation)
- 30-second team recap:
 - 1 thing we did well
 - 1 thing we’ll practice next