

12U Minor Division Coach Handbook (Fastpitch Softball)

A practical, “grab-and-go” guide for first-time and returning coaches—focused on player development, safe progressions, and running fun, efficient practices.

1) Gameplay Rules (12U Minor Division) — SCPAS-Specific Summary

Below is a coach-friendly summary of the key rules and “gotchas” for **12U Minor** based on the attached SCPAS Playing Rules.

A. Game format & timing

- **Time limit: 1 hour 30 minutes, finish the inning.**
- **Regulation game: 7 innings** or a regulation length as defined by SCPAS (including weather/darkness conditions).
- **Minor games** end after 7 innings or the 1:30 time limit; **no tie-breaker procedure** is used for minor division (unlike majors).

B. Run limits & mercy/early finish

- **5-run limit per inning.**
- **Run-ahead rule (minor divisions):** If a team is up **8 after 5** or **12 after 4**, the game is complete.

C. Lineups, subs, and DP/FLEX

- **Continuous batting order: all players bat.**
- **Free defensive substitutions:** rotate players defensively without “burning” subs.

D. Pitching & field setup

- **Pitching distance: 40 feet** for 12U Minor.
- **PIAA pitching rule** is allowed.

E. Plays/rules that matter a lot at 12U Minor

- **Dropped third strike is LIVE/IN EFFECT** (updated rule).
- **Infield fly rule is IN EFFECT.**

Coaching implications (high value reminders):

- Catchers must **block, locate, and throw** on dropped third strike situations; infielders must react to the covering responsibilities.
- Teach batters to **run hard on strike three** until the play is clearly over (at appropriate moments)—this is new for many “minor” players.

- Infield fly: help players (and parents) understand that it exists to prevent “cheap doubles” on intentional drops; teach infielders to call “I got it” loudly.

F. Sportsmanship & conduct (worth emphasizing early)

- Post-game sportsmanship line is required; failure can be treated as unsportsmanlike conduct under the **Zero Tolerance Policy**.
- No alcohol/tobacco/vaping at fields; warnings/ejections possible.

2) Recommended Skills Development for 12U Minor

At 12U Minor (often 10–12-year-olds), the best programs emphasize **fundamentals under increasing game speed**. Your season goal: *make every player safer, more confident, and more capable at the next level.*

A. Throwing & catching (highest priority)

Targets by end of season

- Consistent throwing mechanics: step, glove-side direction, follow-through.
- Catching fundamentals: “thumb to thigh” for grounders, two hands on high balls, transition to throw.

Core focus areas

- **Throwing progression + accuracy** (warm-up becomes skill work).
- **Quick exchange** (catch → grip → throw), especially for middle infield.
- **Communication**: “Ball! Ball! Ball!” “Mine!” “Cut!” “Relay!”

Good reference videos

- Throwing mechanics/drills: “Softball Throwing Drills And Tips” (MegRem Softball) [\[youtube.com\]](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1111111111)
- Quick pre-practice throwing progression routine [\[youtube.com\]](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2222222222)

B. Fielding (infield + outfield)

Infield

- Athletic ready position, first step, approach angle, field out front.
- “Work through the ball” and throw on balance.
- Introduce more decision-making: force vs. tag, where’s the lead runner?

Videos

- “How To Work Through A Ground Ball + 4 Drills” [\[youtube.com\]](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3333333333)

- Triangle drill concept (simple, repeatable fundamentals) [\[youtube.com\]](https://www.youtube.com)

Outfield

- **Drop step**, angles, and catching over shoulder.
- Hit the cutoff, avoid overthrowing bases.

Video

- “2 Outfield Drills To Work On Drop Step/Catching Over The Shoulder” [\[youtube.com\]](https://www.youtube.com)

C. Hitting (keep it simple, build confidence)

Targets

- Balanced stance, strong grip, good load, “see it–hit it,” contact first.
- Situational awareness: moving runners, hitting to the open side.

Keys for 12U Minor

- Prioritize **contact quality** and **consistent approach** over home-run swings.
- Teach **two-strike approach** (shorten up, battle mentality).

D. Baserunning (wins games at this level)

Targets

- Run through first; proper turns; aggressive-but-smart.
- Understanding leads, secondary leads, tag-ups, and reading dirt balls.

Video

- Mike Candrea baserunning fundamentals [\[youtube.com\]](https://www.youtube.com)

E. Pitching & catching (team-wide basics even if only 1–2 pitchers)

Even non-pitchers should learn pitching/catching basics for empathy and emergency coverage.

- Pitchers: stride line, timing, consistent release.
- Catchers: stance, receiving, blocking, quick toss to bases—**plus dropped third strike readiness** for 12U Minor.

Videos

- Pitching mechanics drills (MegRem Softball “4 Pitching Drills...”) [\[youtube.com\]](https://www.youtube.com)

- Foundational mechanics/slo-mo concepts [[youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)]

3) Practice Format Suggestions (Efficient + Fun)

A. Recommended practice structure (75–90 minutes)

0:00–0:10 — Dynamic Warm-up + Throwing Progression

- Jog, skips, high knees, side shuffles, arm circles, leg swings
- Pair throwing progression: short → medium, focus on accuracy (make it a game: “10 perfect throws”)

0:10–0:25 — Defense Skill Block (rotate stations)

- Station 1: Infield ground ball mechanics
- Station 2: Fly balls + drop step
- Station 3: Catchers blocking/throws OR pitchers (small group)

0:25–0:45 — Hitting Block

- 2–3 stations to avoid standing:
 - Tee work (inside/outside)
 - Front toss
 - Live or machine (if available)
- Add constraints: “line drive only,” “hit behind runner,” etc.

0:45–1:05 — Team Defense / Situations

- Cutoffs/relays
- Force plays at 2nd, 3rd
- Bunt coverage (even if bunting is rare, it teaches movement/communication)

1:05–1:20 — Baserunning + Competition

- Turns at 1st, tag-ups, “ball in dirt” reads
- Finish with a fun competitive game

1:20–1:30 — Cooldown + Team Huddle

- Quick stretch
- Shout-outs: 2 players recognized for effort/teammate behavior

B. Practice design principles that work at 12U

- **Max reps, minimal lines** (stations are your best friend).
- **Short teaching moments:** 20–40 seconds, then reps.

- **Constraint-based games:** scoring points for execution (e.g., “+1 for loud communication”).
- **Plan your transitions:** have cones/balls set before practice starts.

4) Example Practice Drills (with YouTube Links)

Tip: Use 2–4 drills per practice and repeat them over multiple weeks. Repetition builds confidence.

Drill 1: Throwing Progression “Game-Ready” Warmup (6–8 minutes)

Purpose: Arm care + accuracy + clean mechanics

Setup: Partners 20–30 ft → 40–50 ft → 60 ft; finish with 5 “game throws”

Coaching cues: Elbow up, step to target, finish through

Video: Throwing progression before practice/game [\[youtube.com\]](#)

Drill 2: Infield “Work Through the Ball” Progression

Purpose: Better footwork, momentum to target, fewer back-foot throws

Setup: Coach rolls balls; players field moving forward, plant, throw

Progression: Slow rollers → firmer → glove-side/backhand

Video: How to work through a ground ball + 4 drills [\[youtube.com\]](#)

Drill 3: Triangle Fielding Fundamentals (quick hands + body position)

Purpose: Clean glove angles + strong base + consistent fielding posture

Setup: Cones in triangle; players field in different positions (center/forehand/backhand)

Video: Softball fielding drills: Triangle Drill [\[youtube.com\]](#)

Drill 4: Outfield Drop Step + Over-the-Shoulder Catch

Purpose: First-step efficiency; tracking balls hit over head

Setup: Coach tosses/throws; player practices drop step and angle

Video: 2 outfield drills for drop step/catching over shoulder [\[youtube.com\]](#)

Drill 5: Pitching Mechanics Mini-Station (small group)

Purpose: Build repeatable movement patterns

Setup: 1 pitcher + 1 catcher + coach; 10–15 min max to protect attention spans

Video: 4 pitching drills to work mechanics [\[youtube.com\]](#)

Drill 6: Baserunning Fundamentals (leads, turns, decisions)

Purpose: Faster first step, smarter decisions, fewer outs on bases

Setup: Cones at bases; coach calls scenarios (single/double, fly ball, dirt ball)

Video: How to Run the Bases in Softball (Mike Candrea) [[youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)]

Bonus: “Best Softball Drills for 11–12 Year Olds” (ideas library)

If you want a ready-made menu of age-appropriate drills and games: [mojo.sport]

5) Age-Appropriate Motivation, Team Building & Character Development

12U players respond best to **belonging, progress, and autonomy**—not long speeches.

A. Team culture basics (set in Week 1)

Create **3 team standards** and review them every practice:

1. **Hustle** (run on/off, sprint 1st base)
2. **Teammate first** (encourage, no eye-rolls)
3. **Coachability** (listen, try again, positive body language)

Make it visible: write them on a card and keep it in your bag.

B. Motivation that works at this age

- **“Catch them doing it right”**: praise effort, not just outcomes.
- Use **micro-goals**: “Today we’re winning the first step,” “Today we’re loud on pop flies.”
- **Progress boards** (not ranking): track team totals (e.g., “80 accurate throws” goal).
- **Player choice moments**: let captains pick warmup music (clean), choose drill order once a week.

C. Team-building activities (10 minutes or less)

1. **Rose-Bud-Thorn** (end-of-practice quick share)
 - Rose = something good, Bud = something you’re excited about, Thorn = challenge
2. **Buddy System**
 - Pair veterans with newer players for warmups and check-ins
3. **“Teammate of the Day” token**
 - A scrunchie/wristband/mini softball passed to someone who helped a teammate

D. Character development moments tied to softball

- **Resilience:** “Next pitch” mentality after an error
- **Integrity:** owning mistakes, respecting umpires
- **Leadership:** communication (“Mine!”, “Cut 2!”, “Two outs!”)

E. Simple, powerful coach phrases

- “Great effort—do it again.”
- “Fail fast, learn faster.”
- “We respond, we don’t react.”
- “Be the teammate you want.”

Sample 90-Minute Practice Plan (Copy/Paste)

0:00–0:10 Dynamic warmup + throwing progression

0:10–0:25 Stations (5 min each x3): [\[youtube.com\]](#)

- Infield grounders (work through) [\[youtube.com\]](#)
- Triangle fundamentals [\[youtube.com\]](#)
- Pitching/catching mini-station

0:25–0:45 Hitting stations: tee + front toss + live (rotate)

0:45–1:05 Team defense: cutoffs/relays + dropped third strike awareness (situational)

1:05–1:20 Baserunning: turns + tag-ups + dirt ball reads

1:20–1:30 Competitive finish + shout-outs + huddle [\[youtube.com\]](#)
[\[youtube.com\]](#)

Quick Coach Checklist (12U Minor)

- Know time limit (**1:30 finish inning**) and **5-run rule**
- Teach **dropped third strike** responsibilities early
- Teach **infield fly** and communication cues
- Use stations to reduce standing
- End every practice with something fun + positive