

Swampscott Little League



Coaches Handbook 2014

Swampscott Little League
www.swampscottll.org

SLL Contacts

Emergency	911
Swampscott Police Department	781-595-1111
Swampscott Fire Department	781-595-4050
Nahant Police Department	781-581-1212
Nahant Fire Department	781-581-1234
North Shore Ambulance	781-593-6666
Swampscott Trauma/Treatment Center	781-596-0466
North Shore Children's Center	978-741-1200
Salem Hospital	978-741-1215

Mike Pegnato, President	617-319-4072	mdp_5754@yahoo.com
Stephanie Greenfield, Treasurer	781-599-0977	sgreenfield77@gmail.com
Rob Hopkins, Secretary	508-440-9497	graydawg864@netscape.net
Dom Nicasastro, Player Agent	781-301-1486	dom.nicasastro@cmswire.com
Dave Bishop, Safety Officer	617-548-1922	david.bishop@bayer.com
Brad McIntire, Field Manager	617-756-0854	bmcintire@cjmanagement.com
Marc Stern, Equipment Manager	617-480-7310	mjsterno@yahoo.com
Cheryl Raustad, Snack Shack Manager	617-240-5825	tcnnb@verizon.net
Mark Nemeskal, Baseball Umpire Chief	781-367-0249	nemeskal@verizon.net
Roy Ballard, Softball Umpire Chief	781-223-0378	roys4girls@yahoo.com
Rich Reiling, Baseball Score/Pitch Tracker		reilinglaw@aol.com

<u>Majors</u>	<u>Manager</u>	<u>Manager Email</u>	<u>Manager Phone</u>
League Director	Rob Hopkins	graydawg864@netscape.net	508-440-9497
WHITE SOX	Joe Caponigro	jocaponigro@comcast.net	978-590-0902
ATHLETICS	Fred Dubiel	trooperbub2001@yahoo.com	781 599 3023
INDIANS	Paul Loguidice	ploguidice@jefferies.com	617-901-8667
TIGERS	Pete Inzana	pinzana@us.ibm.com	508-287-3073
Nahant O's	Adolph Graciale	gracialea@lynnschools.org	781-424-0517
Nahant Sox	Mark Reenstierna	msr01908@outlook.com	617-803-5486
<u>Minors</u>	<u>Manager</u>	<u>Manager Email</u>	<u>Manager Phone</u>
League Director	Bob Taylor	rktaylor@statestreet.com	617-599-0895
DODGERS	Ken Norton	nortons1996@yahoo.com	617-750-1772
BREWERS	Joe Ford	fordpainting@icloud.com	617-592-7225
PHILLIES	Bernie Beisheim	bbeisheim@daypitney.com	617-842-0771
Nahant Huskies	Frank Botta	frank.botta@ms.com	617-645-6851
<u>Farm</u>	<u>Manager</u>	<u>Manager Email</u>	<u>Manager Phone</u>
League Director	Dom Nicastro	dom.nicastro@cmswire.com	781-301-1486
ANGELS	Joe McGonagle	jojmac@yahoo.com	781-856-4000
ORIOLES (Cubs)	Dave Yanetti	law@davidyanetti.com	617-930-5359
RED SOX	Dom Nicastro	dom.nicastro@cmswire.com	781-301-1486
Nahant A's	Mike Hayes	MHayes@gohealth.com	781-254-6001
<u>Instructional</u>	<u>Manager</u>	<u>Manager Email</u>	<u>Manager Phone</u>
League Director	Brad Croft	bcroft.mail@gmail.com	617-417-3731
MUCKDOGS	Joe Ford	fordpainting@icloud.com	617-592-7225
RIVER BANDITS	Tim Swanson	swan0124@verizon.net	860-874-4215
ROCK HOUNDS	Leo DeBole	Leo@suffolktitle.com	617-233-0401
EXPRESS	Jim O'Brien	julie24@comcast.net	
RED WINGS	Peter Murphy	peter.murphy2@state.ma.us	617-973-2407
LOOKOUTS	Frank Pappalardo	fapiii@comcast.net	
<u>TBALL</u>	<u>Manager</u>	<u>Manager Email</u>	<u>Manager Phone</u>
League Director	Neil Collins	neal.collins@ihs.com	617-413-9009
Modesto Nuts	Lou Olivieri	Red_sox@comcast.net	508-801-8342
Tin Caps	Leo DeBole	leo@suffolktitle.com	617-233-0401
Carolina Mudcats	Peter Murphy	peter.murphy@MassMail.State.MA.US	(781) 771-5731
Ogden Raptors	Matt Brogna	matt.brogna@universalwilde.com	617-755-8557
Trenton Thunder	Derek Barnwell	dkbarnwell@verizon.net	781 842 1964
Toledo Mud Hens	Neal Dufffy	neal@nealdufffy.com	617-699-9476
Aberdeen Ironbirds	Neal Collins	neal.collins@ihs.com	617-413-9009
Hot Rods	Al Pica	alpica12@gmail.com	781-264-2500
<u>Juniors Softball</u>	<u>Manager</u>	<u>Manager Email</u>	<u>Manager Phone</u>
Hurricanes	Gino Cresta	qrscresta@comcast.net	781-696-1106
<u>Majors Softball</u>	<u>Manager</u>	<u>Manager Email</u>	<u>Manager Phone</u>
Nor'easters	Steve Modica	lmodica@verizon.net	781-724-8197
Lightning	Randy Hopkins	randyregina@comcast.net	781-521-4421
<u>Minor Softball</u>	<u>Manager</u>	<u>Manager Email</u>	<u>Manager Phone</u>
Marlins	Mike Reiter	michael.reiter@lpl.com	617-821-1108
<u>Farm Softball</u>	<u>Manager</u>	<u>Manager Email</u>	<u>Manager Phone</u>
Diamondbacks	Bryan Pierce	kpierce262@gmail.com	
Marlins	Marc Hazel	mhazel@jacquelinesbakery.com	

16 Coaching Tips

1. Treat all kids fairly. Kids and parents are watching every move/action.
2. Don't overplay your child or other coach's kids – not fair and invites trouble.
3. Don't have heated discussions with parents or coaches at the field or right after a game. A 24 hr. "cool-off" period works wonders. Have the discussion the next day!
4. Take five minutes after every practice and ask each player what they learned during that day's session. Not only does this help you as a coach understand how well you communicated, but it serves as a great reinforcement/reminder of what was just covered.
5. Show, don't tell. Instead of simply telling a player he needed to do something differently, ask him to show you how it should have been done properly. If he can't show you, you show him.
6. When players make mistakes, your reaction should be tempered by the player's effort. If he didn't try or wasn't paying attention that is one thing. But if a player was giving 100% and just did not make the play, he should be encouraged and praised for the effort instead of scolded about the result.
7. If you promise something to your players, follow through. Kids don't forget.
8. Make sure every child has been picked up by a family member before you go home.
9. Players (especially young ones) should call the coaches either, "Coach", "Coach (first name)" or "Coach (last name)," not just by a first name.
10. If you are coaching really young players, kneel down and get at eye level when talking to them.
11. Safety first! Check your entire practice area and imagine the worst. Try to envision anything that might trip a player or that someone could fall onto going for a ball. Store equipment so that it can never come into play. Get any player who is not participating safely out of the way of those who are. Players are only allowed to touch a bat with a helmet on their head and when ready to bat!
12. Look for something each player did well and make a point of mentioning it before they go home.
13. Occasionally before a practice, go around and ask your players what they think the team should work on today. Almost without fail, the things you planned on covering will be suggested anyway, but this creates a feeling of ownership in your players that is invaluable.
14. End every practice or game with solidarity. Everyone gets together, puts their hands in and says, "One, two, three, (TEAM)" at the end.
15. You can overcome a lot of deficiencies with enthusiasm. Even if you're not the greatest coach or don't have the best talent, if you spend every minute on the field encouraging and exhorting your team, even when you're way behind, your players will want to give their best and their parents will love you.
16. Enjoy every moment. You've been given a rare privilege, and it goes by too fast.

Directions to Fields

Clarke - Playground -- Norfolk Avenue, Swampscott

The Little League Field on the eastern end of Abbot Park, adjacent to Norfolk Ave. and Paradise Rd. The playground side, directly in front of Clarke School.

Clarke - Middlesex -- Middlesex Avenue, Swampscott

The Little League Field on the western end of Abbot Park, adjacent to the intersection of Ellis Rd., Middlesex Av. and Hampton St. Directly in front of Clarke School.

Forest Ave. Duratti, Holmes, Cerone "DHC" Field -- 259 Forest Ave, Swampscott

The first Little League Field when you walk into complex. Below the Middle School parking lot.

Forest Ave. Senior Baseball Field -- 259 Forest Ave, Swampscott

The big diamond next to snack shack. Below the Middle School parking lot.

Forest Ave. Softball 'Upper' Field -- 259 Forest Ave, Swampscott

The upper softball field at top of complex. Below the Middle School parking lot.

Forest Ave "Lower" Softball Field (Bowl)

Directly behind Middle School. Follow path from complex to lower field on right.

Phillips Park (Senior Baseball Field) -- 579 Humphrey Street, Swampscott

Phillips Park (Cindy's) – 621 Humphrey St., Swampscott

The LL field on Humphrey Street, closest to Cindy's Pizza.

Phillips Park (Football) – 579 Humphrey St., Swampscott

The LL field on Humphrey St. closest to the field house/football field

Stanley (Softball) – Whitman Rd., Swampscott

The first (closest) field upon entering the Stanley School parking lot. Stanley School is actually on Whitman Road, just off of Orchard Road.

Stanley (Baseball) – Whitman Rd., Swampscott

The second (farthest) field upon entering the Stanley School parking lot.

Nahant (Upper & Lower)

Next to the Johnson School and behind Fire Station. Nahant Road, to Spring Rd, to Flash Rd (fields are behind the fire station)

Nahant Circle

This is an MDC field located immediately on your right as you go towards Nahant via the causeway.

Nahant Circle (Softball)

This is the MDC field, immediately on your right, as you go towards Nahant over the Causeway.

EAST LYNN/ Pine Hill (ELPH) – Softball field next to Volunteer Little League Field

Rt. 129 towards Lynn, go thru Wyoma Sq. lights, Then 2nd set of lights bear left (Flax Pond on left) go to 3rd set of lights take left on Adams St Ext—you will see the field.

From Swampscott: Take New Ocean (Rt. 1A into Lynn). Take right onto Chestnut. Turn left onto Marianna St. Turn right onto Fayette St and then 1st right onto Adams St. EXT.

WYOMA FIELD LYNNWOODS FIELD THROUGH WYOMA SQ TO LYNNFIELD ST RT 129 PASS KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS ON RIGHT. TAKE NEXT LEFT ONTO GREAT WOODS ROAD. GO THRU ENTRANCE OF LYNNWOODS FIELD ON RIGHT

EAST LYNN-- Volunteer Field

From 1 & 128 follow Rt. 129 towards Lynn, go thru Wyoma Sq lights, then 2nd set of light bear left (Flax Pond on left) go to 3rd set of lights, turn left on Adams St Ext-you will see the field.

LYNNFIELD-Newhall

From Rt. 1 take Salem St to Summer St, take right after overhead bridge (Moulton St) go to Chinese Restaurant take left just before restaurant.

LYNN SHORE-- Kiley Park

From 1 & 128 follow Rt. 129 all the way to Eastern Ave take right on Eastern Ave to Superior St (Monte Pizza on left) take 1st right after overhead bridge Kiley Park on left.

PINE HILL-- Spagnoli

From 1 & 128 follow 129 towards Lynn at Wyoma Sq turn right at Parkland Ave, go to set of lights take left on Linwood St continue till you come to a building which houses ambulances, take next left field is on left.

WEST LYNN AMERICAN-Flynn (Field # 1)

Rt.129 Lynn-go to Wyoma Sq take right onto Parkland Ave follow Parkland Ave to Dungeon Rd field on right

WEST LYNN AMERICAN-BARRY (Field # 2)

From Revere take Marsh Rd pass GE take left onto Cottage St take last left, see brick wall field other end.

WYOMA -- Reinfuss

From 1 & 128-take 129 to Wyoma Sq go thru to next cut off make a U turn follow Broadway to Walgreen's, next right is field.

REVERE -- Mackin

From Bell Circle take Bridge route to lights take 2nd right, Winthrop St field on left about 100 yards.

WINTHROP

Rte 1 to Suffolk Downs to a stop sign $\frac{3}{4}$ way round rotary. Then go straight for 2 miles to 4th set of lights (Magee's Comer) bear right at lights, take street past High School to stop sign then left pass football field on right on right is L.L. field.

SAUGUS AMERICAN -- Grabowski

Take Central St to signs for Grabowski Field on Hurd Ave, left on Hurd Ave, field on right.

SAUGUS NATIONAL-Elks

Rt. 1 to Main St exit, Main St towards Wakefield thru 2 sets of lights Elks field $\frac{1}{2}$ mile past 2nd set of lights field on right.

SALEM AMERICAN+NATIONAL -- Forest River Park

From Salem center follow Rt 114 (Lafayette St) towards Marblehead. Take left at light at Salem State onto West Ave. Field is at end of street.

PEABODY NATIONAL-- MacArthur Park

Follow Lynn St and take left onto MacArthur Rd (just past St Ann's Church and Brown School). Go to end and take right or left onto MacArthur Circle.

PEABODY AMERICAN-James St Park

Follow Lynnfield St to 3rd set of lights. Lynnfield St now becomes Washington St. Follow to 1st light and take left onto Allens Ln. Allens Ln becomes Perkins St at Police Station, take next left onto James St.

PEABODY WEST-Cy Tenny

From Rt 1 South take Lake St exit. Follow Lake St to 5 corners and take right onto Pine St. Take 1st left onto Johnson St and look for entrance to field on right.

Guidelines For Field Maintenance

Unlocking/Locking Field Gate, Shed, Bathrooms

- At Forest Ave Little League Field & Upper Softball – the home team is responsible for insuring all doors at the LL complex are locked if last game of the day.
- This includes the field gate, bathrooms, and sheds

Turning Lights On and Off at Forest Ave

- The field lights are located in the room on the right back side of the snack shack.
- There are clearly marked light switches on the back wall for each field
- Turn on lights before dark and turn off lights when your game is over

Pick-up Trash After Each Game / Look for Left Behind stuff

- We will receive complaints, pictures and accusations from neighbors at our parks.
- Please make sure your, the kids, and parents pick-up all trash & left behind items

Lining & Raking the Field Before/After Games

- At Forest Ave Little League Field & Upper Softball – use the Field Liner to lay down the foul lines (lime) before each game; use the batter's box aluminum guide to make an impression in the clay to then use as a guide to line the batter's box
- Before and after every game, use the field rake or screen drag on the infield

Cover Pitcher's Mound, Home plate, Bases w/ Tarps Before Rain

- At Forest Ave Little League Field & Upper Softball – if you are the last game of the day, you are responsible to put the tarps down with the spikes in the grommet holes to protect the field from rain. The season is short enough – every bit helps.

Please do your best to retrieve foul balls (cost \$3 ea.) - have parents/coaches help.

Fixing Depressions (Batters Box, Pitchers Mound, Bases)

- Don't fill in depressions w/ more clay – the soil probably moved to another spot.
- Use shovel to scrape clay back into depression, then groom with rake.

Dealing with Puddles

- **Don't sweep water onto grass area, by doing this you are removing clay and making the low-lying area lower. Clay mix will also kill the grass.**
- Try and gently push standing water to other areas of clay infield to speed drying
- Don't add *quick dry* directly into puddle.
- Spread quick dry sparingly after puddles have been smoothed out.
- Continue to rake and grade the field. A raked field dries 4x faster than unraked!

Maintaining the Grass

- Clay on the grass will kill it. **Don't rake clay onto the grass.**
- Pitch Batting Practice from the mound not the grass. You will wear out the grass.

Storage at Clarke Fields

- See your League Director for a key to the storage container (near porta potty) at Clarke Field for access to rakes, quick dry, and other materials. Keep it locked!

I. Recommendations for Running a Baseball Practice

Preparation

- Keep total practice time to 90 minutes.
- Have a plan **before** you come to practice.
- Keep a first aid kit and ice packs in your equipment bag.
- Include drills that will work on things that the kids did wrong during the last game.
- Start each practice by telling the team what the practice will entail.
- End the practice by asking the players what they learned today - and tell them they did a good job!
- Reward the players who show up on time. For example, if you plan to have a hitting practice, have the players hit in the order they showed up. You would be amazed how many players will start beating you to practice.

Running the Practice

- A good routine for starting each practice is to have the players run a lap or two around the baseball field to warm up and loosen their muscles. Next have them stretch their arms (as described in the throwing section). After the stretch, have them loosen their arms with a short toss drill.
- If you have the kids throw to loosen up then make sure you observe them throw and correct them if they are throwing wrong.
- On cold days make sure the players stretch and loosen their arms, and avoid any drills that involve excessive throwing.
- Games are won at 1B and 2B. Spend more time throwing to those bases.
- Make sure you have assistant coaches so you can break the team up into smaller groups when working on skills. Use different stations to maximize reps.
- Avoid one ball, one batter batting practices and one ball, one fielder fielding practices. Instead of a live Batting Practice, try closing each practice with the Scrimmage described in the hitting section.
- If you are not good at hitting an infield practice with a fungo bat then don't. You can throw the ball instead of hitting it.

Run, Run, Run

- Tell the players the ball field is a sacred place. No one walks on or off the field.
- All sprinting should be done with fielding glove on to reinforce proper defensive running.
- Bat speed and arm strength will increase with sprint work.

Ending Practice

- Try and end each practice at the same place on the field and depart with a positive confident message. Young players like closure and consistency to their activities.
- Consider designating one player each practice to stay 5 minutes longer for individual work or a quick confidence booster.
- Don't be afraid to give the players homework. Give each player something to work on. They should be practicing at home.
- At every practice assign a couple of players to pick up the equipment and bases. Rotate through the roster so every player takes a turn.
- Check the field before you break practice. Make the players pick up any bottles or wrappers they used. They should respect the field and keep it clean.
- Never under estimate the effect you will have on the lives of every player that calls you "COACH".

II. Hitting

The Basics of Hitting

Choosing the Proper Bat Size

Use the chart below as a guide only. Lighter bats are generally better for youth baseball. A drop -10 to -13 is best.

High School & College		Youth League (11-12 yrs)		Youth League (8-10 yrs)	
Player Height (in.)	Best Bat Weight (oz.)	Player Weight (lbs.)	Best Bat Weight (oz.)	Player Height (in.)	Best Bat Weight (oz.)
66	27	70	18	48	16
68	27.5	80	19	50	16.5
70	28	90	19.5	52	17
72	29	100	20	54	17.5
74	30	110	20.5	56	18
76	30.5	120	21	58	18.5
Formula: Height /3 + 5		130	21.5	60	19
		140	22	Formula: Height /4 + 4	
		150	23		
		Formula: Weight /18 + 14			

The Proper Grip

- Grip the bat very loosely. The bat should rest across the middle of the fingers, (not in the palm of the hand), with your “door knocking” knuckles lined up.
- DO NOT: grip the bat too tight, over-wrap your knuckles or hold the bat with the palms of your hands. All these things will slow down the swing.

The Proper Stance

- The player should be close enough to home so they can bend 45-degrees at the waist and touch the outside corner of the plate with their bat.
- The feet are a little more than shoulder width apart, with the toes in a straight line pointed towards home plate (No closed or open stances).
- The head starts completely turned toward pitcher, square to the ground with both eyes level and focused on the release point of the pitcher (Just outside and above the throwing shoulder).
- The knees are flexed w/ weight centered on the insides of the feet. Balance is the primary objective.
- The Hands should be aligned so that the top hand on the bat sits at the same height as the rear shoulder, approximately 3-6 inches from same rear shoulder.
- The Rear elbow should be down at a natural 45-degree angle and the front elbow should also be down, pretty much even with the back elbow. NOTE: ELBOWS SHOULD NOT BE UP!!! When the rear elbow starts up, it must come down in order to hit the ball, creating an uppercut.
- The bat should sit at a 45-degree angle also, with the knob of the bat pointing at the far corner of home plate
- This is where all proper swings originate from (**launch position**) regardless of their starting position. Starting here eliminates unnecessary movement needed to get here during the swing.

The Trigger (or “load”)

The swing actually begins with the hitter rotating their back hip, front shoulder and hands, about 2-3 inches back in a clockwise motion. This move, called the trigger, gets the swing started and gives it some momentum to move into the ball. When the pitcher winds up and shows the hitter their hip the batter starts the triggers. Once the player has rotated 2-3 inches they should reverse direction now rotating their hips counter clockwise into the ball. The player should **not** freeze before reversing direction; instead it should all be one fluid motion.

The Swing

- When pitcher shows you his hip, begin the swing by actually moving back. Front knee, front shoulder and back hip turn back 2-3 inches.
- Don't over stride. The stride should be no more than 3 inches and the weight remains back. After completion of stride, the heel of the front foot touches the ground, officially starting the swing.
- The swing begins from the waist down. The power in the swing comes from the HIPS. Hit with your HIPS. HIPS before HANDS. The back hip rotates toward the ball so that eventually the rear knee, the waist and the belly button are ALL facing the pitcher and the back foot is pointing straight at the pitcher.
- You are now ready to swing. The swing is in the shape of the letter U. The hands come straight down towards the ball, leading with the knob of the bat. Don't extend early; keep hands close to body and inside the ball. As the bat enters hitting zone it should level off until impact. The swing then finishes with a slightly upward angle as the arms extend completely. Don't stop your swing, let it finish and follow through.
- Keep the head DOWN. The hitter's chin rests on front shoulder, while looking at pitcher, prior to initiating swing. The head stays there during the swing, down on the ball, with shoulders rotating around head, until chin ultimately ends up on rear shoulder at completion of swing.

Diagnosing and Fixing Common Problems with the Swing

Where's the Problem?

If you have a hitter that is having problems (doesn't make contact, has a slow swing, doesn't hit with power, just looks wrong) try this technique for diagnosing the problem. First make sure they are starting in the proper position. Check their grip and stance. Once you are sure the grip and stance are fine, watch their feet when they swing. Make sure they are staying balanced, not over-striding and that their back foot is turning when they swing. If the back foot is not turning on every swing then they are not rotating their hips. If the feet are fine then check the hands. The hands should stay close to the body and come straight at the ball as they start to swing. Many hitters will extend their hands away from their body as they start the swing (looping or big swing) or they will drop their hands just before they start the swing (hitch). If their hands are fine, then move on to the head. Is it facing the pitcher when they start, does it stay on a level plane or is it bouncing up and down? Are they watching the ball all the way until it hits their bat? Below is a list of the most common problem that kids have when they are hitting and some suggestions for correcting them.

The Grip

Most kids will over wrap their knuckles, hold the bat in their palms and/or grip the bat too tight. If their elbows are not pointing down when they are in their stance then they are probably gripping the bat wrong. This slows down the swing and makes it harder to bring it through the hitting zone. Fix the grip before you let them swing. Have them take some practice swings after you fix their grip. They will probably notice how it makes it easier to swing the bat. You will probably need to correct each player's grip a number of times before they do it naturally. Don't let them swing with a bad grip. It will just cause bad habits.

Hit With Your Hips

Many kids do not rotate their hips when they swing and end up swinging completely with their arms. If the ball does not jump off their bat then they are probably not using their hips. Watch their feet when they swing. If the back foot is not turning when they swing, they are not rotating their hips. Explain that all the power comes from the hips. Usually if you correct this in soft toss they will immediately see how much harder they

can hit the ball. If they still don't understand how to use their hips try this Hip Twist drill. Have the player place a bat (stick, broom handle, etc.) behind their back on their waistline. With hands gripping the bat from behind, they should get into their stance. Have them try and hit a few soft toss pitches from this position. The only way they can get the bat head to cross the plate is to rotate their hips. Repeat this a few times until they get a feel for the movement. Go back to the normal stance and repeat. Doing this 10 to 20 times a day programs young hitters to get that lower body working correctly without conscious thought (Muscle Memory).

Over Striding and Reaching

Some hitters will stride too far and end up shifting their weight forward before they swing. They end up reaching at the ball instead of swinging. This action makes it difficult to hit change-ups and off speed pitches. Have them shorten their stride and focus on keeping their weight back. Put an object, like a batting helmet, in front of their front foot so they can't over stride.

Keep Your Eye on the Ball

Many kids will turn their head just prior to impact. They don't keep their head down and "watch the ball hit the bat". If you have a player that consistently swings and misses at soft toss, they are probably doing this. There are a couple of ways to correct it. Have a baseball in your bag that you have colored with two different bright colors. When you soft toss to the player, have them yell out the color that they hit. This forces them to watch the ball all the way to the bat. You can also put a batting helmet on the first base line when they are swinging. Tell the player that when they finish the swing they should be looking at the batting helmet.

Hitch

This happens when the player starts the swing by dropping his hands instead of coming straight at the ball from the launch position. This action slows down the swing making it difficult to hit fastballs. To break this habit have the player get in the launch position and then let the bat rest ON their shoulder. As you soft toss to them the bat must come straight from the shoulder to the ball. You can also try rapid-fire soft toss. Get five soft toss balls ready to pitch. In rapid succession soft toss the balls to the player giving them very little time between pitches. This forces the player to shorten their swing and come straight at the ball. You can also try the FENCE DRILL (see below) to try and stop the hitch.

Looping or Big Swings

This happens when the player extend his arms to early, usually when the bat is still behind home plate. This slows down the swing and reduces power at impact. Use the fence drill to correct this problem. Have the player take a batting stance with the outside of the rear end against a fence or wall. The object is to have the player take a normal swing without making contact with the fence or wall. Start in slow motion, for obvious reasons. Improper swing and bat angle will provide immediate negative feedback. The key here is to keep the barrel above the rear shoulder at the proper bat angle (good launch position) and swing through the ball. If a player does this with hands in close to the body (inside the ball), allowing back foot to begin first, they will complete the drill properly. If the player takes a stride, rotates back foot and hips, keeping the bat head above the hands, hands inside the ball, and opens up away from the fence, they can swing down and through the ball without hitting the fence. Full arm extension should not take place until immediately after contact.

Hitting Drills

Do's and Don'ts

Don't run your practice with one player hitting while you pitch and everyone else is just standing around. If you are pitching to one player, have another player hitting off a tee and another player (or two) hitting soft toss. Break your team into a couple of groups and have an assistant coach work on throwing or fielding while you are live pitching. Use Soft Toss and a Tee to fix hitters problems. Don't try and fix their swings when they are up at bat in a live game.

Soft Toss

This is the best way to fix hitting problems. Have the player stand approx. 6-10 feet from a backstop. Have the pitcher kneel at the fence at a 45-degree angle from the batter. The batter should start with their head facing the normal pitchers throwing zone. As they see the soft toss starting (from the corner of their eye) they can bring their head to the hitting zone and begin their swing. Don't let them continue bad habits during Soft Toss. Make sure the grip, stance, and swing, are correct. When one batter is facing live pitching, you should have the on deck hitter at a soft toss station. Use soft toss in every hitting practice and before games. If a player is having trouble making contact have them take extra soft toss. Players should have their own tape balls (scrunch one full sheet of newspaper into a ball and then wrap it with duct tape) so they can practice at home.

Scrimmage

Kids love to scrimmage during practice. Combine your live pitching with a scrimmage. If you have 12 players, divide them into three teams of four. One team is up and the other two are in the field. Have one coach pitch and another coach player catcher (by the backstop). You don't need to use a real catcher; it will just slow down the game. The team that is up gets to hit until they make three outs. Have the kids keep score (they will anyway). The coach that is pitching should talk to the players about situations in between batters. (How many outs are there? What are you going to do with the ball if it's hit to you?) The coach that is catching can work with the hitters. This is a good way to end each practice.

Watching the ball – Multi-Colored Soft Toss

In this drill the coach will be soft tossing multi-colored baseballs to a batter. The batter is instructed to call out which color he hits as he makes contact with the ball. The coach should try and toss the ball with very little spin so the player can see the different colors. The coach and players waiting in line should also call out the color as the ball is hit. Each player takes five swings, retrieves the balls for the coach, and moves to the end of the line.

Watching the ball – “Ball” and “Hit”

"Ball" and "ball-hit" are two easy drills to help a coach and hitter determine when the hitter first sees the ball and how long he sees it. In the "ball" drill the coach throws batting practice to the hitter. The hitter says the word "ball" when he first sees the ball, which should be when the ball is about to leave the coach's hand. At first the ball will be well on its way before the coach hears the word "ball." As more repetitions take place, the ball moves back toward the release point. In the "ball-hit" drill, the hitter says the word "ball" when he first sees the ball and the word "hit" as he makes contact with the ball.

Hitting Drill: Driving through the Ball (Basketball Drill)

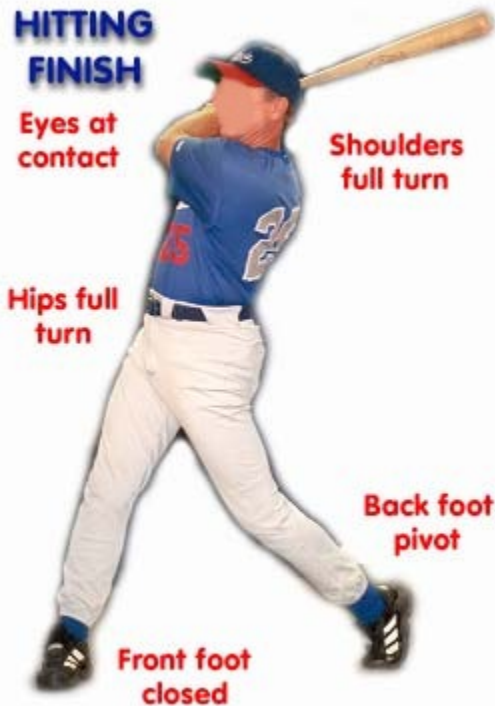
Purpose: To make the batter forcefully hit through the ball.

Set a basketball on a batting tee set about knee height. The batter takes a regular swing at the ball and hits it into a net. Coaches: The drill makes the batter incorporate the lower body to generate power and a strong wrist snap through contact. For younger hitters, use a water polo ball or volleyball to lessen the effort necessary to hit through the ball correctly.

Hitting Drill: Avoid Being Hit

Most kids that are afraid of being hit tend to step out with their left foot exposing the front of their body to the baseball. Teach the kids to turn their front shoulder in and down on an inside pitch. This exposes their back end to the baseball, reducing the risk of serious injury. To reinforce this behavior practice have the player get up in their normal stance and soft toss tennis balls right at the player.

Teaching Hitting



The key to hitting is balance. Without good balance, your players will not be able to maximize the explosive power of the lower half (hips) and will have difficulty controlling their body and the bat as they are swinging. Every time your players swing a bat (outside of game situations) they should freeze - on balance -and hold their finish for three seconds. This will help create muscle memory and outstanding balance.

1. Teach Finish

Place players in their hitting finish as shown at right by having them take a slow-motion swing and freeze. Have them repeat the following terms while holding their finish:

- Front foot closed (front foot remains closed)
- Back foot pivot (back foot pivots 90 degrees as result of hip explosion)
- Shoulder full turn (back shoulder is fully turned)
- Eyes at contact (eyes remain focused at point of contact)

While repeating terms, players make necessary corrections.



2. Teach Objective (Contact Position)

Place players in objective/contact position as shown at left and have them repeat the following terms:

- Front foot closed
- Back foot pivot
- Belly button to pitcher (belly button pointed toward pitcher)
- Hands extended (hands extended toward pitcher from belly button)
- Bat barrel above hands (bat barrel held above hands)
- Eyes at contact

While repeating terms, players make necessary corrections.



3. Teach Trigger or “load” from Objective (Preparation to Swing)

Explain the trigger. It is a slow rotation slightly inward and away from the pitcher which never stops and allows the hips to load in preparation to start the swing at any time. The purposes of the trigger are to time the pitch and to break inertia to get started. There are four hinges to the trigger: front ankle, front knee, front hip and front shoulder. The trigger starts with the hitter raising the front heel slightly and turning the front ankle and knee slightly inward. It is important to emphasize to your players that the trigger is a rotation, and not a swaying of the weight backward.

Place players in the objective/contact position and command the following:

- Hands in - players bring hands in toward belly button about 4-5 inches away from body
- Back foot down - players "un-pivot" back foot
- Triiiiiiggggerrr - players slowly return to stance and slightly beyond

Obviously, your players will not start in their objective during a game, but will instead trigger from their stance. You will teach them to trigger from their stance after you have taught the stance.



4. Teach Stance

Place players in the objective/contact position and command the following:

- Hands in
- Back foot down
- Triiiiiggggerrrr
- Freeze - players freeze after triggering

After freezing upon completion of the trigger, have players point their front shoulder toward the pitcher.

The proper stance is shown at left. Have players repeat the following terms for the stance:

- Toes (toes pointed straight toward home plate)
- Spread (feet spread twice shoulders width for optimum balance)
- Flex (flexed at ankles and knees with weight on balls of feet)
- Waist (slightly bent toward home plate - gets weight on balls of feet)
- Shoulder (front shoulder at pitcher, slightly lower than back shoulder)
- Eyes (level and focused on pitcher)
- Grip (door knocking knuckles lined up, with hands):
 - UP - hands at top of strike zone
 - IN - hands 4-5 inches away from body (too far away creates arm swing)
 - BACK - hands back - even or slightly beyond back shoulder
- Elbows down (elbows pointed down but comfortably away from body)
- Bat angle 45 (bat barrel at 45-degree angle over shoulder)
- 60/40 (60 % of weight on back foot, 40% on front foot)

While repeating terms, players make necessary corrections.

Little League Pitching Mechanics - Simple Instructions For Little League

Pitchers

By Steven Ellis, former Chicago Cubs pitching pro

The goal for any Little League coach or parent is to keep the game simple and fun for their young pitcher(s). That's what we're aiming to do with this lesson on Little League pitching mechanics.

Starting Position

- a. Right hand pitcher starts on right side of rubber, left hand pitcher starts on left side of rubber
- b. When toeing rubber make sure heels are on rubber & toes are on dirt, be balanced
- c. Feet should be inside your shoulders
- d. Both hands in glove
- e. Top of glove just below chin with back of glove facing target
- f. Elbows relaxed against stomach
- g. Slight bend in knees (comfortable position)

Little League Pitching From The Full Wind Up (Right Hand Pitcher)

Step 1 - Rocker Step Back

- a. Rock left foot straight back on ball of foot OR to the side of the mound
- b. Keep chin over pivot foot

Step 2 - Pivot And Turn Your Hips

- a. Turn right pivot foot in front of rubber
- b. Turn upper body so front shoulder facing target
- c. Glove should be six inches off chest

Step 3 - Balance (But Don't Stop!)

- a. Lift knee to belt with foot at 90 degree angle and toe down but don't stop here, keep moving
- b. Weight should be even on back foot
- c. Stay up right don't sink on back foot

Step 4 - Break And Stride

- a. Take ball out of glove break thumbs down and away from each other towards thighs
- b. Ball in hand should be facing 2nd base
- c. Slightly collapse back leg to keep weight back
- d. Bring heel into body then out towards target (this keeps front hip closed)

- e. Stride towards home plate w/ heel, inside of big toe should hit ground first at 1 o'clock
- f. Hands should spread into POWER T position w/ glove down elbow pointing at target
- g. Ball in hand should come out of glove down with fingers on top (knuckles to sky) and rotate up giving high five to centerfield or reaching to the sky

Step 5 - Tuck And Throw

- a. Front elbow drives down into hip
- b. Glove tucks
- c. Back hip rotates towards home plate
- d. Throwing elbow stays high
- e. Fingers stay on top
- f. At release body stays behind the ball pushing ball with body
- g. Wrist snaps down and through
- h. Arm continues to follow through until back of shoulder faces target
- i. Back heel goes up towards sky then rotates over and parallel to the stride leg
- j. Into ready fielding stance

Little League Pitching From The Stretch

- a. Stand with right foot against rubber feet about six inches apart
- b. Ball in glove against chest
- c. Throwing hand in glove
- d. When ready pick up left knee start at #3 position

Drills For Little League Pitchers

One knee drill - start with hands in glove rotate shoulders, hand out of glove point elbow (power T), fingers to sky, lead with heel, tuck elbow/glove follow through thumb to thigh.

Straddle throw drill - Feet parallel outside of shoulders, shoulder facing target, hands in glove, hand out of glove point elbow (power T), fingers to sky, lead with heel, tuck elbow/glove follow through thumb to thigh.

Cement throw drill - Feet slightly outside shoulders, chest facing target, hands in glove rotate shoulders, hand out of glove point elbow (power T), fingers to sky, lead with heel, tuck elbow/glove follow through thumb to thigh. Keep feet planted Balance position drill - Start from balance position (Step 3) hands in glove --shoulder facing target, hand out of glove point elbow (power T), fingers to sky, tuck elbow/glove follow through thumb to thigh.

- * Stay balanced and smooth
- * Don't rush delivery
- * Keep eye on target

One final note: When throwing the fastball, hold the baseball with two fingers with horseshoe facing first base side so four seams will rotate when ball is released.

Pitching Sequence / Good Mechanics
Same routine all the time.

These images are in order from left to right.
(Side, front, & rear view in sequence)



Pitching Sequence / Good Mechanics & Details

Same routine all the time.

These images are in order from left to right.

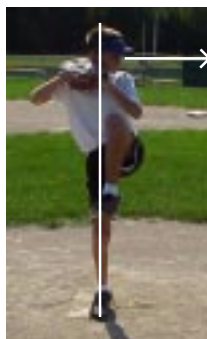
(Side, front, & rear view)



Stand straight, eyes on target



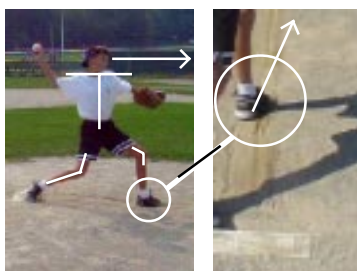
Start motion. Lead foot steps only 6-8 inches back. Eyes on target.



Bring lead foot around and straight up at least belt high. Head level & eyes on target.



Lead leg goes down & out, arms apart. Line up front elbow to target. Head over back knee. Eyes on target.



Shoulders "closed" & level (belly faces 3rd base at foot plant). Eyes level & on target. With chin above belt buckle & shoulders level & closed this should form a "T". Back knee slightly bent down and in & front knee with slight bend. Mitt curling to chest. Lead foot slightly angled and on line at foot plant.



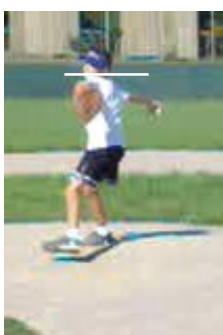
Back foot is pulled (rolled) off mound with hip turn. Upper body straight, head level, eyes on target & mitt to chest



Follow-thru with flat back. Pitching hand swings past front knee. Back foot pulled off mound. Eyes level and on target.



Finish in good balanced fielding position with eyes level and on target.



Shoulders & eyes level.



Eyes level, shoulders closed & straight upper body.



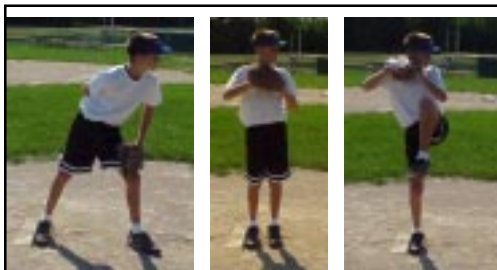
Shoulders closed at foot plant, shoulders & eyes level. Mitt curls to chest.



Hand follows through below knee. Flat back, eyes level.



Finish in a good balanced fielding position on balls of feet.



From the stretch, start with ball in pitching hand and front foot extended. After focusing on target, while bringing front foot back, bring ball into mitt at chest level. Take a deep breath and bring lead foot up to start motion.

Pitching Sequence / Poor Mechanics



Out of balance. Don't lean back



Step (rocker step) is too far back.



Out of balance. Body not straight. Leaning back



Glove is too low.



Glove too far from chest. Poor balance.



No "Karate Kid". Arms don't go straight out in opposite directions. Bad timing.



Fingers under the ball. When hands separate to go back, fingers should be on top of ball, with ball facing 2nd base.



Skipping rocks & out of balance.



Lead leg during motion doesn't go high enough. Poor timing.



"Raring back" (leaning) to try and throw hard.



Elbow below shoulder. Shoulders "open" (belly facing plate) and back foot is pushing off the rubber.



Bad timing. Upper body is too far out in front and over front knee at foot plant. Shoulders are opening up too soon.



Shoulders "open" too soon & elbow below shoulder.



Upper body bent forward, head tilted, and pitching arm is straight back.



Shoulders "open" too soon, head is tilting & eyes are not level.



Back foot dragging straight off the mound & poor follow-thru.



Don't play "yo-yo" on the follow-through. Here the arm and hand stops out in front of body or resists swing out & past lead knee.

These are only a very few samples of poor mechanics. Many times one part of a mechanic might be perfect, while a slight problem with another part in the same photo goes un-noticed by a new or young coach.

III. Throwing

The Basics of Throwing

Stretch Before Throwing

Have all the players stretch their arms before they begin throwing. The following routine is a good start:

- Three sets of front arm circles for 15 seconds.
- Three sets of back arm circles for 15 seconds.
- Stretch the throwing arm by holding it across your chest and then use the opposite hand to pull the throwing arm bicep towards your chin. Hold for 15 seconds and repeat three times.
- Raise the throwing arm straight up with the palm faces back, bend the throwing elbow so the throwing hand is now touching the back of the throwing shoulder. In this position use your non-throwing hand to push your throwing elbow back causing your throwing hand to reach down your back. Hold for 15 seconds and repeat three times.
- IF THE WEATHER IS COLD, AVOID ANY THROWING DRILLS.

The Grip

Four-seam grip – Grip the ball so the index and middle fingers are on top and cross two seams each, and the thumb is on the bottom directly under the index and middle fingers. The ball is gripped loosely and there should be a space between the ball and the V formed by the thumb and index finger. The pads of the fingers should come to rest on top of a seam so that a reverse spin can be put on the ball as it is released.

Proper Throwing Motion

Starting Position: The players should position themselves so their shoulders form a straight line to the target with their throwing shoulder in back and their feet facing forward (perpendicular to the target). The hands should start together at the belly button.

Starting the Throw: When the throw starts the front foot is lifted and slid towards the target. At the same time the hands separate. The glove hand is thrown forward towards the target with the thumb pointing down (this forces the front shoulder to turn in). The throwing hand goes down then back with index and middle fingers on top and pointing away from the target.

Hip Rotation and Weight Shift: As the front foot lands (on the toe and ball of foot), the back hip and shoulder rotate forward towards the target bring the weight up and over the front foot. This rotation and weight shift is the key to using your body to throw. The throwing arm comes up (so the throwing elbow is at least shoulder height) and then forward with the elbow in front of the ball. As the back shoulder comes forward it should be aimed at the target. The glove arm is bent and pulled back into the body so that it tucks right under the shoulder. This movement with the glove arm is important because it helps the hips to rotate and improves throwing accuracy.

Release: The ball is released slightly in front of the body with a downward motion. There should be a snap of the wrists as the ball is released to add velocity to the throw. The ball should just spin off the top pads of the index and middle fingers.

Follow Through: The motion should be completed naturally. The player should let his throwing arm complete its motion and not force it to stop. The back leg will come forward with the weight shift and the back knee should come towards the front knee.

Diagnosing Problems

Check the starting Position: As with hitting, make sure the player is starting in the proper place. Check the ball grip and starting position.

Watch the feet and legs: If they are starting properly, watch their feet and legs when they throw. Watch the front foot to see if they are over striding, landing on their heel, or not stepping directly towards the target. If they stride too far they end up shifting their weight forward before the hips have started to turn and they don't get their body into the throw. If they land on their heel it can force their weight back and make it difficult to rotate their hips. If they don't step directly at the target it will throw off their aim and hip rotation.

Check the body rotation and weight shift: As the front foot lands, the back knee hip and shoulder should rotate and bring the weight forward. If the player's belly button has not turned to face the target at the time of release then the player is not rotating their hips properly. If the back knee does not come towards the front knee then the player is not shifting their weight forward over the front foot.

Arm Position: If the body rotation and weight shift is correct, watch the arm motions. The arms should separate as the player's strides. Make sure the glove arm is thrown out towards the target and then pulled back under the glove side shoulder. Check the throwing arm to make sure it goes down, back and up. When the throwing arm is back the index and middle fingers should be on top. If they are on the bottom the player will end up pushing the ball instead of throwing it. When the throwing arm is up, the elbow must be at least shoulder height. If it is below shoulder height the player ends up short arming the throw and can injure their arm.

Throwing Drills

Wrist Snap

Wrist Drill - Players are on both knees facing each other about 8-10 feet apart. Player 1 will place his throwing elbow in his glove. Raise the throwing elbow so it is even with his throwing shoulder. Concentrate on loading and popping the ball with the wrist to Player 2. There should be very little body movement other than the wrist propelling the ball. Player 2 should give a target and catch the ball with two hands. PURPOSE - focus on the last 10% of the throw/wrist action

Throwing Drill – Motion: Upper Body Movement

Two Knee Throwing - Players are on both knees facing each other at 15 feet. Player 1 will throw to Player 2. The emphasis should be on the hand break out of the glove, arm arc (loose and controlled), turning of the shoulders, release, and follow through. Also it is important to preach proper arm action - ball comes out of glove and proceeds down, back, and up. The fingers should remain on top of the ball. The throwing elbow needs to get even with the throwing shoulder. PURPOSE - To isolate the upper body during the throwing process.

Throwing Arm Down and Back, Fingers on Top

Player 1 is in a throwing position with shoulders lined up facing a target and hands together at chest. Player 2 is on one knee about 8-10 feet directly behind Player 1. Player 1 starts the throwing motion by separating the hands, the glove hand goes forward and the throwing hand goes down and then back in an arc. The fingers are on top of the ball at all times. Player 1 releases the ball as it reaches shoulder level behind their body resulting in a toss to Player 2. Coaches: watch for proper arm separation, throwing arm going down and then back, and that the fingers remain on top of the ball. If the toss does not go directly to Player 2 then make sure the arm is coming straight back.

IV. Fielding

The Basics of Fielding

Choosing The Proper Glove Size

The glove should be small enough so the player can move their arm and wrist easily when the glove is on. The player should not bury their entire hand in the glove. When worn properly the bottom of the palm, near the wrist, is exposed. Smaller gloves force the player to use two hands when catching. Use the chart below as a guide when selecting a glove size:

Determining Your Glove Size		
Age	Position	Glove size
Under 8	All	9 – 10 inches
9-13	Infield	9-10.5 inches
9-13	Outfield	11-12 inches
High School/Adult	Infield	10 1/2-11 1/2 inches
High School/Adult	Outfield	12-12 1/2 inches

Preparation

The first step in fielding is to be prepared, mentally and physically. Before the pitcher starts to throw the fielder has to know what they are going to do with the ball if it is hit to them. As the pitch is delivered an infielder takes two short hops forward with their knees slightly bent, their feet a little more than shoulder width apart and both hands in front of their body. They time their second hop so they land as the ball crosses the plate. If the ball is hit, they are already moving and will be able to react quickly. An outfielder takes the same two-hop approach but their hands do not need to be in front of their body. Their first reaction will be to run so the arms should be prepared to run.

Fielding a Ground Ball – Infielders

Approaching the ball: If the ball is hit directly at an infielder then they should charge the ball. If the ball is hit to either side they should first move laterally until they are in front of the ball and then they should charge the ball. They should NOT take a direct line to the ball that is hit to their side.

Catching the ball: As the ground ball arrives their feet should be slightly more than shoulder width apart with the foot on their glove side slightly in front of the other foot. They should position themselves so the line of the ball is just inside the foot on their glove side. Their knees and waist are bent so the back is parallel to the ground. The ball is caught out in front of the body. Their glove hand should be touching the ground in front of their body with the palm facing up. In order to get the glove in this position they will be forced to bend their knees and waist. Their throwing hand should be on top of their glove hand so they form the shape of an open Alligator's mouth. Their head is square to the ground and watching the ball. After catching the ball they should suck it into their belly and be ready to throw.

Positioning to throw: After catching the ball they can make one of three moves to get their bodies in a throwing position that is lined up to the target. If they are making a short throw they can just POP: take a quick hop (staying in a crouched position) with a slight twist so their throwing arm foot lands behind them and is perpendicular to their target. If they are making a medium length throw they can PIVOT: take a short step forward with their throwing foot so it lands perpendicular to their target so that the next step with their opposite throwing foot will cause them to pivot into a position that lines them up with their target. If they are making a long throw they can shuffle their feet towards the target making sure that their throwing foot is perpendicular to the target when they finish the shuffle. Regardless of the move they choose they should end up with their shoulders lined in a direct line to the target with the throwing shoulder in the back.

Fielding a Fly Ball – Outfielders

Approaching the ball: An outfielders first step should almost always be back. They should not move forwards until they are SURE the ball is hit in front of them. Tell your outfielders that if they are going to make a mistake it should always be in front of them. A mistake in front of them is a single. A mistake behind them could be a HOME RUN! If the ball is hit to their side their first step should be to move their glove side foot back and towards the ball. This pivot will cause a right-handed player to close (turn their back on) a ball hit to their right, and open up on a ball hit their left or directly at them. Their first step should not be lateral. Outfielders should run under control (the head should not bounce up and down) and their glove should NOT be extended until the ball is about to arrive. If they have time, they should always put themselves in a position so they can face the ball and catch it with their arms extended in front of the body.

Catching the ball: Just before the ball arrives they should extend their arms so they catch the ball with two hands away from their body. They should try and position themselves so the glove never blocks their line of sight to the ball.

Positioning to Throw: Most outfield throws will be long so an outfielder should take a shuffle step. They should shuffle their feet towards the target making sure that their throwing foot is perpendicular to the target when they finish the shuffle.

Balls hit down the Line: Tell your left and right fielders that any ball hit between them and the foul line will tail towards the foul line. It doesn't matter if a lefty or righty is up, it will still tail towards the line.

After the Ball is Hit

Teach the players that everyone moves after the ball is hit. Outfielders charge every ground ball and assume that it will get through the infield. They also back up overthrows to the bases. Catchers and second basemen can back up throws to first; the pitcher should be backing up third and home. Players should learn to anticipate throws. If there is a wild throw to first then the left and centerfielders should move to back up the first baseman's throw to second.

Backing Up

Left Fielder

- If there is a runner on third then they backup line after every pitch.
- Ball hit to center, backup the center fielder.
- On a ball hit to right, play at second, backup the throw to second.
- On a ball hit to right, play at third, backup throw to third.
- On a groundball to third or shortstop assume an error and charge hard.
- Rundown going home or third – backup third.
- Rundown going to second – backup second.

Right Fielder

- If there is a runner on first then they backup line after every pitch.
- Ball hit to center, backup the center fielder.
- On a ball hit to left, play at second, backup the throw to second.
- On a ball hit to left, play at first, backup first in foul territory.
- On a groundball to first or second assume an error and charge hard.
- Rundown going to third – backup second.
- Rundown going to second – backup first.

Center Fielder

- If there is a runner on second then they backup after every pitch.
- Ball hit to left, backup the left fielder.
- Ball hit to right, backup the right fielder.
- On a groundball to second or shortstop assume an error and charge hard.
- Rundown going to second or third – backup second.

Catcher

- Bases empty, on a groundball rundown first base line to backup throw to first.
- Runner of first move up the third base line to provide backup at third.
- Runners on second or third, cover home.

Pitcher

- Runner on first, ball hit to right, backup third.
- Runner on second, ball hit to any field, backup home.
- Cover first on anything hit in infield to your left.

Second Baseman

- Runners on third, backup every throw to pitcher.
- Bases empty, backup throw to first on groundball.
- Cover first on groundball to first.

Calling for the Ball

Calling for the ball

Wait for the ball to reach the top of its trajectory. Once you know you can catch the ball call for it. To call for the ball YELL MINE! MINE! The louder you yell, the more likely another player will not collide into you. Don't yell, "I got it", and don't call the ball for someone else (Yours). If you are not sure if you can get to it and, the ball is about to hit and no one has called for it, then call for the ball and try to get it. Call EVERYTHING even if it is hit right at you. This lets the other players know you see the ball (you haven't lost it in the sun) and they don't need to call for it.

Order of Precedence

There is an order of precedence among the fielders with the center fielder being the highest. Center Fielder, Left and Right Fielder, Shortstop, Second Baseman, First Baseman, Third Baseman, Pitcher, Catcher

Whenever possible the player highest in precedence should call for the ball and catch it. Examples:

- Outfielder should try to catch all shallow fly balls.
- Shortstop should try to catch a popup behind third.
- Second baseman should try to catch a popup behind first.
- First and third baseman should try to catch foul pops between their base and home.
- The Center Fielder wins all ties with other outfielders.
- The Shortstop wins all ties with infielders.

If two players call for the ball the player highest in precedence should catch the ball and the other player should back off. Don't dive for a ball if you have not called for it.

Catcher Drills

BARE HAND CATCHING



Procedure: Do not use a glove for this drill. One catcher squats in normal receiving position. The other catcher kneels about 5-7 yards in front with the baseballs. The kneeling catcher proceeds to rapidly backhand the baseballs at different parts of an imaginary strike-zone. The catcher receiving the tosses is trying to catch every ball with soft hands and to stick the pitch. Drop the ball and be ready for the next toss. Start slow and increase in speed once you get comfortable. After the balls are expended, switch rolls.

FRAMING DRILL



One of the most important jobs that a catcher has in order to help is pitcher and get more strikes called. A coach will begin by making his catcher call the pitch either inside or outside. When a catcher frames a pitch on the inside part of the plate his thumb should be in the upward position. When framing a ball on the outside of the plate, set up and stick it. When we say stick it we mean stiff wrist and let the ball go directly to the glove. Repeat till drill is done right.

BLOCKING DRILL



Assume the normal [ready position](#). Your coach (server) should be anywhere from 20 to 30 feet in front of where you are set up with a bucket of baseballs. The server take one knee to prepare to throw pitches in the dirt. The closer the server is to the catcher the easier it is for the server to give good throws. Also, the server should NOT be standing. The server needs to try and replicate the angle at which the pitch will be hitting the dirt. Start by throwing pitches in the dirt directly at the catcher. The catcher should use correct blocking technique to deaden and control the pitch..

Next, work on blocking pitches to each side of the catcher. A good rule of thumb is to let the catcher know which side you will be serving.

HALF AND HALF (BLOCKING AND FRAMING)



THIS DRILL THE CATCHER STARTS IN HIS NORMAL CATCHING STANCE. THE COACH WILL GET GOT ON ONE KNEE ABOUT 44 FEET AWAY FROM THE PLAYER. THE REASON THIS DRILL IS CALLED HALF AND HALF IS BECAUSE HALF THE BALLS WILL BE IN THE DIRT TO BLOCK AND THE OTHER HALF IN THE AIR TO FRAME. THE CATCHER MUST READ THE BALL OUT OF THE HAND AND DECIDE TO BLOCK OR FRAME. REPEAT TILL DRILL DONE RIGHT.

bunt drill (how to field properly)



Player will begin in his catchers squatting stance in his full gear. Coach will stand directly behind the catcher and throw one ball at a time in series of three baseballs, down the first base line, down the third base line, and then up the middle. The player's main objection for the first base line is to travel down the line, if ball is fair, he is going to scoop with both hands, and throw the ball. The objection for the player on the third base line, is to travel to the ball down the line, scoop with your back to the pitcher, pivot, and throw. Finally, the players objection for up the middle is to react as fast as possible towards the baseball, taking his last few steps to round the baseball towards his intended target, as the player scoops the ball with both hands and throws. All scoops should be towards the players back foot so that when the player throws to the intended target with his weight loaded on his backside. All throws should be accurate to the intended target crisply.

Timed Throws



Have a coach or another player go through the motions of a pitcher in the stretch and deliver a ball to you as you crouch behind the plate. As quickly as possible receive the pitch and deliver a throw to another player or coach at second base. A third player or coach should be timing this throw to second with a stopwatch. The stopwatch should begin the moment the ball is caught by the catcher and should be stopped when the person covering second catches the throw (in other words glove-to-glove).

Times:

Measured in seconds to second base on a League sized diamond or your sized field. Times will be affected by age, maturity level, arm strength, accuracy, and quickness. Every catcher's goal should be at the minimum under 3.0 seconds.

Cut-offs

When an outfielder returns his throw to the infield, as a way to line the outfielder up with the base he is intending to make his throw to, a cut-off man is used. In other words, from an infielder's perspective, there are primarily two players with responsibilities to cover a throw from the outfield. There is the infielder who has a base to cover, and there is the infielder who will serve as the cut-off man. The infielder covering the base communicates to the cut-off man which direction he should move (left or right) in order to be in a straight line for the throw from the outfielder to the base. The infielder on the base also informs the cut-off man whether he should "cut" or catch the throw from the outfielder and then make a throw to the base. Or, the infielder on the base says nothing to the cut-off man indicating to the cut-off man to let the throw go through to the base.

When an infielder serves the role of the cut-off man, he must be familiar with the arm strength of his outfielder. An outfielder's goal is to deliver a throw to the infield so that the flight of the baseball is on a line that can be cut-off by the cut-off man, but if need be, still travel all the way to the base with the possibility of one or two hops as it approaches the base depending on the length of the throw. The infielder serving as the cut-off man needs to anticipate a good length to get from his outfielder so that he can receive the throw from his outfielder while the baseball is still on an aggressive flight. In moving out to that distance, the cut-off man upon instruction from his fellow infielder gets inline with the outfielder and the base and puts his arms in the air to signal to his outfielder where the throw should be delivered. Ideally, the cut-off man should also communicate verbally to the outfielder the intended target.



Cut-off man signaling to the outfielder

When a cut-off man receives a "cut" prompt from his teammate covering the base, the cut-off man moves to receive the throw and in doing so, positions his feet so that his feet are online to deliver a throw to the base. He is wary, though, in receiving a "cut" prompt from his teammate, because sometimes there may be a need for a throw to be delivered to a different base than the base that the cut-off man originally lined up to. Because of this possibility, it is often helpful to have the player covering the base not only prompt the cut-off man with the word "cut", but to also add a direction to that prompt. The direction is denoted with a number, such as "1" for first base, "2" for second, "3" for third and "4" for home. Therefore, if a cut needs to be made heading for home, but the throw should go to second because there is a better chance to get the runner heading for that base as opposed to the one heading home, the prompt would be "cut 2".

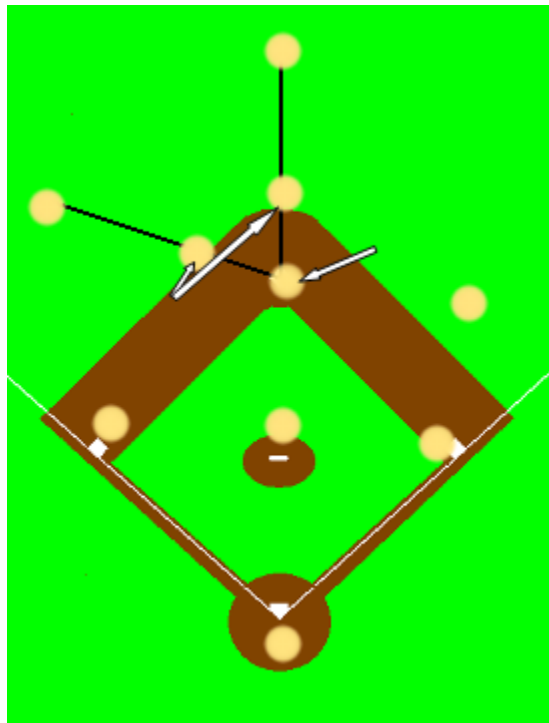


Cut-off man receiving a throw from the outfield

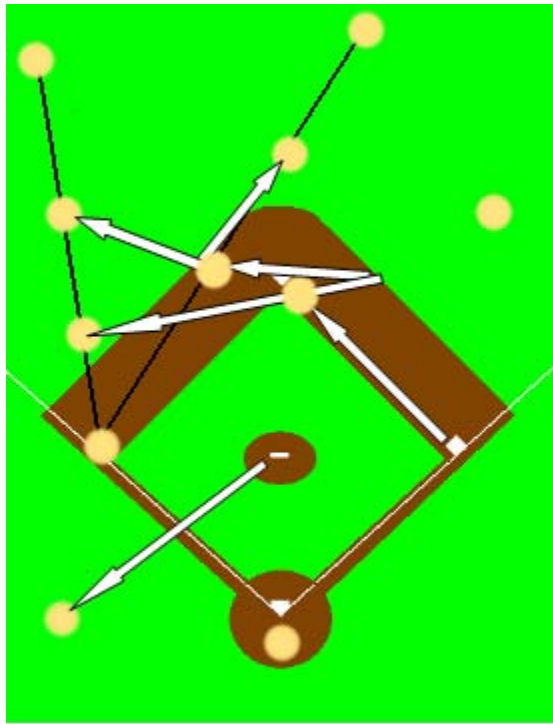
As far as the assignments of the infielders for setting up and receiving throws from the outfield in cut-off situations, there are three situations to be prepared for...a cut to second, a cut to third, and a cut to homeplate. For each situation, the infielders will set up using either a "primary" or "secondary" cut-off system. A primary cut-off situation would be one where the play on the ball by the outfielder is executed in a fashion so that the outfielder has a relatively straightforward throw to make to the infield. In other words, the outfielder is not exhausting his arm strength to try and make the throw to the infield. A secondary cut-off system may be necessary for baseballs that find their way into gaps or down foul lines or simply get past the outfielder all together. For plays such as these, longer throws are required to be made by the outfielder to the infield, which makes a second cut-off man necessary. The second cut-off man simply aligns himself with

the outfielder and the base just as the primary cut-off man does and serves as a back-up or second option for the outfielder to deliver his throw to.

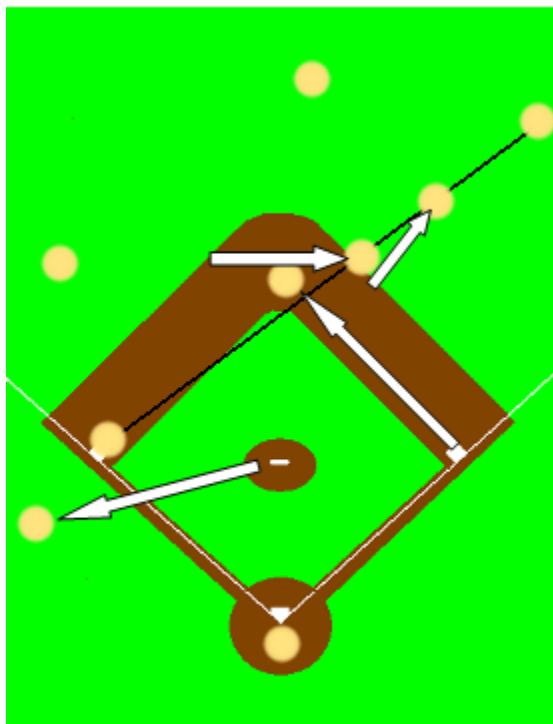
When a cut is required for a throw to second base, the shortstop will serve as the cut-off man for any throws coming from the left and centerfield sides. As long as the play is not made too far to the rightfield side of the outfield, the second baseman will cover second and line up the cut-off man. For a ball to the rightfield side, the second baseman and shortstop simply switch responsibilities.



Cut to second base from left or centerfield



Secondary cut to third from left or centerfield



Secondary cut to third from rightfield