

# **COACHES GUIDE**

**Castro Valley Girls Softball League**



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# INTRODUCTION

## WELCOME!

Thank you for volunteering and committing yourself to the young women of the Castro Valley Girls Softball League. CVGSL Inc. is dedicated to the development of maturity and the achievement of success through a program of action for the youth of Castro Valley and the surrounding areas. This goal will be attained by recruitment and training of qualified adults at the community level. The building of character and molding of personality transcends the acquisition of athletic skills or the winning of the games. The primary concern of CVGSL is to help prepare today's youth for active leadership roles as the citizens of tomorrow. One of the paramount goals of CVGSL is to contribute positively to the quality of life of the youth in the program. To achieve this, the attitudes and conduct of everyone involved must be exemplary. This includes positive attitudes and practices of integrity, loyalty and sportsmanship. It also includes prohibitions against such things as profanity, use of tobacco and drinking of alcoholic beverages on the playing field or while acting in any official capacity in the presence of the youth. Any spectator, coach or manager drinking alcoholic beverages or engaging in abusive language or conduct will be ejected from the premises by the umpire or by any authorized Board member. In addition, the umpire may penalize a team whose spectators are abusive toward an umpire.

## **Where do You Start?**

What can you reasonably expect to teach your players? Start with the fundamentals and build from there. And don't underestimate them! You will be amazed at what these kids can learn!

### **Basics:**

By the end of the season, we would expect that all your players would have learned some basic fundamentals. The following skills are a good starting point:

- *The ability to throw the ball properly.*
- *The ability to field and catch the ball properly; (a thrown ball, grounders and fly balls).*
- *The ability to hit the ball using proper mechanics.*
- *A basic understanding of the rules.*

### **Positions:**

You cannot reasonably expect to teach all your players all positions. If you attempt to let all players play every position, they will not learn any position.

- *Each player should be taught 2 or 3 positions. Place them in positions where they have a chance to succeed. For example, a player with good catching skills is a good candidate to play 1B; a player with a good arm might play SS or 3B.*
- *At least 1 of these positions should be infield position and strive to play each player in the infield at least one inning in every game.*
- *You should develop approximately 3 pitchers, so that those pitchers get enough repetitions to become reasonably effective. (This is important to maximize everyone's enjoyment of the game).*

### **Sportsmanship:**

Above all, teach your kids sportsmanship:

- *Teach your kids to cheer for and to support their team mates.*
- *Teach your kids never to cheer against the other team. Negative cheers that mock, humiliate, or attempt to distract the players on the opposing team are not what CVGSL is about, (and will not be tolerated).*

## **How?**

So how can you teach them these things?

- *Be Patient with them, they may not get it the first time.*
- *Consistency...they will learn best if you and your assistants keep teaching the skills in a consistent manner.*
- *Reverse Chaining is a technique that works well when teaching new techniques or reinforcing those skills they are developing. Basically break down the end result into a few steps that can be done in sequences at different cadences.*
- *Repetition, repetition, repetition! Organize your practices so that every player gets lots of repetitions and everyone is kept busy.*
- *Have a **plan** for every practice and every game.*
- *And above all, Positive Reinforcement! Show them the right way, tell them what they are doing right; not what they are doing wrong. It is much more effective!*

## **How to use this book:**

This book is designed for all ages and skill levels. Skills presented in this manual are divided into 3 Levels of experience:

### **Level 1:** Basic Fundamentals:

This is probably the most important, because if your players can't do the most fundamental skills consistently and with confidence, then they are not going to be able to move to something more challenging. These skills and drills are labeled "Level 1" or just "L1" in this book. Make sure your players can perform these skills before you attempt to teach them anything else. Mike Candrea, former coach of the US National Team says, "You can't win at this game if you can't play catch".

### **Level 2:** Intermediate Skills:

Once players have built a sound foundation in the fundamentals, then they are ready to develop further. Those skills and drills labeled "Level 2" or "L2" are some things to try next with your kids, but not until they are ready.

### **Level 3:** Advanced Skills:

There are a few skills, but not many labeled "Level 3" or "L3". These are skills you probably shouldn't attempt with your players unless you

are coaching a truly more advanced team. This book was not intended to cover advanced skills, so there are not many here.

# Defense

**Rule 1: Go for every ball.**

**Rule 2: When the ball is just out of reach, see Rule 1.**

## **DEFENSIVE SKILLS: READY POSITION**

### **Basic "Ready" Position (Level 1)**

- *Player assumes "ready" position as the pitcher starts her wind-up, (Every pitch).*
- *Player assumes an athletic position:*
  - *Some flex or bend in the knees and at the waist*
  - *Squared up to Home Plate.*
  - *Hands out front about waist high*
  - *Palms facing in, (thumbs of both hands to the sky).*
- *From this position, a player only needs to:*
  - *Turn her glove a quarter turn to fingers up to catch a ball above the waist, or*
  - *Turn her glove a quarter turn to fingers down to catch a ball below the waist or a ground ball.*

### **More Intermediate "Ready" Position (Level 2)**

- *Ready position is as above, but the player "walks into" this position or "creeps" into this position.*
- *As the pitcher is in her wind-up, the player takes a couple of short, steps in and then a very small hop, (Right, Left, Hop) \* ending up in the position described above.*
- *This gets the player moving forward and on the balls of her feet in a position to move quickly in any direction.*
- *Coach your players to time this so their ending little hop is timed with the ball entering the strike zone. They need to be moving on every pitch.*

### **More Advanced "Ready" Position (Level 3)**

- *More advanced players will vary the above based on position.*
- *Infielders will bend at the knees and waist to get low more than outfielders.*
- *Corner infielders (1st & 3rd) will get even lower than middle infielders.*
- *Also, in advanced play the corner infielders are already pretty far in toward home, so, they will not creep in further to a ready position, but rather will "get light on their feet" in place as they adopt ready position.*



infield

Outfield

\* Assumes right handed player

### **Drills:**

- *1.0 Mirror: Two lines of players facing each other – 6 ft. apart. Get into Infield ready position while coach corrects one line, the 'Mirror' corrects their own position on what they see. Hold for 10-15 seconds. Repeat and now coach corrects other line and the mirror corrects their own position. Hold for 10-15 seconds. Repeat this quick drill a few times.*
- *1.1 Shadow: Same concept now the players are now facing the same direction but in shorter lines. 12 player team, 3 rows of 4 about 10-12 feet between rows. On Coaches whistle or "Go" players walk into ready position. Hold 10-15 seconds or enough time for coach to correct. Repeat as necessary 3-4 reps.*
  - *Right handed players – Right foot left foot*
  - *Left handed players – Left foot right foot*

## **Defensive Skills: Receiving a Ball**

### **Receiving a Thrown Ball Basic Mechanics (L1):**

- *Player starts in a "ready" position (see preceding section).*
- *The arms are extended slightly toward the thrower with the elbows slightly bent.*
  - *As the ball comes, the glove position is adjusted to the direction of the throw.*
  - *Thumbs to Thumbs both glove hand and throwing hand*
  - *Fingers down for low throws.*
  - *Fingers "point" to the ball*
  - *As she catches the ball, she should flex her arms to lessen the impact, ("soft hands").*
- *The bare hand secures the ball in the glove. Find the seams and cover the C seams.*

### **Receiving a Ball (L2):**

- *Once players are reasonably comfortable with the above, coach your players to "move to the ball". On a throw right to them, step forward toward the ball, don't wait for it.*
- *On throws off to the side, coach players to move to get in front of it and catch it in front of their body.*
- *They can start the footwork of transitioning to a throw while they are catching it; start to step forward planting the throwing side foot out at 45 degrees to begin turning the hips and shoulders to a throwing position.*

### **Points of Emphasis:**

- *For beginners of all ages, the biggest obstacle to proper technique is fear of the ball. Remember that fear of the ball is not a lack of "courage" but a lack of "confidence".*
- *Confidence can only come from experience. Repetition, repetition, repetition! (But encourage them to use proper mechanics every time).*
- *A common mistake is for players to catch the ball off to the side. Emphasize that players should get in front of the ball every time.*
- *Another common mistake is incorrect glove position. This is not only less effective, but can also increase chance of injury. Encourage players to use proper glove position every time. (See "Tracking" drill).*

### **Drills:**

#### **1. Tracking or Quadrants - to teach proper glove position (L1)**

- *Coach stands directly in front of player, holding a ball.*
- *Coach moves the ball to a variety of positions, high, low, left, right*
- *Player moves glove to proper position as if to catch the ball where the coach is holding it, and wherever the coach moves it.*

#### **2. Playing Catch with a Coach - to reinforce proper mechanics while the player is learning. (L1)**

- *To get players to use proper glove positions and to get in front of the ball, break the players up into as many groups as you have coaches.*
- *Have each coach stand in front of each player in line at a short distance.*
- *Toss the ball easily to the player at a variety of heights and positions. Encourage the player to move to the ball and use the correct glove position.*
- *The use of a short distance is designed to get past the natural fear of the ball in an inexperienced player. Move back to a greater distance as the player gains confidence.*

#### **3. Simply Have your Players Play Catch (All Levels) – Should be done at every practice when warming up arms.**

- *"You can't win at this game if you can't play catch".*

#### **4. Four Corners – Throwing 60 ft. (L2)**

- *Divide the team as equally at each base. It does not matter what position they play.*
- *Start the ball home plate throwing to 3rd base, counter clockwise. Player at third base throws to 2<sup>nd</sup>, to 1<sup>st</sup>, to home. Each player at the base will catch and throw the ball accurately*

- to the next bag. The player then rotates to the back of the line of the same base.*
- *The goal here is to have great footwork, quickness and accuracy. Once you make it through all four bags without a dropped or overthrown ball, then..*
  - *REVERSE Directions – Clockwise which adds the glove side turn.*
    - *When catching the ball on the glove side, the player turns the same direction as their glove hand (quarter spin) to maximize the throws efficiency.*
    - *This adds a level of focus to all players. Those who are waiting in line MUST keep an eye on the ball at all times as to protect themselves from over thrown or missed balls.*

NOTE: If a ball gets overthrown or missed. Have coach with extra balls throw the ball into play vs. having players chase the ball. This speeds up the drill tremendously.

### **5. Rapid Fire (L3)**

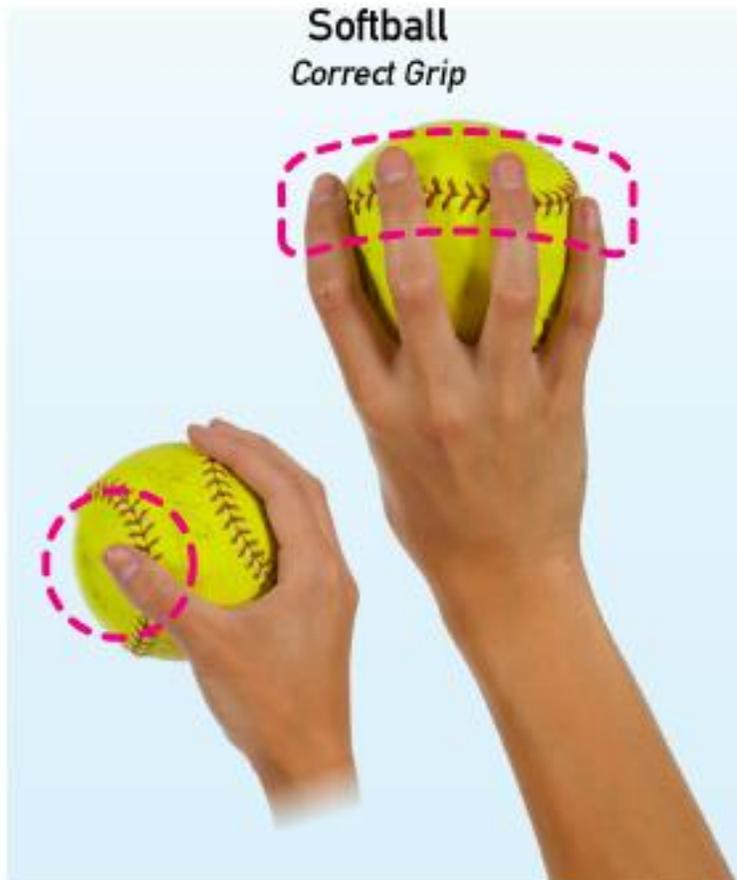
- *Divide team into two single file lines facing each other about 30 feet apart.*
- *Player at front of each line will throw to the first player of the other line as fast as she possibly can with good technique, focusing on grip, ball transfer and quick release, following the throw rotating to the opposite line at the end.*
- *Player receiving the ball in athletic position, stepping to the ball, replacing the feet as quickly as possible.*
- *Goal is to go through entire rotation once without a drop or miss thrown ball.*
  - *As the players advance with this drill you can add side arm throw rotation and opposite foot throws.*

NOTE: If a ball gets overthrown or missed. Have coach with extra balls throw the ball into play vs. having players chase the ball. This speeds up the drill tremendously.

## Defensive Skills: Throwing

### The Grip: 4-Seam

- *Most important aspect of being an accurate, good thrower. Girls hands are smaller, throwing a much bigger ball than a baseball. Having control of the ball and creating velocity comes from the grip.*
- *4-Seam, player holds the ball and locates the "C" on the ball. Covering the top of the C with the four finger tips (comfortably spread) and the thumb wrapped underneath on the opposite seam. If you turn the ball the thumb and index finger form a backwards C.*



IMPORTANT NOTE: DO NOT have the ball cupped into the palm of the hand. There should be a gap in between the ball and the palm.

- *As the player's hands grow they can start removing the pinky finger from the grip or even both ring and pinky. Less fingers, less friction = more velocity.*

**Throwing: Progression** "You must create resistance in a throw to create velocity."- Austin Wasserman

1. **Arm (scapula) load - 1-2-3:** *Players facing each other 15' apart*
  - *start in a one knee position facing target with glove hand at chest. (throwing leg up, glove leg kneeling)*
  - *squared up facing forward, ball behind head, elbow up and pointed to side (1)*
  - *reach elbow back feeling stretch in armpit (2) – Ball hand rotates ball away from target*
  - *release keeping elbow up (3)*
  - *Tuck glove to glove side shoulder, throw hand follow throw to opposite hip, throw side shoulder coming through target.*
2. **Facing Forward Double Throw – Infinity Motion:** *Players facing each other 20' apart*
  - *start in athletic position facing target with hands together at chest*
  - *full separation and arm load and release without hesitation twice (first time no release) – Torque trunk and core.*
  - *use legs but no stepping*
  - *Tuck glove to glove side shoulder, throw hand follow through to opposite hip, throw side shoulder coming through target.*
3. **Scarecrow Sideways Full Throw:** *Players facing each other 25' apart*
  - *Scarecrow, scapulae loaded, sideways, athletic position*
  - *same as 4 with slide step*
  - *Follow through with back side leg past front side leg.*
  - *Tuck glove to glove side shoulder, throw hand follow through to opposite hip, throw side shoulder coming through target. Back leg comes forward landing past front side leg.*
4. **Backwards Full Throw:** *Players facing each other 40' apart*
  - *Squared up with back facing target, hands at chest*
  - *Step back one step with throwing side foot, going into scarecrow and loading scapula's. Version 2 – take multiple short chop steps.*
  - *look and reach with glove hand (behind) for target and throw*
  - *Follow through with back side leg past front side leg.*
  - *Tuck glove to glove side shoulder, throw hand follow through to opposite hip, throw side shoulder coming through target. Back leg comes forward landing past front side leg*
5. **Normal Throw:** *Players facing each other 45' apart*
  - *start with hands at chest, facing forward at target*
  - *include stepping into throw with throwing side foot*
  - *Tuck glove to glove side shoulder, throw hand follow through to opposite hip, throw side shoulder coming through target. Back leg comes forward landing past front side leg*

**6. Crow Hop:** *Players facing each other 60' apart*

- *Start 3-4 feet before you launching point.*
- *Start your step progression*
  - *Rt. Handed players. Rt. Lt.*
  - *Lt. Handed Players, Lt. Rt.*
- *On the third step, player tries to create as much lateral distance/momentum towards target.*
  - *Driving off glove hand foot, throw hand foot "big step" forward, closing hips.*
  - *Landing on throw hand foot, low throw pulling down on the seams. Follow throw! back leg through the target, throwing hand to opposite hip. Hips should be closed, with back hip facing target.*

**7. Long Toss**

- *Players full motion start at 70' apart and on each round of throw, takes 3 steps back.*
- *Players start correcting the angle of their release point to provide maximum distance to the strength of their arms. Pulling down on the seams is something that should be reinforced with these throws.*
- *5-10 reps.*
  - *NOTE: It does not matter if the ball bounces 1-3 times to get there if its in-line with the target.*
  - *Sticking with the long toss is the best way to strengthen player's arms. And in a short period, you will see the difference in power, accuracy and confidence.*

*\*\*\*No time for full progression - Quick warmup 2,3,5 only\*\*\**

**Drills –**

○ **Throwing to Net or back stop: (L1)**

- *Divide team into two groups - Players lined up at 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> base. All players have a ball in glove.*
- *Set targets – ball buckets or nets at 1<sup>st</sup> and home.*
- *1 Player get in third and second positions in ready position as if they had just fielded a ball.*
- *On coaches whistle the players throw trying to hit target. NOTE: players after release "follow throw" with at least two steps towards target.*
- *Once player has thrown and taken steps hustle to back of line and not disrupting the drill.*
- *Next player should be in position when the throw is released.*
- *Rotate lines after a few reps. This is a fast drill. Have one coach at each line correcting AFTER the throw is completed. One coach or manager running drill with whistle or on his/her go.*

- **Crow hop from Outfield: (L2)**
  - Same concept of drill above. Have buckets of balls at the end of each line.
  - Two lines in Centerfield about 10-12' feet apart. Target at home plate. Net or stacked buckets on third base side of plate.
  - Starting position Ball in glove, fielded on outside of glove side foot. Coaches whistle, players simulate coming out of fielded ball and take crowhop technique to hit target.
  - Fast drill, once the player has completed the throw, next player in line should be in ready position.
  - VARIATIONS – Placing Targets at cut-off positions or at 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> bases. Move to left and right fields. Evolution: replacing targets with players.
  
- **Throwing Relay: Focus on proper mechanics and "Game Speed" (L2)**
  - Players are divided into 2 groups. Players in each group are placed in a straight line with players 20-30 ft. apart.
  - The groups of players must be in parallel lines with players equally spaced.
  - The player at one end of each line starts with the ball, and on the coach's signal, throws to the next player in line.
  - Each player in line catches the ball and then throws to the next player in line, focusing on proper positioning to receive the ball and then turning quickly into a proper throwing position.
  - When the ball reaches the player at the end of the line, she throws back to the player she received it from to start the ball back down the line.
  - The first team to successfully throw the ball down the line and back "wins".
  
- **Sidearm Throw (L3)**
  - Often a more advanced player will use a sidearm motion when fielding a slowly hit infield ground ball where there is insufficient time to come upright to throw.
  - The player fields the ground ball on the run.
  - Then without rising, swings the arm into an "L" position.
  - Pulls the glove side shoulder back out of the way, turning the shoulders for the throw.
  - Note: this is not truly a "sidearm" throw, as the relationship of the arm and shoulder is maintained almost as if it were overhand; upper body is just bent forward.
  - Note: With the turning of the shoulders, the player is not throwing across the body. Tips on Teaching:

- Break the throwing motion into its component parts and work on 1 component at a time with beginners.
- Work backwards.
  - start the girls in the body sideways / arm in the "L" position, and have them step and throw.
  - Lastly work on getting to the above position
    - Encourage players to do it right every time. Most coaches have the girls start practice by playing catch to warm up their arms. This is fine, but make sure they are using proper throwing (& catching) technique.
    - Start with shorter throws and then gradually move back to greater distances to develop strength.

## **Defensive Skills: Fielding**

### **Fielding a Ball - Basic Skills – L1:**

*(Assumes right-handed player)*

The following techniques assume that the ball is hit in the direction of the player fielding or close enough that the player can get in front of the ball easily.

#### **1. Approach to the ball**

- First get in front of the ball whenever possible.
- Get into position to field the ball inside the line of feet whenever possible, slightly off-center of the body to the glove side.
- Always field balls moving forward, ("charge" the ball)
- Gradually get low when approaching the ball, (like an airplane coming into land)

#### **2. Field the ball:**

- As the ball approaches, "Square-up" to the ball using "Right-Left-Field" footwork, with the glove side foot slightly forward.
- Get low. Bend at the knees, Butt down, Head up (Do not bend at the waist) • Hands out in front of toes. The point where the ball is fielded and the 2 feet should form an off-set triangle. (Off set slightly to the glove side)
- The glove side arm should maintain a slight bend at the elbow to absorb the ball.
- Back of glove, (not tip) is on the ground. Bare hand is above the glove. ("Alligator hands")
- Watch the ball all the way in to the glove. (Person standing in front should see the top of the player's head).

### **3. Transition to Throw:**

- *After securing the ball, step with throwing side foot on a line to the target, but with the foot angled out at 45 degrees, (starts the hips to turn to throw).*
- *As the arm swings up into a throwing position, the hips and shoulders turn so that the glove side shoulder points toward the target.*
- *Step toward the target with the glove side foot and throw, (for more detail, see "Throwing a Ball" section).*
- *For a right hander, the entire footwork is: Right – Left – Field..... Right – Left – Throw. 14*

### **Fielding a Ball Intermediate Skills - L2:**

1. Approach to the ball (Add to the above) •
  - *Round the ball. That is, instead of approaching the ball directly, bend your approach out slightly away from your target, so that...*
  - *You field the ball moving more in the direction of your target, facilitating the transition to throw.*
2. Field the ball: (Add to the above) •
  - *As the ball approaches, pick your hop: "Short" Hop (just as it comes off the ground) or "Long" Hop, (near it's highest point) •*
  - *When fielding on the short hop, field moving the glove forward into the ball. •*
  - *When fielding on the long hop, absorb the ball with your hands into your body as you secure it.*
3. Transition to Throw: Variations on footwork, for balls hit to the player's left or right. The following assumes right handed player, transitioning to throw to 1st, (2B) and 2nd or 1st (SS, 3B). (Obviously, there are other variations for throws to other bases). •
  - *For balls hit to the player's left: Use the "replace the feet" technique.*
    - *Pivot to the left and take a cross over step with the right foot, and run to the ball. Get in front of it if possible and square up on it, and field normally. Stretch out to field only if necessary.*
    - *After securing the ball, take a quick shuffle step where the Right foot hops to the place the left foot just was as the left foot begins to stride toward the target, thus "replacing the feet"*
    - *With this footwork, turn the hips and shoulders in line with the target and throw. •*

- *For balls hit to the player's right: Use the "plant & throw" technique*
  - *Pivot to the right and take a cross over step with the left foot, and run to the ball. Get in front of it if possible and square up on it, and field normally. (Backhand plays discussed later) ...*
  - *After securing the ball, just plant the right foot to stop your momentum, turn your hips and shoulders in line with the target, step with the left toward the target and throw.*
  - *Take special precaution to pull down with the glove side shoulder as you throw, as there is a tendency to throw high as the momentum is taking you away from the target.*

**Fielding a Ball - Advanced Skills L3: Backhand Plays** (Assumes right-handed player)

Coach your players to attempt to field a ball with a backhand motion only if there is no other choice. If possible they should always get in front of the ball. The following assumes the ball is hit sufficiently to the player's right, that a backhand attempt is the only option. 1.

*1. Approach to the ball*

- *Take a cross over step with the left foot and angle back toward the outfield grass.*
- *As you approach the ball, get as low as possible.*

*2. Field the ball:*

- *As the ball approaches, field the ball with the glove out in front, backhand, with fingers down.*
- *The glove side arm should maintain a slight bend at the elbow to absorb the ball.*

*3. Transition to Throw: You can't always control whether you will need to field the ball off your left or right foot.*

- *If you field it off your left foot, step through right foot, plant and throw. Take special precaution to pull down with the glove side shoulder as you throw, as there will be a tendency to throw high. •*
- *If you field it off your right foot, simply plant and throw. Again, take special precaution to pull down with the glove side shoulder as you throw, as there will be a tendency to throw high.*

**"Do or Die" Plays** (Assumes right-handed player) On a slowly hit ball, your player may not always have to the time to stop and set themselves to make the throw. The following technique is only for that situation.

*1. Approach to the ball*

- Approach the ball on the run
- Get as low as possible.
- 2. Field the ball:
  - As you approach the ball simply attempt to field the ball off the glove side foot without stopping.
  - The glove side arm should maintain a slight bend at the elbow to absorb the ball.
- 3. Transition to Throw:
  - As you secure the ball, swing the arm into normal "L" throwing motion, but without coming up.
  - To clear a path for the throw, pull back on your glove side shoulder to open the shoulders as you throw.

### **Tips on Teaching:**

- As with catching a thrown ball, the biggest obstacle to players using proper technique is fear of the ball.
- Break the whole action of fielding a ball into component parts and practice those until the player gets comfortable.
- Start by picking up stationary balls using proper mechanics and then move to softly rolled balls. Encourage players to focus on proper mechanics in an environment where they don't need to be afraid of a sharply hit ball.
- Repetition, repetition, repetition! The only way players will become skilled at this is by doing it. Practice of this skill should be part of every practice and pregame warm up.

### **Points of Emphasis:**

- The clear majority of ground balls that are missed are because the balls went under the glove or off the fingertips of the glove. Encourage your players to get low and get the "back of the glove dirty".
- The next most common problem area is players attempting to field the ball off to the side or by their foot. Encourage your players to square up to the ball and catch it out front and in the center of their body.
- Another common problem is players bend at the waist instead of bending the knees and getting their hips down and head up.
- Also, make sure that the bare hand is above the glove with the palm up facing the oncoming ball. If the hand is palm-down, then the fingers are in a position vulnerable to getting jammed. The bare hand is there to protect the face on bad hops as much as it is to trap the ball in the glove.
- Back-hand attempts and fore-hand attempts should only be if the player cannot get in front of the ball.

**Drills:**

1. "Soft Hands" (To develop soft hands) L1
  - Partners stand about 6-8 ft. apart without gloves
  - Partners roll the ball back and forth underhanded.
  - They field the ball with bare hands in proper position, and gather the ball into their belly.
  - The hips are down and the arms create a triangle.
2. "Rollers" (To focus on mechanics) All Levels
  - Coach has a bucket of balls to the 3rd base side of the mound, and another empty bucket at 1st base.
  - A line of players will be at shortstop, and a player at 1st base.
  - The coach just rolls a ball to the 1st player at shortstop, who fields the ball and throws to 1st, using proper mechanics.
  - The player at 1st catches the ball and just puts the ball in her bucket.
  - The coach can vary the path and speed of the ball in a vary controlled way and get through many reps with the players very quickly.
3. "Cross-Fire" (Develop skills in a game-like situation) All Levels
  - Players are in 2 lines, 1 at shortstop and the other at 2nd base position. One coach is between home and 1st, (outside the foul line), and another coach is between 3rd and home.
  - The coaches hit ground balls to the players opposite them, 3 balls to each player in turn.
  - The player fields the ball and throws it back to the coach. (A Player can be used as a receiver to catch the ball, and would be positioned near (out front) of the coach. •
  - After each player completes her turn, she moves to the back of the other line.
    - Variation: A game can be made of this, by having the coaches hit the ground balls at precisely the same time. The players field the ball and get the ball back to the person receiving the ball as quickly as possible, competing to see which player can get the ball fielded and back in first, (scoring 1 pt for their team each time they succeed in beating the other team).

## **Defensive Skills: Fielding Fly Balls & Pop-Ups**

### **Fielding a Fly Ball –**

#### **Basic Skills – L1: (Assumes right-handed player)**

- *Move to the ball. First step should be back (drop step) to the side of the expected ball flight. As the player takes the drop step, hips should also turn.*
- *Players should run to the ball. Get in front of it. Then put your glove up.*
- *Players should catch the ball at nose or eye level looking over the top of the glove to track the ball.*
- *Ball is caught in "fingers-up" position (whenever possible), about head high, in front of the body. •*
- *Two hands to the ball. •*
- *Transition to throw using left – right- left "Crow Hop" (see "Throwing a ball section).*

#### **Fielding a Fly Ball – Intermediate to Advanced Skills – L2-3: •**

- *More advanced players will learn to move under the ball intentionally taking a position 2-3 steps in back of where they intend to catch it, then....*
- *Catch the ball moving forward at the last instant, and transitioning into their throwing position all in one motion.*

#### **Tips on Teaching:**

- *Only confidence gained through practice will eliminate natural fear of the ball.*
- *Start easy with short soft tossed flies. Gradually increase distance as players develop confidence.*
- *Again, repetition, repetition, repetition! Confidence in the ability to catch a fly only comes with experience. The ability to judge a ball's flight only comes with experience.*

#### **Points of Emphasis:**

- *Inexperienced players often run to the ball with the glove extended. They can't run as fast that way and should be coached to run to the spot and then put their glove up. •*
- *Emphasize proper glove position. New players often try to catch all balls with a "basket" catch. Emphasize a fingers up glove position.*

## **Drills:**

1. **"Drop Step"** (Focus on that initial drop step) L1-2
  - Player stands facing coach about 3-4 ft. away.
  - Coach points left or right and player immediately "drop steps" and starts running in that direction angling away from the coach.
  - The coach tosses a ball in that direction, and the player runs under it and catches it, throws the ball back to the coach and returns to the end of the line.
  - As the players get proficient at this, gradually increase the distance players must run to the ball. Train your players to be able to run for the ball at top speed.
  
2. **"Wide Receiver"** (Focus on finding and tracking the ball) L1-2
  - Each player has a ball and forms a line with the coach at the head of the line.
  - The 1st player hands her ball to the coach and starts running away from the coach.
  - The coach calls left or right and at the same time tosses a ball in that direction.
  - The player finds the ball, tracks it, runs under it and catches.
  - Player keeps that ball and returns to line.

# Basic Defensive Position Responsibilities

“There are three types of baseball players: those who make it happen, those who watch it happen, and those who wonder what happens.”

- Tommy Lasorda

## **Note:**

The responsibilities outlined below are very basic. Obviously there many possible game situations that would require variations of these, and they can't all be covered here. But teach your players, that “there are no spectators” .... everyone has somewhere to go on every play. Coach them to think of their responsibilities in a sequence of “Ball, Base, Backup”. Their first responsibility is always field the ball; if not hit to them, do they need to cover a base? Lastly if neither of those, then where do they need to back up?

## **Infielders:**

- **1st Base**
  - ✓ *Primary responsibility is to field any balls hit in her direction.*
  - ✓ *In bunt situations, her responsibility is to charge the bunt.*
  - ✓ *If the ball is not hit to her, and it is not a bunt, she immediately moves to cover 1st base (every time)*
- **2nd Base**
  - ✓ *Primary responsibility is to field any balls hit in her direction*
  - ✓ *If a ball is hit to the left side of the field the player moves to cover 2nd base.*
  - ✓ *If the ball is hit toward the 1st baseman, the player moves to cover 1st base or to back up the 1st baseman.*
  - ✓ *In bunt situations, her responsibility is to cover 1st*
  - ✓ *If the ball is hit to right field, the player moves to a position to act as a cut-off and receive a throw from the outfielder.*
- **3rd Base**
  - ✓ *Primary responsibility is to field any balls hit in her direction*
  - ✓ *In bunt situations, her responsibility is to charge the bunt.*
  - ✓ *If ball is not hit to her, she immediately moves to cover 3rd base (every time)*
- **Short-Stop**
  - ✓ *Primary responsibility is to field any balls hit in her direction*

- ✓ *If a ball is hit to the right side of the field the player moves to cover 2nd base.*
- ✓ *If the ball is hit toward the 3rd baseman, the player moves to cover 3rd base or to back up the 3rd baseman. }*
- ✓ *On steals of 3rd or 2nd, the Shortstop covers either 3rd or 2nd.*
- ✓ *On bunt situations, the shortstop covers 3rd if there is a runner on 2nd base. She covers 2nd in all other situations.*
- ✓ *If the ball is hit to left or center field, the player moves to a position to act as a cut-off and receive a throw from the outfielder*

### **Outfielders:**

- *Left Field*
  - ✓ *Primary responsibility is to field any balls hit in her direction*
  - ✓ *Backup balls hit to SS or 3rd base.*
  - ✓ *Backup balls hit to the Center fielder.*
  - ✓ *Backup pickoff throws from the Catcher to 3rd base.*
  - ✓ *If none of the above, move to backup throws to 2nd base or 3rd base, (anticipating where there will most likely be a play).*
- *Center Field*
  - ✓ *Primary responsibility is to field any balls hit in her direction*
  - ✓ *Backup balls hit to the Left or Right fielder.*
  - ✓ *Backup the shortstop on steals to 2nd base.*
  - ✓ *If none of the above, move to backup throws to 2nd base, (anticipating where there will most likely be a play).*
- *Right Field*
  - ✓ *Primary responsibility is to field any balls hit in her direction*
  - ✓ *Backup balls hit to 1st base.*
  - ✓ *Backup balls hit to the Center fielder.*
  - ✓ *Backup pickoff throws from the Catcher to 1st base.*
  - ✓ *Backup throws to 1st base.*
  - ✓ *Backup throws to 2nd base on singles to Left.*

### **Pitchers & Catchers:**

- *Pitcher*
  - ✓ *Primary responsibility is to pitch.*
  - ✓ *Field balls hit back to her or dribbled in front of home plate*
  - ✓ *Field bunts if back to her.*
  - ✓ *Must keep 1 foot in the circle in a coach-pitch situation.*

- Catcher
  - ✓ Primary responsibility is to catch.
  - ✓ Field short balls dribbled in front of the plate.
  - ✓ Field bunts if right in front of the plate.

**Tips on Teaching:**

- The responsibilities at shortstop or 2nd base can be overwhelming. Simplify by telling the player that they basically move in the direction the ball is hit every time.

**Points of Emphasis:**

- Emphasize to all players that everyone has some place to go on every play. No spectators!

**Drills:**

1. "Situations" • Depending on how many players you have at practice, position players at most or all positions.
  - Have 2 or 3 players act as runners and position those players near home plate, but off to the side.
  - Have the pitcher pitch the ball to the catcher. (This is a timing mechanism for both runners and fielders)
  - The coach is standing near home and hits another ball, in the air or on the ground anywhere on the field, and simultaneously a "runner" leaves home for 1st base.
  - The defensive players in the field try to get the runner out. • You are simulating a game, so everything should be at "game speed".
  - You can set up any game situation. 0, 1, or 2 outs; runners on any bases, etc.
  - If you have enough coaches, have a coach at 1st and 3rd to coach the runners as well. You are practicing both defense and base running.

# Hitting

"I think without question the hardest single thing to do in sport is to hit a baseball"

- Ted Williams

## **Key Elements:**

### 1. *The Grip:*

- ✓ *Hands together on the bat*
- ✓ *Grip the bat on the pads at the base of the fingers*
- ✓ *Line up middle row of knuckles (door knocking) on top hand with the midpoint between 2 rows of big knuckles of bottom hand. (Index fingers should be pointing in the same direction forward.*
- ✓ *Firm and relaxed (not too tight)*
- ✓ *Wrists are flexible.*

### 2. *Stepping up to the Plate*

- ✓ *Check your distance from the plate*
- ✓ *Hold bat at the knob with the bottom hand*
- ✓ *Reach out with the bat and touch the far side of the plate*

3.

### 3. *The "Box"*

- ✓ *A "box" formed by player's chest, triceps, forearm and bat simulate a "box". The "box" will be referred to numerous times.*
- ✓ *The "box" must be maintained until contact.*
- ✓ *The lead arm should maintain elbow above hand, hand above barrel of the bat throughout swing.*

### 4. *Loading:*

- ✓ *Loading just means that the player gets dynamic muscular tension in the legs and core muscles of the abdomen by getting into an athletic stance.... some bend in the knees and at the waist ("vertical load").*
- ✓ *From stance, body moves in four directions (north, south, east, west) i.e. stride, box back about three inches, torso tilted at waist and butt back) •*
  - *Negative Move: Box loads straight back weight shifts slightly back to inside of back leg for power at stride.*
  - *Stride foot may or may not move forward. Stride should be less than six inches;*
  - *Tilt at waist. Weight should be on the balls of feet and evenly distributed;*
  - *Butt back. Butt back will put player in athletic stance and load up quads.*

- ✓ Level eyes;
- ✓ Player should load on EVERY pitch.

## **Swing Components (PCR):**

### **1. Posture**

- ✓ Knees inside of feet;
- ✓ Weight equally distributed on the balls of each foot;
- ✓ Tilted at waist;
- ✓ Butt back;
- ✓ Large muscles of the legs and core with dynamic muscular tension ("vertical load");
- ✓ Box maintained in proper position.

### **2. Connection**

- ✓ Start with a slight negative move away from the pitcher; Weight shifts (slightly) to inside of back leg as arms (box) move slightly back.
- ✓ The stride or toe tap is a slight forward movement, returning the weight to a balanced position.
- ✓ Start turn by pushing off inner toe of back foot. Knee of back leg & back hip will move to middle of stance.
- ✓ While turning, front leg will become firm immediately before contact;
- ✓ Weight shifted to inside of front leg right before contact while remaining on balance.
- ✓ Turn torso "into" ball so that barrel rotates in same plane as body core;
- ✓ The box must stay together until released through contact to keep barrel connected to rotation.
- ✓ Front elbow is slightly lower than front shoulder, hands below elbow, barrel below hands at contact.

### **3. Rotation**

- ✓ Using dynamic tension built in large muscle groups of legs and torso, core is turned into and through the pitch.
- ✓ The body rotates on the inside of the front leg.
- ✓ After contact, keep powerful rotation with full finish (top hand may come off the bat after contact) and finishing at front shoulder as bat finishes high above back.
- ✓ Front foot should remain somewhere between a fully closed position (perpendicular to the pitcher) or slightly open (never more than 45 degrees). 25 Hitting (Cont'd)

### **Tips on Teaching:**

- **Basic Skills - L1** *The most essential concept is that the swing itself is a **rotational** move. With new or young players, get them in the correct posture at stance and just teach them to turn into the swing. You might stay away from the "negative move" and "stride" aspects until they have learned to swing rotationally and in balance. Through the swing, the head should stay stationary. The tee drills are essential to teaching this swing (at all ages).*
- **Intermediate Skills – L2** *After a player gets comfortable with the basic rotational swing and can swing consistently in balance, then add the "negative move" and "stride" aspects of the overall swing. These moves are essential timing mechanisms that will become important as the player advances to more competitive levels. However, there is a certain linear motion with these parts which can throw a new player off track. The Negative Move and Stride are slightly linear, but as soon as the stride foot lands any linear motion stops against a firm front side and the swing itself is purely rotational. •*
- **Advanced Skills – L3** *At more advanced levels, a player can use the swing described here and hit the ball with power anywhere. The outside pitch is driven to right as the contact point is more toward the back of the plate, a pitch down the middle is driven up the center, and an inside pitch is driven to left, as the contact point is more in front of the plate.*
- **All Levels:** *Don't rush too soon to hitting off live pitching or even a machine. Hitting from a tee is invaluable to getting these swing mechanics driven into muscle memory. Then move to soft toss or whiffle balls, etc. Work your way up to hitting a pitched ball. Kids will lose their mechanics as soon as they see a pitched ball if the mechanics have not been "drilled in". Repetition, repetition, repetition will be needed for muscle memory.*

### **Points of Emphasis:**

- *The most common mistake new and young players make is dropping their hands as they begin the swing. Stressing keeping the "box" intact helps overcome this tendency.*
- *common mistake 2; is moving too far forward during a stride and getting the weight shifted out too far over the front foot at, and even before contact. This loses all power. Therefore, it is*

*critical that a stride is only a stride to a balanced position against a firm front side, and the swing is rotational.*

- *common mistake 3; is over or under tilting at the waist. The barrel should be below the "box" upon contact. Another common mistake is rising out of their vertical load or tilt. The player must maintain a tilt at the waist throughout the swing rotation.*
- *common mistake 4; is the hands pushing forward out of the "box" before contact. The player must maintain the box through contact. The forearm and bat should be parallel to the shoulders upon contact.*
- *common mistake 5; is the backside collapsing or weight on the back foot and heels. Push off inner big toe of back foot at the beginning of rotation.*

## **Drills:**

### **3. Hit Stick L1**

- *Using T, load with hit stick behind neck and hit whiffle off Tee. Tee should be placed at the middle of batter's stance.*
- *Using T, load with hit stick across chest and hit whiffle off Tee. Tee should be placed at front foot of load. This is a great starting point to learn the rotational concept. Key is to tilt, rotate torso into ball with front knee straightening immediately before stick contacts whiffle. Helps with shoulder plane and learning to turn core.*

### **2. One Handed Drills: L1-2**

- *Whiffle Bat – Using Tee, swing with only bottom hand on the bat, rest top hand on top of wrist, maintaining box to contact and finishing high. Use whiffle balls and a net.*
- *T- Ball Bat – Using Tee, swing with only bottom hand on the bat, rest top hand on top of wrist, maintaining box to contact and finishing high. (T-Ball bat should be no more than 16 – 17 oz.)*
- *You can also do this drill with whiffle balls and a soft toss method hitting into a net.*
- *Both bats create a sense of how the player is really hitting the ball, especially with the short bat. T-ball bat strengthens arm. Helps with maintaining the box and turning with box together while striking the ball.*

### **3. Posture and Swing Plane Recognition L1-2**

*"Load, Tilt & Turn using tape strips on wall for correct posture and swing plane.*

- *First Tape Mark = Tilt*
- *Second Tape Mark = Tricep to Forearm; Also, signifies target point 3.*
- *Third Tape Mark = Swing plane or barrel at contact*  
*Tape strips may be placed on wall. Also, may use bungi cords on nets or fence dugouts, etc.*  
*Repetition, repetition, repetition!*

**4. Chair Drills: L1-2**

- *Using a Tee - Sit on chair (or bucket) with bat on shoulder, rise into loaded position and hit whiffle.*
- *Soft Toss - Same as above, but with whiffle being tossed from a 45-degree angle.*
- *Key is to keep in tilted position with butt back to load major muscles for forceful turn. 27 Hitting (Cont'd)*

**5. Stop Swing w/ Tee: L1-2**

- *Using Tee – Holding bat with box position, turn bat and core into ball and stop as quickly as possible following contact.*
- *• Assess box- barrel relationship, weight shift onto front foot immediately before contact.*

**6. Long Tee Drill w/ Tee: L2-3**

- *Use a tee and real softballs of appropriate size to age group. Do not use a net.*
- *Have players use proper mechanics and just drive the ball out into open space, (use other players as shaggers.*
- *Focus on driving line drives with backspin. Reinforces swinging level and on plane.*

**4. Walk into Swing: L3**

- *Again, use a tee and real softballs, with or without a net. Have the player take a stance approx. 1 stride toward the catcher side of where they would normally line up to the tee.*
- *(For a right hander), have the player slide their right foot against their left, and then stride with their left and swing. (this may take a time or 2 to get lined up right).*
- *This drill reinforces a proper weight transfer while remaining balanced.*

# ***Bunting***

**Note:** *Bunting is a "Level 2" skill...Bunting is a next logical progression for players who have learned how to hit.*

## **Bunting – Intermediate Skill – L2**

*The following describes the basics of a "sacrifice" bunt, the most basic of several forms of bunting skills.*

### **Stance:**

- The player first takes her normal batting stance., but more to the front of the box.
- From that stance, as the pitcher begins her motion, the player turns into a bunting stance.
- There are 2 basic bunting stances:
  - The player can move both feet so as to turn mostly square toward the pitcher, or
  - The player can simply pivot both feet so that they point generally in the direction of the 2nd baseman (right hander) or in the direction of the shortstop, (left hander).
- In either case, the player crouches slightly, with hips and shoulders turned generally toward the pitcher and leans somewhat forward. Eyes are just over the top of the bat
- The player slides her top hand part way up the bat and holds the bat out in front of her, (toward the pitcher), elbows slightly bent. The bat is held at an angle throughout the bunt with the barrel held slightly higher at the top of the strike zone/chest.
- The top hand should be placed at about the place on the bat where the bat changes dimension. The fingers of the top hand should not wrap around the bat, but rather curl

back to only be holding the bat on the side away from the ball.

**Bunt:**

- As the ball approaches, the player positions the bat to let the ball hit the bat and drop to the ground out front. (The player should not make a motion to hit the ball with the bat.... moving it into the ball). The action is like “catching” the ball with the bat.
- The player should start with the bat at the top of the strike zone, and only adjust down for pitches.
- Adjusting to the height of the pitch is done entirely with the knees, to lower the body in one piece, without dipping or changing the angle of the bat.
- The goal is to deaden the ball so that does not roll too far.

*Note: The logic of a sacrifice bunt is not to necessarily attempt to deceive or surprise the other team, so the player “squares around” early to be already in position when the pitch comes.*

**Drag Bunting – Advanced Skill – L3**

*Unlike the Sacrifice bunt, the drag bunt is intended to surprise the opponent and to catch them off guard and out of position. The sacrifice is designed to move a runner; the drag bunt is an attempt by the batter to reach base. Drag bunting is done from the left side.*

**Stance:**

- The player first takes her normal batting stance, and in her customary position in the box. • From that stance, as the pitcher begins her motion, the player turns to drag bunt the ball. Also unlike the sacrifice bunt, when drag bunting, the player waits as long as possible before initiating the action.

- There are 2 variations of footwork to get into position to drag bunt. Either is acceptable. The player can use whichever works best for her.
  - The player can merely turn to place her left foot in the front corner of the batter's box.
  - The player can, 1st drop the right foot back slightly, and then make a cross over step with the left foot.
- In either case, the goal is to have the left foot land at about the instant she is making contact with the ball, in a starting to run motion.

**Bunt:**

- The bat as held much as it is in a sacrifice...hand slides up the barrel, the barrel of the bat is held high.
- Since as the player is bunting the ball, she is also moving forward, the player must make a special effort to not hit at the ball, but rather give with the ball to deaden it.
- Coach your player to try to make contact using the last 6 inches at the end of the bat. This will help deaden the ball. This is one time; you do not want to use the sweet spot of the bat.
- Coach your player to just touch the ball with the bat to knock it on the ground, hopefully not too far, drop the bat and take off running all in one motion. Coach her not to wait around to see where the ball goes.

***Points of Emphasis:***

- The most common mistake players make when attempting either kind of bunt is to drop the head of the bat. This tends to result in popping the ball up or fouling it off.
- common mistake 2; is hitting the ball too hard. The farther the ball goes from home plate, the easier it is on the defense. Just "catch" the ball with the bat.

- Also, in most cases, well executed bunts are 4-6 feet from the plate, towards the corners. Bunting towards the pitcher is the easiest play as the ball is typically bunted to hard and the sacrifice is in jeopardy as there might be a play for the lead runner.

## **Drills:**

### **1. "Target Bunt"**

- Draw several concentric arcs foul line to foul line in the dirt out from home plate, about 3 ft. apart. (1st arc 3 ft. out, 2nd arc 6 ft. out, etc.)
- Then assign point values to the space between the arcs. The 1st 3 ft. may be 1 pt., the next 3 ft. may be 3 pts, the next might be 1 pt., and beyond that is 0. Also, any foul ball is 0.
- Then either bunting off a machine, or with a coach pitching, players take turns seeing how many points they can get say off 10 pitches.
- You can vary this even further by dividing the arcs with 2 pie shaped cuts from home plate, and giving different point values to different sections.

# Base Running

## **Basic Running Mechanics:**

### **Arm Action:**

- *Elbows are bent at 90-degrees*
- *Arms drive vigorously from chest down past hips*
- *Arms pump straight ahead, (not across chest)*

**Knees:** *lifted high to form 90-degree hip angle*

**Feet:** *pointed straight ahead; running on balls of the feet*

**Body Lean:** *is from the ankles not from the waist*

## **Home to First:**

*The player runs hard out of the batter's box every time she hits the ball. As she gets about half way to 1st, she needs to pick up the 1st base coach who will give her 1 of 3 options:*

### **1. "Through the Bag"** *(anytime a play at 1st is expected)*

- *Player runs as fast as she can directly to 1st staying in the running lane.*
- *Player touches the nearest part of the orange base and continues running for a couple of steps.*
- *After running past the base, the player stops quickly and listens for instructions from the coach, (in case there is opportunity to advance).*

### **2. "Round the Bag"** *(ball is in play, no play at 1st is expected, but it is unclear whether the player will be able to advance to 2nd)*

- *As the Player nears 1st, she swings out slightly into foul territory.*
- *So that she can make a sharp turn (without swinging wide) touching the inside corner of the white base.*

- *She continues about 10 ft. toward first, coming to a stop in a crouched, balanced position ready to advance or go back and waiting for instruction from her coach.*

**3. "Go Two"** *(The opportunity is there to go all the way to 2nd)*

- *Similar to above, player swings out slightly making a tight turn, touching the inside corner of the white bag and continues hard toward 2nd*

**Going 1st to 2nd; or 2nd to 3rd:**

*Like running to 1st, when the player is about half way to 2nd or 3rd, she should look to the 3rd base coach who will give her one of 3 options:*

1. **"Slide"** *(Discussed in next section)*
2. **"Round the Bag"** *(Same as above)*
3. **"Go Three, or Go Home"**

**Going Home:**

*The only option is whether or not to slide. Player should slide to avoid a tag or to avoid a collision. She can listen to her 3rd base coach, but she is mostly on her own to make that decision.*

**Leading Off:**

- *Players should place their left foot on the edge of the base facing the next base, and to the right corner of that edge.*
- *Their right foot should be alongside the base (for example to the right field side at 1 st base).*
- *As the pitch is released, or as it nears home, (depending on division specific rule), they should push off aggressively with their left foot, using the base to push from.*
- *Take several aggressive steps, and stop only if the ball is not hit, or if instructed by the coach.*

- *Players should get in the habit of leading off aggressively on every pitch. Tips on Teaching:*
- *Make sure your players understand the rules concerning when they can advance and when they cannot.*
- *Use common clear commands from the base coaches, supported by clear, consistent signals, (they may not be able to hear you in the pandemonium of a game.*

### **Points of Emphasis:**

- *Emphasize for your players to be aggressive on the base paths. Do not assume that on a hit that they will only advance 1 base. Do not play "station to station".*

### **Drills:**

2. **"Home to First"** (focus on base running mechanics, options at first, and coach's commands)
  - *Players line up at home. A coach takes up the first base coaching position.*
  - *On the coach's command to "Go" each player in turn starts sprinting toward first.*
  - *As the player gets half way to first, the coach gives one of 3 commands, "Through the Bag", "Round the Bag" or "Go Two"*
  - *The player responds to that command using proper technique.*
3. **"Round the Bases Relay"**
  - *Players are divided into 2 equal teams, one in a line at home, and one in a line at 2nd.*
  - *Coaches position themselves outside the base line, just past each base, (for example 1 coach would be positioned to the outfield side and to the 2nd base side of 1st, about 10 ft. from the bag.)*

- *On the coach's command, the 1st player in each line begin running the bases, going all the way around.*
- *When the 1st player completes circling the bases, she tags the next player in her line, etc. creating a relay race.*
- *The coaches are positioned to force the players to make good tight corners at each base.*
- *The team that has all their players complete circling the bases first wins*

## Sliding (“Bent-Leg” Slide)

*Note: Sliding is a Level 2 skill. Sliding should be taught to players who already have the basic skills.*

### **Basic Mechanics:**

- *Player runs directly toward the base without losing speed.*
- *She starts the slide approximately 10 ft. (2 or 3 steps) in front of the bag.*
- *The lead foot is extended, and the opposite leg is bent at a 45 degree angle and is tucked under the knee of the forward leg, (making a figure 4).*
- *The runner leans back, extends the arms out like an airplane and extends the lead foot toward the bag.*
- *The laces of the bottom foot face the base*
- *The top leg is bent slightly at the knee, with the kneecap facing up, and the foot a few inches off the ground. (Keeping the knee bent helps absorb the shock of hitting the base).*

### **Tips on Teaching:**

- *As with several other skills, teach this working backwards, starting with the players simply lying on the ground in the correct sliding position.*
- *You might teach the girls this skill first on wet grass in (very) old clothes.*
- *Do not attempt to teach these young players a “head-first” slide.*

### **Points of Emphasis:**

- *The runner must keep up the speed. There is no way to do this in a tentative or timid manner. This only increases chance of injury.*

- *A common mistake is new player first learning this skill tend to slide too late, and hit the base hard. When first learning, better to slide to early.*
- *The player can extend either leg depending on what feels natural, but given a choice, it is better to learn to extend the right leg, as this will help later in learning a "pop-up" slide, (but either is fine).*
- *Make sure that they pick up the front foot off the ground so they do not catch their cleats and potentially injure their ankle.*

### **Drills:**

4. **"Cardboard & Baby Powder"** *(focus on first learning how to slide in a fun, non-threatening way)*
  - *Tell your players ahead of time that you are going to practice this and advise them to wear old clothes and soft soled athletic or running shoes, (not cleats)*
  - *Get a very large piece of cardboard free of any staples or anything rough that might injure the players*
  - *Sprinkle it liberally and frequently with baby powder, keeping it slippery.*
  - *Initially, just have the girls form a line and run one at a time, and slide freely on the cardboard, (using proper form).*
  - *Once they get used to it, put the cardboard up to a base for them to slide toward.*
2. **"Slip & Slide"**
  - *Same as above, but just use a "Slip „n Slide" instead of the cardboard.*