

## Target Skills by Level of Play

### *Age Appropriate Skills*

The approximate, desired skill progression for youth baseball players is noted below. Bear in mind that young players will develop physically and mentally at different rates. Regardless of how hard they throw or how fast they run, players should be able to demonstrate proper technique in specific baseball fundamentals.

### **Tee Ball / Coach Pitch (5-8 yr olds)**

Understand the basic rules of the game:

- Run to the proper place when the ball is hit
- Run past 1st base when appropriate (Round to 2nd, Round to Foul)
- Learn how runs can be scored

Demonstrate the throwing basics:

- Front shoulder points at the target (Point with glove if needed for "T" extension)
- Throwing elbow above shoulder
- Step towards target and throw

Demonstrate fielding basics:

- Ready Position (Feet wide/moving, knees bent, butt down, palms up: knees to waist)
- Glove under hat to field a ground ball
- Catch the ball fingers up (fly ball) and fingers down (ground ball)
- Catch the ball in front of the body
- Cover the ball in glove with bare hand.
- Understand how to get an out (force at 1st, tag on a runner, caught fly ball)

Demonstrate hitting basics:

- Always wear a helmet & only swing when in the batter's box or batting cage
- Hold the bat with hands together/knuckles aligned--Index Finger Test
- Square stance to the pitcher
- Hands at top of strike zone
- Knob of bat to opposite batter's box
- Hit off a tee
- Hit soft toss

- Show support for teammates and enthusiasm to learn
- Listen to coach when coach is talking
- Field only the balls that come to you

## Target Skills by Level of Play

### Machine Pitch (8-10 year olds)

Understand the rules of the game:

- Understand balls, strikes and innings
- Understand when runners can advance
- Understand force out and tag out situations

Demonstrate the Throwing Progression:

- Demonstrate four-seam grip (may use entire hand)
- Basic Progression Execution
  - Snaps (Elbow at Shoulder level, square to target, wrist snap, rotation)
  - Skateboard upright or Glove knee down (weight shift & follow through)
  - Stride out (Add feet--Step to throw)
  - Hops (Three hops to throw)
- Keys: Point the front shoulder, step, throw, eyes-nose-chin to target, feet follow through  
"Nose to Leather" Follow through with eyes and body

Demonstrate fielding basics:

- Demonstrate fielding ground balls to both forehand (down/out/up/in) and backhand
- Demonstrate fly balls--catch above nose and eye level, two hands, glove foot in front
- Demonstrate force outs and basic double play mechanics/footwork
- Demonstrate 1st base mechanics (straddle, see throw, stretch)
- Demonstrate position location knowledge (Where do I stand?)
- Demonstrate basic relay throws
- Catchers demonstrate 3 stances and throw to 2nd base the Spartan Way (3 steps/2 Footwork)

Demonstrate base running techniques:

- Demonstrate 1st three steps out of batter's box
- Safely execute a Bent Leg slide
- Demonstrate straight steals and delayed steals
- Demonstrate when and how to tag up
- Understand when to round 1st base (toward 2nd or foul)

Demonstrate Hitting Mechanics:

- Use proper grip (Index Finger Test)
- Stance: Feet shoulder + wide, knees bent, hands at top of zone, knob to box
- Stride: Small step, load hands/weight back as coach feeds machine
- Pivot: Rear leg "show the ump your cleats--belly button on plate"
- Swing: Hips, arms, two hand follow through
- Demonstrate pitch selection and bunt fundamentals reliably
- Comfortable with batting drills (tee, soft toss, batting cage live toss, bunting)

Teamwork:

- Understand and demonstrate coverage and backup responsibilities (Everyone moves)
- Demonstrate fly ball priority positions and communication
  
- Show support for teammates and enthusiasm to learn
- Arrive at practice and games at time requested, dressed and ready to play
- Show respect by listening, keeping dugout clean and organized, wear uniform correctly
- Set a season improvement goal and demonstrate 100% effort
- Hustle on and off the field

## Target Skills by Level of Play

### Kid Pitch (10-12 yr olds)

- Demonstrate four-seam grip, two seam grip, fastball and change up
- Basic Progression Execution adds Long Toss (focus is mechanics/accuracy not velocity)
- Demonstrate proper follow through on all throws--Follow with your feet
- 6 Step Pitching Progression
  - Stance
  - Rocker Step
  - Pivot
  - Balance
  - Separation / Approach
  - Release
- Demonstrate wind up and stretch
- Demonstrate 1st strike in first two pitches reliably (Control trumps velocity)
- Create a downward plane for the ball

#### Demonstrate fielding techniques:

- Demonstrate double play depth and footwork from all infield positions
- Demonstrate infield communication (plays, coverage, reading the batter, etc)
- Demonstrate pitcher covering 1st base
- Demonstrate outfield readiness, break to ball, square to target, footwork, throw
- Catchers demonstrate signal calling, framing, and reliably throw to all bases

#### Demonstrate base running techniques:

- Demonstrate "First 3 Steps" out of the batter's box
- Understand 1st and 3rd situations
- Demonstrate techniques for straight steals and delayed steals
- Demonstrate coach communication / signal pick-up
- Begins to demonstrate self-thinking/decision making on base paths

#### Demonstrate hitting techniques:

- Demonstrate strong Spartan Hitting Mechanics
- Demonstrate line drives and hard ground balls (No bad hops for fly balls)
- Accustomed to drill work (tee, soft toss, front toss, etc)
- Accustomed to selecting pitches based on count and coach signs
- Begin to develop hitting strategy vs. specific pitchers
- Begin to practice situational hitting (hit and run, sacrifice bunts, bunt for hit, etc)

#### Teamwork:

- Begin to demonstrate ability to read pitchers for teammates
  - Demonstrate coverage and backup responsibilities on every hit (Everyone moves)
  - Demonstrate bunt defenses
  - Demonstrate 1st and 3rd plays
  - Demonstrate run-down techniques with runners on base
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- Respect the game by teaching younger players
  - Demonstrate 100% effort on and off the field--We run between the lines
  - Master playing "one pitch at a time" and rebound quickly from set backs
  - Look for opportunity to help teammate reach their goals

## Target Skills by Level of Play

### (12-14 yr olds)

#### Master the : Throwing and Pitching Progressions:

- Demonstrate four-seam grip, two-seam, and change-up
- Demonstrate throwing for accuracy – all distances including long toss
- Demonstrate pitching and throwing mechanics using the whole body
- Reliably demonstrate 1st of 2 pitches as a strike
- Demonstrate pitch control low and zone control with boxing and tilting at catcher's call
- Demonstrate ability to win 1 ball-1 strike counts with a strike
- Demonstrate hold and pickoff basics

#### Demonstrate fielding techniques:

- Master Fielding Mechanics (Ready Position, Fielding, Throw, Footwork, Follow Through)
- Demonstrate proper angle on the ball to field
- Demonstrate double play depth and turns from all infield positions
- Demonstrate Do or Die outfield ground balls to target (cutoff/base)
- Demonstrate outfield fence drills (recovery and relay)
- Catchers master 3 stances, framing, blocking and provide positive field leadership

#### Demonstrate base running techniques:

- Demonstrate One Way lead and proper leads off all bases
- Demonstrate proper stealing footwork
- Demonstrate breaking on pitcher's first move
- Understand tag-up situations
- Understand 3rd base rules
- Understand no-out, one-out, and two-out rules
- Demonstrates self-thinking / decision making on base paths

#### Demonstrate hitting:

- Master Hitting Mechanics
- Master situational bunting (Short Game)
- Demonstrate line drives and hard ground balls reliably
- Accustomed to drill work (tee, soft toss, front toss, etc)
- Accustomed to selecting pitches based on count and coach signs
- Demonstrate situational hitting (hit and run, etc)
- Demonstrate aggressive versus defensive swings
- No stride hitting

#### Teamwork:

- Demonstrate cutoffs and relays
- Demonstrate advanced pickoff plays
- Demonstrate full bunt defenses
  
- Show respect by teaching younger players
- Demonstrate 100% effort against personal season goals
- Build up teammates through positive support through strike outs, errors and mistakes