

# Hershey Little League

## Player Development Guide



### TBall Division (Ages 4-6)

T-Ball offers the players a great opportunity to develop a strong foundation in batting, throwing, and fielding. Because batters use a tee to hit, they are able to focus on the basic principles of hitting. Coaches' teaching the proper mechanics correctly is essential for players to continue development and hitting confidence. Accurate throwing is a new skill the players will need to develop. T-Ball also formalizes the fielding team's positions and allows players an opportunity to learn the basic strategies of positional play. In addition to promoting good sportsmanship and the goals identified above, the goals and objectives for T-Ball include:

Area	Repetitive/Basic Skills to be Fully Introduced	Skills to be Introduced
Basic Rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which direction to run when the ball is hit</li> <li>• Runners must touch the base,</li> <li>• How to score a run</li> <li>• Foul balls/fair balls</li> <li>• The way outs are made (catching the ball in the air, throwing to first, or tagging the runner)</li> <li>• To run through first base when you're the batter</li> <li>• That three outs constitutes an ½ inning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Base running (when you don't have to run, not running past your teammates on the base paths, etc...)</li> <li>• Staying on your base</li> </ul>
Defense	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn throwing mechanics: turning your body so that the front shoulder points towards the target, keeping the elbow above the shoulder, and stepping toward the target with the non-throwing foot while releasing the ball.</li> <li>• Learn how to separate hands and arms and use proper range of motion in throw</li> <li>• Follow the ball with the eyes into the glove, whether on the ground or in the air; using two hands to catch and field; and catching the ball out in front of your body</li> <li>• Learn to play the position: to let your buddy field a ball that is hit to him or her, and</li> <li>• To be aggressive and go after the ball when it is hit to your position</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Controlling the base runner's advance by throwing to the next base,</li> <li>• Throwing relays, instead of running with the ball,</li> <li>• Throwing the ball back to the pitcher when there is no play to be made</li> <li>• Introduce the areas of responsibility for each position.</li> <li>• Proper fielding mechanics for ground balls &amp; fly balls (catch and cover)</li> </ul>
Offense	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balanced batting stance and positioning to hit off a tee</li> <li>• Fundamental swing mechanics; hand positions, lead arm, swinging through the zone &amp; short stride at pitcher with rhythm, turn hips on ball</li> <li>• Watching the ball come off the bat,</li> <li>• Batting safety (when not to swing bats, wearing batting helmets).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce the importance of looking to the first and third base coaches for running guidance.</li> <li>• The ability to hit softly tossed pitches.</li> </ul>

### Colts Division (Ages 7-8)

Colts Division adds the element of live pitching by both the players and coaches. This allows the players to further develop the fundamentals of hitting. The aspects include timing, watching the ball, and determining if the pitch is a ball or a strike. Players at this level also should be taught base running strategies, introduced to skills such as taking

a lead/wait-and-see approach to a pop-fly, not running from second to third when a grounder is hit to the short-stop (unless there is also a runner on first), and how to avoid committing interference (team on the offense impacts a defensive play) and obstruction (defensive team impacts offensive team- typically standing in the base path when not making a play for the play). In addition to the goals for the T-ball division, the goals and objectives for the Colts Division include:

Area	Repetitive/Basic Skills to be Fully Introduced	Skills to be Introduced
Basic Rules	Learn more advanced elements of the game: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to make force-outs</li> <li>• How to tag up</li> <li>• Base running (when you don't have to run, not running past your teammates)</li> <li>• Distinguishing balls and strikes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interference and obstruction</li> <li>• Running out a single vs making the turn</li> <li>• Introduction to sliding, bent-leg slide.</li> </ul>
Defense	Learn more advanced throwing mechanics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pointing the front shoulder, stepping, and throwing, and follow-through</li> <li>• How to separate hands and arms and use proper range of motion in throw</li> <li>• Proper grip on ball and how to release ball to generate proper spin</li> <li>• Generating momentum toward the target and following the throw.</li> <li>• Pitching – Two seam vs Four seam grip</li> <li>• Proper field mechanics for ground balls &amp; fly balls</li> <li>• Catching with fingers up versus fingers down, using two hands,</li> <li>• Forehand and backhand, and</li> <li>• The underhand flip to a base</li> <li>• Understanding force outs vs when to place a tag on base runner.</li> <li>• Learn to play the positions:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The position and areas each player should cover,</li> <li>○ How to cover the nearest base when the ball is not hit to you, and</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Throwing the ball back to the pitcher when there is no play to be made.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The structure for outfielders to throw to relays into second base.</li> <li>• Controlling the base runner's advance by throwing to the next base, and</li> <li>• Back-up responsibilities (LF, RF, SS, 2B, P,C)</li> <li>• Basic double plays</li> <li>• Straddle the bases on tag plays</li> </ul>
Offense	Learn more advanced hitting mechanics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choosing the right bat,</li> <li>• The proper grip, understanding how each hand controls bat at contact</li> <li>• Balanced batting stance</li> <li>• Fundamental swing mechanics; hand positions, lead arm, swinging through the zone &amp; short stride at pitcher</li> <li>• Rhythm, timing, and balance at contact</li> <li>• Getting foot down in time to see the ball</li> <li>• Watching the ball come off the bat,</li> <li>• Batting safety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Importance of looking to the first and third base coaches for running guidance</li> <li>• Build confidence in aggressive batting approach.</li> <li>• Hitting outside pitch to "opposite side"</li> <li>• 2 strikes=protect plate</li> <li>• Tagging up</li> <li>• Basic "lead" after pitch crosses plate</li> </ul>

## Minors Division (Ages 9-10)

Minors Division adds the element of consistent live player pitching that allows the players to further develop fundamental skills and start to become a more advanced hitter and pitcher. The game will also take on an additional competitive element as the ball is “live” when the pitch is released. As a result, the catcher’s position becomes more important to controlling the pace of the game. Players in this division will continue to develop aspects of good hitting that include timing, watching the ball, and determining if the pitch is a ball or a strike. Players at this level also should practice correct base running strategies and the skills taught in Colts that include taking a lead/wait-and-see approach to a pop-fly, not running from second to third when a grounder is hit to the short-stop (unless there is also a runner on first), and how to avoid committing interference and obstruction. With the added element of youth pitching, coaches must be aware and seek to protect developing players throwing arms and prevent avoidable injury. **Coaches should always be aware of a player’s total pitch count for all baseball being played.** This includes discouraging use of curve balls and sliders. In addition to the goals for the previous divisions, the goals for the Minors Division include:

Area	Repetitive/Basic Skills to be Fully Competent
Basic Rules	Learn more advanced elements of the game: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Base running from second and third base,</li> <li>• Distinguishing balls and strikes, and</li> <li>• Interference and obstruction.</li> </ul>
Defense	Further develop more advanced elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Double-plays,</li> <li>• The run-down,</li> <li>• Covering a bunted ball</li> <li>• Catcher’s basics, including blocking, controlling the ball, making a good throws to second &amp; third bases</li> <li>• Controlling the base runner’s advance by throwing to the next base, and</li> <li>• Learn Basic pitching mechanics, including Two seam &amp; Four-seam grip; pointing the front shoulder, stepping, and throwing; and generating momentum toward the target by driving back leg, and following the throw, glove up to catch a hit ball</li> <li>• For more advanced players, introducing full wind-up rather than pitching from stretch.</li> <li>• Develop greater arm strength and be able to make an accurate throw from third base to first base using the whole body.</li> <li>• Master catching and fielding techniques, including handling thrown and hit balls, first-base fundamentals, and crossovers and drop steps.</li> <li>• Develop more advanced positional play:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The position and areas each player should cover and back up,</li> <li>○ How to cover the nearest base when the ball is not hit to you, and</li> <li>○ Cutoffs and relays, taking “care of” the ball</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Calling for the ball or calling off other players</li> </ul>
Offense	Develop hitting techniques, while reinforcing the fundamentals of hitting mechanics, including, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning advantaged/disadvantaged counts while hitting</li> <li>• Learn to create torque in swing</li> <li>• Learning how to approach offspeed pitching/reading the pitch</li> <li>• Bunting basics</li> <li>• The use of signs from the third base coach</li> <li>• Aggressive base running, including rounding bases at right times, avoiding the double-play, anticipating hits, running behind a thrown ball</li> <li>• Bent leg slide, calling “time” to recover</li> </ul>

**Majors Division (Ages 11-12)**

Majors Division players should be ready for the more advanced and technical skills of the game. At this level of play, coaches should also assist the players to further understand the technical aspects of the big picture of the game. As with the Minors Division, **coaches should always be aware of developing pitchers and the players' total pitch-counts from all baseball being played.** The fundamentals taught at the younger age divisions should be mastered during these levels and players in this division should continue to develop aspects of strong hitting that include timing, watching the ball, and determining if the pitch is a ball or a strike.

Offensive Technical Skills	Defensive Technical Skills
Preparing to hit/getting set Swing fundamentals with balance, rhythm, torque, and timing at contact Mental approach to at-bats (adv/disadv counts) Bunting basics and advanced bunting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sacrifice bunting</li> <li>• Drag bunting</li> </ul> Base running more aggressive skills, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch base coaches</li> <li>• Rounding the bases</li> <li>• Stealing second base</li> <li>• Stealing third &amp; home</li> <li>• Bent-leg slide</li> <li>• Anticipating hits</li> </ul>	Throwing basics-control the ball Catcher basics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Catcher blocking/wild pitch, control the ball</li> <li>• Reacting as a catcher, both knees up</li> </ul> Pitcher basics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pitcher stretch mechanics</li> <li>• Fastball</li> <li>• Change-up</li> <li>• Reading/knowing the batters</li> </ul> Outfield basics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenging outfield plays</li> <li>• Communication</li> </ul> Infield basics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fielding ground balls</li> <li>• Double plays</li> <li>• Fielding pop-ups in the Field</li> </ul>
Offensive tactical skills	Defensive Tactical Skills
Aggressive base running and avoiding errors Base running from Second to score Scoring from Third First-and-Third Play Using the Bunt, stealing second base, stealing third base Situational hitting Handling a rundown	Defensive positioning Defending the First-and-Third Double Steal Defending bunt situations Pitcher pickoffs Catcher pickoffs Double-Play defense Determining the best pitching options Rundowns Wild pitch coverage Backing up throws Cutoffs