



# ***Baseball BC Grassroots***

## ***Initiation***

### ***Coach-Parent Leader***

#### ***Manual***

***5U 6U 7U 8U 9U***



# Acknowledgements

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Baseball BC would like to thank the following people and groups for their collaboration on this program and all of its content:

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Our youngest athletes and coaches and all of the generations that will follow will be best served to enjoy what is typically a very hard game to learn and master.

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**A Great Video for All Parent Leaders & Coaches to watch**

***“It’s what we say they will remember, not the skills we teach them.”***

***Echo’s Beyond the Game***

***The Lasting Power of a Coach’s Words***

***Coach Reed Maltbie – TedX Video***     [click to go to video](#)

# Overview

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The Grassroots Program goal is to provide a fun & safe environment for children to learn the fundamentals of baseball while building physical literacy for kids in the Active Start Stage in the LTAD (Long-Term Athlete Development) model.

This manual is for parents who have offered to be Parent Leaders at the 5U, 6U & 7U division as well as those who are coaching at the 8U & 9U levels. These five divisions fall under the Grassroots category and the goal is to offer a strong basic foundation to players learning baseball.

In this manual we will explain the proper mechanics of baseball positions, drills, and practice plans to assist you in becoming a successful Parent Leader/Coach. The best thing you can do is work the kids through a mix of drills and games that are FUN!

These players are between the ages of 4 and 9 years old and the key with this age group is to break it down as simple as possible. The goal is to learn the fundamentals of baseball but also develop a sense of fun and enjoyment for the game. Keeping the activities short and well planned will result in a smoothly run practice.

## Parent Participation

Parent Participation is **recommended** for all five divisions. This helps relieve pressure for you the Parent Leaders/Coaches when running practices or on game day. Each age division brings different levels of support from parents. In 5U & 6U we suggest parents be partnered with their own child during the drills and on the fields for games. In 7U, the player's cognitive awareness is improving and some drills won't require parents to help. 8U & 9U teams tend to carry full rosters of 11-12 players, by having two to three drills stations setup with parents running the station allows for the coaches to help with technique correction/support for ALL the players.

We have found that when players are partnered with their parents for skills, the child has more fun and learn the proper technique at a quicker pace then when partnered with another kid.

## How to use these Materials

We recommend Parent Leaders and coaches read this manual focusing on the age division they are coaching. There are 10 weeks of practice plans for each age division that follow the Grassroots Learning Progressions chart. Review the designated weekly practice plan and review the proper mechanics related to that practice plan.

# Progression Skills

<p><b>Throwing</b> <b>5U</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ready - Hand up</li> <li>2. Aim - Point to target with arm/leg</li> <li>3. Throw - Body control – stay on feet</li> </ol> <p><b>6U</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Grip - 4-seam/across horseshoe</b></li> <li>2. Ready - Hand up</li> <li>3. Aim - Point to target with arm/leg</li> <li>4. Throw - Body control – Stay on fee</li> <li>5. <b>Follow Through</b></li> </ol> <p><b>7U</b></p> <p><b>**Progressive throwing Intro** - Start square, soccer kick, step and ready, aim, throw, follow through)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Grip - 4-seam/across horseshoe</b></li> <li>2. <b>Square up - Chest to target</b></li> <li>3. <b>Step &amp; Ready - Hand up; Show the dog the ball</b></li> <li>4. Aim - Point to target with arm/leg</li> <li>5. Throw - Body control – stay on feet</li> <li>6. <b>Follow Through</b></li> </ol>	<p><b>Catching</b> <b>5U</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ready - 2 hands together and out</li> <li>2. Watch - Eyes on ball</li> <li>3. Catch - Close hands</li> </ol> <p><b>6U</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ready - 2 hands together and out</li> <li>2. Watch - Eyes on ball</li> <li>3. Catch - Close hands</li> <li>4. <b>Catch – Close hands Cradle/Cushion</b></li> </ol> <p><b>7U</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ready - 2 hands together and out</li> <li>2. Watch - Eyes on ball</li> <li>3. Catch - Close hands</li> <li>4. <b>Catch – Close hands Cradle/Cushion</b></li> <li>5. <b>Move towards the ball using body control</b></li> </ol>	<p><b>Hitting</b> <b>5U</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Set feet - Bellybutton to tee</li> <li>2. Set hands - Door knockers</li> <li>3. Bat position - Bat point to sky</li> </ol> <p><b>6U</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Set feet - Bellybutton to tee</li> <li>2. Set hands - Door knockers</li> <li>3. Bat position - Bat point to sky</li> <li>4. <b>Follow Through - No Spinorama/ Squish the bug</b></li> </ol> <p><b>7U</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Set feet - Bellybutton to tee <b>**Plate**</b></li> <li>2. Set hands - Door knockers</li> <li>3. <b>**Power** Position - hands back, bat point to sky</b></li> <li>4. <b>Swing - Moving ball</b></li> <li>5. <b>Follow Through - No spinorama/ Squish the bug</b></li> </ol>
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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Throwing</b> <b>8U</b></p> <p><b>**Progressive throwing Intro**</b> - Start square, soccer kick, step and ready, aim, throw, follow through)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Grip - 4-seam/across horseshoe</li> <li>2. Square up - Chest to target</li> <li>3. Step &amp; Ready - Hand up; Show the dog the ball</li> <li>4. Aim - Point to target with arm/leg</li> <li>5. Throw - Body control – stay on feet</li> <li>6. Follow Through</li> <li>7. Throwing to a target</li> <li>8. Creating momentum with our body (intro)</li> </ol> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>9U</b></p> <p><b>**Progressive throwing Intro**</b> - Start square, soccer kick, step and ready, aim, throw, follow through)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Grip - 4-seam/across horseshoe</li> <li>2. Square up - Chest to target</li> <li>3. Step &amp; Ready - Hand up; Show the dog the ball</li> <li>4. Aim - Point to target with arm/leg</li> <li>5. Throw - Body control – stay on feet</li> <li>6. Follow Through</li> <li>7. Throwing to a target</li> <li>8. Creating momentum with our body (intro)</li> <li>9. Throwing with movement (shuffle)</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Catching</b> <b>8U</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ready - 2 hands together and out</li> <li>2. Watch - Eyes on ball</li> <li>3. Catch - Close hands</li> <li>4. Catch – Close hands Cradle/Cushion</li> <li>5. Move towards the ball using body control</li> <li>6. Catch with vertical movement</li> </ol> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>9U</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ready - 2 hands together and out</li> <li>2. Watch - Eyes on ball</li> <li>3. Catch - Close hands</li> <li>4. Catch – Close hands Cradle/Cushion</li> <li>5. Move towards the ball using body control.</li> <li>6. Catch with vertical movement</li> <li>7. Catch ball in glove with 1 hand</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Hitting</b> <b>8U</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Set feet - Bellybutton to tee <b>**Plate**</b></li> <li>2. Set hands - Door knockers</li> <li>3. <b>**Power**</b> Position - hands back, bat point to sky</li> <li>4. Swing - Moving ball</li> <li>5. Follow Through - No spinorama/ Squish the bug</li> <li>6. Hit an overhand thrown pitch</li> </ol> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>9U</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Set feet - Bellybutton to <b>**Plate**</b></li> <li>2. Set hands - Door knockers</li> <li>3. PowerPosition - hands back, bat point to sky</li> <li>4. Swing - Moving ball</li> <li>5. Follow Through - No spinorama/ Squish the bug</li> <li>6. Hit an overhand thrown pitch</li> <li>7. Swing at pitches in strike zone</li> <li>8. How to protect yourself from a ball that is going to hit you</li> </ol>
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# Progression Skills Continued

<p><b>Fielding</b></p> <p><b>5U</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ready position - Strong legs/Athletic Position</li> <li>2. Fielding position - Sit on a chair</li> <li>3. Receive - Alligator</li> </ol> <p><b>6U</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ready position - Strong legs/Athletic Position</li> <li>2. Fielding position - Sit on a chair</li> <li>3. Receive - Alligator</li> <li>4. Shuffle - Moving towards ball with body control</li> </ol> <p><b>7U</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ready position - Strong legs/Athletic Position</li> <li>2. Fielding position - Sit on a chair</li> <li>3. Receive - Alligator</li> <li>4. Shuffle - Moving towards ball with body control</li> <li>5. Step and Throw</li> </ol>	<p><b>Running</b></p> <p><b>5U</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Run - Straight line</li> <li>2. Stop - Using body control</li> <li>3. Balance - Stay on feet</li> </ol> <p><b>6U</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Run - Straight line</li> <li>2. Stop - Using body control</li> <li>3. Balance - Stay on feet</li> </ol> <p><b>7U</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Run - Straight line</li> <li>2. Stop - Using body control</li> <li>3. Balance - Stay on feet</li> <li>4. Run through 1<sup>st</sup> base/rounding bases</li> <li>5. Intro to running technique/form</li> </ol>	<p><b>General</b></p> <p><b>5U</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Positions - Infield positions</li> <li>2. Directional Baserunning - counter clockwise</li> </ol> <p><b>6U</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Positions - Infield positions</li> <li>2. Directional Baserunning - counter clockwise</li> <li>3. Throw to a base for an out</li> </ol> <p><b>7U</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Positions - Infield positions</li> <li>2. Directional Baserunning - counter clockwise</li> <li>3. Throw to a base for an out</li> <li>4. How to make an out - Force, Tag, Catch, Strike Out, Bat throw</li> <li>5. Advancing/stopping at bases</li> </ol>
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# Progression Skills Continued

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# Structure of the Practices

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## Objective of the Week

The first five Practice plan are designed with specific objectives.

## Team Meeting

We feel this is very important for this age group. Take time to have a chat with the players. Ask them about school, or their favourite things, or anything they may be excited to share with you or the others. Get down to their level and express general interest. Then use the time to tell the players, in general terms, what you plan to do that day.

## Warm-up

A dynamic warm-up is perfect to get the blood flowing and the muscles warmed up at this age. Warm-up can be anything that gets the players moving. Think: game of tag, jogging with sill movements, jogging with athletic movements (butt kickers, high knees, etc.).

Avoid the trap of “throwing to warm-up” and think “warm-up to throw” instead.

## Large Group or Small Group Instruction

Group instruction with demonstrations is important. We want all the players and parents to learn the proper mechanics/instructions. Use parents with their child to help correct mechanics.

## Small Group Drills

Some drills require you to break the players into smaller groups to work on activities or drills specific to the skill. Use 2 or 3 stations and rotate the players every 5 or 10 minutes depending on the activities you have chosen. Reminding parents to correct mechanics

## Breaks

Don't forget to give the players frequent short breaks. This helps with attention spans and with transitioning between activities (parents can use the time to set up a station or review what will happen next).

## Finish with something fun

Try and finish every practice with something fun for the whole team. Whether it is a game of tag, a race around the bases, an obstacle course, or a relay race, try and finish with something fun.

# What to do when it's just not coming together

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Sometimes you will find the players are just not into it. They are tired, had a bad day, wound up, or it is just one of those days. When that is happening, don't be afraid to throw part of the plan out the window and come up with something new. For example:

1. Play tag. Do not underestimate how much players love to play tag. After letting them choose, try and incorporate some skills into it. For example, you must "freeze" in hitting, throwing, or fielding position.
2. Ask the players. See if there is something they really want to do as an activity. Most often, their buy-in and engagement will be instant and you can slowly steer them back to baseball related tasks.
3. Take them to watch another field go watch a practice or game that is happening. The players look up to the older players like they are the pros. Use the opportunity to point out one thing the older players are doing, and then suggest your players go back to your field and try it too.
4. Ask for help. Every child has a parent with them on the field. Sometimes you just need to start a conversation and a quick brainstorm can come up with an idea.
5. Move into a scrimmage game.
6. Take an extended water break.
7. Wrap up early.
8. Have a contest of some sort. Base or Dragon race.
9. Grab a soccer ball and kick it around for a bit.

# More Coaching Tips

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1. Reinforce that a young player with a little work, can control what their body does
2. Break down the mechanics of an activity into finer steps and practice each step before putting it all together. It is never bad to practice small parts of the mechanics in isolation from the others.
3. Encourage the players and parents to practice at home. Baseball players are developed in the back yard from lots of reps “the right way”
4. Build confidence one small step at a time – i.e. Compliment the player that they had a really good grip on the bat or their eyes locked on the ball well when then took a bad swing, rather than the negative.
  - a. “That’s ok, you’ll get it next time”
  - b. “Nice swing, you’re going to hit a big one if you keep swinging like that”
  - c. “Good cover you prevented the ball from getting deep into the outfield”
5. Players reach various plateaus of confidence that become the building blocks of success. Celebrate every one.
6. Reinforce hustle - Running on and off the field between innings may be the most running a player gets during an evening at the ball park. Make it a race.
7. Promote Cheering and Chatter (the positive kind)
8. Organize each players equipment in the dugout or along the fence line so when they are done a defensive inning, they can easily grab their helmet and replace it with their glove. When the team is done at bat, players replace helmet and grab your glove at same location.
9. Try and get to know something about each athlete that isn’t baseball related.
10. Give both parents and athletes some super easy ‘homework’ between to practice at home.
11. Make sure to help players learn their teammates names, encourage conversations between them. You might have a shy player that needs some encouraging.
12. Try to kneel down when talking to the little ones; this avoids any unintended intimidation.
13. Ask questions to your players after instructions, this will give you a sense of what the players think or understand of that drill.

Let them get good at what they can do before they are challenged.

# Athletic Position All Ages

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The athletic position is the most important position in any sport. With slight variations, the athletic position is used for balance, quickness, and agility. It is the position in which you are ready to make quick movements while still staying balanced and coordinated. Our athletic position will be used when we are fielding, throwing, hitting, catching, and running in baseball.

For the 5U, 6U & 7U aged player, we call this position “Strong Legs” because it gives them an internal cue of what we are looking for. In 8U & 9U you can use start to use the proper term Athletic Position.

What does the athletic position look like?



Athletic Position/Strong Legs



Athletic Position/Strong Legs

Some verbal cues to help with the athletic position are:

- Feet slightly wider than shoulder width apart
- On the balls of your feet (we don't want to be flat footed and on our heels)
- Knees slightly bent
- Chest facing target (ball)
- Hands are out front of body in a relaxed position (not on knees)
- Head is up and looking at the ball

Teaching the Athletic Position – For players at a very young age, some of these cues might be difficult for them to understand because they aren't sure what their bodies are doing yet, or what some of these things mean. You might have to physically move them into this position to begin with. Once they practice getting into this position, which you should do as much as possible, they will feel more comfortable and it will become second nature.

When they get comfortable in this position while being static (not moving), we want to progress into a more dynamic (moving) movement. This should be done once the player fully understands the basic athletic position and are able to get in it on command. We want to teach them what is called a “split step”. Most infielders will use this as a pre-pitch routine to get the best jump on a hit ball. Have a look at this video that explains it with Evan Longoria of the Tampa Bay Rays

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b4V1smBgdH4> .

Some verbal cues to help with the split step are:

- Walk into the position with 2 steps (normally it is throwing foot, glove foot)
- As you land on the second step (glove foot), do a small hop
- Land with both feet facing the target (ball) and slightly wider than shoulder width apart
- Knees are slightly bent
- Hands are out in front of body in a relaxed position
- Head is up and looking at the ball

# Warm Up

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## 5U 6U & 7U Warm Up

Reason to warm up is different for players at this age. We want to focus on physical literacy, and not so much about preparing the players muscles for participation.

### **Physical Literacy, What is it? Why is it important?**

**Physical literacy** is the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge, and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life. It's important to give children at this age a multitude of different abilities to try to master. At this age you want to focus on running, jumping, and hopping which helps agility, balance, coordination and speed.

## Fun Activities/Ideas for warm up

- Freeze tag
  - Have players stand in different positions when they are tagged (hitting, fielding, throwing). Once touched by another player, they can continue running around
- ZigZag relay
  - Set up cones in a staggered line (slalom). Have player run through cones and tag next person in line to go.
- High knees – make sure opposite arm/opposite leg. Knees up as high as possible. Drive through the ground. Quick up and down is more important than being first to the next line.
- Butt kicks – make sure opposite arm/opposite leg. Heels to butt. Quick up and down is more important than being first to the next line.
- Shuffles – laterally shuffle the feet without touching them together. Stay low in a good athletic fielding position with chest and eyes up.
- Kangaroo jump – hopping over cones. Do it forward/backward and side to side
- Military walk – arm straight out, try to kick hand with opposite leg
- Backpedal – 7U. Reach back with the feet while running backwards. Extend as far back as possible with the legs.
- Crossover (front and back) - 7U. Cross the right foot over the left and left over right
- Jumping Jacks
- Squirrely – have players run around in a coned off area. When you say “dog”, they have to stop and get in throwing position. If you say “bat” they have to get in hitting position, if you say “monkey”, they have to get in fielding position.
  - Use fun animals or can just say “throw”, “hit”, “field” etc.
  - Can add in balance drills. When you say flamingo, they have to balance on 1 leg
    - Make sure they use both legs to balance

- The shuttle – place balls at each bag. Split up into 4 teams (1 team at each bag). Have players take the balls and put them at another teams bag. Goal is to have 0 balls at your bag at the end of set time. Players can only take 1 ball at a time.
- ABC running technique <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zEHuJTjPNTA>

## 8U & 9U Warm Up

For 8U and 9U, it is important that we start teaching players how to warm up properly. They are starting to get to an age where they are moving faster and we should warm up the body for any active participation. In your warm up there should be no throwing! Throwing will happen after warm up and stretching. We want to warm up to throw, not throw to warm up. The warm up should take at least 10 minutes, and probably closer to 15. Make sure to incorporate breaks if the players are getting tired.

For the warm up, it is important that players show up on time. The warm up should begin with the entire team participating. This is a time to have some fun, be social, but also warm up the body for the activities of the day. If players are late to practices or games, it becomes difficult to do a proper warm up for that player because they are always playing catch up. Implement a rule that everyone has to arrive 5 minutes before practice begins. There is a difference between practice warm up, and pregame warm up which we will describe below, so make sure to try and implement the right warm up depending on what you are doing at the field that day.

For players that arrive before practice and want something to do, there are some games that they can play that will occupy their time and also help with some baseball skills. Below we have listed some Pre-practice activities/games that players can do prior to the start of practice. Have your players do these while they are waiting around for practice to begin. Get parents involved as well!

- Reason to warm up is different for players at this age. We want to focus on physical literacy while also warming the body up for participation.
- Physical Literacy, What is it? Why is it important?
  - Important to give children at this age a multitude of different abilities to try to master. At this age you want to focus on running, jumping, and hopping which helps agility, balance, coordination and speed. At this age, speed development is crucial, and all of the warm up activities should be done at a fast pace.

## Pre-Practice Activities 8U & 9U

For players that arrive before practice and want something to do, here are some games that will occupy their time and also help with baseball skills that don't include throwing. Have your players do these while they are waiting around for practice to begin. Get parents involved as well!

- Flip



- Players can use their bare hands or glove. All players make a circle. 1 person starts off by hitting the ball with their glove or hand to someone else in the circle. Goal of the game is to get other players out, by the ball hitting the ground or someone not hitting the ball to another player. Players get 4 lives or mistakes until they are out of the game. Last one standing wins!
- Pepper
  - In groups of 4 or 5, have 1 player as the hitter and the rest form a line or semi-circle in front of the hitter. From about 10 feet, players underhand toss the ball to one player hitting. The hitter half swings, and tries to hit the ball on the ground to the other players in the semi-circle. If the hitter hits the ball in the air and the ball is caught, the player who catches it gets to hit. If the player swings and misses, the player on the far right of the hitter gets to hit. All other players shuffle down the line and the hitter becomes the first person to the left of the hitter. To make it more challenging for the fielders, if they make an error, they can be sent to the back of the line (last to hit). Use wiffle balls or lite flight balls until they are comfortable with how hard to hit the ball.
- 2 ball
  - Players are in a circle and have 1 ball each. One person has 2 balls and they start the game. That player throws the ball underhand to another player. The player that the ball is coming to has to throw their ball to someone else before they catch the first ball. To make it easier, you can let them catch the ball at first and then throw the new ball. Suggest having the players always hold the ball in their throwing hand, and have their catching hand open to catch the ball. Players get 4 lives or mistakes until they are out of the game. Last one standing wins
- Short hops
  - Players set up in a line. A coach or parent has a ball. Set up all players in the same direction (straight up, forehand, backhand). Throw a ball so the ball skips just before their glove. Players have to let the ball bounce once, and then catch it. Can use a glove or bare hands. Small balls will be better if using bare hands
- Bat dribble

Each player has a bat and a ball. Goal is to bounce the ball off of the bat as many times as possible without letting the ball hit the ground. Use large bats and/or balls to make it easier

## Practice Warm Up 8U & 9U

Warm up in practice is especially important for teaching fundamental movement skills. This is a great time to try new movements and also have some fun with it. There are some examples below of what to do for a practice warm up. There are lots of different movements that you can do, but here are some

that you can incorporate into your practices. For a practice warm up, we suggest doing some of the following:

- Poles to get blood flowing (1-2 minutes)
  - Running back and forth from one foul pole to the next (if you have a fence)
  - Pick spots on the field to touch (trees, fences, goal posts etc.)
    - Light jog
    - Nobody gets left behind. Do as a group; Motivates parents to be on time so their kid doesn't get left out
- Lower limb strength is important for any skill in baseball (these should be done with quick feet and as fast paced as possible). Make sure that they have good form while doing these exercises as well (3-4 minutes)
  - Frog jumps
  - 2 foot jumps
  - Single leg bounds
  - Body squats
    - Add in hops after a squat
  - Lunges
- Dynamic stretches (3-4 minutes)
  - Karaoke – do on toes (calf muscles)
  - Butt kicks (quadriceps)
  - High knees (hips/hamstrings)
  - Arm circles (shoulders)
    - Backwards, forwards, opposite
  - Arm swings
    - Forwards and backwards
    - Cross body (like a hug)
  - Trunk rotations
  - Airplanes/supermans (hamstrings)
  -
- Sprints 5-6 (3-4 minutes)
  - Short distance and give them at least a 30 second break between the next sprint
  - Don't want them tired when they do their sprints, they should be fully rested
- Baserunning (2-3 minutes)
  - When ball crosses plate (coach pitch/pitching machine)
  - Time these for a fun individual competition
  - Start low (squat) and come up
- Obstacle course (2-3 minutes)
  - Set up cones or objects that they have to move around and change direction quickly. You can also add in some of the dynamic stretches while doing the obstacle course.

## Pre-Game Warm Up 8U & 9U

Game warm up is getting ready for game play that day. We want to make sure that our athletes are getting prepared for game play, rather than teaching new skills, movements or physical literacy. A game warm up should include a dynamic warm up and stretches but try to stay away from the lower limb strength activities. Focus should be on dynamic movements that are going to mimic those done in the game (crossovers, high knees, etc.)

# Catching - Teaching Progression

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## Ready-Watch-Catch – No Glove

The first Ready-Watch-Catch are focused on catching with no glove and is more concerned with hand-eye coordination, confidence in catching and not being scared of the ball/object. Not using a glove should be the first part of the progression for catching. These principles can be used with a glove as well with some slight modifications in the second part of catching.

**Ready** – in an athletic position with our legs, we want our 2 hands out front of our body close to one another, and our palms facing out. Our hands should be near the middle of our body to react to either a high throw or a low throw.



Ready Position Front view



Ready Position Side view

**Watch** – in our READY position, we want to keep our eyes open and concentrating on the ball. When the ball/object is thrown, it is important to keep our eyes open so we don't lose track of where the ball is. We want to watch the ball all the way until it is secured in our hands/glove

**Catch** – if the ball is above the waist, we want to put our thumbs together, and index fingers together making a triangle. If the ball is below the waist, put your pinkies together. Make sure that the fingers are spread wide for more coverage. When the ball/object hits the hands, close both hands around the object and squeeze firmly. Make sure that we let the ball/object come to us, and we don't jump at the ball.



Catch above waist



Catch below waist



Squeeze Ball

## Catching – Glove

With a glove, all of the aspects of catching are the same with the following modifications.

**Ready** – all of the same principles, as with no glove apply here.

**Watch** - all of the same principles, as with no glove apply here.

**Catch** – a few changes need to occur when using a glove for catching but the basic principles still apply. But rather than closing both hands around the ball, you want to close your glove hand first with the ball in it, and then cover your glove with your throwing hand. With players that might not be strong enough to close their gloves, try to have them cover the ball with their throwing hand in their glove. This will be very difficult on anything above the waist, so try to strengthen their hands by squeezing objects such as bean bags, foam balls etc.



## Catching – Cradle/Cushion 6U

**Cradle/Cushion** – after progressing through the Ready-Watch-Catch the next thing we want to teach is how to cushion/cradle the caught ball. As the ball is coming towards our hands, we bring our hands towards our chest to take away some of the speed of the throw. This will also allow us to be quicker when throwing the ball as they get a bit older.



Catch Hands Out



Catch after cradle

## Catching with lateral movement – 7U

**Movement** – Moving towards the ball when catching can be very a very difficult task. We need to make sure that we are under control and balanced with our bodies, and try to slow down as we approach the ball. When we are moving, we want our glove to be in a relaxed running position. As we slow down to approach the ball, we can get into our READY-WATCH-CATCH.

## Catching with vertical movement – 8U

**Movement** – Moving towards the ball vertically can be one of the more difficult things to do. There are a lot of things to judge; direction of the ball, speed of the ball, trajectory of the ball, height of the ball, and then have to match all of that information with how we should move towards the ball. When moving to catch a ball, it is important to try and keep your head and eyes as steady as possible so you can track the ball easier. This means not bouncing when you run, but rather a more smooth, gliding technique. Also make sure that the eyes always stay on the ball so you can track it all the way until the ball hits the glove. If we can, its much easier to catch the ball when not moving, so trying to teach the players to run

as fast as they can to where the ball will end up, and then stop to catch it is the best and easiest way for them to catch the ball. When catching the ball, we want to make sure that the ball is directly over top of us, with our glove just slightly to the glove side of our head so we can still see the ball come into the glove (INSERT PIC).

## Catching with 1 hand – 9U

In 8U, we learnt how to run to a fly ball and get underneath the ball so we can catch it and put ourselves in a good position. Whenever we can, we want to try to catch the ball with two hands because its quicker to get the ball out of the glove and also gives us more of a cushion if the ball bounces around in the glove. In 9U, we are getting more comfortable moving to balls and sometimes we can't get in the perfect position under the ball to catch it. Sometimes, we have to stretch our glove arm as far as we can, so we can catch the ball (INSERT PIC). We have practiced catching with one hand before, but that was when we are static. Now, we are dynamic and trying to catch a ball with one hand is much more difficult.

You can practice this with a glove or without a glove. If you are not going to use a glove to practice this, make sure to use a ball that is softer and something that they are able to squeeze with their bare hand.

To start off, when practicing catching with one hand, have the players moving forward, or laterally. You can increase the level of difficulty with this progression by having players go backwards. We want them comfortable with an outstretched arm first before making it more difficult.



# Throwing - Teaching Progression

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## Ready-Aim-Throw

**Ready** – The first part of throwing is to get in a ready position to throw. In our Ready position, we need to have a strong base so we need to be in a good athletic position with slight knee bend. For our arm, we want to bring our throwing arm down, reach back, and lift the arm to shoulder height. With the elbow at shoulder height, the elbow should be bent at 90 degrees or less.



**Aim** – Second part of the throwing motion is getting ready to aim the ball. How we do that is point the glove elbow towards our target. Lining up your glove shoulder and elbow pointed towards the target, with your glove at a 90-degree angle to where you want to throw and parallel to the ground. At this point, our throwing hand is in the ready position.



Ready with ball facing out



Aim with glove to target



Release Point

**Throw** – The final step of the throwing motion. From our ready and aim position, turn the hips so that the bellybutton is facing the target and move the throwing arm forward to release the ball. They should release the ball in line or out front of their front knee.



## Grip – 6U

Two or three fingers on top of the ball, thumb on the bottom/side of the ball. Because of hand size all are likely to use 3 fingers and the thumb will only go part way down the side. Some players may even have to use all fingers due to really small hands.

Correct players who hold the ball in the palm of their hand.



Thumb under ball



Across the seams

## Follow Through – 6U

**Follow Through** – AFTER release of the ball, continue the arm path of the throwing hand down towards the opposite hip and bring the throwing side leg through



Arm Path



Arm Finish



Leg Follow Through

## Throwing Progression – 7U

**Throwing Progression Intro** – This is where we put everything that we have taught over 2 years into effect and more into a “true” throwing motion. Knowing that we never start in a perfect throwing position, we normally start with our chest towards the ball, and need to throw the ball in a different direction. What we do is start with our chest square, take a step with our throwing arm foot like we are kicking a soccer ball (instep facing our target).



Chest Square



Soccer Kick

**Step/Show dog the ball** – The next steps we want to do almost simultaneously. Take a step forward with our glove foot pointed towards our target first, then get in our ready position, and aim. One key thing to add into our ready position is that the ball is facing the same direction as our chest, or facing in the opposite direction of where we want to throw the ball. This is called showing the dog the ball. Either is acceptable. We do not want them to have the ball facing the back of our head.



Ball Facing Side



Ball Facing Back



Ball Facing Head  
INCORRECT

Our final steps are Throwing the ball and the Follow Through. From our ready and aim position, turn the hips so that the bellybutton is facing the target and move the throwing arm forward to release the ball. They should release the ball in line with their front knee. SEE BELOW. For our Follow Through and AFTER release of the ball, continue the arm path of the throwing hand down towards the opposite hip and bring the throwing side leg through SEE BELOW.



Release Point



Follow Through

## Throwing Progressions

### 1. Individual Throwing

- Line players on foul line and place ball on ground. On the coaches command they can pick the ball up (all at the same time) and get into throwing position. While holding in throwing position, parents check grip, position, and balance. On coach's command, players throw in to the field, then retrieve their ball. Progress to targets below:
  - Hoola hoops on the ground (use bean bags)
  - Set up a tee with a helmet on it.
- The helmet is used because it gives the player a small target at their level which helps with their accuracy.

### 2. Players Throwing to Coaches

- Get a bucket of ten balls and have the player stand with the bucket
- Start at 10 feet away and have the players throw all tens balls to the coach. The coach should reinforce the proper technique during this drill. The goal is get the player to throw a straight ball toward the coach.
- In order of importance. Technique, on target versus left or right, straight versus lobbed. Eyes on target is very important. Parents assist with child in the drill as opposed to being the target.
- Extend the distance based on skill level

### 3. Players Throwing To Players or parents

- This is a great drill to do as the players improve. This provides them with experience both catching and throwing the ball from other players.
- Have the players start at distances which they can be successful. 10 feet away is a good starting point

### 4. Fielding Grounders and Throwing

- Line up a small group of players facing the coach – pick a distance that is suitable for the group
- One at a time have the players receive a grounder and stand up and make a proper throw.
- Roll 3 balls to the player before rotating
- The player should work on the proper technique while throwing.
- Extend the distance as the players improve

Increase the pace of the drill as players improve.

These 3 points below are the most important aspects of throwing and should always be concentrated on.

1. Arm movement
2. Body Control
3. Throwing Position

## Variations and Progressions to Playing Catch

Variations of playing catch can be done with parents to start, and then progress to playing catch with other players as their abilities progress. The progressions can be done in any number of body positions to focus on different things such as arm movement, balance, body position, etc. Be creative and responsive to the players you are working with. If these body positions don't work, try something new or silly (like starting on their bellies) to keep them engaged.

### 1. Progressions – 7U

- Show Grip: pick up ball off ground and show grip to partner
- Toss and Grip: pick up ball off ground, small toss in air to self, catch and show grip to partner.
- Throw: pick up ball off ground and throw to partner.
- Toss and Throw: pick up ball off ground, small toss in air to self, catch and throw to partner.

Note: for the standing progressions, players can freeze in “throwing position” for the Show Grip and the Toss and Grip progressions. When they freeze coaches/parents can check proper body position (balance and aligned to target) and grip.

### 2. Different body positions to work through the progressions.

- Seated with legs crossed (watch for arm motion)
- On both knees
- On 1 knee (throwing knee down, glove knee up)
- Standing with ball in front
- Standing, but turned around with ball to back
- Running to stationary ball on the ground

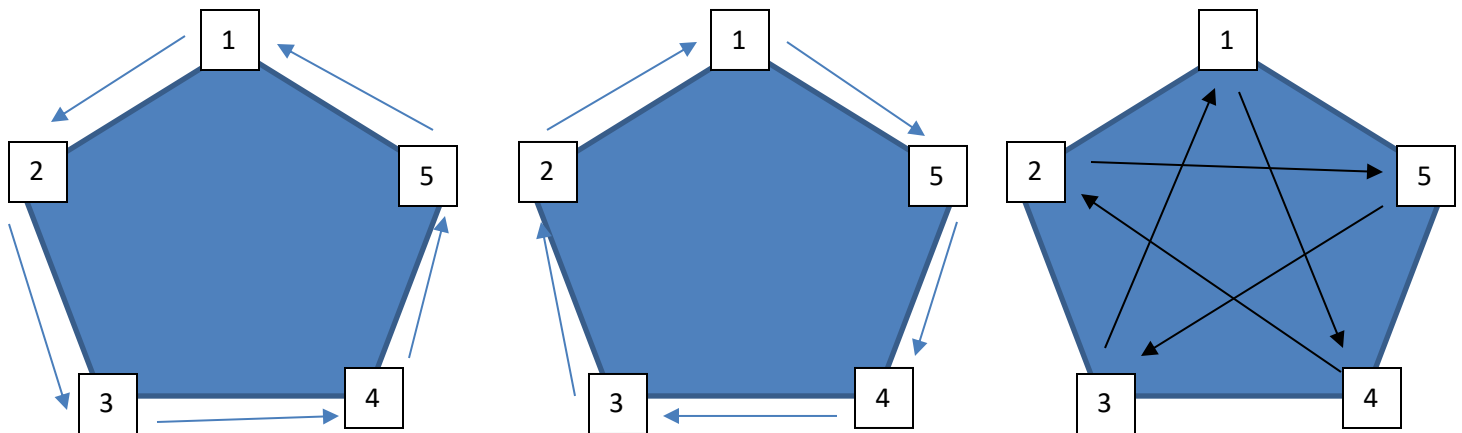
## Throwing Rock and Fire - 8U

We introduce some momentum at the 7U level with stepping into our throw. The next step of progression is to use our hips more to create more momentum and power with our throw. To do this we are going to use a drill called rock and fire. What the rock and fire does is generate power and momentum from the legs and core, and translate that into a strong throw. What we do for the rock and fire is have our feet in a wide base, with toes pointed perpendicular to the direction we are throwing. We want to sway the hips and move our center of mass from our back leg, to the front leg. Our balance should go from 50-50 (right in the middle) to 80-20 (on the back throwing leg) and then forward to 80-20 on the glove side leg. As you move from the back leg to the throwing leg, the hands separate and the core (hips) starts turning so the bellybutton is now facing the target. Also as the throw momentum has gone from the back leg to the front leg, you want the glove to stay right around glove side chest/armpit area. It is crucial that the glove doesn't drop below the hip, or ends up away from the body as this means the shoulders are opening up early and losing power.

Players should now be learning where to throw the ball when there are runners advancing around the bases. Because we are now learning to move our bodies in different ways, and need to make decisions

quickly and to react, we need to know how to change our feet so that we are facing the direction we want to throw the ball. This is where throwing to a target becomes important. Up to now, we have been focused on the mechanics of throwing which is needed, but have always done it when our target is not moving or right in front of us. What we need to do is learn how to move our bodies and feet to get into a good position to make an accurate throw.

A really good activity or drill is to have 5 players in a pentagon where 1 player has a ball. The pentagon should be large enough so that player has enough room to step into a throw. Player 1 has the ball at the top of the pentagon, player 1 steps and throws the ball to next person on their right (counter clockwise) and the ball continues to move around the star for 2 turns. The players catching the ball should be facing the thrower, and then have to adjust their feet when they make their throw. After 2 turns counter clockwise, make them go clockwise (this will be easier for right handed throwers) because their feet will be closer to the facing the same direction they are catching the ball and where they want to throw the ball. The last variation is going across the star. It would go from player 1-4-2-5-3-1 and then the other direction 1-3-5-2-4-1.



## Throwing – Shuffle Throw 9U

Progressing from throwing in 8U, we have learned that we have to create momentum with our lower half and core (hips). We have learned how to use our hips better with the Rock and Fire drill above, and that drill should continue to be used as well.

The next step in the throwing progression is moving our feet so that we can create momentum and also shorten the distance that we are throwing the ball. To do that, we are going to add in a shuffle before we throw. At this point in time, we have been working on shuffling with our physical literacy, now we have to try and put that movement together with our throwing motion.

Starting in our rock and fire position above, but rather than swaying our hips, we want to take shuffle steps to get closer to our target. We don't want to click our heels together, there should be about a foot width of space between our feet when we get to the end of the shuffle. As the feet are separating, our

throwing hand should be coming back into the ready position (think of stretching an elastic band) and our glove hand should start to get into the aim position INSERT PIC (glove elbow and shoulder in line with target) INSERT PIC. We want to throw the ball, follow through, and then continue our body momentum towards our target for a step or 2.



# Fielding – Teaching Progression

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## Ready position-Fielding position-Receive

**Ready Position** – this is our set-up prior to a ball arriving and getting ready to move. We need to be in an athletic position with our legs. Feet a little bit wider than shoulder width apart, knees slightly bent, and on the balls of your feet. Make sure that they are strong in this position, so they can move quickly.



Ready Position Front



Ready Position Side

**Fielding position** – this is the position when the ball is arriving. We want our legs wide and knees bent at a 90-degree angle, like you are sitting on a chair. Our back should be at a slight angle, with our glove out front and open, and our throwing hand close to the glove. The fingers of the glove should be pointed down, and the palm or logo of the glove facing out. Eyes are up and looking at the ball. The ball should be fielding in the middle of the body. **ADVANCED** – have your glove foot slightly out front of your throwing foot. Rather than the glove fingers pointed straight down, the back of the hand rests on the ground, and the palm is to the sky and fingers pointed at the ball.



Fielding Position Front



Fielding Position Side



Fielding Position Front



**Receive** – when the ball enters our glove. With our throwing hand, we want to cover up the ball with our bare hand to trap it in our glove (Alligator). From there, we bring our glove and hand up to the bellybutton. Then we start our throwing progression of Ready-Aim-Throw.

## Fielding – Shuffle 6U

**Shuffle** – moving towards the ball and getting ready to field can be a difficult task. The first part of the progression is to teach a shuffle step like you would do in a warm-up. Have the players glide laterally so the middle of their body is going to line up with the path of the ball. Try to make sure they don't click their heels when this happens

## Fielding – Step and Throw 7U

**Step and Throw** – After we have fielding the ball, we need to get into a good throwing position. Once we field the ball, bring it to our bellybutton, we get the grip, and then start our throwing process. Take a step with our throwing arm foot like we are kicking a soccer ball (instep facing our target).

Take a step forward with our glove foot pointed towards our target first, then get in our ready position, and aim. One key thing to add into our ready position is that the ball is facing the same direction as our chest, or facing in the opposite direction of where we want to throw the ball. This is called showing the dog the ball. Either are acceptable. We do not want them to have the ball facing the back of our head.

Our final steps are throwing the ball and the follow through. From our ready and aim position, turn the hips so that the bellybutton is facing the target and move the throwing arm forward to release the ball. They should release the ball in line with their front knee. For our Follow Through and AFTER release of the ball, continue the arm path of the throwing hand down towards the opposite hip and bring the throwing side leg through.

See next page for photos.



Fielding Position



Alligator



Hands to Bellybutton



Soccer Kick



Ready Position Throw



Release Point



Follow Through

## 8U Fielding

In 8U we continue to learn what outs are and how to make outs. As we have learned, outs can be made many different ways; we are going to focus on force-outs, and tags. As an infielder all of the outs are going to be at a base. So we need to learn how to properly stand on a base, while attempting to catch a ball.

### **Force Play – Stretch**

When there is a force play (we have learned this at 7U), there is a certain way that we want to stand on a base ready to catch a ball, and that is called a “Stretch”. For a stretch, we want to place our throwing foot on the inside part of the base where the throw is coming from (ex. If play is at 1B and the ball is coming from any infield position, the foot should be on the inside part of the base that is facing towards 2<sup>nd</sup> base). Our glove foot needs to keep our balance so we don’t fall over and are able to catch the ball. The glove foot needs to be pointed where the ball is going to end up when it reaches the base you are on. We don’t want to step too early, because if the ball isn’t perfectly on line (which is rarely ever is), it is hard to adjust and be able to move our glove side foot so we can catch the ball. As the ball is on the way, we want to stretch, or lunge at the ball while still keeping out foot on the base.

\*\*\*We need to make sure that the foot that is on the base is not in the middle of the base! If our foot is on the middle of the base, it becomes dangerous for both the fielder and also the runner because the runner does not have a lot of base to step on and if that is the case its possible that the fielders foot or ankle will get stepped on. \*\*\*

### **Decision Making – where to stand**

When there is a ball hit, we need to teach our infielders to go to their base and be ready for a ball if it is thrown to them. We don’t want to stand on the bag all the time, but if there is a ball that is coming to the base they are near, they need to be able to get to the base so we can do our “stretch” to catch the ball (for force plays), or catch and tag the runner (non force plays). There are certain times when different positions have to cover different bases and it depends where the ball is hit. Normally, 1B always goes to first base, and 3B always goes to third base, and catchers stay at home plate. For 2B and SS though, it depends where the ball is hit and who covers second base. If the ball is hit to the right side of the field (1<sup>st</sup> / 2<sup>nd</sup> base side) then the SS will cover second base. If the ball is hit to the left side of the field (SS/3<sup>rd</sup> base side) then the 2B will cover second base for any plays.

### **Decision making – where to throw the ball**

In continuing our progression with fielding, we need to also know what base to throw to, or make a decision on what base to throw to depending on where the runners are and if there is a force play or not.

Generally speaking when the ball is hit within the infield, there are 2 choices to make and it depends where the runners are. If there is no force play (runners on 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, or 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>) runners can stay on their bag; or if there is a force play (runners on 1<sup>st</sup>, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, or 1<sup>st</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>) runners have to advance

on a ground ball. With no force play the play should always go to first (runners don't have to advance on a ground ball). With a force play, you want to try and get the runner out that is closest to home plate if possible.

When the ball gets to the outfield, we want to get our outfielders to throw the ball into the infield as quickly as possible towards second base. The ball will not get to second base, but there should be a player close enough where they can pick up the ball and then have to make a decision where to throw it next, if at all.

## 9U Fielding – Fielding a ball outside of your feet

Up to this point in time, we have expected our athletes to get in front of every ball and field it in the middle of our body. At 9U, we are going to start to teach them how to field a ground ball that they can't get in front of because it is too far, but they can still reach with their glove. There are 2 different plays that we are going to talk about; the forehand (glove side), and the backhand (throwing side). **THESE SHOULD ONLY BE USED WHEN THE PLAYER CANNOT GET IN FRONT OF THE BALL IN A GAME SITUATION.**

Below we are going to explain the forehand, and the backhand. These movements are very similar with one major difference - what way the hand is positioned. For a Forehand, the palm is out and the thumb is up with the pinky parallel and near the ground (think about shaking a hand). For the Backhand, the palm is out, thumb is down, and the pinky on the top part of the hand.

**Forehand (Glove Side):** The legs are key in fielding any ground ball and like a routine ground ball we can get in front of, we want to get low and bend our knees and not at the hips. There are a couple of differences with our legs when fielding a forehand. We want our chest to the side, not forward, and our glove leg will be in front of the throwing leg. Our glove is going to be in out front of our body and in front of the glove foot (not against the foot) and open wide (palm to the ball with thumb UP). Our eyes and head should be behind our glove, not looking straight down at the glove.

Once the ball is in the glove and it's closed, we have to get balanced once again. To do that, we bring our throwing foot into our glove foot, square up to our throwing target with our shoulders, and then continue with our shuffle throw. All we are really doing is replacing our feet, throwing foot to where the glove foot was, and then moving into a shuffle throw.

**Backhand (Throwing Side):** The legs are a key in fielding any ground ball, and like a routine ground ball that we can get in front of, we want to get low and bend our knees, and not at the hips. There are a couple of differences with our legs when fielding a forehand. We want our chest to the side, not forward, and our glove leg will be in front of the throwing leg. Our glove is going to be in out front of our body and in front of the glove foot (not against the foot) and open wide (palm to the ball with thumb DOWN). Our eyes and head should be behind our glove, not looking straight down at the glove.

Once the ball is in the glove and it's closed, we have to get balanced once again. What we are going to do is bring our throwing foot into our glove foot, square up to our throwing target with our shoulders,

and then continue with our shuffle throw. All we are really doing is replacing our feet, throwing foot to where the glove foot was and then moving into a shuffle throw. This will be a bit easier to do on this side because we don't have to square up our shoulders are much, because they should already be closed towards the target.

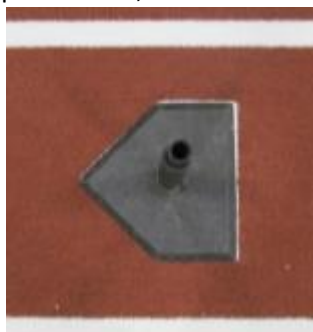


# Hitting – Teaching Progression

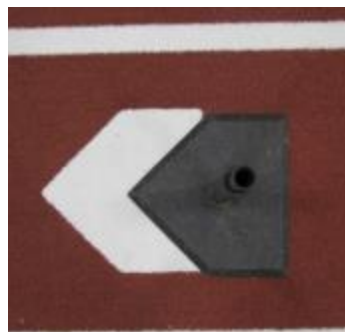
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## General Concepts

When we are hitting, we want to make sure that we can hit the ball to the middle of the field. To do this, we need to hit the ball out front of our body, so the bat can get perpendicular to the middle of the field. To do this, we set the tee up out front of our body in line with our front leg. For our swing, we want to have a level swing to give us the most chance at success. It gives us more room for slight error, so we can swing up a little bit, or down a little bit, and the ball will still travel into the field.



INCORRECT Tee  
Position



Correct Tee Position

## Set feet-set hands-bat position

**Set Feet** – We need to be in an athletic position with our legs. Feet a little bit wider than shoulder width apart, knees slightly bent. Make sure that they are strong in this position, so they can move quickly. Have the toes and bellybutton facing the tee/plate and have the tee lined up with the front hip or foot.



Set Feet Side View



Set Feet Back View



**Set Hands** – place the bat in the hands of the player. The bat should lay across the inside part of the knuckles, and not in the palm of the hand. The knuckles should line up somewhere between the middle knuckles (door knockers) and the lower knuckles.



Knuckles Line Up

**Bat position** – the hands need to be high and around the ear and 3-4 inches in front of the back shoulder. The elbows are in a relaxed position making a triangle with the hands. The bat should be pointed up to the sky at a 45-degree angle. Make sure that the end of the bat doesn't wrap around the head, this makes it very difficult for players to get the bat through the strike zone.



Hand Position



Triangle



Bat Angle

## Hitting – Squish the bug/Follow through 6U

**Squish the bug** – after we get into a good starting position (set feet, set hands, bat position), we want to use our hips to power the rest of our body to hit the ball. How we do that is, with your back foot, we want to turn it like we are squishing a bug, getting our heel off the ground and we are balancing on the ball of our back foot. We want our hips and bellybutton now facing the pitcher. After we squish the bug is when we start moving our hands towards the ball. As best we can, we want to separate these two movements so they are sequential and not done simultaneously.

Squish bug at contact



**Follow through** – the follow through occurs AFTER contact of the ball. We want the players to continue the path of the bat past the ball and until the bat reaches the players back. The follow through is done with both feet planted on the ground and without lifting them off of the ground. It is best at this age to keep both hands on the bat throughout the follow through for safety reasons.

Follow Through





## Hitting – Power Position 7U

**Power Position** – this is also called the load. For our power position, we want to get our hands in the most powerful position possible so we can hit the ball as hard as we can. From our set hands position, with our top hand (closest to barrel) pull the bat back more towards the catcher, our bottom hand (closest to knob) is used as a guide. There will be a slight shoulder turn with the front shoulder, which is ok. You still want the shoulders square to the plate, but a little turn is fine. If the players back is facing the pitcher, or if the top of the bat faces the pitcher they have turned too far.



Set Hands



Power Position



Shoulder Turn Front View



Shoulder Turn Side View.  
Bat Facing Pitcher

## Hitting – 8U

For 8U, our main focus is still on the hitting mechanics and trying to keep being consistent. We should also encourage our hitters to swing hard, and not just try to meet the ball, but actually hit the ball hard. Remember, at this age, speed is important for these athletes within their development, so we want to train them to do things quickly, and in this case, it is swing the bat hard and fast.

In 7U we started to introduce hitting a moving object and away from a tee in a game situation. For 8U, we go one step further and are now focusing more on hitting a moving ball that is an overhand pitch at a larger distance (from a machine). At 8U we are using a pitching machine, so timing becomes more important for hitters at this age. We need to teach them how to time their swing with a moving ball.

Just because we are now using a pitching machine, does not mean that we can stop using the tee and all of the other tools from the Rally Cap level. Hitting a baseball is one of the most difficult things in sports to do, so its important that we give the players as much success as we can, knowing that they will struggle when it comes to hitting a pitched ball. **We strongly encourage using tees.**

Continue to use the tee, underhand front and side toss, and some coach pitch (you probably wont have access to the machine at your practices) to prepare your players for the games and hitting off of the machine.

When throwing either overhand or underhand, it is important to have each of your players know when their front foot needs to be down on the ground and ready to swing. Every player will be different, but we would suggest that when the pitchers front foot hits the ground, so does the batters front foot. That means we aren't going to be late with the start of our swing and it gives us a better chance of hitting the ball.

When throwing overhand, as a coach we should make sure that we are down on 1 knee so the trajectory of the ball matches that of what the pitching machine will be like. If we throw from a standing position, hitting becomes more difficult because of the downward trajectory of the ball.

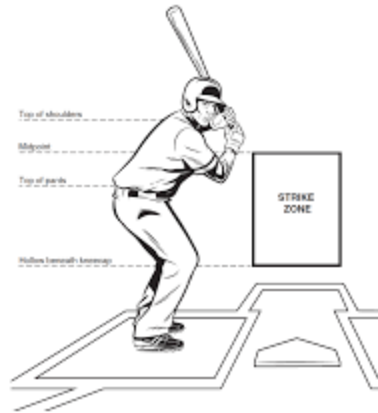
## Hitting – 9U

**Strike Zone:** In 9U, we are going to continue to work on hitting mechanics and the swing as we have done all the way up, remembering to swing hard! Now we need to start preparing them for the next progression of hitting, which is the decision-making process of what balls to swing at and what balls to not swing at. Up to this point in time, we have always put the ball right in the middle of the strike zone (or close to it) from a pitching machine, coach pitch, soft toss, or tee. We have focused on how the body mechanics work and what the swing should looks like.

Now we need to start teaching them about the strike zone, and what that is. The strike zone is a reference to where the ball crosses the plate. For a ball to be a strike it needs to do the following:

- Cross the plate
- When it crosses the plate, be between the knees, and the arm pits

Here is a good representation of the strike zone.



As a coach, building in decision making when we are swinging will become key once players face real pitchers on the mound so we need to prepare them for this during the season. **That means only in a practice setting at this age.**

It's a good idea to start changing the height of the tee when we recommend tees be used. Change the tee height from the middle of the strike zone, top of the strike zone, and bottom of the strike zone to find out where they hit the ball the best. Then try to get them to swing at those pitches when you hit a moving ball. They will learn how to adjust their hands, and where the bat needs to be to hit pitches at different heights. Leave the ball in the middle of the plate for now, only changing the height of the tee.

**Protection from being hit:** We need to start teaching them how to protect themselves if the pitch is not in the strike zone and possibly hit them. This is very common in 11u, so it's key for players to learn how to protect themselves earlier on. The natural thing to do when a ball is coming at them, is face the ball and put their hands up to try and block it from hitting them. This is the complete opposite of what they should do. We want to teach them how to protect their face. We teach them how to turn their back and roll away from the ball that is coming towards them.

Here are the steps from turning away from the ball:

- Tuck chin to chest
- Elbows come in against the body
- Turn away from ball (back is facing the pitcher)
- Bring bat down so the ball doesn't hit the bat in the air

Now, it still might hurt, but by turning away from the ball, we protect the face where serious injuries may occur.

To teach how to do this, we suggest using soft jugs balls, wiffle balls, or anywhere balls. Make sure they have their helmets on, at a short distance throw the ball at their back so they get in the habit of turning away from the ball to protect their face. Once they get comfortable with the movement, start to mix in pitches in the strike zone, and ones that are going to hit their body.

# Running – Teaching Progression

There are some keys to running to become efficient and as fast as possible. We always want to run on the balls of our feet. The faster we can get our feet off of the ground, the quicker we become. If we run flat footed, it takes too long to land and get our foot off the ground. We always want to run with an opposite arm-opposite leg approach. When our right foot is in the air, our left arm is up. When our left foot is in the air, our right arm is up. We want to get our knees up after foot strike.



Opposite arm/leg

## Run-Stop-Balance

Run – to be efficient, we want to run in a straight line from one base to another. Make sure they don't run in a curved pattern. Also we want to make sure that we run with our eyes up, looking at where we are going, and not to the ground.

Stop – we have to teach them how to stop at each base, because if they don't, they can be tagged out. To stop at a base, we want to run as fast as possible, and as we get close to the base, take some stutter steps, to slow us down in a **controlled** manner.

Balance – after we stop at the base, we want to make sure that we are balanced and get ready to run again. Our balanced position should be our athletic position, legs a bit wider than shoulder width apart with the knees slightly bent.

## Baserunning – 7U

1<sup>st</sup> Base Infield Ground Ball– Instead of stopping at 1<sup>st</sup> base, we are now going to teach to run through 1<sup>st</sup> base because it is faster than trying to stop on the base. We do this on a ground ball to the infield that we want to try and beat the throw to 1<sup>st</sup>. We want to focus on hitting the front part of the base, and after we have touched the base, we take stutter steps to slow ourselves down. As we are slowing down, check over our right shoulder to see if the ball has been thrown away.

1<sup>st</sup> Base Ball in the Outfield – When there isn't going to be a play at first base, we teach our players to try to get to 2<sup>nd</sup> base as quickly as possible. Instead of running straight to first, and curving out towards right field, we ask the players to start a “banana curve” about 15 feet before 1<sup>st</sup> base. Once we get to 1<sup>st</sup> base, we want to hit the inside corner (towards pitching mound) of the base, to give us a direct line to 2<sup>nd</sup> base. Our first base coach should be telling the runner whether to stop and come back to 1<sup>st</sup> base, or continue on to 2<sup>nd</sup> base.



Rounding 1<sup>st</sup> Base

## Baserunning – 8U

As a baserunner in 8U, having outs within the games brings in other factors the runners need to be aware of. Baserunners need to learn how to leave a base, the **decision-making** process depending on where the other runners on base are (force play or non force play), and what type of hit it is (ground ball or fly ball).

### Decision making – What to do on ground balls

As a baserunner, they need to know if they are forced to the next base or not. There are 3 situations where you HAVE to run to the next base. If the ball hits the ground in fair territory and there are runners on 1<sup>st</sup>, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, or 1<sup>st</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>. If any of these situations happen, the runner must try to advance to the next base.

There are also 3 situations when a runner DOES NOT HAVE to run to the next base because they are not forced when there are runners on 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, or 3<sup>rd</sup>.

There is one other situation that could happen in baseball, runners on 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>. The runner on 1<sup>st</sup> is forced to advance on a ball that hits the ground, but the runner on 3<sup>rd</sup> is not forced. So the runner on third has to make a decision on whether to run or not.

### Decision making – What to do on fly balls

This will be covered more in 9U, but if the ball is caught, we have to tell our players to go back to the base they were just at. Because there aren't many balls that are caught in the air at this level, we will wait 1 more year to teach them the proper way to tag up and what to do when a ball is hit in the air and caught.

## Baserunning 9U

**Advancing Bases:** We have another progression in the rules of baseball for 9U. In the past, there has only been one play and we have stopped the runners if the ball is thrown away. But in 9U, if the ball stays in fair territory, the runners can advance to the next base. They can still be put out by the defense if they are tagged though.

Because there are more advancing bases at this age, we need to teach the players to keep an eye on the ball more and always know where the ball is.

**Tag Up on Fly Balls:** At this age, there will be more balls that are going to be caught in the air. As base runners, they need to know if a ball is caught in the air, they must tag up. What this means is when the ball is caught, they need to touch the base they were at when the ball was pitched, before they can advance to the next base. On a tag up, they don't have to go the next base after they have tagged up, but if they think they can get to the next base safely, they can advance as far as they think they can get.

# Pitching – 9U

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In 9U we introduce pitching for players. There are some specific rules for pitching in the Rules section of this document so make sure that you read the rules and follow them for the protection of the players.

This age is still all about development and not about winning (we aren't keeping score anyway!).

\*\*\* We have to make sure we are teaching pitching in progressions. Start in a practice setting and follow the progression below:

- Pitcher and catcher only (use a coach for a catcher if you need to but try to have a coach helping the pitcher with mechanics as well)
- Pitcher and catcher with a coach at bat
  - Suggest bringing a glove so you can catch the ball when it is going to hit you
- Pitcher and catcher with a batter NOT SWINGING but standing in batters box
  - Good for both the pitcher and for timing practice. Make sure the batter does not swing but is practicing getting their front foot down
  - Helps pitcher practice with someone in the batters box
- Pitcher and catcher with a batter swinging (probably best on-field)
  - This is not the best use of time, so might want to set up 2 different stations with 2 sets of pitchers, catchers, and hitters
  - PITCH IN A GAME
    - Only after you have given them an opportunity to see what it is like with a batter in the batters box. They will be terrified if the first time they have to pitch, they have to throw to a batter

To teach pitching, it is very simple. The pitching motion is an extension of our regular throwing motion. There are a few differences, but they are very similar. One of the biggest things for a pitcher is to keep their eyes on the target they are throwing to. Because this is a new movement they will want to look at the feet, but we have to keep their eyes on the catcher and target we are throwing to.

**Set Position:** To start, we want to have the pitchers throw from the set position because this is the simplest way to start the pitching motion. Throwing side foot should be just in front of the pitching rubber and feet should be about shoulder width apart with a slight knee bend, with our hands together (ball in throwing hand covered by glove) somewhere between our bellybutton and arm pits and close to our body.

**Leg Lift:** Lift glove knee directly up towards the sky to about hip height. Glove foot should be away from the back knee at a 90° angle. Hands are still together.

**Stride:** Knee comes straight down toward the ground. As the knee goes down, the hands break and we start to go into our Ready and Aim position from throwing. Once the glove foot is almost touching the

ground (still about shoulder width), we want to push towards home plate with our throwing side leg to create momentum.

**Rotation:** Once our glove foot lands, we should be in our Rock and Fire position (throwing 8U) with our toe pointing at the catcher, Ready position (throwing hand up), Aim (glove elbow/shoulder pointed towards catcher). We want our hips to open and then our shoulders to follow.

**Release:** Release the ball out in front of our body (around the front knee)

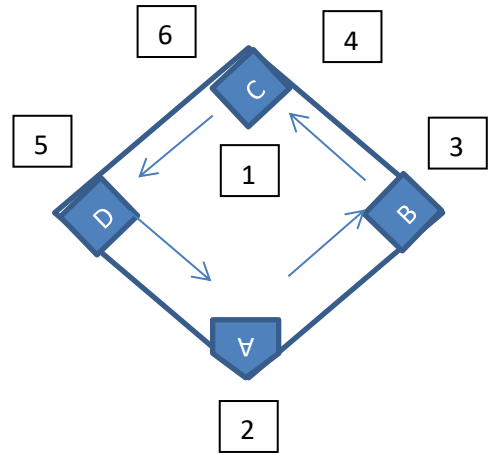
**Follow-through:** Make sure that we follow-through after release. Throwing hand should end up near the glove side hip, and the throwing side leg should also come through so that we end up in a position to field a ball (Ready position for fielding). A lot of players will want to bring their throwing side leg through too quickly and get into a fielding position, we want them to throw the ball first, and think about the fielding position AFTER ball release.

# General Game Knowledge

## Positions

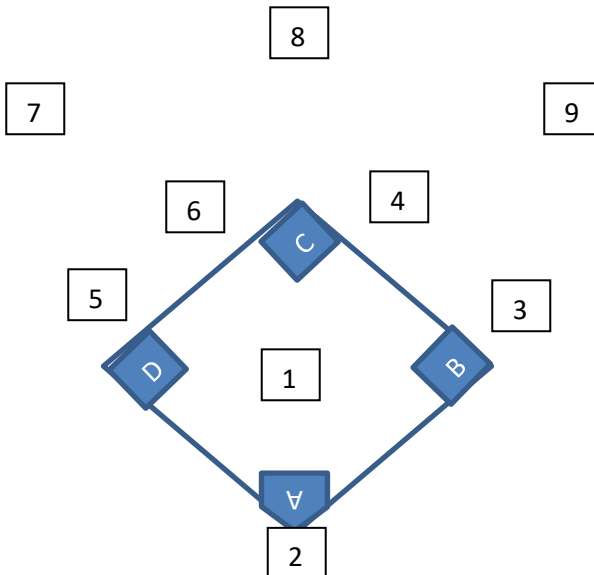
- 1) Pitcher (P) – should be behind and to the side for safety
- 2) Catcher (C)
- 3) First Base (1B)
- 4) Second Base (2B)
- 5) Third base (3B)
- 6) Short Stop (SS)

- A) Home Plate
- B) First Base
- C) Second Base
- D) Third Base



## Positions – OF

- 7) Left Field
- 8) Center Field
- 9) Right Field





# Equipment Guidelines

## Gloves

Now that players are becoming more comfortable with catching, it is important that we start looking at the equipment they use and how it fits on their hand. For glove size, you want the hand to fit nice and firm in the glove. They should be able to hold the glove up in any position and it should not be difficult. If it is difficult to hold in any position, the glove is too big, or too heavy for them to control, making it very difficult for them to catch a ball consistently. The other part of gloves is how the players can close the glove when the ball goes in. This becomes more important as they get older because now we are throwing balls to bases more often, and hopefully being able to start catching some balls in the air. Breaking in a glove might be the most important thing you can do for your child at this age. You want the glove to be soft enough that they can close the glove with minimal effort. If they aren't strong enough to close the glove, you should look at finding out how to soften that glove, or getting a new one that is softer all together. For leather gloves, if you have them, using shaving cream to moisten the leather and soften it up is useful to be able to close the glove more efficiently.

## Bats

At any level, the bat is such an important piece of equipment for the game. The bat should never be too heavy and should always be light enough for them to handle. If the bat is too heavy, this will change their mechanics and they will also lose control of their body. A couple of ways to identify if a bat is too heavy are:

- 1) When they are swinging, they lose balance and spin around in a circle
- 2) The bat carries their body forward on the follow through.
- 3) If they can't hold the bat straight out with 1 arm parallel to the ground.
- 4) If the barrel (big part of the bat) is constantly low when they are swinging, or if they are hitting the tee or below the ball more often than not.
- 5) If you see they can barely keep the bat off their shoulder.

As a guideline, we want to try and have a bat that will be lighter rather than heavier because this will give the players more success because they won't lose control of their body and will be able to more consistently do what they are asked with their body and swing.

## Base Running

Run in a counter clockwise direction (A-B-C-D-A), touching each base in order after the ball is hit. Players need to stay on the base after the first touch or they can be tagged with the ball for an out. At 1<sup>st</sup> base, players are allowed to touch it, run through it, and then return to the base without being tagged out. If they make a motion towards moving to the next base, they are liable to be put out on a tag. Players are also allowed to touch home plate and continue on to the dugout. They should not stand on home plate after touching it because there could be more players coming to touch home plate.

## Throw to a base for an out – 6U

ALTHOUGH THERE ARE NO OUTS IN 6U, WE WANT TO TEACH THEM TO THROW TO BASES AND TEACH THEM WHAT A FORCE OUT WILL BE. A force play is when the ball is hit in fair territory, it touches the ground, and a runner(s) is forced to run to the next base. In order for a runner to be forced, all of the bases previous to the one they are on need to be occupied at the time of the pitch/play. \*\*\*There is always a force play at 1<sup>st</sup> base on a ground ball AND WE SHOULD DIRECT OUR FIELDERS TO THROW THE BALL TO 1<sup>ST</sup> ON GROUND BALLS TO THE INFIELD\*\*\*

Example 1, if there is a runner at 1<sup>st</sup> base and 2<sup>nd</sup> base, both runners are forced to run to the next base once the ball has touched the ground. The fielders now have an opportunity to throw the ball to 1<sup>st</sup> base, 2<sup>nd</sup> base, or 3<sup>rd</sup> base, and if the ball is caught while the defending player is touching the base and BEFORE the runner touches that base, they are out.

Example 2. If there is a runner ONLY at second base, the runner doesn't have to run, but is able to should they decide to do so. Once the ball is put in play, and the runner takes off for third, the ball gets thrown to third base and is caught before the runner touches the base. The runner IS NOT out because this is not a force play. In this example, the runner would need to be tagged with the ball to be an out. That is covered more at the 7U level.

## 7U – How to make an Out

**Force out.** There are many ways to make an out in Baseball. As a 6U, we learned what a “force out” is and how we can get a force out.

**Catch.** You can also “catch” a hit ball in the air before it touches the ground.

**Tag.** A “tag” play is when any runner is touched with the ball that is in possession of a defending player. A tag play can happen when runners are forced and they aren't touching a base, but it can also happen when there is no force play, and the runner is tagged with the ball before or after touching a base.

**Strikeout.** When a hitter has 3 strikes during 1 at bat. A strike is a pitch that is in the hitting zone and called by the umpire, or a ball that is hit foul. A hitter cannot strikeout on a foul ball!

**Bat throw.** Safety is always a concern in any sport, especially in baseball. We recommend giving a player 1 warning for throwing their bat after they hit the ball, and after that it is an automatic out. All runners would return the base they were at previous to the ball being hit. Teach the players to drop the bat beside them after they hit the ball and before they start running to first base.

There are other ways to make outs as well, but those should be covered once they get older and more involved in baseball. These are the main ways to get out, and should be the focus of learning at this age group. Some other ways to get out are interference, and appeals for those that would like to learn more about the rules of baseball.

## 8U - On Field Communication

With more plays happening at this level now, we need to teach our players how to communicate so everyone knows who is going to get the ball, and who needs to go cover a base. The easiest way to teach communication on the field is to have players yell “ball”, or “I got it” so that everyone on the team knows who is going to get the ball. Typically, the player who calls “ball” or “I got it” first is the one that will take the ball, and the other player will cover a base or the player catching the ball. Communication is very important because we want to be able to cover as much field as possible, and very rarely is the ball hit directly at a player. Normally there are 2 players converging on a ball which can become dangerous if there is no communication.

## 9U – Tag Ups and Appeals

To keep this as simple as possible, from a defensive standpoint, if a ball is caught in the air after being hit and there are runners on base, you can try to get a runner out at the base they started at when the ball was pitched.

As an example, if there is a runner on 1<sup>st</sup>, and the ball is hit in the air and is caught, if the runner has left 1<sup>st</sup> base, before the ball is caught, he needs to tag up (touch first) before he can go to 2<sup>nd</sup> base. For the defense, they can get this runner out 2 ways, by tagging the runner before he has gone back to touch 1<sup>st</sup> base, OR throw the ball directly to first base where this becomes like a force out (catch the ball with a foot on the base).

This will be quite chaotic at the beginning when they are learning, so this should be covered in practices when you are practicing baserunning, and also defense.

# What is next for coaching development?

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The NCCP Program (National Coaches Certification Program) is a program put on by Baseball Canada and the PSO (Provincial Sport Organization) Baseball BC, that aides in the development of coaches across the country. The NCCP Courses are beneficial to coaches because it builds a good foundation of knowledge through facilitation with other coaches and the Learning Facilitator. The NCCP program has courses for both Grassroots coaches, and high performance coaches, depending where you are in your coaching development.

At the Grassroots level, there are clinics for the new coach that wants to learn about the basics of baseball through facilitation and experiences of other coaches. These first clinics are *Coach Initiation in Sport* and, *Coach Initiation in Baseball*. These first 2 clinics are part of the **Initiation Coach pathway**.

Next is **the Regional Coach pathway**. The clinics in this pathway are *Teaching and Learning*, *Planning*, and *Absolutes*. *Teaching and Learning* focuses on different learning styles of players and how to best teach skills so that all of the different learning styles are covered. *Planning* shows how to plan out a baseball season, a practice, and how to best manage the time through efficiency so skill development time is maximized. *Absolutes* is the meat and potatoes of skill development. In this clinic, the focus is on the major skills of baseball, hitting, throwing, catching, fielding, and running and will include how to teach each skill along with drills that will supplement the learning.

The final 2 clinics are part of the **Provincial Coach pathway**, and they are *Pitching and Catching*, and *Strategies*. *Pitching and Catching*, focuses just on those topics but going into depth with mechanics, and pitch grips. *Catching* focuses on the mechanical aspect of catching such as set-up, blocking, and throwing runners out. There is also some mental training and pitch selection topics discussed. *Strategies* is based on game knowledge and positioning. Discussions will be had on defensive positioning, hitting, base running, and how to build a line-up.

Baseball BC also hosts position specific clinics that go more in depth and are solely focused on that topic, called **Instruction Clinics**. Those clinics are *Hitting*, *Infielding*, *Outfielding*, *Base running*, and *Pitching and Catching*.

# Game Rules and Format

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## 5U Game Format Structure Rules

1. Recommendation at this age is to use Wiffle or Lite Flight balls for safety purposes
2. Recommendation at this age is to use Plastic bats because they are lighter and have larger barrels for contact
3. Three Team Rotation
  - Hitting will rotate to Fielding when inning is complete
  - Fielding will rotate to Skill Development when inning is complete
  - Skill Development Drill will rotate to Hitting when inning is complete
4. Parents stationed at each base and home plate. Base Parents to assist baserunner where and when to run. Home plate parent to assist batters reminding them to reset, adjusting tee height when needed and placing balls on tee.
5. All Players shall be given equal opportunity to play different positions. No player shall play the same position twice in a game.
6. Each inning shall have everyone go through the batting order once.
7. Hit off Tee **ONLY**
  - Each batter will be allowed a **max of 6 swings** to put the ball in play. If the ball does not go into play, batter shall advance to first base.

\*\*\*To limit inactivity for all players, the **6-swing** limit should be strictly enforced.

\*\*\***Tip** – if batter is not successful making contact with the ball off the tee, try adjusting the Tee height and give batter a different bat.
8. Baserunners may advance only one base at a time.
9. Ball in play – Fielders should be directed to throw to nearest base where a runner is advancing.
10. There are no outs

## 6U Game Format Structure Rules

1. For the first two games of the year, the recommendation at this age is to use Wiffle or Lite Flight balls. After you may switch to using Incrediballs (T-balls). Be mindful some players may prefer to use the wiffle or lite flight.
2. For the first two games the recommendation at this age is to use Plastic bats. After you may switch to using the metal Tee-Ball bats. Be mindful some players may prefer to use the plastic bats. \*\* Only use wiffles or lite flights with plastic bats.
3. Three Team Rotation
  - Hitting will rotate to Fielding when inning is complete
  - Fielding will rotate to Skill Development when inning is complete
  - Skill Development Drill will rotate to Hitting when inning is complete
4. Parents stationed at each base and home plate. Base Parents to assist baserunner where and when to run and direct fielder where to throw the ball that's in play. Home plate parent to assist batters reminding them to reset, adjusting tee height when needed and placing balls on tee.
5. All Players shall be given equal opportunity to play different positions. No player shall play the same position twice in a game.
6. Each inning shall have everyone go through the batting order once.
7. Hit off Tee **ONLY** for first 2 at bats. Coach pitch/toss last at bat.
  - Each batter will be allowed a **max of 6 swings OR 6 coach pitches** to put the ball in play. If the ball does not go into play, batter shall advance to first base.

\*\*\*To limit inactivity for all players, the 6-swing/pitch limit should be strictly enforced.

\*\*\***Tip** – if batter is not successful making contact with the ball off the tee, try adjusting the Tee height and give batter a different bat.
8. Baserunners may advance only one base at a time.
9. Ball in play – Fielders should be directed to throw to nearest base where a runner is advancing.
10. There are no outs.

## 7U Game Format Structure Rules

1. For the first two games of the year, the recommendation at this age is to use Wiffle or Lite Flight balls. After you may switch to using Incrediballs (T-balls). Be mindful some players may prefer to use the wiffle or lite flight.
2. For the first two games the recommendation at this age is to use Plastic bats. After you may switch to using the metal Tee-Ball bats. Be mindful some players may prefer to use the plastic bats. \*\* Only use wiffles or lite flights with plastic bats.
3. Three Team Rotation
  - Hitting will rotate to Fielding when inning is complete
  - Fielding will rotate to Skill Development when inning is complete
  - Skill Development Drill will rotate to Hitting when inning is complete
4. Parents stationed at each base and home plate. Base Parents to assist baserunner where and when to run and direct fielder where to throw the ball that's in play. Home plate parent to assist batters reminding them to reset, adjusting tee height when needed and placing balls on tee.
5. All Players shall be given equal opportunity to play different positions. No player shall play the same position twice in a game.
6. Each inning shall have everyone go through the batting order once.
7. Hit off Tee **ONLY** for first at bat. Coach pitch/toss or use of tee for remaining at bats.
  - Each batter will be allowed a **max of 6 swings OR 6 coach pitches** to put the ball in play. If the ball does not go into play, batter shall advance to first base.

\*\*\*To limit inactivity for all players, the 6-swing/pitch limit should be strictly enforced.

\*\*\***Tip** – if batter is not successful making contact with the ball off the tee, try adjusting the Tee height and give batter a different bat.
8. Baserunners may advance only one base at a time.
9. Ball in play – Fielders should be directed to throw to nearest base where a runner is advancing.
10. There are no outs.

We recommend half way through the season implementing an 'Intro to Real Baseball' Game rules. If you can have teams play on Tadpole size fields, this will enhance the game for players and parents. These 'suggested' 7U Game rules provide a few introductions to the game.

## 7U Intro to Baseball Game Rules

1. Only the Incrediballs (white baseballs/T-balls) are to be used.
2. The games shall be 1hr.
3. All players shall be given an equal opportunity to play every position. No player may play the same position. All players must play in both the infield and outfield each game.
4. Coaches will pitch or a tee will be used.
5. Each batter will receive a **maximum of 6 pitches** or 3 strikes (whatever comes first) from the coach. After 6 pitches or 3 strikes, the batter shall be given 2 soft toss pitches from the coach. If they do not put the soft tosses in play, the batter shall be called out, no exceptions. If using a Tee – **maximum of 6 swings** or 3 strikes (whatever comes first)
6. Each inning shall have everyone go through batting order once no matter how many outs.
7. All batters must have helmet with chinstrap.
8. Any batter who throws a bat shall be given 1 warning. Should that batter do it again, they shall be immediately called out.
9. Ball hit: runners may continue to advance until any fielder controls it.
10. Runners may still be called out if they are tagged, or on a force play at any base.
11. Parents shall be permitted on the field of play to encourage proper playing position.
12. Outs will be used. Any out such as a catch (flyball), force out, tag, or strike out will be used and that player will not continue running the bases after making an out. This will be difficult for the players at first, but they will learn what an out is, and need to learn this to play at the next level.



## 8U Game Rules

### Flexiball

1. A synthetic covered soft baseball shall be used for all games (Not the “cloth” raised stitched Incrediball and not a standard hardball)

### No Scorekeeper

2. No scorekeeper is required. Teams do not keep score.

### Minimum Players

3. A team can have as few as 6 players and still play the scheduled game
4. If a team is short players, then the following defensive positions are not occupied, in the following order of priority
  - a. No catcher
  - b. No catcher and pitcher
  - c. No catcher and pitcher and 1 less outfielder
5. If 1 team has less than 6 players, the opposing team is encouraged to lend players for defensive positions, but still have the players bat for their own respective teams.

### Field Set Up / Take Down

6. The Home team shall set up the bases and the Away team shall set up the pitching machine.
7. Bases shall be placed in the sunk holes closest to home plate.
8. All equipment MUST be put away at the conclusion of the game. If another team is waiting to take the field, you may leave the equipment out ONLY if you speak to another coach who accepts responsibility for the equipment.

### Innings / Time Limit

9. The games shall be 5 innings, however no new inning may start after 90 minutes.
10. Each half inning shall end after 3 outs or 4 runs scored.

### Rainouts

11. Rainouts of games will be called at the park, unless both coaches agree otherwise.

## ***Fair Play: Substitutions and Player Positions***

### Rotating Positions Played During the Game

12. All players shall be given an equal opportunity to play every position.
13. No player may play the same position more than 2 innings in 1 game.
14. All players must play in both the infield and outfield each game.

### Sitting out

15. Coaches may not sit a player for two consecutive innings. No player may sit out twice before every player has sat once

## *Equal Opportunity*

16. Every effort should be made to give equal playing time over the course of the season and to give players the opportunity to try different positions.
17. Every effort should be made to rotate the batting order throughout the season so that everyone gets a chance to bat near the top of the order and the bottom of the order.

## *The Batter*

### *Batting Lineup*

18. All players listed on the roster take their turns at bat.

### *Safety*

19. A player who throws a bat will receive 1 warning before being called out.
20. All helmets must have chinstraps

### *Pitching Machine Used*

21. A pitching machine shall be used in all games. No players are permitted to pitch or operate the pitching machine. A coach loads the machine for his own batters. A bucket of baseballs shall be placed at the pitching machine to speed up the pace of the game.

### *Max Pitches per Batter*

22. Each batter will receive a maximum of 6 pitches or 3 strikes (whatever comes first) from the pitching machine. After 6 pitches or 3 strikes, the batter shall be given 2 soft toss pitches from the coach. If they do not put the soft tosses in play, the batter shall be called out, no exceptions.

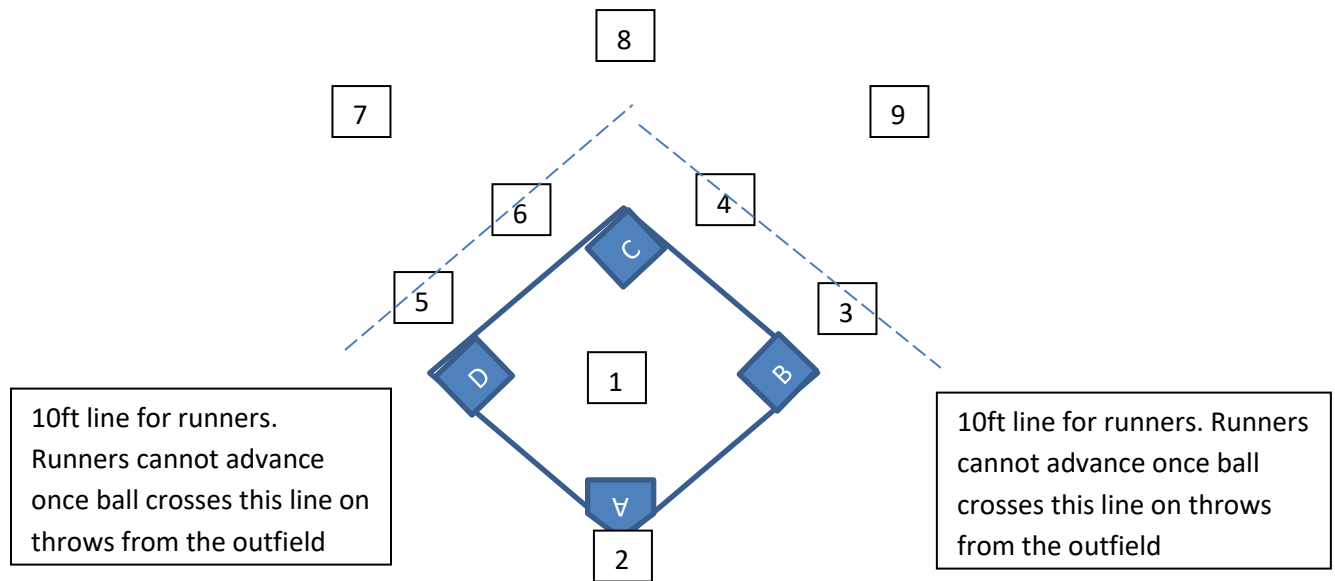
## *The Runner*

### *Ball Hit to Infield*

23. When the ball is hit in the infield, the runners may advance until infield play is complete. However, players do not advance on a passed ball.
  - a. For example, if there is a runner on first, ball hit to shortstop who throws to 2nd base for the force play, if the 2nd baseman misses the ball and it travels into the outfield, the runners cannot advance.

### *Ball Hit to the Outfield*

24. When the ball is hit to the outfield, the runners may continue to advance until after the ball is thrown from the outfield crosses an imaginary line 10 feet behind the baseline. Once the ball crosses that line, runners must stop at the next base they were advancing to. For example, if a runner is in between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> base when the ball crosses the line after the throw from the outfield, the runner cannot advance past 3<sup>rd</sup> base. The ball is still in play, and runners can still be put out. If the runner continues to run past the base, just bring them back to the base they should be on without any penalty.



### Hit at Pitching Machine – Dead Ball

25. Any ball hit within 4 feet of the pitching machine shall be declared a dead ball by the coach. Play will immediately stop and all runners will advance 1 base. If a play that requires a fielder to come within 4 feet of the pitching machine, the coach shall immediately stop play, call a dead ball, and each runner will advance 1 base.

### Advance on Ball in Play Only

26. Runners may not advance on a wild pitch or passed ball.  
27. No stealing is permitted.

## Other Rules

### Catchers

28. Each team shall field a catcher, in full catcher gear. The coach shall ensure the catcher is a safe distance away from the batter. If the catcher catches a pitched ball, he/she shall throw it back to the pitcher. Otherwise, the coach shall hold on to the baseballs until the pitcher runs out. The purpose of this rule is to speed up the pace of the game.  
29. No defensive coaches shall be permitted on the field, except 1 coach must be at the backstop to assist their catcher.

### Safety

30. No parents shall be permitted on the field of play, unless invited by the coach.  
31. No players shall leave the dugout unless permitted by the coach or parent helper.  
32. All injuries and incidents shall be reported to the Division Coordinator within 24 hours of the occurrence.

# 9U Game Rules

## Regular Baseball

1. A regulation baseball shall be used.

## Scorekeepers

2. While wins and losses are not tallied in Tadpole, each team shall designate their own scorekeeper for the purposes of maintaining the proper batting order and ending an inning after 4 runs score.

## Minimum Players

3. A team can have as few as 6 players and still play the scheduled game
4. If a team is short players, then the following defensive positions are not occupied, in the following order of priority
  - a. No catcher
  - b. No catcher and pitcher
  - c. No catcher and pitcher and 1 less outfielder
5. If 1 team has less than 6 players, the opposing team is encouraged to lend players for defensive positions, but still have the players bat for their own respective teams.

## Field Set Up and Take Down

6. The Home team shall set up the bases and the Away team shall set up the pitching machine.
7. Bases shall be placed in the sunk holes furthest from home plate.
8. All equipment MUST be put away at the conclusion of the game. If another team is waiting to take the field, you may leave the equipment out ONLY if you speak to another coach who accepts responsibility for the equipment.

## Innings / Time Limit

9. The games shall be 5 innings, however no new inning may start after 90 minutes.
10. Each half inning shall end after 3 outs or 4 runs scored.

## Rainouts

11. Rainouts of games will be called at the park, unless both coaches agree otherwise.

## *Fair Play: Substitutions and Player Positions*

### Rotating Positions Played During the Game

12. All players shall be given an equal opportunity to play every position.
13. No player may play the same position more than 2 innings in 1 game.
14. All players must play in both the infield and outfield each game.

## Sitting out

15. Coaches may not sit a player for two consecutive innings. No player may sit out twice before every player has sat once.

## *Equal Opportunity*

16. Every effort should be made to give equal playing time over the course of the season and to give players the opportunity to try different positions.
17. Every effort should be made to rotate the batting order throughout the season so that everyone gets a chance to bat near the top of the order and the bottom of the order.

## *The Batter*

### *Batting Lineup*

18. All players listed on the roster take their turns at bat.

### *Safety*

19. A player who throws a bat will receive 1 warning before being called out.
20. All helmets must have chinstraps

### *Pitching Machine Used*

21. A pitching machine shall be used in all games. No players are permitted to pitch or operate the pitching machine. A coach loads the machine for his own batters. A bucket of baseballs shall be placed at the pitching machine to speed up the pace of the game.

### *Max Pitches per Batter*

22. Each batter will receive a maximum of 6 pitches or 3 strikes (whatever comes first) from the pitching machine. After 6 pitches or 3 strikes, the batter shall be given 2 soft toss pitches from the coach. If they do not put the soft tosses in play, the batter shall be called out, no exceptions.

## *The Runner*

### *Ball Hit to Infield*

23. When a ball is hit in the infield, the runners may advance until infield play is complete.
24. Players may advance on any overthrow that remains in fair territory.
25. Players cannot advance on a passed ball that goes into foul territory.

For example, if there is a runner on first, ball hit to shortstop who throws to 2nd base for the force play, if the 2nd baseman misses the ball and it travels into the outfield, the runners may advance until the ball is under control by any infielder. However, on an overthrow to 1st base that goes into foul territory, runners may not advance.

### *Ball Hit to the Outfield*

26. When the ball hit to the outfield, the runners may continue to advance until the ball is under control by any infielder.

### *Hit at Pitching Machine – Dead Ball*

27. Any ball hit within 4 feet of the pitching machine shall be declared a dead ball by the coach. Play will immediately stop and all runners will advance 1 base. If a play that requires a

fielder to come within 4 feet of the pitching machine, the coach shall immediately stop play, call a dead ball, and each runner will advance 1 base.

### *Advance on Ball in Play Only*

- 28. Runners may not advance on a wild pitch or passed ball.
- 29. No stealing is permitted.

## *Other Rules*

### *Catchers*

- 30. Each team shall field a catcher, in full catcher gear. The coach shall ensure the catcher is a safe distance away from the batter. If the catcher catches a pitched ball, he/she shall throw it back to the pitcher. Otherwise, the coach shall hold on to the baseballs until the pitcher runs out. The purpose of this rule is to speed up the pace of the game.
- 31. No defensive coaches shall be permitted on the field, except 1 coach must be at the backstop to assist their catcher.

### *Safety*

- 32. No parents shall be permitted on the field of play, unless invited by the coach.
- 33. No players shall leave the dugout unless permitted by the coach or parent helper.
- 34. All injuries and incidents shall be reported to the Division Coordinator within 24 hours of the occurrence.

### *Pitching*

- 35. Player pitching will be introduced in mid to late May at the Discretion of the Division Coordinator and in consultation with local association and the coaches.
- 36. Rules specific to pitching are included in Appendix A.

# Codes of Conduct

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## 8U Codes of Conduct

### Coaches

Coaches shall

- a. Develop team respect for the ability of opponents as well as for the judgment of umpires and opposing coaches
- b. Be professional in manner and accept responsibility for actions by displaying high standards, while displaying control, respect, dignity and professionalism as an ambassador of the association
- c. Promote competition, fair play, and fun with a goal of developing all the athletes
- d. Abide by all policies, rules, and codes of conduct imposed by the association and its governing bodies

### Players

Players shall:

- e. Treat everyone with respect by:
  - i. Being generous in winning and graceful in losing
  - ii. Respecting and accepting with dignity the decisions of the umpires
  - iii. Being courteous to teammates, coaches, opponents, and spectators
- f. Exercise self-control at all times by:
  - i. Refraining from unsportsmanlike gestures, talk, language, profanity, taunting, or teasing
  - ii. Refraining from throwing equipment in disgust (bat, helmet, glove, or any object)
  - iii. Take proper care of equipment and uniforms, including setting up, taking down, and caring for equipment at games and practices.

### Parents

Parents shall to treat everyone with respect by:

- g. Cheering in a positive manner for all competitors
- h. Respecting the decisions of officials
- i. Being courteous and respectful to other spectators, all competitors, coaches, event organizers and officials
- j. Refraining from disrespectful conduct of any sort, including profanity, obscene gestures, offensive remarks, taunting or other actions that demean any individual.
- k. Exercise self-control at all times
- l. Refrain from the use of alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs at any park.

# 9U Codes of Conduct

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- a. Develop team respect for the ability of opponents as well as for the judgment of umpires and opposing coaches
- b. Be professional in manner and accept responsibility for actions by displaying high standards, while displaying control, respect, dignity and professionalism as an ambassador of local association
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- k. Exercise self-control at all times
- l. Refrain from the use of alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs at any park.



# Appendix A

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## 9U (Tadpole) Spring Pitching Rules

### Start Date

1. Pitching in this division can be implemented any time after the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in May by the Division Coordinator in consultation with the coaches and local association.

### Pitching Distance

2. Pitching distance shall be from 42' or 46' – the tadpole fields are set at 46' so the coaches will need to mark a new line closer to home plate for the pitcher to use if they choose 42'. Once a player starts from a distance they may not change that distance during the inning. (Note: Mosquito distance is 46'; Most Tadpole Summer Ball Tournaments are from 46')

### Umpire

3. The home team will provide an umpire for the game who will:
  - a. Count up to 6 total pitches to the batter
  - b. Call balls and strikes
  - c. Call the batter out after 3 strikes (Note: no longer any soft toss after strike 3)
  - d. After 6 pitches or ball 4 direct the coach of the batting team to throw 2 soft toss pitches from the baseline to the batter. The batter will have these two attempts to put the ball in play. If the ball is not put in play, the batter shall be called out, no exceptions.
  - e. Make all other regular decisions by an umpire including plays in the field and balls that are fair/foul

### Pitch Counter

4. Every team shall designate a pitch counter for their team. The pitch counter shall keep a record of who pitched and the pitch count for each pitcher.
5. The pitch counts are to be kept in the team scorebook

### Pitching Limits

6. Pitchers may only pitch in 1 inning per game. (After delivering 1 pitch to a batter, that player shall not pitch in any other inning that game).
7. The maximum pitches a pitcher may deliver in an inning is 35. Once a player has delivered 35 pitches, the player must be replaced. To speed up the pace of the game, the replacement player should be a player who has been sitting off that inning (so the coach can have that player warm up prior to taking the field).

8. Unless exceptional circumstances arise, the pitcher entering the game will not take any warm up pitches on the mound, as they should already be warmed up coming off the bench.

## Double Header / Consecutive Days Pitching Limits

9. A pitcher may pitch in 2 games during a single day, so long as the total number of pitches in the first game is 25 pitches or less.
10. A pitcher may pitch in consecutive days, so long as the total number of pitches the previous day is 25 pitches or less.
11. A pitcher may not pitch on 3 consecutive days.

## Fair Play

12. Every player must be given an equal opportunity to pitch.

## Other Rules

13. Any pitcher that hits 2 batters must be replaced.

## Pace of Play

14. The time limits are still in play: The games shall be 5 innings, however, no new inning may start after 90 minutes.
15. To help with pace of play
  - a. Keep a bucket of balls at the mound for the pitchers.
  - b. Do not have the catcher retrieve and throw back to the mound on every pitch. The coach assisting the catcher (or catching) shall collect the baseballs
  - c. Teams will have the option of using a coach as a catcher (with mask) for the pitcher and dressing a player as catcher who will stand off to the side to be the "fielding catcher" at home plate.
  - d. See also Rules 7 and 8 above.

## Batting Order/Position Chart

Batting Position	Name	1 <sup>st</sup> inning	2 <sup>nd</sup> inning	3 <sup>rd</sup> inning	4 <sup>th</sup> inning	5 <sup>th</sup> inning	6 <sup>th</sup> inning
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							
9							

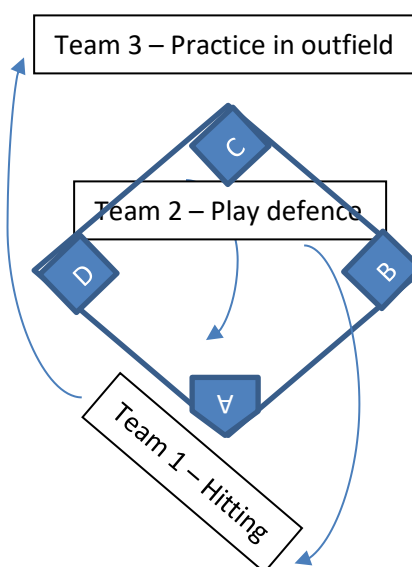
## Field Rotation – 5U-7U

The field rotation is as follows

Team 1 Hitting > OF – Practice

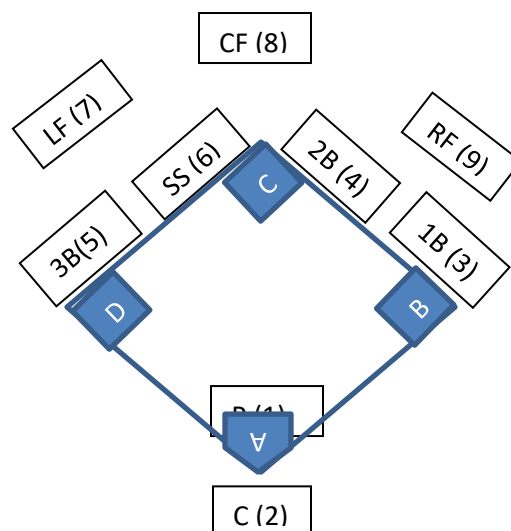
Team 3 Practice > Infield – Defense

Team 2 Defence > Hitting



## Position Rotation – 8U/9U

- No player can play the OF for 2 straight innings
- Example of rotation for 1 player
  - 3B>LF>SS>CF>2B>RF>1B>P>C>3B
- Number system
  - 5>7>6>8>4>9>3>1>2>5



# Communication Email Resource

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Your team's parents and players want to know about you. Communication and building a bond with families is important. We recommend as soon as you receive your team list, send out an introductory email to the parents. Below is a sample:

\*\*\*\*\*

## 2018 Spring Baseball Season

Hello all, and welcome to *[Insert Association Name]* 2018 Grassroots Division spring baseball season. My name is *[Insert Name]*, and I will be coaching your kid(s). The start of the season is fast approaching, and I just wanted to give you some important information before we hit the field.

### My bio

I am a *[Insert Occupation]* with *[Insert Company]* and have lived in *[Insert City/Town]* for *[Insert Number]* years. I have *[Insert Number]* children, *[Insert sports or other activities they might be involved with]*. This is my *[Insert Number]* season coaching in the Grassroots Division, and so far it has been a great experience. In addition to coaching I .... *Tell them about your baseball experience or anything you would like to share*. I have really enjoyed coaching, and look forward to a fun season of baseball with your kid(s).

### Objectives For The Season

My coaching philosophy for kids this age is simple, the most important thing is for them to have fun and for things to be positive. In Grassroots we are developing/teaching them the basic skills they will need to play the game, and our end goal is for them to have the desire to continue with baseball after the season ends. I also hope they take away some lessons when it comes to sportsmanship, fair play, teamwork and discipline.

So you all have an idea of what to expect this season, the main fundamentals we will work on are as follows:

1. Make sure they know how to hold the ball properly;
2. Proper ready position: how to field the ball, how to catch the ball;
3. Throwing: proper arm motion and footwork;
4. How to hold a bat;
5. Proper hitting position;
6. If you field the ball you throw it to 1st base, always making sure to touch 1st base;

7. When you hit the ball you run to 1st base. Know to run to the next base when the ball is hit;

You will notice that everything except #1 above require the players to learn about "balance" and controlling the movement of their bodies, so we will also do non-baseball activities that are fun (Tag, throw wiffle balls to self etc.) It's all about breaking the complex down into simple repetition (that can be built on as they get older).

*Coaches for 7U might add this*

With the 7U division being the oldest of the Grassroot players we will start getting them ready for Tadpole where they really start to learn the rules of the game. Striking out and out at base will be introduced along with moving to the Tadpole fields mid may to play our games.

## **Parent Involvement**

Our team's greatest asset will be the help/involvement of all parents. In order for the players to get the most out of the season we will need you, the parents, to help out with some of the drills during practice. With that in mind please make sure to bring your glove to all practices and games.

We will have a short parents meeting on *[Insert Date]* at the start of our practice. It will be a short meeting mainly so we can all meet. If there is a day when I cannot attend a practice or game, I will be asking for parents to help out.

If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact me at *[Insert Contact Info]*.

See you on the Field!!

Coach *[Insert Name]*