



Coaches Manual

Welcome to Wayland Little League.

THANK YOU for volunteering your time to serve as a coach with Wayland Little League promoting the game of baseball to our young people in this community. It is through your efforts and the dedication of people like you that we can thrive in our mission of providing players a positive experience on the baseball and softball field -- and to help them reach their goals as a player.

The Purpose of this coaches Manual

The purpose of this coaches manual is to provide you with an easy-to-read guide to assist you throughout your season. It contains information that may prove useful and valuable throughout the season.

Mission of Little League

Through proper guidance and exemplary leadership, the Little League program assists children in developing the qualities of citizenship, discipline, teamwork and physical well-being. By espousing the virtues of character, courage and loyalty, the Little League Baseball and Softball program is designed to develop superior citizens rather than superior athletes.

Appointment of Coaches

The Wayland Little League President is responsible for the nomination of all manager, coach and umpire candidates; and it is the Board of Directors that votes to approve (or deny) these nominees. The League President is responsible for confirming that all background checks are completed before any manager, coach or umpire may assume his/her duties with the league.

The nominations of the League President are done so after he/she has diligently reviewed the volunteer applications completed during registration, and discussed the candidates with the nominating committee.

If a decision is made to not approve and appoint a volunteer to a position that he/she held previously, the League President is responsible for speaking to the subject on behalf of the Board.

Your Mission as a coach

Coaching Little League can be a very rewarding experience. It is very important however, that you keep a proper perspective of what your priorities and mission should be at this level of competition. Your primary responsibility is NOT to win! The pressure of winning will come soon enough for these young athletes. Your primary mission as a Little League coach is to teach and develop.

The Coach's Role

The heart of Little League is what happens between the adult coach and the players. It is the coach more than any other individual who controls how the players are benefited from participation. The Little League coaches must be leaders. All coaches must recognize that they hold a position of trust and responsibility in a program that deals with a sensitive and formative period of a child's development. It is important to remember that parents, are entrusting their children to us. Not just their physical beings, but their emotional ones as well. The safety and well-being of our children is of the highest importance and priority and is the responsibility of each coach.

While our central focus is making the season as enjoyable as possible for the players, we also want to make it enjoyable for each coach who graciously volunteers his or her time and energy. If you enjoy this season...your players will too! Similar to a great teacher who inspires his or her students, a coach will arguably play the biggest role in determining how much satisfaction and enjoyment a player gets out of the season. As a coach, you will have a direct influence on your entire team and each individual. It isn't a question of whether or not you're a role model; the question is, what type of role model will you be?"

As a coach and representative of Wayland Little League we expect you to work toward the betterment of the entire league - and not simply your own team or child. We ask that you possess strong communication skills and display a passion for teaching the game and spending time with kids. Our coaches understand that coaching is challenging and rewarding, and we realize that while winning is important winning at all costs is not acceptable or applauded. Successful coaches understand that success isn't measured in wins or losses but rather in how many players advance in their development and want to continue to play for years to come. We ask our coaches to challenge each player while providing him or her with a positive experience and life lessons that they can apply to other areas of their life .

As a coach, one way of providing a player with a great season and subsequently improving the level of play for the entire league is by giving him or her the skills needed to achieve on-field success. This binder will provide you with suggestions and the tools needed to develop the skills of each player, your team, and as a result the overall quality of the league. Not included in this binder is the support system that you should get from other coaches in the league as well. All of our coaches come from different playing and/or coaching backgrounds, and while each coach heads-up a respective team the collective good of the entire league and its players is key. Coaches should be willing and open to assist a fellow coach and his players.

As a coach, it is our responsibility to provide players with the instruction necessary to play the game with confidence and to develop each time they take the field. To do this, you must be able to conduct a strong practice, which (outside of keeping your players safe) is your biggest responsibility as a coach. We hope the material in this binder can assist you in your practice management and serve as a valuable resource in helping to provide you, your team, and the entire league a great season!

Each coach must have the understanding, patience and the capacity to work with children. The manager coach should be able to inspire respect. Above all else, managers and coaches must realize that they are helping to shape the physical, mental and emotional development of young people. The Little League manager must be something more than just a teacher. Children of Little League age are strongly influenced by adults whose ideals and aspirations are similar to their own. The coach and player share a common interest in the game, a desire to excel, and determination to win. Children often idolize their managers and coaches, not because the adult is the most successful coach or mentor, but because the manager and coach are sources of inspiration.

Your Responsibilities as a coach

It is important to remember that your players look up to you. You set the example and accordingly you should always act like a coach when on the field and be aware of your actions when you are off the field.

Coaches may recruit as many assistant coaches as are willing to participate. Coaches should follow the rules and guidelines outlined in this manual and adhere to the spirit of the league. Among the coaching staff's responsibilities are the following:

Your responsibilities while coaching include:

- The safety and well being of all little league players regardless of which team they play on.
- Abide by the Code of Conduct.
- Adhere to the Wayland Little League Coaching philosophy.
- Attend the coaches' clinic.
- Obtain the necessary equipment from the commissioner.
- Attend the Major League coaches meeting, to be held prior to the beginning of the season.
- Contact all parents/players to inform them which team they are on, the coaches names and phone numbers, and to remind them of the following events:
- Disseminate any and all information to the players and their parents for all events during the season that do not appear on the schedule.
- Ensure one coach is always present at the field on game nights 30 mins prior to game time with the equipment bag.
- Keeping score of games and winning team should report the final score of each game to the designated league commissioner.
- Understanding and learning the game appropriate to the level you are coaching at.
- Being polite, kind and approachable to all players and their families.
- Being fair by providing ALL players the opportunity to learn.
- Making every player feel they are a part of the team regardless of their talent level.
- Dressing like, and looking like and acting in an acceptable manner which is that of a coach.
- Setting reasonable goals and expectations.
- Teaching the fundamentals of the game.
- Being positive no matter what the outcome.
- Knowing and supporting Little League Baseball and Softball rules and programs.
- Being honest and not afraid of admitting your own mistakes.
- Being open-minded.
- Being a role model for the children.
- Understanding that growth and progress come one small step at a time.
- NEVER yelling at a child.
- Setting appropriate rules and following them.
- Communicate any problems, issues or suggestions to the league commissioner as soon as necessary.
- Return all equipment to the league commissioners when the season is over
- Remembering the game is for the children.

Successful Coaching

Determining whether or not you were successful at the end of the season is not measured by your team's win / loss record. Evaluating your success at the youth level can be determined by asking yourself the following questions:

- Did they have fun and enjoy themselves?
- Did they feel comfortable being an active member of the team?
- Was I able to get the absolute best out of the athletes?
- Did I leave players feeling more confident about themselves and more confident in their abilities as athletes?
- Did they excel in the concept of good sportsmanship and treating opponents, teammates, fans and officials politely?
- Did they understand the drills and learn the skills we taught them?
- Did I leave them a little more prepared for life's challenges?
- DO THEY WANT TO RETURN NEXT SEASON / NEXT YEAR?

Establishing Your Team Philosophy

Every coach is different and therefore his or her philosophies will vary. There are however, basic expectations that should be required from the players. Establishing how you are going to run the team and informing the players and parents on the first day is important for a successful season. Your team philosophy should include:

- Safety comes first above all else - follow the rules established to keep everyone safe.
- When the coaches are talking to the team all players should pay attention.
- Be the absolute best you can be at every practice and game.
- Improve in your skills through practice.
- Work hard at becoming physically fit.
- Learn as much as you can about the game.
- Always support the team and your teammates.
- Always conduct yourself in a respectful manner and represent the town and your team with pride.

Team Rules

Team rules allows the team effectively and efficiently. They ensure every participant gets the most they can from the Little League experience by preventing the waste of the team's most precious resource; time. The following items should be reviewed with both players and parents at the beginning of each season:

- Act with safety in mind, and above all else.
- Always act in a manner as to bring credit to the team, league, and yourself.
- When the coach speaks everyone listens.
- No one starts practice until the coach arrives.

- When the coach says stop, everyone stops.
- When you do not understand something, ask questions.
- Stay focused,
- Learn the game.
- Follow instructions.
- Always work hard and give your best effort with a good attitude.
- Follow the playing rules and practice good sportsmanship at all times.
- No horseplay.
- When not involved in a drill or a game - always encourage, never criticize or shout instructions.
- Refrain from foul language, obscene gestures, or any form of verbal or physical abuse.
- Maintain self-control, and refrain from unnecessary demonstrations including the throwing of helmets, bats, or any other equipment.
- Refrain from arguing, teasing, or taunting with the umpires, coaches, players, or spectators.
- Wear the uniform properly and with pride.
- Win graciously - lose graciously.

Aims and Goals

Children participating (depending on the league / level) will learn a number of key skills which provide a solid foundation for participating in baseball including:

- Safety / Safe Play
- Sportsmanship
- Teamwork
- Catching
- Throwing
- Hitting
- Running the bases (and learning their names)
- Introduction to baseball rules.
- Learning about positions and how to play the positions.
- How to play as a team.

The emphasis is on fun, learning and keeping each player active and involved. Instruction is based fun games and lots of repetition. Fun games and drills will be repeated and each player will get a lot of turns to ensure maximum participation and enjoyment. Coaches will be provided with a framework of goals and skills for their appropriate level along with drills and games for each practice session.

Winning Versus Developing

Your ability to teach baseball skills in a safe, fun manner is going to be a major factor on how fast your players learn. Development of players during their time in Little League is crucial to their immediate and future success in the sport. Wins and Loses will soon be forgotten but having fun with their friends and enjoying learning the fundamentals of the game and playing baseball will endure. This is one of the most essential to being a successful coach.

Coaching Your Own Child

The reason for you volunteering your time and energy this season is largely (or exclusively) related to your desire to coach your child. It is an awesome experience being able to coach your child and to spend time with him on the field. However, it can also be difficult. It is certainly a dynamic for different than the other 10-12 players on your team. Many parent-coaches are either too tough on their own kids or not tough at all and allow their favoritism to outwardly show. You want your child to feel as if they are being treated the same as their teammates, no more and no less. Here are some suggestions that could help you if you are involved in this unique coaching situation:

- Have your child refer to you as ""coach in team settings. This tells the team that when you and your child are at the ball field, your child is just another member of the team.
- Avoid having him bat 3rd and play SS....all the time. They, like everyone on your team, should get experience at all of the positions.
- Make sure your child is experiencing character development as the rest of his teammates. The game of baseball will provide many teachable moments.
- Make sure your child knows that he or she is your son first and an athlete second. When managed correctly, many life-long relationships between parent-coaches and their children are strengthened by the common bond of baseball.

Most importantly, make sure your child wants you to coach, or is it making it difficult on him? Is your relationship growing because of your coaching responsibilities or deteriorating?

Lastly, it is important to keep in mind that one day, you will no longer be their coach, but you will always be your child's parent.

Safety

Player safety is a key concern and responsibility of all coaches and parents.

Each year, more than 100,000 children ages 5 to 14 are treated in hospital emergency rooms for baseball or softball related injuries. Three to four children die from baseball injuries each year.

Baseball and softball related injuries involve the head more than any other part of the body. Protective equipment, safe playing environments and playing by the rules help to prevent injuries from occurring while teaching players safe ways to have fun.

Wayland Little League places the safety of all of our children, coaches and spectators above all else. Please review this section for an overview of our policies regarding safety.

Coaches Safety Code

- Arrangements should be made in advance of all games and practices for emergency medical services.
- Managers, coaches and umpires should have some training in first-aid. First-aid kits should be available at the field.
- No games or practice should be held when weather or field conditions are not good, particularly when lighting is forecasted.
- Play area should be inspected frequently for holes, damage, glass and other foreign objects.
- Dugouts and bat racks should be positioned behind screens.
- Only players, managers, coaches, and umpires are permitted on the playing field during play and practice sessions.
- During practice and games, all players should be alert and watching the batter on each pitch.
- During warm-up drills players should be spaced so that no one is endangered by wild throws or missed catches.
- Equipment should be inspected regularly and ensure it fits players properly.
- Batters must wear approved protective helmets during practice and during games.
- Catchers must wear catcher's helmet, mask, throat protector, long model chest protector, shin-guards and male catchers must wear a protective supporter at all times.
- Head first slides are not permitted (12 years old and under).
- During sliding practice bases should not be strapped down and should be located away from the base anchoring system.
- At no time should "horse play" be permitted on the playing field.
- Parents of players who wear glasses should be encouraged to provide "safety glasses."
- Players must not wear watches, rings, pins, jewelry or other metallic items.
- Catchers must wear catcher's helmet and mask with a throat protector in warming up pitchers. This applies between innings and in bull pen practice.

Safe Playing Conditions

Before allowing players to begin using any facility, an assessment should be taken of the facility. If something is found to be unsafe, or jeopardize the safety of players, coaches, umpires or spectators it must be rectified before any Little League activity can take place.

Indoor Facilities

Facilities located indoors should be inspected for unsafe playing conditions, prior to activities commencing. Report all problems or potential safety hazards with the facility to the league commissioner or safety officer immediately. If in doubt, keep players away from any potential hazards until the problem is rectified.

Outdoor Facilities

Coaches should check for the general condition of the field / of all outdoor facilities prior to Little League activities commencing. Coaches should inspect the playing field and make sure it is safe for play. Check for:

- Walk the field prior to every practice and game. Look for problem areas such as holes, damaged fences, loose bags, etc.
- Have players report all problems or potential safety hazards with the field to the coaches immediately.
- Ensure all players are aware of the fences and gates.
- Holes, damaged fences, loose bags, etc.
- General condition of the field.
- Holes, low spots, large rocks.
- Flooding, standing water / puddles.
- Pitchers mound.
- Base running paths
- The integrity of fences and benches.
- The infield or outfield is clear of any garbage or debris.
- Keep fingers inside the dugout! A line drive hitting a finger grasping a chain link fence is very painful.

Report all problems or potential safety hazards with the field to the league commissioner or safety officer immediately. If in doubt, keep players away from any potential hazards until the problem is rectified.

Inclement Weather Conditions



If the Wayland recreation department determines that fields are open the Wayland Little League commissioners and coaches will make final determination on whether it is safe to play up to the time of the game or practice.

Once a game or practice has begun and there is any subsequent determination or reason that safety with regard to inclement weather may be in an issue, it is the responsibility of the commissioner, coach, umpire or parent to raise this issue.

If there is any question that the weather conditions are causing a safety hazard to players, coaches or umpires, play should be halted immediately and if necessary players should be moved to a safe place.

Note: When there is threat of rain, thunder and lightning, Wayland Little League ask coaches to ensure that ALL PARENTS remain at the field or make sure your child has a designated adult that is NOT a coach, umpire or Wayland Little League official.

Before activities begin or recommence, weather and field conditions must be that that all safety issues have been addressed and are no longer a factor to the safety of players, umpires and coaches.

Lightning



Lightning is the most consistent and significant weather hazard that may affect Little League baseball. Within the USA, the National Severe Storms Laboratory (NSSL) estimates that 100 fatalities and 400-500 injuries requiring medical treatment occur from lightning strikes every year. While the probability of being struck by lightning is extremely low, the odds are significantly greater when a storm is in the area and the proper safety precautions are not followed.

When there is threat of rain, thunder and lightning, Wayland Little League ask coaches to ensure that ALL PARENTS remain at the field or make sure your child has a designated adult that is NOT a coach, umpire or Wayland Little League official.

- If a flash-to-bang count of 30 seconds is observed, all individuals should have left the field and reached a safe structure or location.
- The scheduled events may need to be terminated.
- When considering resumption of an athletic activity, WLL recommends that everyone should ideally wait at least 30 minutes after the last flash of lightning or sound of thunder before returning to the field or activity.

The following steps are recommended by the NSSL to mitigate the lightning hazard: (Reprinted with permission from NCAA and NSSL, for informational purposes only)

- Designate a chain of command as to who monitors threatening weather and who makes the decision to remove teams or individuals from an athletic site or event. An emergency plan should include planned instructions for participants as well as spectators.
- Obtain a weather report each day before a practice or event. Be aware of potential thunderstorms that may form during scheduled interscholastic athletic events or practices.
- Be aware of National Weather Service-issued (NWS) thunderstorm watches and warnings as well as the signs of thunderstorms developing nearby. A watch means conditions are

favorable for severe weather to develop in an area; a warning means that severe weather has been reported in an area and for everyone to take proper precautions.

- Know where the closest safe structure or location is to the field or playing area, and know how long it takes to get to that safe structure or location.
- Safe structure or location is defined as:
 - Any building normally occupied or frequently used by people, i.e. a building with plumbing and/or electrical wiring that acts to electrically ground the structure.
 - In the absence of a sturdy, frequently inhabited building, any vehicle with a hard metal roof (not a convertible or golf cart) and rolled-up windows can provide a measure of safety. A vehicle is certainly better than remaining outdoors. It is not the rubber tires that make a vehicle a safe shelter, but the hard metal roof which dissipates the lightning strike around the vehicle. **DO NOT TOUCH THE SIDES OF THE VEHICLE!**
- Be aware of how close lightning is occurring. The flash-to-bang method is the easiest and most convenient way to estimate how far away lightning is occurring. Thunder always accompanies lightning, even though its audible range can be diminished due to background noise in the immediate environment, and its distance from the observer. To use the flash-to-bang method, count the seconds from the time the lightning is sighted to when the clap of thunder is heard. Divide this number by five to obtain how far away (in miles) the lightning is occurring. For example, if an individual counts 15 seconds between seeing the flash and hearing the bang, 15 divided by five equals three; therefore, the lightning flash is approximately 3 miles away.
- Lightning awareness should be increased with the first flash of lightning or the first clap of thunder, no matter how far away. This activity must be treated as a wake-up call to interscholastic athletic personnel. The most important aspect to monitor is how far away the lightning is occurring, and how fast the storm is approaching, relative to the distance of a safe shelter.
- As a minimum, NSSL staff strongly recommend that by the time the monitor obtains a flash-to-bang count of 30 seconds, all individuals should have left the athletic site and reached a safe structure or location. Athletic events may need to be terminated.
- The existence of blue sky and the absence of rain are not protection from lightning. Lightning can, and does strike as far as 10 miles away from the rain shaft. It does not have to be raining for lightning to strike.
- If no safe structure or location is within a reasonable distance, find a thick grove of small trees surrounded by taller trees or a dry ditch. Assume a crouched position on the ground with only the balls of the feet touching the ground, wrap your arms around your knees and lower your head. Minimize contact with the ground, because lightning current often enters a victim through the ground rather than by a direct overhead strike. **MINIMIZE YOUR BODY'S SURFACE AREA, AND MINIMIZE CONTACT WITH THE GROUND! DO NOT LIE FLAT!** If unable to reach safe shelter, stay away from the tallest trees or objects (such as light poles or flag poles), metal objects (such as fences or bleachers), individual trees, standing pools or water, and open fields. Avoid being the highest object in a field. Do not take shelter under a single, tall tree.
- A person who feels his or her hair stand on end, or skin tingle, should immediately crouch, as described above.
- Avoid using the telephone, except in emergency situations. People have been struck by lightning while using a land-line telephone. A cellular phone or portable remote phone is a safe alternative to land-line phones, if the person and the antenna are located within a safe structure or location, and if all other precautions are followed.

- When considering resumption of an athletic activity, NSSL staff recommends that everyone should ideally wait at least 30 minutes after the last flash of lightning or sound of thunder before returning to the field or activity.
- People who have been struck by lightning do not carry an electrical charge. Therefore, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is safe for the responder. If possible, an injured person should be moved to a safer location before starting CPR. Lightning-strike victims who show signs of cardiac or respiratory arrest need emergency help quickly. Prompt, aggressive CPR has been highly effective for the survival of victims of lightning strikes.

Equipment



As with all sports, wearing and using the right gear can go a long way toward preventing injuries. Wayland Little League provide each team a kit back which includes bats, balls, helmets and catchers gear. This equipment should be inspected on a regular basis to ensure that it is in good good and serviceable condition and fit for purpose.

In addition there are rules which must be observed in both games and practices to ensure the safety of players at all times.

- Batting helmets must be worn whenever a player is at bat, waiting to bat, or running the bases. Helmets should always fit properly and be worn correctly. If the helmet has a chin strap, it should be fastened, and if the helmet has an eye shield or other face guard, this should be in good condition, securely attached to the helmet.
- A catcher must always wear a helmet, face mask, throat guard, full-length chest protector, athletic supporter with a cup, shin guards and a catcher's mitt whenever they are catching pitches, whether it's in the game, in the bullpen or during warm-ups.
- Clips OUT on shin guards. Clips in will get caught and trip the player.
- Appropriate sports shoes should be worn appropriate to the surface the game or practice is being played on. Baseball cleats on grass / clay are suggested.

- Baseball cleats must have molded plastic or rubber cleats. Metal cleats are not permitted at the Little League Level. Some players use soccer cleats that meet these guidelines are permitted.
- It is recommended that all players wear athletic supporters; most, particularly pitchers, catchers and infielders, should wear protective cups.
- Protective eyewear for children with glasses or contacts.

Bats

Bats present a very serious danger to players when misused or used negligently. Consequently the use of bats are to be strictly controlled by the coaches.

Rules governing the use of bats must be introduced at the first practice and reinforced to the players before each practice and game.

- Bats are only to be picked up when instructed by a coach.
- When carrying a bat it must be held down to the ground with a straight arm and dragged behind the player
- Players must never swing their bat unless directed by the coach.
- Players must never swing their bat around other people (players, coaches, umpires, spectators etc). Check first that there is no one around you!!
- Use the, “Double Distance” rule. Players with bats must be more than two bat lengths away from the next closest player.
- Always swing the bat under control.
- Always drop the bat. Never throw it.
- Always wear a helmet, when on deck, during live batting practice or batting in a game.
- Bats are never to be held or swung in the dugout or on the bench.
- Bats must be either placed in a players equipment bag, placed on a bat rack or neatly placed leaning against a fence when not in use.



At Bat / Batting

While batting is the really fun and exciting part of baseball it must also be done in an appropriate manner with regard to safety issues.

Whether batting takes place in a practice or a game batting should be carried out in a safe, controlled environment.

The potential for players to be hit by a bat is high unless some rules are introduced immediately and reinforced each time there is a practice or a game.

Other common sense ways include wearing quality, league-approved safety gear, and regularly



inspecting the equipment and playing field.

Batting helmets must be worn whenever a player is at bat, waiting to bat, or running the bases.

- Helmets should always fit properly and be worn correctly. If the helmet has a chin strap, it should be fastened, and if the helmet has an eye shield or other face guard, this should be in good condition, securely attached to the helmet.
- Ensure the bat is Little League approved.
- Use the right size bat for the players (once size does not fit all)
- Make sure the bat grips are in good condition.
- Bats should be in good condition and not damaged.
- Always swing the bat under control.
- Always drop the bat. Never throw it.

Safety when batting

The potential for players to be hit by a bat or a thrown ball is high unless some rules are introduced immediately and reinforced each time there is a practice or a game.

Whether batting takes place in a practice or a game batting should be carried out in a safe, controlled environment.

- The area should be appropriate and free of hazards.
- Batting helmets must be worn whenever a player is at bat, waiting to bat, or running the bases.
 - Helmets should always fit properly and be worn correctly.
 - If the helmet has a chin strap, it should be fastened.
 - If the helmet has an eye shield or other face guard, this should be in good condition, securely attached to the helmet.
- Bats must be in serviceable condition, not damaged and be Little League approved.
- Players should use the right size bat for their age and size.
- Ensure that bat grips are in good condition.
- Players should always swing the bat under control.
- Players must always drop the bat. Never throw it.
- When players step into the batters box - be ready for the ball to be pitched.
- Pitchers must not throw the ball until the batter is

Safety using and handling bats

Bats present a very serious danger to players when misused or used negligently. Consequently the use of bats are to be strictly controlled by the coaches.

Rules governing the use of bats must be introduced at the first practice and reinforced to the players before each practice and game.

- Bats are only to be picked up when instructed by a coach.
- When carrying a bat it must be held down to the ground with a straight arm and dragged behind the player
- Players must never swing their bat unless directed by the coach.
- Players must never swing their bat around other people (players, coaches, umpires, spectators etc). Check first that there is no one around you!!

- Use the, “Double Distance” rule. Players with bats must be more than two bat lengths away from the next closest player.
- Always swing the bat under control.
- Always drop the bat. Never throw it.
- Always wear a helmet, when on deck, during live batting practice or batting in a game.
- Bats are never to be held or swung in the dugout or on the bench.
- Bats must be either placed in a players equipment bag, placed on a bat rack or neatly placed leaning against a fence when not in use.

Throwing and Catching

Baseballs are extremely hard and can reach upwards of 60 mph. This presents a real hazard to players coaches and spectators. This danger will only increase as players get older and stronger, (and balls get harder) therefore these rules should be adhered to at all Little League levels not just the instructional league level.

A few basic rules can ensure can go a long way to ensuring everyone is as safe as they can be.



Coaches have a responsibility for:

- Controlling the circumstances around where and when a player should throw a ball.
- Ensuring players only throw balls when instructed to do so.
- All players should be throwing in the same direction with adequate separation between adjacent players.
- Making sure players don't try to retrieve balls in the line of balls being thrown
- Ensuring that appropriate balls are use for your age group / league. (T-ball leagues use softer balls than the majors and minors leagues for example.)

Players should be coached to understand a few safety precautions around when and where they should throw balls.

Players should:

- Always warm up and warm their arms up before throwing begins.
- Always throw to another player under control.
- Always have players face the ball during batting practice.
- Ensure players face the ball and present a target (glove up) when catching.
- Do not throw the ball unless their partner is looking at them.
- Learn proper throwing techniques such as: releasing the ball out in front of the body after the arm passes the head, using a smooth throwing motion and keeping their eyes on the target.

- Be aware of their surroundings (other players / obstacles / etc)
- Never use damaged or wet baseballs.
- When pitching to a batter - wait for the batter to be in position and be ready to receive the pitch.
- If in doubt - don't throw the ball.

Throwing / Pitching



There are a number of risks to players when throwing or pitching baseball, that of being struck by a baseball or an injury as a result of throwing a baseball. Steps must be taken to protect players from

- Ensure that appropriate balls are used for your age group / league. (Little League T-ball leagues use softer balls than the majors and minors leagues and should not be given harder baseballs.)
- Damaged or wet baseballs must not be used.
- Players should always warm up and warm their arms up before throwing begins
- Make sure players learn proper throwing techniques such as: releasing the ball out in front of the body after the arm passes the head, using a smooth throwing motion and keeping their eyes on the target.
- Players should always throw to another player under control.
- Always have players face the ball during batting practice.
- Do not throw the ball unless their partner is looking at them.
- Ensure players face the ball and present a target (glove up) when catching.
- Proper throwing and pitching technique should be taught and reinforced to reduce the chance of injury.
- Little League provides age appropriate pitch counts for pitchers during games - these counts must be adhered to.
- Age appropriate player rest periods must be considered and adhered to when scheduling games and rosters.

Concussion

Concussion, a type of traumatic brain injury, is caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head. Concussions can also occur from a blow to the body that causes the head and brain to move rapidly back and forth—literally causing the brain to bounce around or twist within the skull.

This sudden movement of the brain causes stretching and tearing of brain cells, damaging the cells and creating chemical changes in the brain.

Concussions can result from a fall or from athletes colliding with each other, the ground, or with an obstacle, such as a goalpost. Even a “ding,” “getting your bell rung,” or what seems to be a mild bump or blow to the head can be serious.

As a coach you are on the front line in identifying an athlete with a suspected concussion. You know your athletes well and can recognize when something is off—even when the athlete doesn’t know it or doesn’t want to admit it.

So to help spot a concussion, you should watch for and ask others to report the following two things: 1. A forceful bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body that results in rapid movement of the head. AND 2. Any concussion signs or symptoms, such as a change in the athlete’s behavior, thinking, or physical functioning.

Signs and symptoms of concussion generally show up soon after the injury. But the full effect of the injury may not be noticeable at first. For example, in the first few minutes the athlete might be slightly confused or appear a little bit dazed, but an hour later they can’t recall coming to the practice or game.

You should repeatedly check for signs of concussion and also tell parents what to watch out for at home. Any worsening of concussion signs or symptoms indicates a medical emergency.

SYMPTOMS REPORTED BY ATHLETE:

- Headache or “pressure” in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Sensitivity to light
- Sensitivity to noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
- Concentration or memory problems
- Confusion
- Just not “feeling right” or is “feeling down”

SIGNS OBSERVED BY COACHING STAFF:

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Is confused about assignment or position
- Forgets an instruction
- Is unsure of game, score, or opponent
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Loses consciousness (even briefly)
- Shows mood, behavior, or personality changes • Can’t recall events prior to hit or fall
- Can’t recall events after hit or fall

No matter whether the athlete is a key member of the team or the game is about to end, an athlete with a suspected concussion should be immediately removed from play. To help you know how to respond, follow the Heads Up four- step action plan:

1. REMOVE THE ATHLETE FROM PLAY.

Look for signs and symptoms of a concussion if your athlete has experienced a bump or blow to the head or body. When in doubt, sit them out!

2. ENSURE THAT THE ATHLETE IS EVALUATED BY AN APPROPRIATE HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL.

Do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself. Health care professionals have a number of methods that they can use to assess the severity of concussions. As a coach, recording the following information can help health care professionals in assessing the athlete after the injury:

- Cause of the injury and force of the hit or blow to the head or body
- Any loss of consciousness (passed out/knocked out) and if so, for how long
- Any memory loss immediately following the injury • Any seizures immediately following the injury
- Number of previous concussions (if any)

3. INFORM THE ATHLETE'S PARENTS OR GUARDIANS.

Let them know about the possible concussion and give them the Heads Up fact sheet for parents. This fact sheet can help parents monitor the athlete for sign or symptoms that appear or get worse once the athlete is at home or returns to school.

4. KEEP THE ATHLETE OUT OF PLAY.

An athlete should be removed from play the day of the injury and until an appropriate health care professional says they are symptom-free and it's OK to return to play. After you remove an athlete with a suspected concussion from practice or play, the decision about return to practice or play is a medical decision.

PLAYERS WHO HAVE SUFFERED POSSIBLE CONCUSSIONS

Pursuant to CDC training and WLL policy, any WLL player who has received a blow to the head and demonstrates one or more signs/symptoms of a concussion during practice or a game must be removed from the activity and examined by a medical professional.

That player may not resume playing for his / her league team, in either practices or games, until the player's head coach receives written medical clearance from the player's medical provider or via written parent communication that medical clearance has been received.

The medical clearance must state either:

1. The player did not receive a concussion from the blow to the head; or
2. The player did receive a concussion from the blow to the head, but has sufficiently recovered such that he/ she can return to play.

All Wayland Little League head coaches must take the following on-line training from the Centers for Disease Control: <http://www.cdc.gov/headsup/youthsports/coach.html>

More details can be found at www.waylandlittleleague.org > Resources > Coaches Corner

- Coaches must provide their certificate of completion to their league commissioner before commencing any Little League related practices or organized events.

Player safety factors

As with many sports, there are two types of common baseball and softball injuries - impact, and overuse. Impact, or traumatic injuries are caused by sudden contact with the ground, an object, or another person. Common causes of impact baseball injuries include being struck by a bat or ball, or colliding with another player. Overuse baseball injuries are those that occur from excessive use of the wrist, arm, and shoulder joints from pitching and batting the ball.

- Perform dynamic stretching before every game and practice.
- Perform static stretching after every game and practice (See Warming up the Athlete).
- Ensure players who wear eyeglasses wear athletic eyeglasses or eyeglasses with straps.
- Ensure players keep hydrated during and after all games and practices – especially on hot days. Regular breaks for players to take on fluids are essential.
- Ensure the players pay attention and never clown around.
- Be aware of and take into account of any medical conditions your players may have.
- Have players inform the coach immediately if they are sick or injured. Don't play players who are ill or injured, no matter how much they are needed.
- Bandage all cuts and be aware of blood-borne pathogens. Always use disposable gloves when bandaging an injury.
- Report all injuries to the league and parents if they are not in attendance.
- Follow-up with a phone call that day.
- Keep good records on injuries to players.
- Never allow players to move anyone who is hurt.
- Never allow players to start the practice without the coach being present.
- When in doubt as to the seriousness of the injury, call 911. Always err on the side of caution.
- The Little League also has guidelines for blunt force chest injuries. Make sure you understand what is required of the coach when a player sustains a blunt force chest injury.
- Make sure they are aware of the injury potential when sliding into a base.
- Be aware of exposing players to the sun for extended periods of time. Keep players in the shade as much as possible. Covering skin with clothing and headwear reduces exposure and appropriate eyewear can help protect players eyes.
- Remind parents that sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher on hot sunny days is an essential item to pack in their kit bags. It also should be sweat and water-resistant and reapplied every two to four hours.
- Keep your players hydrated during and after all games and practices – especially on hot days. Regular breaks for players to take on fluids are essential.
- Bandage all cuts and be aware of blood-borne pathogens. Always use disposable gloves when bandaging an injury.
- Report all sickness or injuries to the league and parents (if they are not in attendance.)
- Follow-up with a phone call that day.
- Never allow players to move anyone who is hurt.
- Never allow players to start the practice without the coach being present.

- When in doubt as to the seriousness of the injury, call 911. Always err on the side of caution.
- The Little League has guidelines for blunt force chest injuries. Make sure you understand what is required of the coach when a player sustains a blunt force chest injury.
- Make sure players are aware of the injury potential when sliding into a base and how to minimize the risk of injury.
- Training errors can occur when you enthusiastically take on too much physical activity too quickly. Going too fast, exercising for too long or simply doing too much of one type of activity can strain your muscles and lead to an overuse injury.
- Technique errors. Improper technique can also take its toll on your body. If you use poor form as you do a set of strength training exercises, swing a golf club or throw a baseball, for example, you may overload certain muscles and cause an overuse injury. Common causes of impact baseball injuries include being struck by a bat or ball, or colliding with another player. Overuse baseball injuries are those that occur from excessive use of the wrist, arm, and shoulder joints from pitching and batting the ball.
- Players should not play or practice if they are experiencing persistent pain or loss of motion.

Facility conditions



Coaches should inspect the playing field and make sure it is safe for play. - that there are no holes or stumps in the infield or outfield and clear any garbage or debris.

- Walk the field prior to every practice and game. Look for problem areas and hazards such as holes, damaged fences, loose bags, etc.
- Report all problems or potential safety hazards with the field to the league commissioner or safety officer immediately.
- If in doubt, keep players away from any potential hazards until the problem is rectified.
- Ensure all players are aware of the fences and gates.

Fielding

Introduction

Most coaches tend to think about catching balls such as “grounders” first when you mention fielding, however teaching a player how to throw properly is the most important skill a player needs to develop at an early age. Developing good throwing habits should be your primary instructional focus throughout the season. The greatest gift you can give your players is the ability to throw a baseball. It will save a lot of headaches down the road as well as reduce the risk of injuries that often come with the unnatural throwing motion.

Statistics show that lacking the ability to properly throw a baseball causes more players to call it quits more than any other deficiency they may have on the field. A player who struggles to throw at the age of 12 will have a near impossible time learning how to throw and develop good habits when he's 13+ as he makes the transition to the big diamond.

Understanding the steps to throwing:

Players must learn to ~~walk~~ **throw** before they learn to ~~run~~ **pitch**. Don't rush them to the mound. Arm speed and velocity are a function of proper throwing skills and having the **intent** to throw hard. A player's arm action is vital to his success on the field. The elbows are the dominant moving force when viewing proper arm action (elbows out, elbows up and elbows lead the hands). The forearms need to be loose and continually moving with no backside pauses.

- Upon release of the ball the hand must be outside the elbow.
- The hand needs to stay behind the ball upon release.
- Throwing is a **high elbow action**. One of the keys to proper arm action is that the elbow is as high as the shoulder, where the hand is in relation to the elbow is then the player's preference based on comfort, arm speed, and natural arm action.
- Players use two arms to throw (throw the glove, throw the ball). Both arms should be symmetrical (the angle of both elbows should be the same) after the break.
- Shoulder turn - the final rotation of the throw. The back shoulder should *replace* the front shoulder.
- **Control** is a direct function of sound body movements.
- The thrower has not completed the throw when the ball is released but when his arm is in the proper finish position.
- The ball's rotation should be 12-6 opposed to 3-9 which leads to elbow pain and fatigue (Little League Elbow).
- **Control** is easier to teach than speed. At a young age encourage players to throw fast to help them develop those fast-twitch muscles --control will come second.
- Poor mechanics and bad habits are often the result of kids aiming or pushing the ball.
- The best way to promote arm strength and sound throwing movements is through long toss.



Instructional League: Throwing Cues

Starting Point:

For younger players some basic steps can help. The act of throwing a baseball is not that simple. Throwing requires the entire body to work together in order to throw the ball accurately and to put something on it. Younger players will take time to learn to control their body fully and to achieve this this level of coordination.

Less can be more - don't try to over coach throwing techniques - telling younger players something like "step and throw" can be enough and the first step on a long journey to becoming proficient in throwing a baseball accurately.

All positions on the field require the ability to throw the ball accurately. Good throwing mechanics will enable them to make plays. When you warm up with the team before practice or play catch in the back yard, make sure you work on your mechanics and strive to improve accuracy. Remember younger players may not not in most cases be coordinated to put everything together.

Grip

The best way to grip the ball is across the seams. The fingers are placed over the top of the seams to provide a good grip on the ball. In the first picture you'll notice that you can see 2 seams running horizontally.

The back of the ball not visible will also have 2 seams running horizontally. By gripping the ball in this fashion, those 4 seams will help to keep the ball in the air longer and keep the ball traveling straighter (assuming the player can throw it with 12-6 rotation - see graphic below).

It takes years of practice to be able to grip the ball across the 4 seams in this fashion when playing a position other than pitcher on the field. Players can work on this by throwing the ball into their glove and as they pull the ball out shift the ball to the correct grip. This takes practice and I wouldn't worry about it for younger players.

Steps to throwing

- Eyes and front shoulder are on the target.
- Chin/nose is going toward target
- After fielding the ball you will be turning your body sideways and pointing your lead shoulder in the direction of the throw.
- In order to get the lower and upper body working in sync it is important that the player starts from the center of his body .
- Players who are accurate pickup the target early!



Break

- When a player "breaks" or takes the ball out of his glove, we want him to "thumb flick" down.
- This does not have to be a big arm circle.
- The player should *break (or zipper)* from where it says the name of his team on his jersey opposed to his hip, ear, or above his head.
- Both arms should be symmetrical with each other.
- Players who throw or break from their ear or hip end have a difficult time getting their upper and lower body working in sync.



Arm Cocking Phase

- The ball is pushed back and away behind the body
- The baseball is pointing away from his head
- Notice the ball is not near the ear.
- The elbow is near or at shoulder height.
- Player is looking down his arm
- Feet and shoulders are square.
- Eyes and front shoulder are on the target.

The most common throwing flaw at this age is keeping the ball too close to his ear.



Acceleration Phase

- This is the action of throwing the ball.
- Triggered by the shoulder turn.
- The player will step towards the intended target.
- The player has his glove tucked to this chest, his front foot leading toward his target, elbow above his shoulder, chin to target, hand behind baseball, and back foot is still on the ground
- The player's hand will end up outside his elbow.
- The release point is critical to throw accuracy and is something that will be mastered with practice over time.



Deceleration and follow through

- Player replaces his shoulders, flattens his back, and gets to his opposite hip.
- Players who throw fast 'replace their shoulders.' Players get their right shoulder where their left shoulder started and vice versa. Players who finish with their shoulders completely square to home or their target tend to cut off their throw. After throwing the ball player should not pin his arm against his body but keep it rag loose and free of tension..
- The palm is facing back and not up signaling player stayed behind the ball.



Catching the ball - the basics

A skill often overlooked is teaching players how to have a catch correctly. If players cannot master catching the ball, transferring the ball to their throwing hand quickly, and making a strong accurate throw to their target they will struggle at every position.

Good defense revolves around a team's ability to catch the baseball and then throw accurately.

Watch many teams warm up however and you'll see players using poor throwing mechanics resulting in their target running after poorly thrown balls.

But if catching the ball is such a vital skill, why aren't players better at it? One reason is that "*having a catch*" is seen as something that is done *before* practice and not *during* practice; it is not viewed by coaches as being important so the players take that same approach and do it with little focus or attention to detail.



Glove

- Players should get the right glove. The glove becomes an extension of the hand when catching a baseball.
- It must fit properly to work efficiently. As a general rule of thumb, players under the age of 12 will use a glove in the 10-11 inch range. Older players will use something between 11 and 13 inch glove.
- Before playing regularly with your glove, it's important to break in your glove. One of the best ways to break in your glove is by practicing your catch.

Body Position

- Position your body. Catching a baseball relies heavily on your stance and body position. You should be in the athletic position to prepare catching a ball. The athletic position takes the following into effect:
- The player should bend their knees slightly. This will give you the flexibility to lunge for the ball and keep your mind focused.
- Keep your shoulders positioned towards the target. This will make it easier to visualize and react once the ball comes towards you.
- Stand on the balls of your feet instead of standing flat-footed.
- Be ready to catch the ball with both hands - a catch is not only made with the baseball glove.

Watch the ball

- Watch the ball. **You can't catch what you can't see.** The key to catching a baseball is to never let the ball out of your sight. Keep your eyes fixed from the time the ball leaves the thrower's hand until it lands in your glove. By watching the ball, you can track the ball's flight plan, and prepare for the right stance to catch the ball.

Go to the ball.

- Not all balls are hit or thrown directly to the fielder - Players should not feel inclined to stay anchored in one place, but instead move to catch the ball.
- The feet get the hands to the ball to make the catch.
- If the ball is thrown and you can tell it will land behind you, run backwards while watching the ball.
- In baseball, catchers play by zone defense. When the ball enters your zone, it's your job to move to it.

Position the glove.

- The glove should be held with the palm facing outwards in front of your body.
- Position the glove in the direction of the target who is throwing the ball.
- If the ball is thrown above your belly button, fingers up very little adjustment is required from the ready position.
- When the ball is thrown above your body, extend your arm upwards towards the ball

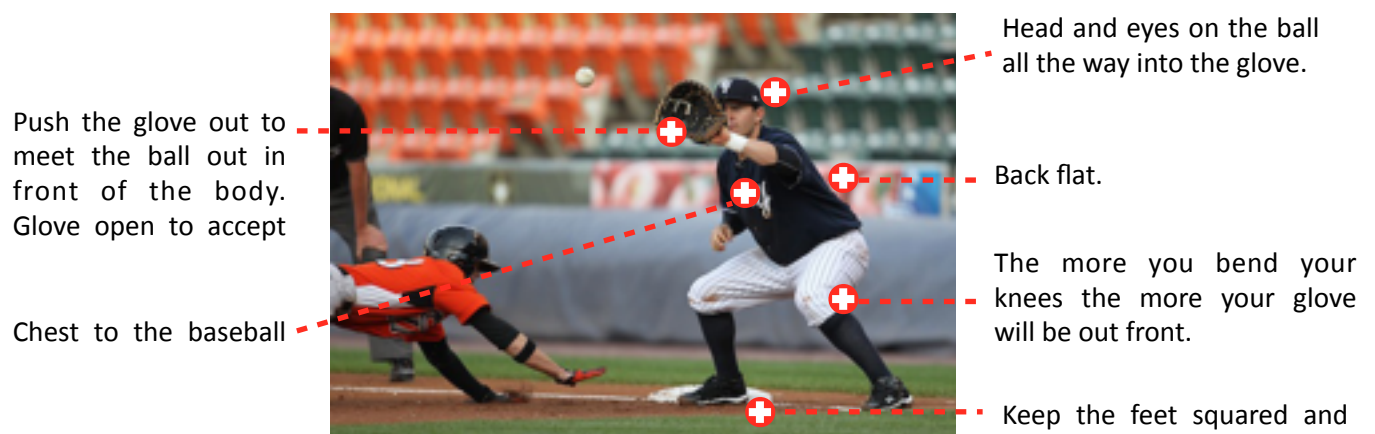


- If the throw is below the belly button, rotate your glove so that your fingers are pointed down.



Make the catch.

- The players should aim to catch the ball out in front of their body. Pushing the glove out to meet the ball.
- Line up the ball with the catching hand (glove)
- Be prepared to move
- Catch the ball in the pocket of the glove.
- Keeping head and eyes on the ball until it is safely secured in the glove.
- Close your hand immediately once the ball makes contact with your glove.
- Get into the practice of using your second hand to secure the catch. Using your second hand will also prepare you to throw once you become a catcher. Your free hand needs to have quick access to the ball.



The Importance of catching the right way!

- Make sure your players are throwing properly and not throwing until they have adequately warmed-up, you must also focus on the other half of the equation - the receiver.
- The thrower should not throw the baseball until the receiver is ready and “shows his hands.”
- The receiver should hope for a good throw, however, expect a bad throw. If he is standing flat footed and the throw isn’t perfect he will not react accordingly and make a play on the ball.
- Players shouldn't hold the baseball, but look to transfer it quickly and send it back to where it came from as fast as possible.
- Every ball that is thrown should be on a line until they get to long toss where they should be encouraged to ‘put a belly on it’ (arc). (This does not mean the ball should be thrown like a pop-up.)



This results in a pushing motion more-so than a throwing motion. Players at this age need to learn the proper **arm action** as it relates to throwing, as well as begin to learn how we use our entire body to throw the ball and not just the arm.

The Do's of having a catch...

- One player stands on the foul line and the other in the outfield. All players throw in the same direction.
- Every 8-10 throws a player moves back 10 feet.
- Receivers or catchers are hoping for a good throw, however, should be expecting a bad throw.
- Players should always be moving their feet and ready for an errant throw.
- When a bad throw occurs the player should run and get it and return to the same spot on the field and throw.
- Players should not hold the ball for more than 3-seconds after catching the ball.
- When throwing to your partner your front foot, glove, lead hip, chin, and eyes should be going toward the target. Front side should stay closed as long as possible.
- Start close, progress back, end close.

The Don'ts of having a catch...

- Having a catch on the infield where throws are criss-crossing each other. Stay off the infield!
- Players stand close to each other the entire time while developing poor throwing mechanics. Players need to get to long toss.
- Expecting a perfect throw every single time. A player stands flat footed while waiting for a throw and cannot react if the throw is off target.
- Walking after a poor throw and then throwing it from where he picked it up.
- In baseball our first thought after catching the ball should always be getting rid of it quickly -- and not holding it.
- Front foot opening up too early. Body going in one direction while trying to throw in a different direction.
- Not having a progression where players long toss to each other.



Throwing Drills to Promote Sound Mechanics

- **Wrist Flips:** Promotes staying behind the baseball. Player 'waves goodbye' to the ball and get the ball to rotate properly.
- **One Knee Throws:** Player has throwing side knee on the ground and glove shoulder lined up with target or partner. Throwing distance is 15-20 feet.
- **Feet in Cement:** Player starts square to target and feet stay still as upper body is isolated. Focuses on having a good shoulder turn.
- **Be the Bird Man:** Promotes 'thumb flicks' or how the ball is taken out of your glove. Player breaks 3 times with thumbs breaking down prior to throwing the ball. Palms should face backwards during the break.
- **Ready, Break, Throw:** Player goes from ready position, breaking properly with a good thumb flick, pausing in a j-up or t-position with the ball pointing away from his head, before finally throwing the ball.
- **Self Bounce or Self Toss:** Players bounces ball off ground or tosses in the air then catches the ball and throws with proper footwork as he tries to get the ball out of his glove and transfer the ball quickly.
- **Ball Pickup and Throw:** Player places the ball on the ground 3-5 feet in front of him. Player approaches the ball like an infielder, picks up the ball and throws in one motion.
- **Crow Hop:** Player begins to use his body to throw the ball and not simply rely on his arm.
- **Box Throwing:** While players warm-up, players try to make a box around the head of their partner as they work on accuracy.
- **Eyes Closed:** Have the player throw with his eyes closed. This will force him to feel his movements.
- **End-Game Throwing:** Have players start in the finish position or how they should look after throwing the baseball. He will then have to get back to that position after he rewinds and then completes the throw.
- **Step backs:** Used to reinforce the front foot being close and feet in a straight line. Players start with feet close together and then 'step back' with their back foot. Front foot stays anchored to the ground.
- **Rapid Fire:** Player catches the ball and gets ride of it as quickly as he can before the next ball is tossed to him.
- **Self Drop:** Player turns sideways and points the ball at his target. He then drops the ball and then quickly catches the top half of the ball and in one continuous motion continues with the arm circle without any stops or pauses.
- **Pendulum:** Have players start in the J-up or T-position. They then swing their arms down and cross before they then complete their throw.
- **Flick and Release:** Thrower will break with his hands together and release the ball. The ball should go toward 2b (if it's the pitcher) if done correctly.
- **Reach, Grab, Throw:** For players who keep the ball close to their ear. Player starts without a ball in his glove. The coach stands behind him holding the ball up high. Player must reach back, grab the ball and throw in one continuous motion.

Throwing Games

Below, find a sampling of fun throwing related games to play with your team that you can implement into your practice plan. It is important that during the games players are reminded of the skills, cues and movements they should be focused on while performing the game.

Far, farther, farthest:

Setup a target and three cones. The player (or team) must make 10 accurate throws from the *far* cone before moving back to the *farther* cone where he needs to make 5 successful throws, and finally they must move to the *farthest* cone to complete 3 accurate throws.

Knockout:

Setup a target (hula hoop) with two lines and two bucket of baseballs. The first player in each line compete to see who can get in into the target first. The first player who gets it in "knocks out" the other player. Get it in on the first try? Everyone on your team who is out gets back in. A fun game that promotes accuracy and getting rid of the ball quickly.

Long Toss Competition:

Players compete to see who can throw the ball the furthest. Long toss is a great tool to promote sound mechanics and develop arm strength.

Relay Throws:

Form two lines. Have 1/2 the team make a line down the 1B and another down the 3B foul line. The ball starts at home and the team has to get the ball all the way to end by making accurate throws. Advanced: players should turn glove side after making the catch.

Last Team Standing:

Players partner-up and have a catch. When the ball hits the ground that group is out. The last team standing wins the game.

Around the Horn:

Players throw the ball "around the horn" by starting with the ball at home plate and attempting to get it from 1B - 2B - 3B and back to home without a drop.

Infield Play

As mentioned earlier, providing a safe environment is your biggest responsibility as a coach. This especially pertains to how alert a player is prior to the coach or player pitching the ball. A batted ball- at every division- can get on a fielder in a hurry, and if an infielder is not awake and in a proper baseball ready position there is a real concern or threat of injury.

What does it mean to be *baseball ready*?

Pre-pitch Routine: Becoming a strong infielder begins by answering the following questions *before* the ball is hit.

- Am I in the correct position?
- Where's the play?
- If the ball comes to me, what do I do with it?
- If the ball goes to him...or him...or him...what is my responsibility?
- How many outs are there?
- Have I told at least one other teammate the situation?
- Are the runners fast or slow? (Advanced)
- Where did this hitter hit last time? (Advanced)
- Where is the pitcher throwing the ball and how does that relate to where I should be positioning myself? (Advanced)



During the windup and the pitch:

- The entire infield should be moving with slow and in-control creep steps toward home plate. The glove must always be visible.
- Pop the glove - at the conclusion of your creep step players should pop their glove. This is your way of telling the hitter I am ready. Hit me the ball! The other option is to simply have the arms dangling (marionette) down, however, try to avoid hands on knees with a poor position when it comes to reacting.
- As the ball enters the hitting zone the players should be still and ready to react with both feet on the ground.
- Middle infielders should be up taller than corner infielders.

The ball is hit!

- Players should be encouraged to '**come and get it.**' You want to stress the importance of players coming to get the ball and not sitting back on it.
- Players should have an internal clock as they look to get the ball and get rid of it as quickly as they can while staying in control. (Hot potato for the young players).
- Errors are part of the game. Errors of aggression should be accepted, while errors of omission or not going after the ball should not.
- Get dirty! Dive and do what you have to in order to keep the ball from getting by you.
- On balls hit directly at a player two hands is expected. Why do we use two hands? First so we can secure the ball, and second so we can get rid of it quickly.
- On forehand and backhand plays players should only use one hand.

Always have your teammates back!

- Players should always be in a position to back-up a play in the event of a bad throw or missed ball. Backing a player up *after* a ball is missed is too late.

The next play is far more important than the last play.

Remind players that errors are part of the game. When they happen encourage your players to pick each other up with words of encouragement. When an error occurs the best way to ensure that he will miss the next one too is by getting angry or not saying a word.

Infield Play Techniques in Pictures

Fielding a ground ball

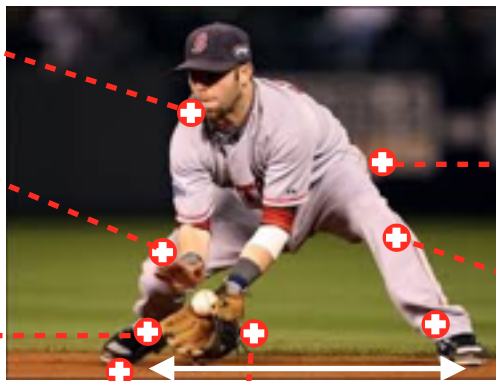
Head and chest up and eyes on the ball (watching for hops etc)

A player's top hand should be above the glove as a means to secure the ball as well as to get rid of it quickly.

Hands should be soft (like

Glove on the ground to prevent ball from going

Wide base in order for them to get below the baseball.



Player gets into a low crouch close to the ground,

Knees bent

The player moves to align his body with the line of the flight of the ball. The ball is fielded in

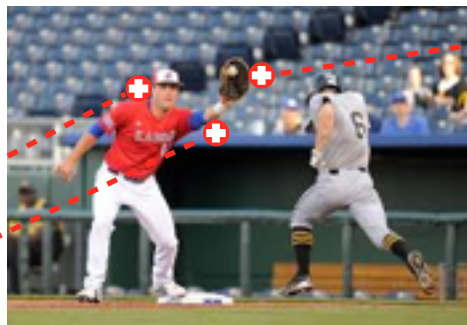
For a right handed thrower, his left foot should be slightly ahead of his right.

Catching a thrown ball or a line-drive

Younger players especially struggle when catching a ball thrown to them or catching a line-drive.

Eyes on the ball. Move the glove to

Arms extended when trying to make a catch.



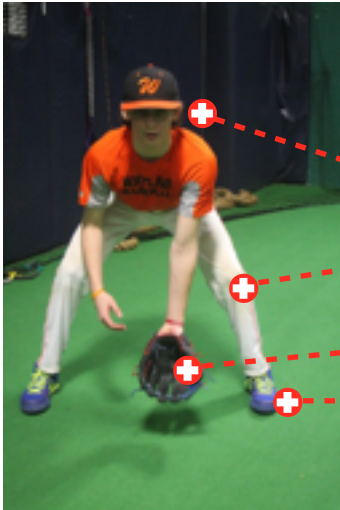
If the ball is above the

If the ball is below the

Ball is secured when it hits the web of the glove .

Players should learn to close and squeeze

Fielding ground balls

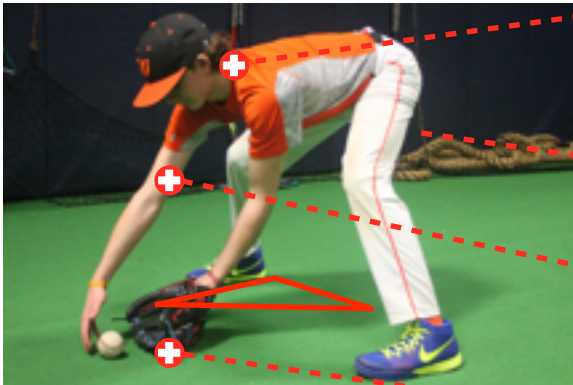


Pre-pitch (baseball ready)

A player's pre-pitch routine is just as important to having success as what happens after the ball is hit.

- Head up and eyes on the ball. (A player should always know where the ball is and think "it's coming to me").
- Players should be in a read-and-react position. "Baseball Ready"
- Glove ready **with hands off the knees**
- Players should be off their heels and on the balls of their feet

For a ball hit at the player



The player should make a triangle with the feet and glove out in front of the body

- The player moves his body to meet the ball straight on.
- The player watches the ball into the glove.
- The player should spread his feet apart and squat to get down to the ball. (Don't try to keep the legs straight and reach down)
- Throwing hand ready to secure the ball and transfer from the glove for throw.
- The glove is out in front of the body. If the glove is directly beneath the player, they won't see the last hop.
- The glove should be on the grass / clay to prevent the ball going under



Correct Stance - front view.



Incorrect Stance - front view.

Fielding Ground balls away from the body (One handed fielding)

When fielding a ground hit and it is moving away from the fielder the fielder will attempt to make the catch by reaching down and away from the body. Body position is important, the correct body position is down and close to the ball. This is known as depth, which means the chest and eyes are to close the ground (and ball).

As a rule of thumb:

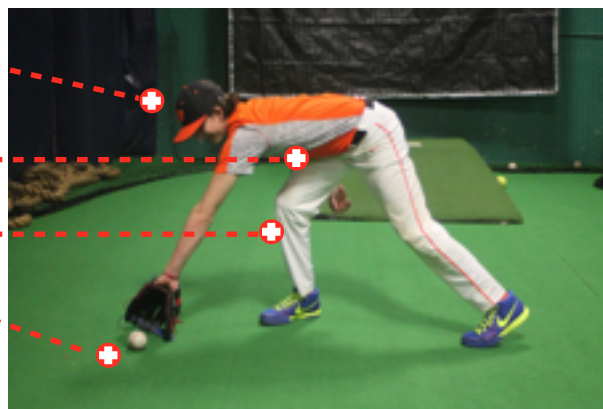
A ball close to = two hands.

A ball you have to reach for = one hand.

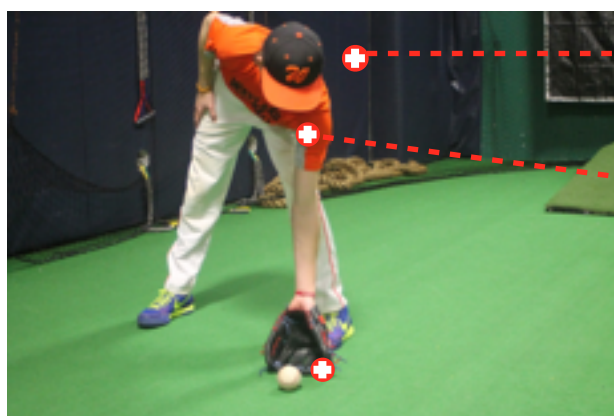
We always want good depth no matter what type of ground ball we're fielding.

The routine backhand

- Head and eyes on the ball until it is secured in the glove.
- Head is behind the path of the ball with the left ear in over the ball.
- Chest is low to the ground and over the ball.
- Player should get chest to knee and either use the elbow as a hinge or come through the ball.
- Glove in position and open, ready to receive the ball.
- Players should be encouraged to run and then square-up to a ball opposed to shuffling to the ball.



The forehand ground ball catch



- Head and eyes on the ball until it is secured in the glove.
- Head is behind the path of the ball with the left ear in over the ball.
- Chest is low to the ground and over the ball.
- Glove in position (on the ground or low enough to make the play) open, and ready to receive the ball.
- Players should be encouraged to run and then square-up to a ball opposed to shuffling to the ball.

Low fielding stance vs high fielding stance



Low stance - front view.

Corner infielders need to start lower than middle infielders as the ball will get on him a lot faster.



High stance - front view.

Middle infielders should start more upright because they need more range / cover more ground to reach a hit ball.

- Both players are "baseball ready"
- Both stances allow slower hit balls to be charged down by the infielders in order to make a quicker throwing.
- The glove is ready (not on the knee or somewhere else that would make it hard for the fielder to get it into position. This is also a safety issue - a hard hit ball can arrive very quickly to an infielder which increases the danger of being hit if the glove cannot be brought into play quickly enough.
- The player is ready to move his feet to get his hands to the ball. (The feet get the hands to the ball)

Outfield Play

Often at the youth level, playing the outfield can be seen as a form of punishment or a demotion. It is important to stress the importance of a strong outfield and the many roles it plays on defense.

First, it is important to note that the outfield is in fact the last line of defense. If an infielder misses the ball he has the outfielders to retrieve it, however, if an outfielder misplays the ball he has nobody behind him (and it can be a long and lonely run chasing after a ball).



Outfielders also have the responsibility to cover a large area of ground and must be able to make strong and throws -- and not those short throws the infielders get to make all game long.

Playing the outfield also requires a player to stay focused and alert at all times. He must be able to play left field for five innings without any ball coming to him, and then all of sudden get a great jump on a sinking liner to win the game in the sixth. He is also in charge of serving as the back-up on every thrown and batted ball that the infield handles. Outfielders should expect every ball hit or thrown to an infielder to be missed. Don't wait for an error to react but anticipate what could go wrong...while cheering for your teammates to do it well!

Outfielders, like infielders, must always know the score, inning, how many outs and strikes there are, and being in the proper position.

Positioning in the Outfield

Too often outfielders play too deep and too close to the foul line. Metrics show that at every level there are more balls hit to the big part of the field opposed to down the lines. If you drew a line from first base to second base and continued that line the left fielder should be closer to that point than near the foul line.

Outfielders also fear a ball going over their head and often play far too deep. Until they hit it over your head....come in, take the bloop hits away, and trust yourself to go back on the ball. With a right-handed hitter up, the right fielder should be shallower than the left fielder as most youth players have more power to their pull side.

Know Your Pitcher & Hitter

Understanding how the pitcher works on the mound will help the outfielder determine where to position himself as well as knowing the tendencies of the hitter. A left-handed dead pull hitter should mean the entire outfield shifts 5-7 steps to their left. A strong pitcher that throws hard may overpower many hitters causing them to be late on the ball which should prompt the outfielders to position themselves for more opposite field hits.

Pre-Pitch Movement

Before each pitch is thrown, an outfielder should take the proper steps to position himself in the ready stance. This movement is minimal and should not be more than one step forward with both the right and left foot. The outfielder can remain taller than his infield teammates.

Outfielders should also be aware of his surroundings. How far am I from the wall? The fence? Where is the sun? Is there any wind that can effect the flight of the ball?

Coming in on fly balls

On balls hit in front of the outfielder, he should run hard toward the infield. ON a blooper, the outfielder should know that he can dive for the ball, since it has little chance of rolling too far past him. On the other hand, if he comes in on a liner, the outfielder must remember he is the last line of defense. He can dive, but he must make sure not to let the ball get by him,

Going back on fly balls

Avoid backpedaling at all costs. An outfielder should turn, put his head down and run in the direction of where he thinks the ball will land. As he is going ground on that location he can turn and look over his shoulder for the ball and adjust to make the catch. This is difficult and takes a lot of practice. He should also not run while having his glove outstretched. This will slow him down considerably.

Outfielders: Fielding a ground ball

- Always break hard for a ball hit on the ground and in the habit of backing up your infielders.
- With no runners on base, the outfielders should go to his throwing side knee to field the ground ball and block it. Under no circumstances should the ball get back you.
- With runners on base, a right handed outfielder should charge the ball and slow down enough to field the ball in control and on his left foot.
- Do or dies. There are certain situations when the game is on the line and the outfielder must charge through the ball, catch it, and make a strong throw to the base.

Catching a Fly Ball

- Run full speed to a fly ball. Do not glide.
- Setup up 6-10 feet behind the ball. An outfielder never wants to be directly under the ball. This allows him to move through the ball.
- A player uses his glove, hand and of course his eyes to catch the ball-- he needs to look it all the way into his glove.
- Two hands for a ball hit right to him and one hand for all running catches.
- A player must call for any fly ball he is attempting to catch by saying, "I've got it, I've got it."
- Everyone who is NOT catching the ball should be saying, "Take it, take it."
- Remember, a batted balls always wants to curve toward the foul lines.

Fly Ball Prioritization

You certainly want to avoid all collisions on the field between teammates. You also want to avoid harmless pop-ups falling to the ground because of a lack of communication between players. Infielders and outfielders must know who has priority on certain pop-ups. Priority means --- if he calls for it then the other player gets out of the way.

Between Outfielders:

- Center fielder gets priority on all balls that he can get to and has the right to "call off" his teammates. Traditionally the center fielder is a team's strong outfielder that can cover the most range.

Outfielders Over Infielders:

- Since the outfielder is coming in on a ball and the infielder is going back on a ball the priority always goes to the outfielder. Once the outfielder calls for the ball (multiple times) the infielder should veery out of his way.
- Never try to catch a ball without communicating to an infielder who has already called for a ball.

Catching

The catcher is the other half to a successful battery and the team's leader that plays a huge role in making sure all players know the situation. He controls the game in many ways and plays a huge role in a team's success. He has a unique view of the game seated behind the plate and all of his teammates' eyes are on him for most of the game; he should utilize this opportunity to lead by example.

As a team leader, he should:

- Lead by example.
- Control the tempo of the game.
- Control the running game.
- Work harder than anyone else on the field.
- Know the pitching staff's strengths and weaknesses.
- Never allow his offensive struggles effect his defensive responsibilities.
- Remind all players how many outs there are and where the play is.
- Be a vocal quarterback for the infield on all pop-ups.
- Encourage his teammates and always be willing to pick them up when they fail.

As the field general, the catcher is involved in just about every defensive play in the game. Below are a variety of situations a good catcher should be prepared for, how to prepare for them and how they should be executed:

Give Signals (older ages)

- Have a purpose for every sign.
- Signs should be well hidden.
- Know what the pitcher can throw -- and what he can't.
- Does the hitter's stance prevent him from hitting a certain pitch?
- What did the hitter do his last at-bat that would indicate he may have a hard time with a certain pitch?

Control the Tempo of the Game

- Is your pitcher struggling and does a timeout and quick visit to the mound help slow the game down for him? Or if he's on a roll, a catcher should work quickly to keep that momentum going.

Bunts

- The catcher must call out bunt plays to let the defense know where to throw the ball as he is the only player facing the field.
- Use the glove when the ball is rolling.
- Use your bare hand when the ball is stopped.

Plays at the Plate (safety risks)

- The catcher's left toe should be pointed down the 3rd base line with the heels placed on the front, left corner in foul territory.
- Mask should be left on for protection.
- Tags should be applied with both hands to avoid dropping the ball.
- If a catcher's lower body is made contact with he should always fall and not resist the contact. Resisting or trying to stay upright can result in injury.

Pop-ups

- In most cases, if the ball is in fair territory let the infielders catch it. The catcher can help call out who should be taken it.
- On pop-ups near home plate, the catcher should turn their back to the field and leave enough room for the ball to come back towards the field.
- On plays away from home plate, the catcher should take off their mask. On balls close to the plate, the mask should be thrown when the ball gets to its max height.

Pitch-outs (older age)

- Once the pitcher's arm starts moving toward the plate, the catcher can start his footwork to move them further from the hitter.
- Make sure your pitcher is using a slide step and throwing a fastball.

Run Downs

- Catchers are involved in run downs at 1B - but make sure it is ok to leave home plate uncovered.

Catchers Stance

As with every position in baseball, we want to start each play with a good foundation. The catcher's stance is the foundation from which everything happens off of. From here we will call the game, receive the pitches and throw out runners. With each situation, the stance is altered in anticipation of the next play.

A catcher should always present a good target to his pitcher and should be hoping for a strike -- but athletic and fast enough to react and smother a ball in the dirt to prevent a passed ball. A catcher should always anticipate balls being in the dirt. He wants to beat the ball to the spot and should catch the ball out in front of his body and not behind him, which will give the umpire a good look at the pitch. Being a "catcher," your first job is to always *catch* the ball -- particularly strikes and even borderline strikes. Catching the ball allows the pitcher to get into a good groove and prevents base runners from getting free bases.

The primary stance (with no runners on base)

The primary stance is the stance that catchers will spend the second most amount of time in. This stance needs to be comfortable given the volume of time spent in this stance, however there are some technical keys that put you in the best position possible to receive the ball effectively.



The catcher should be in the primary stance when:

1. There are less than two strikes on the batter
2. There are no runners on base

The primary stance is not a stance that is designed to allow the catcher to block or throw effectively. Therefore, anytime they may need to block or throw, you need to be in the secondary stance. Don't worry about blocking off-speed pitches with less than two strikes. If you change your stance based on the pitch, you could tip your pitch calls to the other team and give them an advantage.

Feet

The feet are somewhere between the hip and shoulder width, but the exact width will depend on comfort. The catcher's weight should be on the balls of the feet and not on your heels.

Balanced, Comfortable, AND Athletic

The catcher needs to be balanced and comfortable in the primary stance, but still athletic. What this means is that the catcher needs to be in a position where they can spring out of their stance to catch a bad pitch and have the ability to shift their weight with their hips to aid in receiving the ball well. Even though the catcher isn't responsible for blocking the ball, they still need to be able to catch bad pitches and protect the umpire. Find a stance that is balanced and comfortable, but not so comfortable that it turns lazy and can't be athletic when the pitch isn't thrown to the location the catcher called it.

Low Target

Effective pitchers have to execute pitches down in the zone, so the catcher will want to help their pitcher by offering him a low target. The catcher should open their glove as wide as possible and set the target between the knees to offer the pitcher a low target and help him execute down in the strike zone.

Right Hand Behind Right Heel

Since the catcher does not need to worry about blocking or throwing the ball in the primary stance, they need to keep their right hand completely protected. Keeping the hand behind their right heel (or even grabbing your right heel) is best. As you can see from the picture above, the hand is completely protected from foul tips. Placing the hand behind the heel also allows the arm to hang naturally, which in turn contributes to the catcher remaining in an athletic primary stance. Young catchers are often taught to put their hand all the way behind their back, but that is uncomfortable and hindering. Putting the right hand behind your right heel is the perfect combination of protection, comfort, and athleticism.

Good Posture

Your posture will vary based on comfort, but you want to present yourself as a solid visual target for your pitcher. The picture above shows a catcher in a very upright stance. Many catchers are more hunched over than the picture above, but the bottom line is that you want your posture to create a good visual for your pitcher.

Optional: Angle Your Stance

One option for you to consider in your primary stance is to angle your left knee towards the second base bag. Angling your stance can help you with the low/inside pitch that is the most difficult pitch to handle for a catcher. It also helps some catchers reach the low/outside pitch more effectively. The stance in the picture above does not have much angle because this is a comfort thing that depends on the catcher, but it should be something that you consider and try to see if it helps you receive low pitches more effectively.

Secondary stance (with runners on base)

The secondary stance is the most taxing stance that a catcher will be in. The good news is that a catcher spends the fewest amount of pitches in this stance (assuming your pitcher is having a good day), but the catch is that the most pressure filled moments of games almost always take place in your secondary stance. It is essential that you put yourself in the best position possible with your secondary stance so that you can do your job well when it matters most for your team.



The secondary stance is the stance from which the catcher will block and throw, therefore they must be in the secondary stance EVERY time one of the following two scenarios is in play:

1. There are two strikes on the batter.
2. There are runner(s) on base.

It is very tempting to get lazy and assume the pitcher will execute a pitch (especially a fastball) or that a runner will not run, but the catcher has to fight that temptation. The catcher must be in the secondary stance EVERY pitch with two strikes on the batter and/or with runners on base.

Feet

The catcher's feet should be at least slightly wider than shoulder width apart, but the specific width will depend on comfort. The catcher's weight is on the balls of the feet.

Balanced & Athletic

Balance and athleticism are the keys to the catcher's secondary stance because they must be able to receive, block, or throw from the same stance. If the catcher cannot accomplish all three possible tasks effectively, they are not in a proper stance and need to consider adjusting the feet width. If the catcher is unable to stay in the proper stance long enough to be in the secondary stance for every pitch necessary throughout an entire game, then strength and conditioning should be a focus. This is not a comfortable stance, so the catcher's fitness is important.

Legs Parallel with Ground

The catcher's butt should be up high enough so that your legs are parallel with the ground (see picture above). If the butt is too low, it will be difficult for the catcher to get your knees down quickly to block. If the butt is too high, you will block the umpire and affect your ability to win strikes for your pitcher.

Low Target

Effective pitchers have to execute pitches down in the zone, so the catcher will want to help the pitcher by offering him a low target. The catcher should open their glove as wide as possible and set the target between the knees to offer the pitcher a low target and help him execute down in the strike zone.

Right Hand Tucked into Right Hip

The secondary stance must allow the catcher to make split second reactions and get their body into the proper blocking or throwing position quickly and consistently. Due to this necessity, the right hand should be tucked into the right hip. From the right hip, the catcher's right hand can very quickly get where it needs to be for both blocking and transferring/throwing. As the picture above displays, the catcher's right is more exposed than behind your right heel, but it is still protected enough. The need to block and transfer/throw well with such a short reaction time necessitates a slightly greater risk, however if the right hand remains tucked in its proper position, the chances of the right hand getting hit are too slim to worry about.

Many catchers are/have been taught to catch the ball with their right hand behind their glove in their secondary stance. While this makes sense on paper and in pictures, it is not practical. It is cumbersome to try to move both hands at once to catch a pitch that is not located right at the chest, and the minute the catcher's right hand comes out from behind the glove (which is very easy to do), it is right in the hot zone for getting hit with a foul tip.

Optional: Left Foot Slightly in Front

Many catchers like to angle their secondary stance slightly so that their left foot is slightly in front of their right foot. This can help a catcher "cheat" in their transfer to get into their throwing position as quickly as possible. Feel free to try angling the catcher's stance slightly to see if it helps the throws! That said, the catcher will still need to keep their chest square to the pitcher. This will ensure a quality visual target for your pitcher, and it will help them block effectively. Having to twist their chest back into a squared-up position wastes precious time that they don't have when your blocking pitches (especially as pitchers throw harder and harder at the higher levels). By all means the catcher can angle their feet slightly, but twist at the waist to keep your chest square to the pitcher.

Secondary stance (with runners on base)

The Signs Stance is extremely important and simple, and yet it is often neglected by catchers. As players get older catchers will need to develop the ability to give pitchers signs.

According to Baseball-Reference.com, the average number of pitches thrown in a MLB game in 2010 was 147. Those are the best in the world. At the younger levels, games could exceed 150 pitches in just a few innings.

All that is to say that a catcher is in his sign giving stance more than any other stance, and therefore it is important that a catcher use the proper stance.



There are two primary objectives of the Signs Stance:

- 1. Communicate the pitch to the pitcher.** It goes without saying that the pitcher and catcher need to be on the same page in knowing what pitch is being thrown. The proper Signs Stance puts the catcher in a position to communicate his pitch calling consistently and effectively.
- 2. Hide signs from opposing teams to prevent signs from being stolen.** Hitting is very difficult, and stealing signs is one way that many teams (especially at the collegiate level) try to gain an advantage at the plate. One of the easiest ways to steal signs is from a catcher who is sloppy or lazy with his Signs Stance. The good news is that this is a very easy fix with nothing more than some attention to detail.

The picture above displays the proper Signs Stances. Here are some keys to keep in mind:

- **Keep your feet close together.** The exact distance that your feet are apart will vary slightly based on comfort, but as a rule of thumb you want your feet less than hip-width apart. and your heels should almost be touching. This ensures that your knees are close enough together and prevents gaps in your stance where your signs could be seen from the side.
- **Sit with your chest up.** This keeps you in a good posture and presents a good target/frame of reference for your pitcher.

- **Extend your glove from your left knee.** Extending your glove from your left knee helps conceal your signs from the third base coach.
- **Put your right hand up against your protective cup.** One of the most common mistakes in the sign giving stance is a catcher giving signs with his hand too low or too far away from his protective cup. If you rest your hand against your cup at all times, you will always know that your hand is in the proper position.
- **Tuck your right elbow into your side.** Another way you can tip pitches to the opposing team is by moving your elbow/forearm differently when you give different signs. If you keep your right elbow tucked into your side, you will ensure that your arm does not move around when you are giving different signs with your hand.
- **Use proper hand signals.** Using the proper hand signals not only prevents opposing teams from stealing the signs, but it also ensure consistent, clear communication with your pitcher. Refer to the image below for the proper hand signals.
- **Angle your stance slightly (optional).** One last consideration is to potentially angle your stance so that your right knee is pointed towards the second base bag, and your left knee is pointed towards the shortstop. This will help ensure that the first base coach or runner on first base cannot see your signs. Since your glove is extended from your left knee, your signs will still be protected from the third base coach even though our body is angled.

Catching - Blocking a Pitch in the Dirt

A good defensive catcher can block balls thrown in the dirt. It's a skill keeps runners from advancing and saves runs. Blocking. In many ways, this is where the rubber meets the road for a catcher. Blocking is where you find out how much you really want to catch. It is by far the most difficult, and sometimes painful, aspect of catching. As a catcher, their job is to throw your body in front of the ball, keep the ball in front of you and prevent a passed ball.



A catcher uses his glove to catch the ball, and his chest protector to block the ball. Blocking the ball is a huge part of being a good catcher and is a skill that must be developed and worked on.

Once you determine that the pitch will bounce in the dirt, aggressively go after the ball and try to shorten the distance between you and where it will bounce. The closer you get to the point where the ball is going to bounce, the better chance you have to block it. This is a side to side, and/or slightly forward move. I say slightly forward, because if you are too aggressive moving forward, you could put yourself in danger of being hit by a swinging bat.

You may hear a coach tell an infielder, "play the ball, don't let the ball play you". This is the same advice you need to take when blocking pitches in the dirt. If you simply drop and hope the ball hits you or stab at it with your glove, you're not going to be successful most of the time.

Position

Blocking a pitch requires quick reflexes on your part. With runners in a position to steal a base you will naturally be in a squat position that allows you to make a quick throw. This position is also important for blocking pitches. The reason it's mentioned here is that you may go back to a lower squat with a man on third, second and third, or the bases loaded. While there isn't the threat of stealing a base in these situations, there is the threat of all runners advancing on a past ball or wild pitch. So while you may not have your rear as high as you would when there is a threat of stealing, you still want to have it high enough to allow you to move quickly to either side.

The ball coming right at you is the easiest to block:

Remember the goal is to try and block the pitch and keep it in front of you. With this in mind, you want to provide the largest target you can. By leaning slightly forward, rolling your shoulders forward and relaxing; you are positioning yourself so when the ball hits, it has the best chance of dropping in front of you.

What does relaxing have to do with it? Think of it this way. If you throw a ball against a brick wall, the ball is going to bounce back to you. If you put a pad in front of the brick wall and throw the ball again, the ball will hit the pad and drop. If your chest is rigid and doesn't give when the ball hits it, the ball will act like it's hitting that brick wall and may bounce a long way. If you relax your body before impact and allow some give when the ball hits you, the ball will act more like it's hitting a pad than a brick wall.

A catcher should keep the following keys of blocking in mind:

General:

- Lean slightly forward with your chest square to the ball.
- Roll your shoulders slightly forward.
- Once in position try to relax.

Knees:

- Get both knees to the ground in the direction of the ball as quickly as possible.
- Do not jump to the knees. Soft landings make for soft movements.
- Drop both knees to the ground with your glove hand protecting the ball from going between your legs and your throwing hand providing more blocking area at your side.
- Keep your knees apart and your back straight to provide the largest target.

Glove:

- The catcher should lead with the glove and cover the hole between the legs with both the glove and bare hand. The bare hand should not be entirely behind the glove. The glove should remain open at all times. The catcher should not try to catch the ball once it hits the ground.

Elbows:

- The elbows should sink into the correct position when the hands are in the correct position. The ability to flare one's elbows out creates a bigger target for the ball to hit. In doing this, the catcher's shoulders will stay squared to the ball.

Chin:

- The chin should go directly down to the chest to locate the ball on the ground. This movement will cause the shoulders to round and be over the ball, creating a good angle for the ball to bounce off the catcher. The catcher needs to keep their eyes open to locate the ball quickly.

Just Off The Plate To Your Left Or Right

If the pitch is going to bounce slightly to your left or right:

- Drop your left knee to the ground on your left side. This is going to establish your blocking position.
- As you drop your left knee your right knee will follow. Make sure your knees are apart.
- Once you have done this, move your hands, back and shoulders into the same position you would when blocking a pitch directly in front of you.

Keeping your balance should not be a problem when blocking a pitch slightly to the side. If you find that you're off balance and sometimes fall to the side when trying to block this pitch, it may be that you're dropping your knee too much in front of you instead of off to the side. When this happens, you will feel the need to learn your body to the side to try and get in position. Another reason for being off balance in this situation is trying to block a ball that is too far away by dropping your knee. With a ball that is farther away, you need to step before you drop. This technique is discussed below and on the next page.

Hitting

“Baseball is the only field of endeavor where a man can succeed three times out of ten and be considered a good performer.” - *Ted Williams*

“Hitting a big league pitching is the most difficult thing to do in sports. - Ted Williams

Introduction

Hitting a baseball IS hard... and requires patience not only from the hitter but from their coach and parents. Remember that baseball is played with a small, hard round ball, pitched at speed and the hitter attempts to hit the round ball “square” with a round bat.

This guide has been assembled to provide coaches some key points to focus on and to provide a solid foundation for players to begin hitting to and develop older / more experienced players. This guide is not intended to be a fully comprehensive guide, much has been written about the art of hitting and there are many publications that go in depth into the subject. Coaches wishing to go into more depth can certainly find a wealth of books / articles on the subject.

Seeing the ball.

First and most importantly, You Can't Hit It ... If You Can't See It.

When beginning to coach young players one thing that is overlooked is teaching them to see a pitched (or thrown) ball. Considering it is quite difficult to hit a ball when you can clearly see it approaching, it is all but impossible to hit a pitched ball if you can't see it, or see it too late. This applies regardless of whether the hitter is playing little league baseball or a major league player.

Seeing the baseball, pitch recognition, and timing are the most important skills hitters need to develop. Hitting must therefore be taught starting with the head position and eyes.

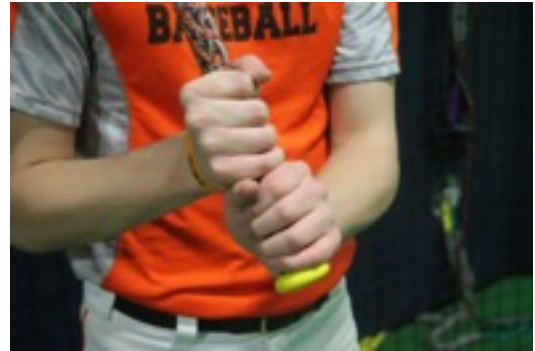
- Hitters should position themselves so they are pointing their face towards the mound and are looking at home plate with both eyes.
- Young hitters often make the mistake of looking out of only one eye, or out the corner of their eyes. Sometimes they tend to cock their head so that one eye is closer to the pitcher than the other. These positions (and stances) alters the depth perception.
- Both eye should be on a parallel plane if the ball is to be seen (and hit) correctly
- Tucking the chin behind the shoulder also limits a hitter's vision.
- Players should keep their head down and eyes on the the ball. If the head moves the body follows, and the swing suffers.



Gripping the bat

To avoid players developing bad habits early in their Little League careers and to promote successful hitting, coaches should show players the correct way to hold their bat and pay close attention on a continuous basis as to how players hold their bat.

- Begin by placing the bat handle at the base of the fingers of both hands.
- Grip the bat with the fingers rather than holding it in the palm, holding it in the palm deprives you of wrist action, flexibility and speed.
- Align the middle knuckles of your top hand with the middle and lower knuckles of your bottom hand
- Hands should touch so they can work as a unit.
- The bottom hand should hold more firmly than the top hand. The bottom hand pulls the bat through the hitting zone.
- Hold the bat firmly but don't squeeze it. Tension slows down the wrists and hands. The grip will automatically tighten as you swing.

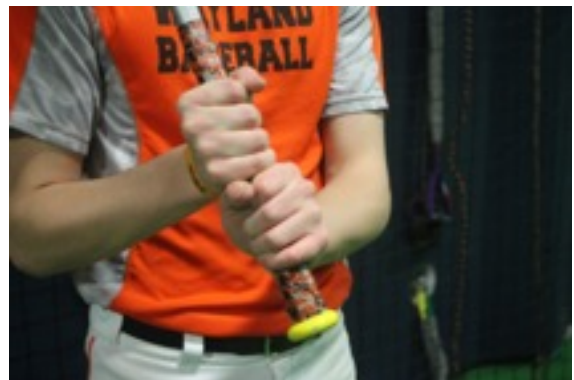


Choking up on the bat

If you have spent any time around youth baseball (or softball) you will have certainly heard a coach tell players to “choke up” on the bat.

Choking up the bat handle in essence makes the bat shorter, which increases the hitter's bat speed and ability to get the bat through the hitting zone and make contact.

- For younger players who may not have yet developed the strength to fully control (a comparatively heavy) bat, choking up on the bat can help.
- Choking up on the bat means the batter will slide their hands above the knob of the bat and inch or two.
- Choking up gives players better control of the bat (especially if they lack the strength at a younger age).
- Some power and plate coverage can be sacrificed, but the advantages outweigh this at a younger age.
- Be careful the batter is not over choking, that is the hands too far up the bat handle, because it will handcuff the hitter making his swing awkward and robot like, essentially taking all bat control away from the hitter.



Correct bat position.

In addition to the importance of gripping the bat correctly, how and where the bat is held (the position of the bat) is extremely important too. Coaches should note and correct the starting bat position for each player on an ongoing and consistent basis. Each player will differ but as a general rule the following points can be followed.



- The player should hold the bat out in front of themselves. Let comfort dictate the players choice but as a general rule of thumb it should be no less than 5 inches and no more than 7 inches from the players torso. The rear arm should remain in the same plane at the rear shoulder. Player should not point their rear elbow up in the air as this will cause the bat to drop as they swing. Elbows should be bent at a position comfortable to the player.

- Holding the hands near the body keeps you on the inside of the ball. If the bat is held out farther than that the swing has too large an arc, the hitter loses leverage and may find it difficult to coordinate their hips and arms into the correct swing.

- Holding the bat too close can restrict the batter's movement and lose bat speed. The swing will have a large loop and requires a long push to get the bat into the hitting zone. In many cases by the time the bat gets into the hitting zone the ball is already in the catchers glove!

- Holding the bat too close can have the effect of upper-cutting the ball which tends to result in fly balls.
- The bat should be held up in an almost vertical position (have the players imagine there is a cup of water on the top of the barrel that cannot be split) not parallel to the ground or hanging behind the players back.

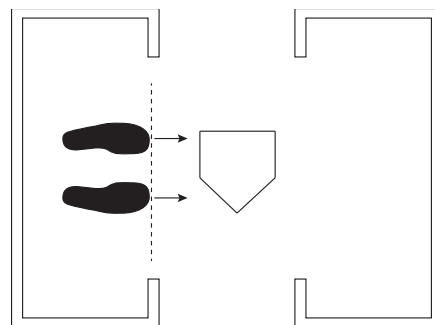
Batting Stance

If you watch baseball players at any level you will see that there are many different styles of batting stances and styles. For sure there isn't one single batting stance that suits all players. Players will learn to bat following an established set of rules that will promote successful hitting which are then adapted over time to suit each individual's style and preference.

For children beginning to play baseball finding a stance that promotes successful hitting is critical. For first time players this guide can be used to get players into a batting stance that works and promotes success. For older players who have been playing for some time, their stance can be tweaked to ensue continuing success at the plate.

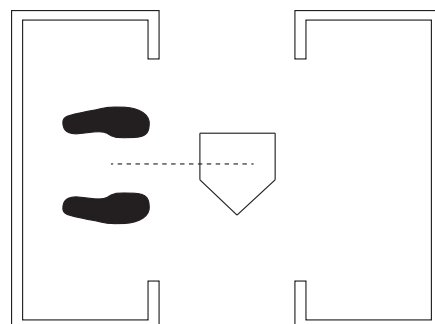
1. Have the player adopt an **even (or parallel) stance**.

Both feet are lined up parallel to each other and feet are square to the plate with the players weight off heels. Feet are spread so they are roughly six to eight inches wider than the shoulders. The player should be evenly balanced with hips and shoulders level. *(When they are balanced they should not be able to be pushed over with a slight push from the coach. Have fun with this. Kids really enjoy trying this.)*



2. **Measure-Up to Home Plate.** There are many theories about where to stand in the batters box.

To make it easy for younger players, keeping it simple is the best option. Have the player position their belly button with the middle of home plate and they should be good to go.



Note:

Younger players will often find it hard to gauge the correct distance from the plate. Often they will be too close or too far from the plate.

An easy method for young players to gauge their distance from the plate is to place the end of the bat on near side (corner) of the plate, (see image) then touch their front knee with the knob of the bat. This will ensure they get good coverage of the plate when they swing.



This can be a good reminder also for the player to ensure that their feet are square to each other and the plate

3. **Knob 2 Knee** A good pointer for the hitter to check their bat position quickly is that the knob of the bat is pointing at the catcher's knee. This will provide an instant reminder to have their bat up and not hanging behind their back.

4. **TV-Up Face:** Two Level Eyes on Pitcher. Players should keep their head eyes and body steady and level.

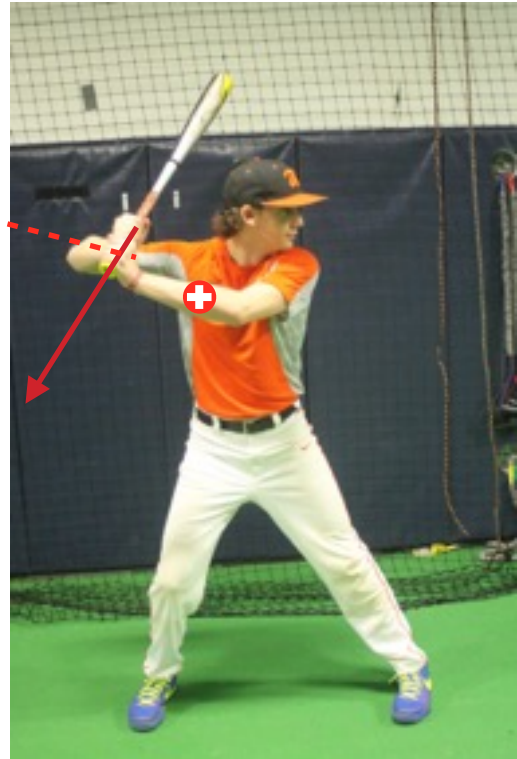
5. **Piano Fingers:** Loose Grip/Forearms. Batters tend to tense up and grip the bat too hard. Remind players to hold the bat firmly but don't squeeze it. Tension slows down the wrists and hands. The grip will automatically tighten as you swing.

6. **Dance in the Stance:** Hitters needs rhythm and should be loose (not a statue) perhaps a little swagger, ready for pitch and be ready to swing. Be ahead of the pitcher (expecting the pitch and prepared to react to it) rather than reacting to late and trying to catch up (as result being late with the swing and giving up a strike)

7. **Breathe!** As well being loose and ready the pitcher should be relaxed, steady breathing will help the hitter focus and see the ball. Slow steady breathing is the best - when players hold their breath it affects their vision and muscle control.

8. **Yes, Yes, Yes...** (or expect a the pitcher to throw a strike). The hitter's approach should be that they are expecting the pitcher will be throwing strikes. As a reminder to themselves If the player says "yes yes yes" to themselves they are looking for the strike. (as soon as a pitch that is not a strike they can easily say no and leave off the pitch). Many players are looking (hoping) for the pitcher to throw balls.... The mentality should be "yes yes yes" as it is easier to say no and not swing at the pitch rather than expect a ball and try to react when it is in fact a strike.

9. The most important part of the batting stance is to make sure the player is comfortable and has a clear view of the pitcher and the ball. It will take time for players to learn the correct stance and a lot more time, trial and error to find what works for them.



Players should be encourage to try playing around with different techniques until they feel the most comfortable in their batting stance.

Note: Coaches should not being advising players to **point their elbow up in the air** as this will cause the bat to drop as they swing.

Elbows should be bent at a position comfortable to the player.

TWO PARTS OF THE SWING:

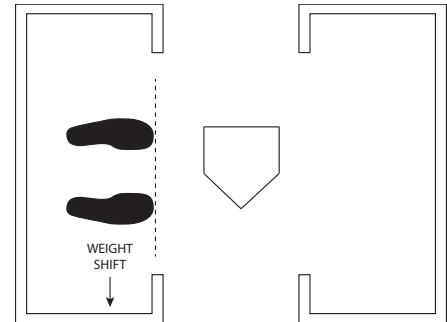
PREPARING TO SWING - Trigger, Shift, Negative Move

All good (successful) hitters have a back (negative move), then forward motion prior to the swing, whether they swing at the pitch or take the pitch. This is the mental and physical trigger for the player to be prepared for the pitch.

The trigger is the cue to the hitter to be ready for the pitch and be prepared to swing.

The hitter will shift is their weight slightly onto their rear foot as the pitcher winds up to deliver the pitch,

The hands will also move slightly to the rear (negative move).



Ask the players to imagine trying to fire a bow and arrow without pulling back on the bow before firing if you don't load the bow it is impossible to fire the arrow - its the same principle with the bat.

Hands loaded back.

Hands move backward ready to

Weight transfer

Slight shift back of the weight on

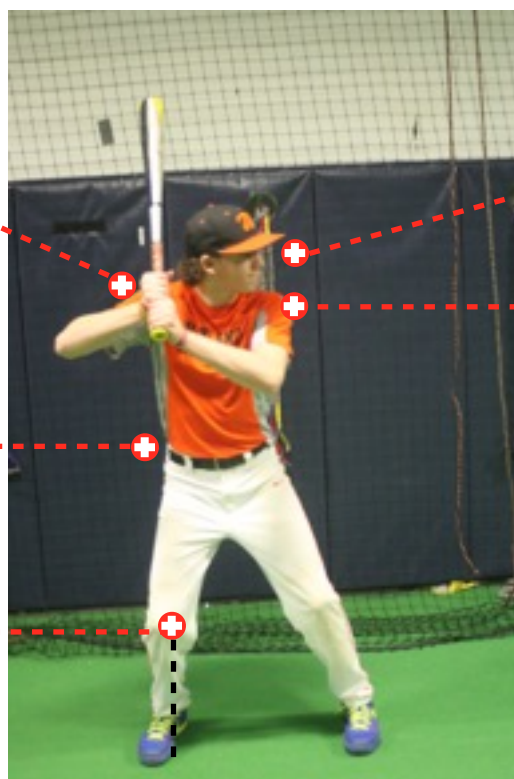
Back knee inside of foot

K2K still in place

Front shoulder slightly below

This backward (or loading) movement is slow - the calm before the storm.

It's the "Kaaah" in Kaaah-Boom!



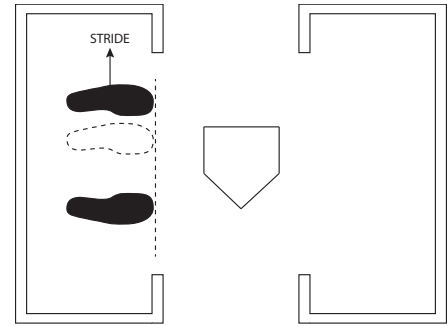
ROTATIONAL: THE SWING PHASE

Once the hitter has made the decision to swing the front foot serves as the igniter for the rest of the swing.

The stride releases energy forward and takes the hitter into the pitch. It helps the player pivot and bring the hips, arms and shoulders into action.

The stride should be side on to the pitcher, it is just pushing the shoe logo towards the pitcher, and planting the foot before swinging the bat.

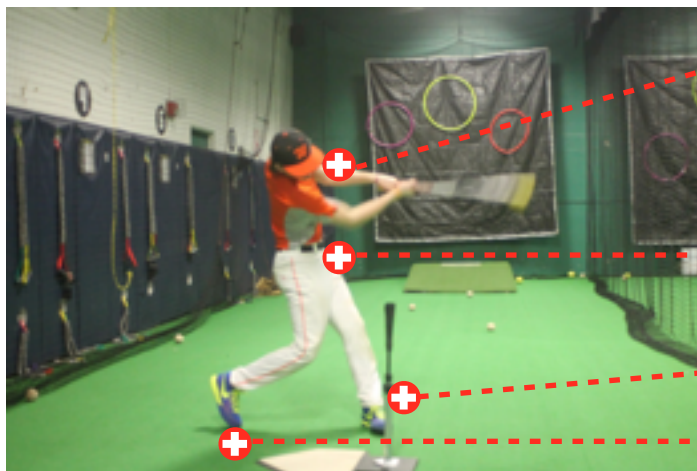
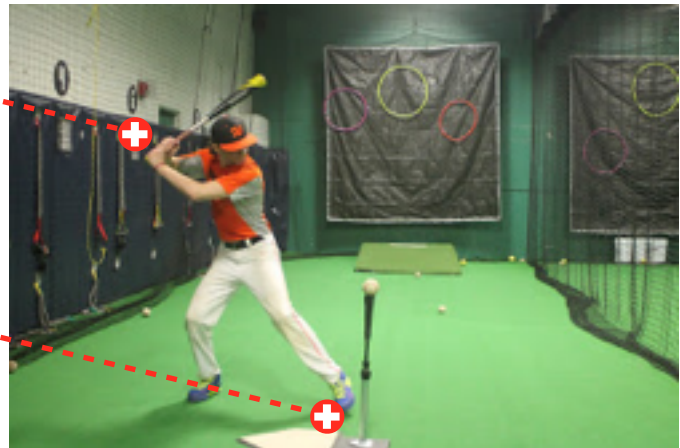
An excessively high step will cause balance and timing issues for younger players. The stride should be straight, closed, short, and the landing should be soft / quiet.



As the front foot lands and hands should still be back.

At this point the rotation part of the swing begins .

The rotational part of the swing begins after the front toe touch / foot plant. The swing is reliant on a solid, stable base provide by the feet being planted.



The head and eyes remain on the ball throughout the swing. Moving the head will effect the body position and the swing as a whole.

As the bat begins to swing forward the player will rotate (or snap) their hips. Most of the power a player will generate is though the core of the body not just the arms.

The front foot remains planted.

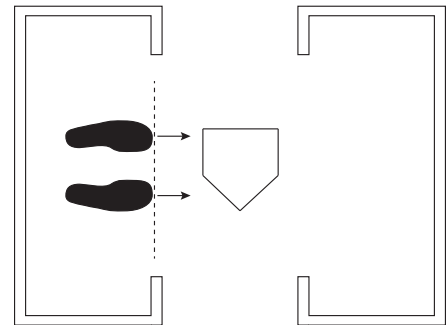
The rear foot will pivot on the ball of the foot.

Stepping / Front foot striding to pitcher

Players should be introduced to and taught the **4 S's of hitting**. By introducing and reinforcing the 4 S's of hitting this will help develop good habits and ensure early success in hitting.

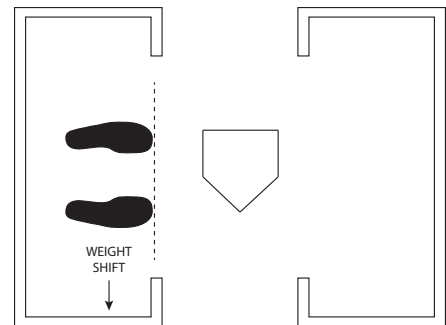
1. Stance (Front foot closed)

Stepping into the batters box players should adopt a comfortable stance. For beginning Little League players, the recommendation is that feet should be a little wider than shoulder width apart, in line with each other and pointing square on to home plate.



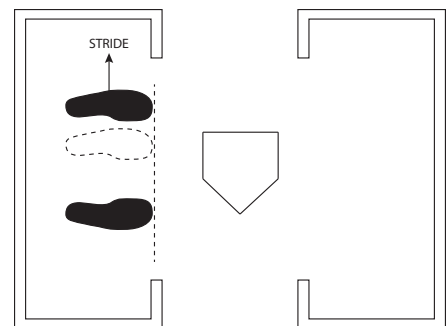
2. Shift (loading the hands and weight ready for the pitch)

As the pitcher winds up to deliver the pitch, the hitter will shift their weight slightly onto their rear foot. The hands will also move slightly to the rear. Ask the players to imagine trying to fire a bow and arrow without pulling back on the bow before firing - it's the same principle with the bat. This ensures the hitter is ready and in a position to hit.

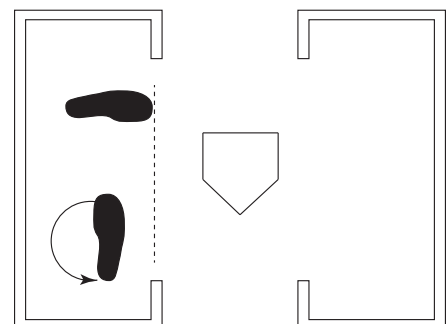


3. Stride ("Nike" sign to pitcher)

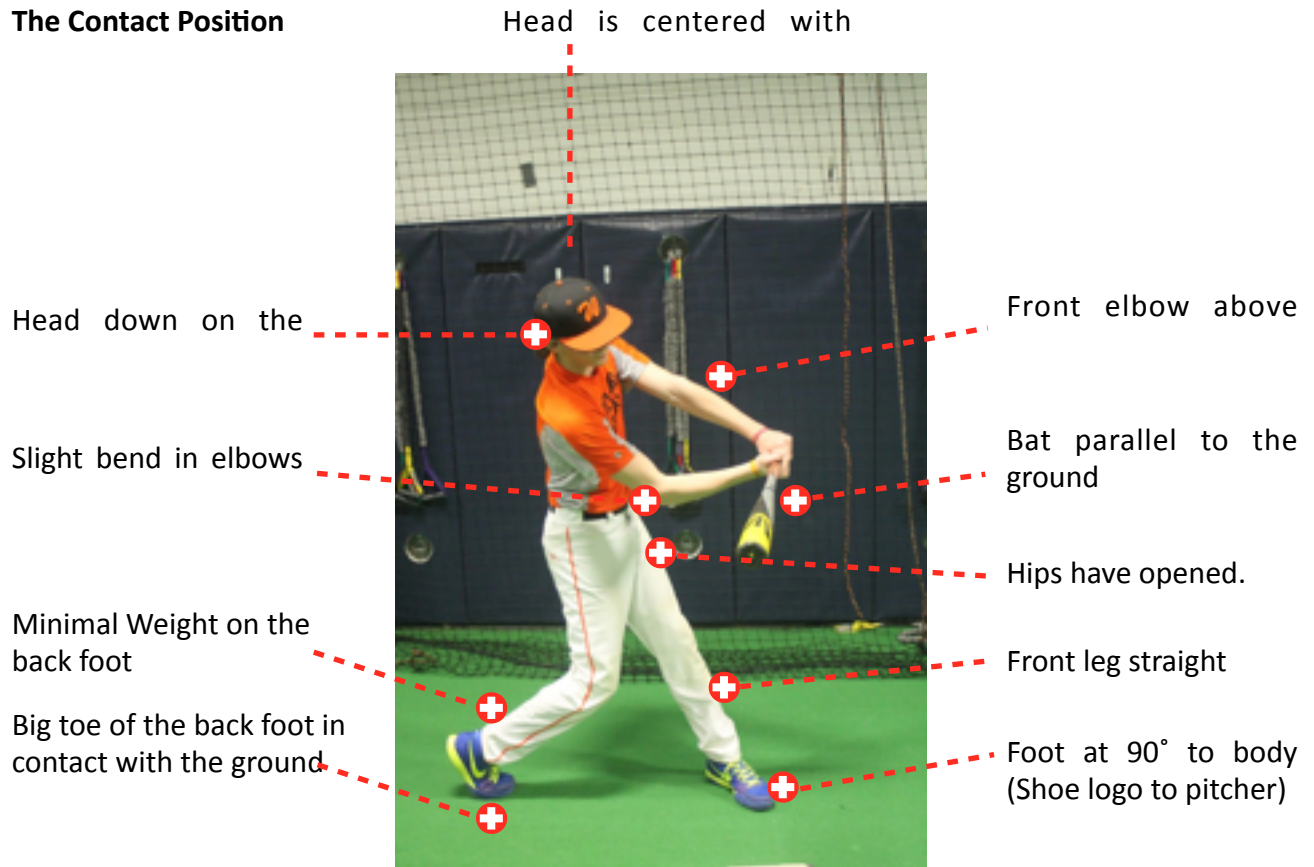
Front foot serves as the igniter for the rest of the swing. The stride releases energy forward and takes the hitter into the pitch. It helps the player pivot and bring the hips, arms and shoulders into action. The stride should be just pushing the shoe logo towards the pitcher, planting the foot before swinging the bat. An excessively high step will cause balance and timing issues for younger players. Stride should be straight, closed, short, and the landing should be soft/quiet. Front foot lands and hands should still be back.



4. Snap. As the front foot lands, the hitter will "snap" their hips. Pivoting on the ball of the rear foot the batter will finish their swing on the toes of their rear most foot. Power is developed through the hips (not just the arms) and will power the bat through the hitting zone. Bat speed is the end result of proper body movements. (10 toes on the ground only one heel) back heel pointing at the catcher.



The Contact Position



The 4 R's of hitting

The 4Rs of hitting can be thought of as defining the sequence of the at bat. All of the 4 R's are as equally important as each other and will dictate the level of success of the at bat. Consistency of carrying out the 4R's will ensure success at the plate when hitting.

1. **Rhythm.** Players need to develop a rhythm when hitting. Rather being mechanical in their approach a fluidity and rhythm will help hitters to react to changing situations and different pitches.
2. **Read.** Reading the ball out of the pitchers hand will provide hitters to decide on what their swing will be and where the ball can be hit. Over time players will be able to see the type of pitch the pitcher is throwing and react accordingly. It is a skill that must be honed over time. Once a hitter can read a pitch they can react accordingly.
3. **React.** The reaction to a pitcher begins on the windup, hands go back so the hitter is ready to come onto the pitch. As the pitch is released and the pitch is read, reacting to the pitch they are thrown is essential. (not the pitch they wanted). Many hitters will change their mechanics (swing) to try to hit a pitch that is out of the strike zone. A good hitter will react by not swinging at a pitch out of the strike zone. If a pitcher is throwing fast balls a hitter may begin their swing a little earlier or later for a slower pitch.
4. **Rotate.** Once the hitter has reacted to the pitch, made a decision on to swing at the pitch they will step towards the pitcher, snapping the hips and developing power to swing through the strike zone and hitting through the ball. Head and eyes on the ball through the hit.

Instructional Hitting Levels

At the little league level there will be many levels a player will progress through as they develop. Aspects of hitting that can be introduced and worked on will include:

- Setup – Everything a hitter must do before the pitcher throws the ball
- Load – Trigger, Shift, Negative Move
- Stride – Not all strides will be the same (that's ok)
- Launch Position – How you take a pitch tells a lot by what kind of a hitter you are
- Hand Path - the path the hands will take with the bat (possibly the hardest aspect)
- Contact Point – The most important part of the swing
- Extension and Finish

Before stepping Into the batters box

An at bat begins when the hitter is next up. The batter will be considered on deck and will be required to prepare in a designated area. Many Little League players are not sure what they are meant to be doing while on deck. Here are some tips to give to hitters to help them make the most of their brief time in the on-deck circle:

- Get Loose - prepare your body to swing the bat.
- “Circle of Champions: On Deck Circle” - There are great opportunities to utilize the on-deck circle. Players can get their timing down when watching the opposing pitcher. Hitting is all about timing after all, so what better way than to get it as perfect as possible while in the on-deck circle? Some players do this, some players stretch and find their comfort zone mentally.



- Players should practice their swing, the swing they have worked on in practice sessions - the one that brings them success. Many players will focus only on a small aspect of their swing or sometimes, a swings look very unorthodox and nothing like their game swing. Changing their swing or swinging in an unorthodox manner while on deck will only cause confusion or problems when the player gets into the batters box.
- As soon as the hitter is on deck or steps into the “on deck circle” the hitter should be READY to hit.
- The hitter should be encouraged to get into an on deck routine. The player must be focused on the game, aware of the game situation, watching the pitcher, taking swings to prepare to hit. The player must not just go through the motions which means they are not talking with or joking around with team mates.

- Pitch Recognition. Watching what the pitcher is throwing and when (fastball on a 2-0 count) changeup - slider etc. Watch for location and speed. Hitter is reading the ball, determining its location, and deciding if he is going to swing and where he is trying to hit it.
 - Practice Swings for Every Pitch Location
 - Timing Mechanism: When do I start? Tailoring the swing to match the pitcher. Is it the starting pitcher throwing 65 mph as opposed to a relief pitcher throwing 45mph?
 - Review the Situation. What do I need to do - what is the coach asking me to do. Am I asked to get a base hit and start the inning off, do I need to drive a run in, bunt sign? Potential to steal to second to get into scoring position?
 - Deep Breath, Relax
 - Jog - Don't walk to Home Plate. "Bring it on" Show that you are excited to bat, show confidence and are ready to go.

Advanced Hitting Topics (Major League onwards)

Older more experienced players will begin to work on more advanced techniques.

Players who can analyze their own at bat and diagnose their own issues will find success. As coaches we can look at a number of issues to help the player address - most of the common problems can be summed up as:

- **L.O.U.E.** (players struggling at the plate will usually be one of the following reasons.)
 - **Late**
 - **Over**
 - **Under**
 - **Early**
- Contact Points and hitting the ball to all fields. Rather than trying to get a hit the ball players with more experience and skill will be trying to place their hits based on a number of criteria including pitch location, game situation etc.
- Hitting in different counts and situations. Changing the approach to game conditions, situations and pitch counts. What should the approach be for example when the pitch count is 2-0 as opposed to being down in the count 0-2. The hitters approach in the first inning last inning (for example)
- Visual Mechanics and In-game routines. Players should develop a routine, how can a player be successful if the technique is different every time. "Act as if you have been there before"
- Hitting different pitches. Train players to look for, recognize and hit different pitches. As players develop they will be exposed to better pitching. Their ability to react to the different pitches should also develop.
- Developing an approach at the bat. "Have a routine that works for you"..... Making adjustments and self-coaching. Players who can analyze their own at bat and diagnose their own issues will find success.



Outside of the plate



Center of the plate



Inside of the plate

Hitting at Practice: Tee Hitting

"For me it's simple. Can our guys take the same swing off the tee that they take in the game. It's their ability to copy this and develop this mind-body repetition that will lead them to greater consistency at the plate." — Major League Hitting Coach Edgar Martinez:

The Tee is not just for the younger kids - even Major League Players regularly use the Tee. The Tee is the number one best way to help players learn and improve their batting skill.



Using it has many advantages:

- Focus on hitting.
- Learn or improve batting mechanics. Practice makes perfect, allows players to hone skills for the "perfect" level swing.
- Allows players to focus on one or on many things.
- Hand / eye co-ordination, players can see the bat hit the ball
- Players can practice on their own
- Practice and repetition produces success.
- Players can take what they learn to live pitching.
- Work on every possible pitch location.
- Multiple players batting at the same time.
- Good method of warm up before live hitting commences.
- You can use any kind of ball.
- Allows players to focus on many things and take their time to perfect their swing
- Hitting off of the tee is one of the best hitting drills around.
- Even Major Leaguers use the tee!!

Some rules of thumb for players hitting off the tee:

- For young players: “If you can touch the ball, you are too close to the tee.”
- Use the “rule of 3” : Every 3 swings change the location and height of the tee.
- Work Short, Look Long: Visualize pitcher on mound
- Remind players - If you can’t have a great swing off a tee, how can you have a great swing when trying to hit a moving ball? Practice makes perfect

Live Hitting



Live hitting is a fun part of any practice that all players look forward to.

Practices not only need to be safe but dynamic and fun.

To include all players and keep them involved and interested, there is a wrong way and a right way to conduct live hitting practices.

The wrong way...

- One hitter, 10+ fielders
- Swinging at every pitch
- 15+ swings per batter
- Having no purpose at the plate and just swinging.
- Fielders congregate together and aren’t in real positions.
- Pitching that doesn’t resemble game speed.

The right way...

- As part of a series of stations
- Swinging only at strikes
- Five swings and out
- Ask the hitter, “What are you working on this round?”
- Every ball put in play is an opportunity for the defense to make a play.
- Pitch with a purpose. Coach should throw BP as close to game speed as possible.
- Shorten the distance to increase the number of strikes.

Speed Overload



We don't want players to get used to slow off speed pitches as a matter of routine. Hitters need to see faster pitches in order to speed up their reaction time and get used to seeing fast pitches.

- After hitting off the tee/front toss players should be exposed to fast(er) pitching (even if it's a struggle).
- By using a machine or throwing to a player faster than he can initially handle you are forcing the player shorten and quicken their swing, develop better hand-eye coordination, and prepare the player for in-game success.

Front Toss / Wiffle Balls

- When throwing to players get on their level (this may mean getting on a knee) Wiffle balls are thrown from a knee at a distance of 15'-20' from the batter (maybe 25' when throwing to a big 12 year old).

The primary reason for throwing from a short distance is our pitching accuracy. The most important thing for a player working on their swing is to see a high percentage of strikes.



- Throw on a line (not a pop-up) Do not use a full long circle motion with the arm as if we were actually pitching. The throw, from shorter distances is very similar to throwing a dart. Good wiffle ball pitching technique relies a great deal on the wrist snapping through the ball at release. The wrist snap supplies a lot of force and is the key to accuracy.
- Do not lob the ball and/or throw it in an arc.
Often with younger players and players still developing their swinging skills the tendency is to throw the ball slower with a big arc. This type of pitch, in most cases, is more difficult to hit than a ball thrown a bit firmer and more on a line to the strike zone.

- Front toss is a great way to pump in strikes and gets players a lot of swings.
- Wiffle balls decrease the amount of time spent chasing balls and eliminates many safety concerns.
- One coach should be able to throw to multiple batters at once when using wiffle balls.
- Speed is typically not an issue for players as it relates to hitting the ball during front toss. This allows players to focus on areas of their swing they need to correct.

Pitching

Introduction

Expecting and getting Little League pitchers to hit their spots and consistently throw strikes is challenging. That's because many youth baseball pitchers haven't developed the techniques and mechanics just yet that will allow them to be successful.



For many 8-13 years olds, pitching from the stretch and not the full windup can be helpful.

- First, there's very little if any loss in velocity, with a greater ability for consistent control as they build their confidence.
- Second, there's generally less that can go wrong mechanically, and it can allow for faster development of some key parts before introducing the windup, which will add some possible flaws, such as the momentum of pushing the lower or upper body out too fast, creating imbalance at leg lift, which then sets off a cycle of the body being out of sequence for that pitch and creating inconsistent control and a possible sore arm.

Pitching from the stretch allows most of the major parts of the delivery to be developed correctly, and muscle memory built in before bringing another piece of the pitching puzzle. It's kind of like putting the frame (or outside) of a puzzle together before working on the middle.

When you are coaching players to pitch, take it in stages, and don't try to fix everything at once. The following 13 youth baseball pitching techniques could be broken down even further, but by using these as a guide you won't get caught up over-analyzing every detail.

Youth Pitching Techniques

1. Mental
2. Set-up
3. Rocker step and lead leg lift
4. Balance
5. Hand position
6. Lead leg down and hand separation
7. Weight shift (body movement)
8. Arm action
9. Shoulders
10. Lead foot plant and knee action
11. Back (post) foot action
12. Hip rotation
13. Release, follow-through, and finish

1. Mental



Have pitchers develop a routine, what they do between every pitch, both mentally and physically.

- What's the game situation,
- How many outs, the count,
- What to do if the ball is hit to them, where should I throw it for the out?
- Approach the mound the same all the time and develop a style and routine that helps put the whole pitching process of mechanics and the

2. Set-up

On the mound they need to clear their mind visualize where the ball is going and freeze for a split second to dial in on their muscle memory and target.

Gripping the ball and placing it in the mitt the same way each time is part of this routine. The ball should not be placed in the back of the hand, it should be on the last 2 knuckles of the longer fingers, and not squeezed to tight. Throwing balls well short of the mound is one sign of squeezing the ball to tight.

Tell pitchers to "Find a dime," they will then know to instantly look at the catcher's mitt, and visualize a dime in the mitt, not the whole mitt. This helps get them focused.



3. Rocker step and lead leg lift



For the stretch, they need to get on the mound in the stretch position, the lead leg should be about 2-3 feet in front of the mound (rubber) and the ball in the pitchers hand.

They first focus, take a breath, move the lead foot back to the mound at the same time the hands comes together about chest high, and a pause and focus: "Find the dime."

Then lead leg lift naturally and without a jerky motion preferably the knee goes between the belt and chest high and hands together (not against the chest, but a couple of inches from it).

From the windup position, the (what will be) back or lead foot should only go back and a little to the side about 3-6 inches. Any more than this gets the body out of balance and starts a negative sequence, where for the rest of that pitch, all of the moving parts are having to get re-balanced and in proper timing (which usually doesn't happen) to make the pitch.

From the windup the sliding the back foot into position on the mound and the swivel action of the hips to get the body turned sideways on the mound is an important part of the process to staying in balance, and not swinging around too far so the back faces the batter.



4. Balance



Balance when pitching can be a challenge for little league players but is one of the most critical parts that must be mastered for: Keeping a weight centered will help with a number of things including:

- Consistent control,
- Velocity and
- Reduced arm stress.

5. Hand position (mitt and ball)

The throw or pitch begins at the center of the body.

The ball hand and mitt should stay together until the lead leg starts to move down, remember, leg goes down, hands go apart.

The hands should stay about chest high (for timing reasons) until they separate.



6. Lead leg down and hand separation



The lead leg goes down and out, not out, over and down. The toes should hang down slightly. If the heel of the lead leg is down, this can open the hips and shoulders too early and cost your pitcher velocity, control, and a sore arm.

There's several important aspects of the lead arm and pitching arm during separation that are shown in our guides and the affects of what happens with variations of this.

The hands do go in opposite directions, but not like the karate kid, the lead arm stays a little bent and using the elbow as a site to the target, the pitching arm goes back towards 2nd with the thumb under the ball and the ball moves from facing 2nd base to rotating as the arm moves into the High-L (or cocked) position.

7. Weight shift (body movement)

"Staying back" over the back (post) leg as long as possible while maintaining good balance and body position is one of the main ingredients to power and velocity. Staying back and not moving our in front too early harnesses the power in the hips until the lead foot plants, at that moment is the uncoiling of the spring (hips), and if the sequence has proper timing and the pitching arm and shoulders are in the right position, maximum velocity and control will be seen. If the top of the body moves out too soon then most of the power from the hips is lost and places the additional load on the shoulder.



8. Arm Action

The pitching arm should be moving in sequence and timed to be at the high-L at foot plant. If the arm is too quick or too slow there's loss of power and stress on the arm. The part of this sequence is better seen in our guides. It's important that the pitching elbow from the high-L to just before release be at or slightly above shoulder height. If it's too low there's loss of power and a lot of stress placed on the elbow (ulnar collateral) tendons. If the elbow is too high it pinches the rotator cuff and creates stress there as well.



9. Shoulders



The shoulders (head and eyes too) need to stay in line from 2nd towards home until foot plant.

A very typical flaw is the shoulder opening up too soon before foot plant causing erratic control (usually low and outside) and arm stress.

10. Lead foot plant and knee action

The lead foot should stride out to a long, but comfortable stride length. The foot should land on the ball of the inside part of the foot pointing slightly towards the right hand batters box. It should land on a line from the post (back foot) towards home plate. If it lands too far to the right the shoulders (for a righty) are too closed and they're throwing across the body which reduces velocity and puts a lot of stress on the shoulder.



If it lands too far to the left of the line, the shoulders will be pulled open too soon, reducing control, velocity and brings on a sore elbow. We have some excellent, easy drills (in our guides and our video library) on how to train the lead leg to land properly with the correct amount of front knee flex.

The front knee is important as well, it needs to have some flex at landing without caving in, and not too rigid which forces the upper body from being able to follow-through properly, forcing the pitching elbow to come from over the top which puts a lot of stress on the elbow, and usually pitches high in the strike (or ball) zone.

11. Back (post) foot action



Note: The back foot does NOT push off the mound. Even though that's how most people were taught in little league and you still hear coaches saying: "push off for power." Pushing off does just that, it pushes the upper body out too fast and now the entire sequence is called: "negative sequence," meaning the body is now, before it's even had a chance to get started is out of sequence (negative), and the body and muscle memory and mind will have to adjust (which usually doesn't happen) to get everything else back in sequence somewhere down the delivery road. The back foot is pulled off the rubber from the hip action. If the foot drags off the mound

12. Hip rotation



As the foot plants and the shoulders stayed closed, the hips explode the pitching arm through the pitching slot (angle) to release and pulling the back foot off the mound, actually rolling it onto its outside top of the toes and then the back foot pops up and out.

Even with the hips rotating and the release, the head, eyes, and shoulders should be as close to level as possible to keep good balance and allow a proper finish for the arm and put them into a good fielding position.

13. Release, follow-through, and finish

The release should be out in front of the head, and the wrist should snap through after release and follow a circular line from release down between the plant knee and ankle.

The pitcher should not short-arm the pitch or re-coil the arm like using a yo yo.

The finish allows the energy and stress in the shoulder, elbow and wrist to be dissipated instead of just jamming on the breaks. This proper follow-through and finish is vital to consistent pitching and for reducing arm





Base Running



Being a good base runner is far more than just being fast. It requires form, direction, technique, know how, and certainly baseball intellect, instincts and game awareness.

There are a wide variety of situations that every base runner should be able to execute. This is a skill often overlooked, however,

chances are it will play a large role in the outcome of many games.

Situation #1: On contact out of the batter's box:

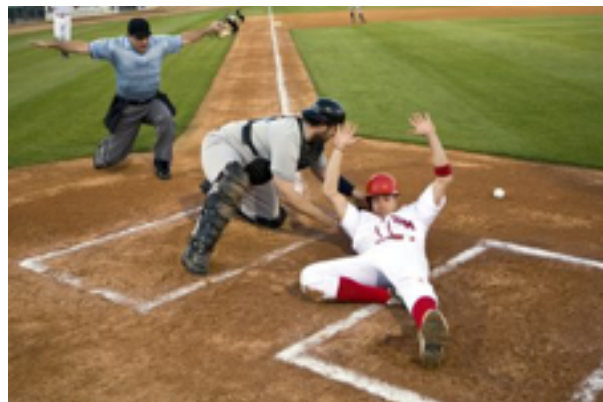
- Always hustle and run hard out of the box.
- Take note of where the ball was hit to determine whether to run through the bag or round first base and thinking two bases.

Situation #2: On a ground ball or infield play:

- If the ball is hit on the ground, the runner should run as fast as he can in a straight line to first base.
- Step on the front of the bag with any foot and continue to run through the bag.
- Once through the bag, break down with fast choppy steps and look to your right to see if the fielder made an errant throw into foul ground. If so, stop and look to advance to second base.
- Do not make an attempt to run toward 2B. By taking steps toward 2B you become a live runner and can be tagged out.
- Avoid sliding into first base.

Situations #3: On a base hit to the outfield

- A runner should always be thinking two bases (double) after hitting the ball to the outfield. If the outfielder bobbles or misplays the ball he can advance to second.
- Rather than running in a straight line to first base the runner should make an arc in foul territory so he hits the inside part of the bag and is in a good position to run to second in a direct line.
- Determine as to whether you should advance to second base by using your eyes and listening to your coach.



Situation #4: Going from first to third

- On a ball hit in front of the runner (left field to center), he will make the primary decision on whether he can advance to third base.
- On a ball hit behind him (right center-right field), then he will pickup his third base coach prior to reaching second base.
- Use the part of the second base closest to third to push off in the direction you are looking to advance.

On Deck Hitters

- On plays at home plate, the on-deck hitter should be telling the runner if he should slide or remain standing up.
- On a dropped third strike the on-deck hitter should also be telling the hitter to try and advance to first base.

Situation #5: On Hit & Runs (ages 13+)

- On a hit-and-run play, the runner on first base should break as if they are stealing second base.
- The runner should glance in upon contact so as to be aware of where the ball is hit. If it is a pop-up with less than two outs the runner should be on the brakes and retreat back to first.

Situation #6: Caught in a rundown

- If you are caught in a rundown with other runners on base, the runner should try and remain hung up for as long as possible so they can advance to the next base.
- If picked off at first base go as fast as you can into second. Force the first baseman to make a strong and accurate throw around you to second base. Avoid dancing.

Situation #7: When tagging up

- On a fly ball deep into the outfield, tagging up is standard procedure. A player should return to the base when an outfielder is camped under it. Once the ball touches leather he should advance to the next base while making sure the runner ahead of him is also advancing.
- On more shallow balls, it is a judgment call. The base coach should help the runners. The runners should also look at where the outfielders are playing prior to the pitching to have a better understanding of whether they can get to certain balls.
- If it looks like it might fall for a base hit, go halfway and take off once it falls. If it is caught, the runner will have time to get back to the base.

Communication between coaches and players is always important within the game, perhaps no more so than with a runner on the base paths.

How can a coach help a baserunner?

- Explain to them the situation. When to go vs. when to stay.
- Relay the signs in an easy to understand method.

- Every baserunner must show the coach using his fingers how many outs there are after every batter.
- Runners taking leads off of second base should hear phrases like, “You’re ok, you’re ok” to encourage a bigger lead or “hold, hold” when he reaches a good distance from the bag.
- Remind them what we do on a grounder, line drive, and a fly ball.
- Never make contact with a baserunner during a play. This can result in the player being called out.
- Encourage aggressiveness. A bad base running is also a good learning experience.

Sliding

Sliding is a skill and should not be overlooked. Have your players practice sliding into all bases with the exception of first. Sliding teaching points:

- Feet first opposed to head first; it’s safer and often more effective.
- The “figure four slide” also allows players to “pop-up” and advance to the next base if the situation allows.
- Slide early and before the bag. Injuries often occur when a player slides late into the bag.
- While running full speed, drop down landing while folding one leg under the other in a figure four.
- Throw hands up to shoulder level. Do not push down your hand to brace yourself which can cause a wrist injury.
- The best way to practice sliding is on the grass and without shoes on and with a sliding mat or breakaway bag.



Concussion in youth athletes.

A concussion is a brain injury caused by a bump or blow to the head that can change the way your brain normally works. Even what seems to be a mild bump or blow to the head can be serious. As many as 3.8 million sports and recreation-related concussions are estimated to occur in the United States each year.

Little League regard the safety and well-being of children at it's highest priority. Even when all normal safety precautions are taken there is still a risk of a player coach or umpire being involved in an incident that may cause a concussion.

It is essential that all coaches can recognize the causes, the signs and symptoms and the immediate actions when a suspected concussion occurs.

Little League Baseball and Softball strongly encourages all coaches and teams to not only comply with any applicable state laws, but also to review the information and training materials on concussions which is available (free of charge) on the Centers For Disease Control website.

To help ensure the health and safety of young athletes, many states (including Massachusetts) have enacted laws designed to educate people about concussions, and protect the health and safety of young athletes. In addition CDC developed the "Heads Up: Concussion in Youth Sports" initiative to offer information about concussions for coaches, parents, and athletes involved in youth sports.

The "Heads Up" initiative provides important information on preventing, recognizing, and responding to a concussion. **All Wayland Little League head coaches must take the following on-line training** from the Centers for Disease Control:

<http://www.cdc.gov/headsup/youthsports/training/index.html>

It is essential that each coach review this material in order to understand its responsibilities regarding when and how to address concussions.

The Massachusetts law can be found in chapter 111 section 222 of the Massachusetts Code. Chapter 111 deals with public health. (Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 111, § 222)

Massachusetts law requires that a concussion training program be developed by the Division of Violence and Injury Prevention for Schools subject to the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association to participate in and making annual participation mandatory for any parent, coach, or volunteers, among others, for any extracurricular athletic activity. The law encourages the use of information from the CDC for the development of the program and requires the program to develop forms regarding concussions requiring the signature of the both the student and the student's parent/guardian before participation in an athletic activity. If a student who is participating in extracurricular activity become unconscious during play or has suffered a concussion as diagnosed by a medical professional, that athlete may not return to the activity until cleared in writing by a health care professional. A school district is required to maintain records under this law. Although the law does not waive liability or immunity of a school district, its officers or employees, no liability is created and any person volunteering to assist with an extracurricular athletic activity is immune from damages unless willfully or wantonly negligent in act or omission.

The official versions of section 222 is currently available online at:

<http://www.malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXVI/Chapter111/Section222>

The Massachusetts Department of Health maintains a web page relative to Sports Related Concussions and Head Injuries applicable to interscholastic sports and students, which provides electronic access to Massachusetts Department of Public Health Regulations regarding Head Injuries and Concussions in Extracurricular Activities (see Mass. Public Health Regulation 105 CMR 201.00, et seq., standardized forms for reporting and return to play and links to other valuable information related to head injuries and concussions).

The web page can be viewed online at:

<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/programs/community-health/dvip/injury-prevention/sports-related-concussions-and-head-injuries.html>

CONCUSSION Information Sheet



This sheet has information to help protect your children or teens from concussion or other serious brain injury. Use this information at your children's or teens' games and practices to learn how to spot a concussion and what to do if a concussion occurs.

What Is a Concussion?

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury—or TBI—caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or by a hit to the body that causes the head and brain to move quickly back and forth. This fast movement can cause the brain to bounce around or twist in the skull, creating chemical changes in the brain and sometimes stretching and damaging the brain cells.

How Can I Help Keep My Children or Teens Safe?

Sports are a great way for children and teens to stay healthy and can help them do well in school. To help lower your children's or teens' chances of getting a concussion or other serious brain injury, you should:

- Help create a culture of safety for the team.
 - › Work with their coach to teach ways to lower the chances of getting a concussion.
 - › Talk with your children or teens about concussion and ask if they have concerns about reporting a concussion. Talk with them about their concerns; emphasize the importance of reporting concussions and taking time to recover from one.
 - › Ensure that they follow their coach's rules for safety and the rules of the sport.
 - › Tell your children or teens that you expect them to practice good sportsmanship at all times.
- When appropriate for the sport or activity, teach your children or teens that they must wear a helmet to lower the chances of the most serious types of brain or head injury. However, there is no "concussion-proof" helmet. So, even with a helmet, it is important for children and teens to avoid hits to the head.



Plan ahead. What do you want your child or teen to know about concussion?

How Can I Spot a Possible Concussion?

Children and teens who show or report one or more of the signs and symptoms listed below—or simply say they just "don't feel right" after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body—may have a concussion or other serious brain injury.

Signs Observed by Parents or Coaches

- Appears dazed or stunned.
- Forgets an instruction, is confused about an assignment or position, or is unsure of the game, score, or opponent.
- Moves clumsily.
- Answers questions slowly.
- Loses consciousness (*even briefly*).
- Shows mood, behavior, or personality changes.
- Can't recall events *prior to or after* a hit or fall.

Symptoms Reported by Children and Teens

- Headache or "pressure" in head.
- Nausea or vomiting.
- Balance problems or dizziness, or double or blurry vision.
- Bothered by light or noise.
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy.
- Confusion, or concentration or memory problems.
- Just not "feeling right," or "feeling down."

Talk with your children and teens about concussion. Tell them to report their concussion symptoms to you and their coach right away. Some children and teens think concussions aren't serious or worry that if they report a concussion they will lose their position on the team or look weak. Be sure to remind them that *it's better to miss one game than the whole season.*

To learn more, go to www.cdc.gov/HEADSUP



Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention
National Center for Injury
Prevention and Control

Concussions affect each child and teen differently. While most children and teens with a concussion feel better within a couple of weeks, some will have symptoms for months or longer. Talk with your children's or teens' health care provider if their concussion symptoms do not go away or if they get worse after they return to their regular activities.



What Are Some More Serious Danger Signs to Look Out For?

In rare cases, a dangerous collection of blood (hematoma) may form on the brain after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body and can squeeze the brain against the skull. Call 9-1-1 or take your child or teen to the emergency department right away if, after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body, he or she has one or more of these danger signs:

- One pupil larger than the other.
- Drowsiness or inability to wake up.
- A headache that gets worse and does not go away.
- Slurred speech, weakness, numbness, or decreased coordination.
- Repeated vomiting or nausea, convulsions or seizures (shaking or twitching).
- Unusual behavior, increased confusion, restlessness, or agitation.
- Loss of consciousness (passed out/knocked out). Even a brief loss of consciousness should be taken seriously.

Children and teens who continue to play while having concussion symptoms or who return to play too soon—while the brain is still healing—have a greater chance of getting another concussion. A repeat concussion that occurs while the brain is still healing from the first injury can be very serious and can affect a child or teen for a lifetime. It can even be fatal.

Revised 5/2015

What Should I Do If My Child or Teen Has a Possible Concussion?

As a parent, if you think your child or teen may have a concussion, you should:

1. Remove your child or teen from play.
2. Keep your child or teen out of play the day of the injury. Your child or teen should be seen by a health care provider and only return to play with permission from a health care provider who is experienced in evaluating for concussion.
3. Ask your child's or teen's health care provider for written instructions on helping your child or teen return to school. You can give the instructions to your child's or teen's school nurse and teacher(s) and return-to-play instructions to the coach and/or athletic trainer.

Do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself. Only a health care provider should assess a child or teen for a possible concussion. Concussion signs and symptoms often show up soon after the injury. But you may not know how serious the concussion is at first, and some symptoms may not show up for hours or days.

The brain needs time to heal after a concussion. A child's or teen's return to school and sports should be a gradual process that is carefully managed and monitored by a health care provider.



To learn more, go to www.cdc.gov/HEADSUP

You can also download the CDC **HEADS UP** app to get concussion information at your fingertips. Just scan the QR code pictured at left with your smartphone.

Discuss the risks of concussion and other serious brain injury with your child or teen and have each person sign below.

Detach the section below and keep this information sheet to use at your children's or teens' games and practices to help protect them from concussion or other serious brain injury.

- ☐ I learned about concussion and talked with my parent or coach about what to do if I have a concussion or other serious brain injury.

Athlete Name Printed: _____ Date: _____

Athlete Signature: _____

- ☐ I have read this fact sheet for parents on concussion with my child or teen and talked about what to do if they have a concussion or other serious brain injury.

Parent or Legal Guardian Name Printed: _____ Date: _____

Parent or Legal Guardian Signature: _____

CONCUSSION FACT SHEET FOR COACHES



WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

Concussion, a type of traumatic brain injury, is caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head. Concussions can also occur from a blow to the body that causes the head and brain to move rapidly back and forth—literally causing the brain to bounce around or twist within the skull.

This sudden movement of the brain causes stretching and tearing of brain cells, damaging the cells and creating chemical changes in the brain.

HOW CAN I RECOGNIZE A POSSIBLE CONCUSSION?

Concussions can result from a fall or from athletes colliding with each other, the ground, or with an obstacle, such as a goalpost. Even a “ding,” “getting your bell rung,” or what seems to be a mild bump or blow to the head can be serious.

As a coach you are on the front line in identifying an athlete with a suspected concussion. You know your athletes well and can recognize when something is off—even when the athlete doesn’t know it or doesn’t want to admit it.

So to help spot a concussion, you should watch for and ask others to report the following two things:

1. A forceful bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body that results in rapid movement of the head.

AND

2. Any concussion signs or symptoms, such as a change in the athlete’s behavior, thinking, or physical functioning.

Signs and symptoms of concussion generally show up soon after the injury. But the full effect of the injury may not be noticeable at first. For example, in the first few minutes the athlete might be slightly confused or appear a little bit dazed, but an hour later they can’t recall coming to the practice or game.

You should repeatedly check for signs of concussion and also tell parents what to watch out for at home. Any worsening of concussion signs or symptoms indicates a medical emergency.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Athletes who experience one or more of the signs and symptoms listed below, or who report that they just “don’t feel right,” after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body, may have a concussion.

SYMPTOMS REPORTED BY ATHLETE:

- Headache or “pressure” in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Sensitivity to light
- Sensitivity to noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
- Concentration or memory problems
- Confusion
- Just not “feeling right” or is “feeling down”

SIGNS OBSERVED BY COACHING STAFF:

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Is confused about assignment or position
- Forgets an instruction
- Is unsure of game, score, or opponent
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Loses consciousness (even briefly)
- Shows mood, behavior, or personality changes
- Can’t recall events prior to hit or fall
- Can’t recall events after hit or fall

[INSERT YOUR LOGO]

WHAT ARE CONCUSSION DANGER SIGNS?

In rare cases, a dangerous blood clot may form on the brain in an athlete with a concussion and crowd the brain against the skull. Call 9-1-1 or take the athlete to the emergency department right away if after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body the athlete exhibits one or more of the following danger signs:

- One pupil larger than the other
- Is drowsy or cannot be awakened
- A headache that gets worse
- Weakness, numbness, or decreased coordination
- Repeated vomiting or nausea
- Slurred speech
- Convulsions or seizures
- Cannot recognize people or places
- Becomes increasingly confused, restless, or agitated
- Has unusual behavior
- Loses consciousness (even a brief loss of consciousness should be taken seriously)

FACTS

Sometimes people wrongly believe that it shows strength and courage to play injured. Some athletes may also try to hide their symptoms.

Don't let your athlete convince you that he or she is "just fine" or that he or she can "tough it out." Discourage others from pressuring injured athletes to play. Emphasize to athletes and parents that playing with a concussion is dangerous.



WHAT SHOULD I DO IF A CONCUSSION IS SUSPECTED?

No matter whether the athlete is a key member of the team or the game is about to end, an athlete with a suspected concussion should be immediately removed from play. To help you know how to respond, follow the Heads Up four-step action plan:

1. REMOVE THE ATHLETE FROM PLAY.

Look for signs and symptoms of a concussion if your athlete has experienced a bump or blow to the head or body. When in doubt, sit them out!

2. ENSURE THAT THE ATHLETE IS EVALUATED BY AN APPROPRIATE HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL.

Do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself. Health care professionals have a number of methods that they can use to assess the severity of concussions. As a coach, recording the following information can help health care professionals in assessing the athlete after the injury:

- Cause of the injury and force of the hit or blow to the head or body
- Any loss of consciousness (passed out/knocked out) and if so, for how long
- Any memory loss immediately following the injury
- Any seizures immediately following the injury
- Number of previous concussions (if any)

3. INFORM THE ATHLETE'S PARENTS OR GUARDIANS.

Let them know about the possible concussion and give them the Heads Up fact sheet for parents. This fact sheet can help parents monitor the athlete for sign or symptoms that appear or get worse once the athlete is at home or returns to school.

4. KEEP THE ATHLETE OUT OF PLAY.

An athlete should be removed from play the day of the injury and until an appropriate health care professional says they are symptom-free and it's OK to return to play. After you remove an athlete with a suspected concussion from practice or play, the decision about return to practice or play is a medical decision.

WHY SHOULD I BE CONCERNED ABOUT CONCUSSIONS?

Most athletes with a concussion will recover quickly and fully. But for some athletes, signs and symptoms of concussion can last for days, weeks, or longer.

If an athlete has a concussion, his or her brain needs time to heal. A repeat concussion that occurs before the brain recovers from the first—usually within a short time period (hours, days, weeks)—can slow recovery or increase the chances for long-term problems. In rare cases, repeat concussions can result in brain swelling or permanent brain damage. It can even be fatal.



DID YOU KNOW?

- Young children and teens are more likely to get a concussion and take longer to recover than adults.
- Athletes who have ever had a concussion are at increased risk for another concussion.
- All concussions are serious.
- Recognition and proper response to concussions when they first occur can help prevent further injury or even death.

HOW CAN I HELP ATHLETES TO RETURN TO PLAY GRADUALLY?

An athlete should return to sports practices under the supervision of an appropriate health care professional. When available, be sure to work closely with your team's certified athletic trainer.

Below are five gradual steps that you and the health care professional should follow to help safely return an athlete to play. Remember, this is a gradual process. These steps should not be completed in one day, but instead over days, weeks, or months.

BASELINE:

Athletes should not have any concussion symptoms. Athletes should only progress to the next level of exertion if they do not have any symptoms at the current step.

STEP 1:

Begin with light aerobic exercise only to increase an athlete's heart rate. This means about 5 to 10 minutes on an exercise bike, walking, or light jogging. No weight lifting at this point.

STEP 2:

Continue with activities to increase an athlete's heart rate with body or head movement. This includes moderate jogging, brief running, moderate-intensity stationary biking, moderate-intensity weightlifting (reduced time and/or reduced weight from your typical routine).

STEP 3:

Add heavy non-contact physical activity, such as sprinting/running, high-intensity stationary biking, regular weightlifting routine, non-contact sport-specific drills (in 3 planes of movement).

STEP 4:

Athlete may return to practice and full contact (if appropriate for the sport) in controlled practice.

STEP 5:

Athlete may return to competition.

If an athlete's symptoms come back or she or he gets new symptoms when becoming more active at any step, this is a sign that the athlete is pushing him or herself too hard. The athlete should stop these activities and the athlete's health care provider should be contacted. After more rest and no concussion symptoms, the athlete should begin at the previous step.

HOW CAN I HELP PREVENT CONCUSSIONS OR OTHER SERIOUS BRAIN INJURIES?

Insist that safety comes first. To help minimize the risks for concussion or other serious brain injuries:

- Ensure that athletes follow the rules for safety and the rules of the sport.
- Encourage them to practice good sportsmanship at all times.
- Make sure the athlete wears the right protective equipment for their activity. Protective equipment should fit properly, be well maintained, and be worn consistently and correctly.
- Wearing a helmet is a must to reduce the risk of severe brain injury and skull fracture. However, a helmet doesn't make an athlete immune to concussion. There is no "concussion-proof" helmet.

Check with your league, school, or district about concussion policies. Concussion policy statements can be developed to include:

- The school or league's commitment to safety
- A brief description of concussion
- Information on when athletes can safely return to school and play.

Parents and athletes should sign the concussion policy statement at the beginning of the season.



▶ **"WHEN IN DOUBT,
SIT THEM OUT!"**

[INSERT YOUR LOGO]



JOIN THE CONVERSATION AT www.facebook.com/CDCHeadsUp

TO LEARN MORE GO TO >> WWW.CDC.GOV/CONCUSSION

Content Source: CDC's Heads Up Program. Created through a grant to the CDC Foundation from the National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment (NOCSAE).

Playbook

As Little League players develop a lot of emphasis is placed on physical skills such as throwing hitting, catching, running the bases, pitching etc. Sometimes the mental and tactical side of the game is at best relegated to an after thought or forgotten completely. As players develop they need to understand what their role is on a play by play and situation by situation basis.

This section has been included in the coaches manual for two main reasons.

1. It is to allow coaches to begin to introduce the aspect of baseball as a mental game where players need to be aware of and understand the game situation and what their role is in the game for the next play, for the given defensive situation.
2. It is to ensure that players understand that they are part of the game and are involved in every in every play.

In many little league games you will see the fielders stood around as if they're not participating the in the game until the ball gets hit toward them - to which they will react. As players begin to understand that in most plays they have a role to play they will begin to study and read the game they are in, in ways they previously have not. This is in contrast to what commonly happens, that outfielders stand around, losing focus and interest in the game. The aim is to make sure they are baseball ready - looking to make plays and understanding what they need to do if (and when) the opposition do get a hit!

Baseball defensive strategy has more to it than where to position your infielders and outfielders. A coach knowing strategies for defensive situations is key to proper defense. Positioning fielders may be the difference between an out and a RBI triple.

More importantly teaching players the importance of knowing their role and defensive strategies is key to progressing in baseball as players become bigger, stronger and more skilled and competition becomes more intensive.

Defensive players need to recognize situations for baseball relays and cutoffs, be quick to get into position, and know how to make the relay throw.

This section includes situations and plays that players will encounter in almost every game. It is important that each player understands that when they are fielding that when the ball is hit - they will almost certainly need to do "something".

This will not only improve a teams defensive play but It will keep players "in the game" thinking:

- What is the game situation? How many base runners do we have, what is the score, what inning are we in, etc.
- What do I need to do if the ball comes to me?
- What do I need to do if the ball goes somewhere else?
- Where do I need to cover?
- Am I the cut off player?
- Can I get a double play - if so how?
- Where did this player hit the ball last time - where do they like to hit it?

Relay Basics

Get Into Position.

As a cut off man work to move your feet so the throw you are receiving comes in at chest height (its an easy height to handle). Try to play it to the left side of your chest and get your feet moving and inline to the direction you are going to throw. Turn to your glove side and throw (you create more momentum and have less movement). This ensures the quickest and strongest catch and release possible.

Throw Low.

When throws are made in baseball relays and cutoffs, keep the ball down. This will allow for someone else to cut the ball if needed to hold a runner and it also gets your target quicker with a hop or two than sailing a high rainbow.

Get in Line.

It is important for the cut off men to be in a straight line from where the ball is being thrown from and where it is eventually going to go.

The quickest path between two points is a straight line, also if the ball is overthrown the ball is going in the correct direction. (Check out our diagrams of baseball relays and cutoffs for more on positioning.)

Stay in Fair Territory.

Players should stay in fair even if the throw is coming from an outfielder in foul territory.

If coming down the left field line, this is important because you want your throw to home to be on the inside of the runner so it won't hit him in the back. Remember, if your throw hits the runner, the ball is still live and the runner will be able to score.

From the right field line, the throw coming from fair territory cuts down the angle that the catcher has to take his eyes away from the runner and catch the ball. The further the ball comes from foul territory the more the catcher has to angle his body away from the base and the runner.

1. Ground balls with bases empty

Groundball to 1B: Bases empty

Catcher: Cover home plate

Pitcher: Runs to cover first base - ready to receive the ball from the first baseman - touches first base when he receives the ball.

First baseman: Fields the grounder. Touches the plate with the ball ahead of the runner - if not flips to the pitcher covering the base.

Second baseman: Covers second base.

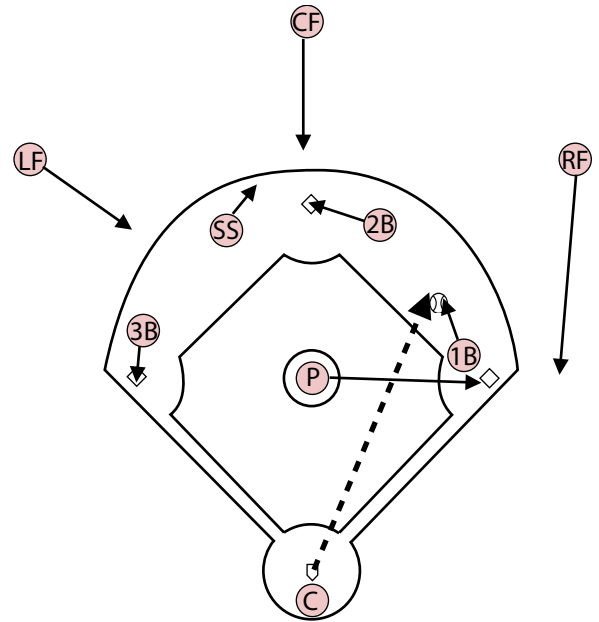
Shortstop: Backup any throw to second base.

Third baseman: Cover third base.

Left Fielder: Back up throw to third base.

Center fielder: backup any bad plays or throws to second base.

Right Fielder: Cover first base for bad throw.



Groundball to 2B: Bases empty

Catcher: Cover home plate

Pitcher: Be ready to receive ball to end play. (in the event of not getting the out at 1B)

First baseman: Moves to first base with foot on base - looks for throw from 2B or SS. (Come off the base if you have to in event of bad throw from 2B / SS)

Second baseman: Field the ball throw it to first base.

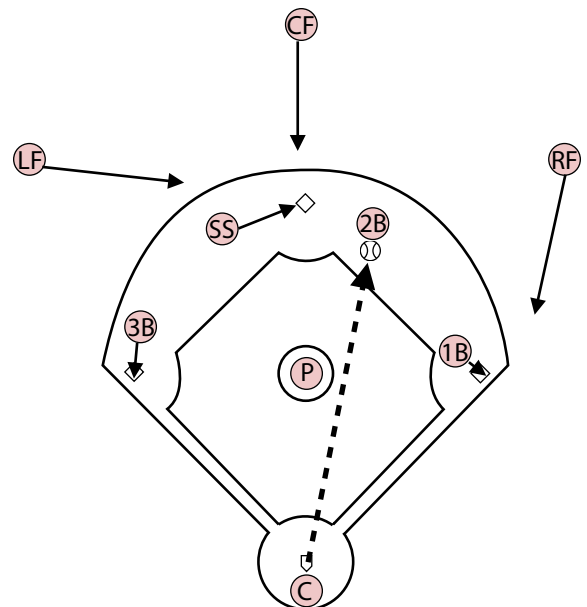
Shortstop: If the ball is closer to SS field the ball & throw to 1B. Otherwise Cover second base in case of attempted run to 2nd base be ready for throw from 1st baseman or 2nd baseman

Third baseman: Cover third base.

Left Fielder: Be ready to back up short stop.

Center fielder: Back up second baseman

Right Fielder: Cover first base



Groundball to 3B: Bases empty

Catcher: Cover home plate

Pitcher: Get out of way of throw from 3rd base to first base.

First baseman: Cover third base

Second baseman: Cover second base

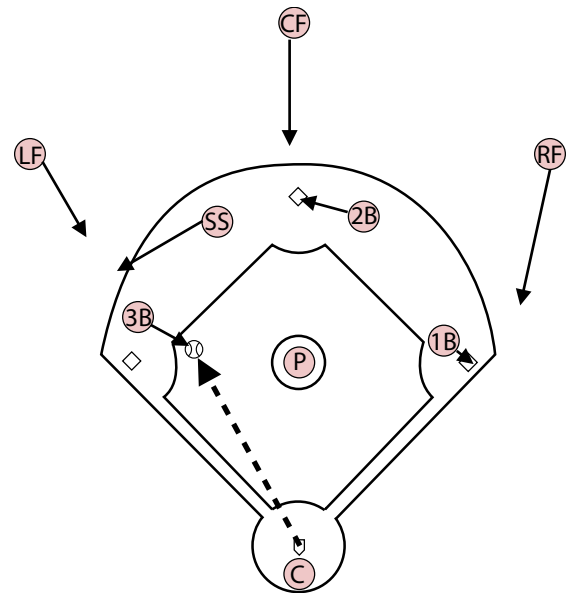
Shortstop: Backup third baseman

Third baseman: Field the ball - if play can be made throw to first base.

Left Fielder: Backup third base.

Center fielder: Be ready to backup second base (in case of throw to second)

Right Fielder: Backup first base



Groundball to SS: Bases empty

Catcher: Cover home plate

Pitcher: Be ready to receive ball to end play. (in the event of not getting the out at 1B)

First baseman: Moves to first base with foot on base - looks for throw from shortstop. (Come off the base if you have to in event of bad throw from shortstop)

Second baseman: Cover second base. Be ready for throw from first base or right fielder.

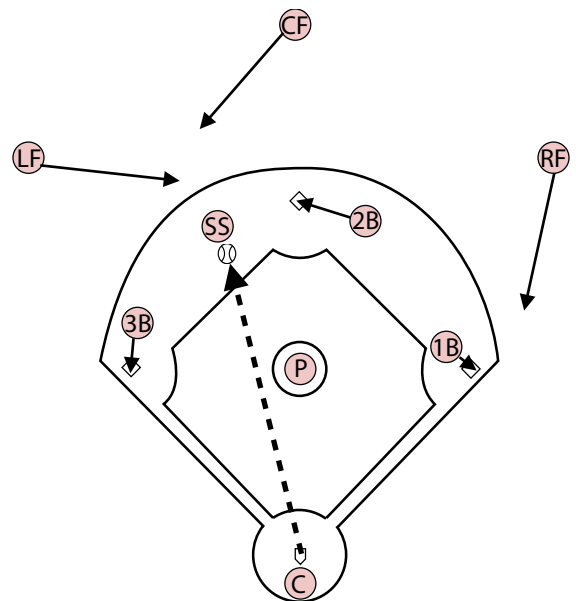
Shortstop: Fields the grounder. Throws to first base.

Third baseman: Cover third base.

Left Fielder: Backup right fielder.

Center fielder: Backup shortstop

Right Fielder: Backup first base



2. Ground balls with runners on base

Groundball to 1B: Runner on 1st or runners on 1st & 3rd

Catcher: Cover home plate

Pitcher: Runs to cover first base - ready to receive the ball from the first or second baseman - touches first base when he receives the ball.

First baseman: Fields the grounder. If able touches 1st base then throws to second base for the out. (calls "tag") Or if unable - flips to the pitcher covering first base.

Second baseman: Cover second base. Be ready for throw from first baseman. Look to throw back to first base (pitcher) for the double play.

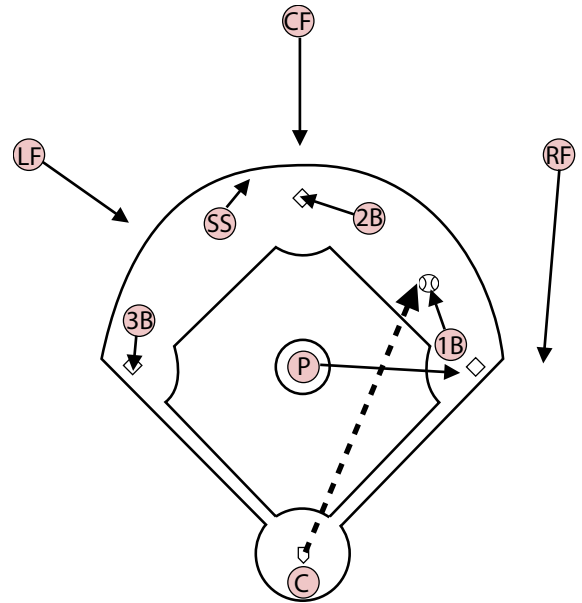
Shortstop: Cover second base

Third baseman: Cover third base.

Left Fielder: Back up the shortstop.

Center fielder: Back up the shortstop

Right Fielder: Cover first base



Groundball to 2B: Runner on 1st or runners on 1st & 3rd

Catcher: Cover home plate

Pitcher: Be ready to receive ball to end play. (in the event of not getting the out at 1B)

First baseman: Covers the base, ready for throw from 2nd baseman (if runner on 1st base is off the base).

Second baseman: Fields the ball. Flip to the shortstop. If the shortstop is out of position throw it to first base.

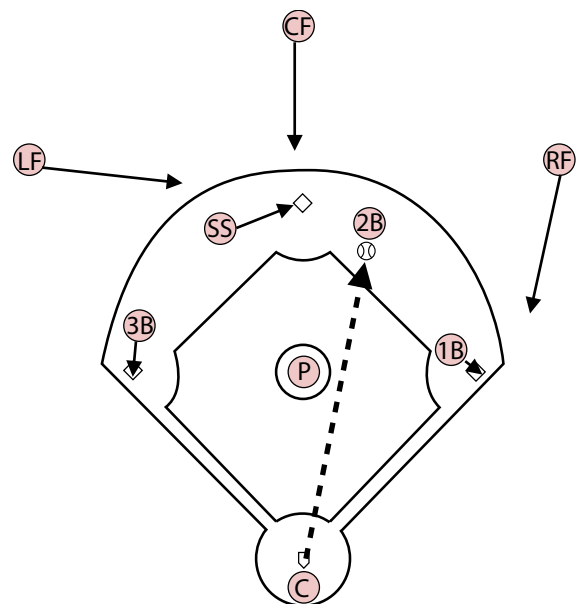
Shortstop: Cover second base for the flip from the second baseman, step on the base and throw to first base for double play (if less than two outs)

Third baseman: Cover short stop in case of bad throw to shortstop.

Left Fielder: Back up throw to shortstop.

Center fielder: Back up the right fielder

Right Fielder: Field the hit and throw it to the cutoff man (the shortstop).



Groundball to SS: Runner on 1st or runners on 1st & 2nd

Catcher: Cover home plate

Pitcher: Be ready to receive ball to end play. (in the event of not getting outs.

First baseman: Moves to first base with foot on base - looks for throw from shortstop. (Come off the base if you have to in event of bad throw from shortstop)

Second baseman: Cover second base. Be ready for flip from shortstop. Be ready to throw to first base for double play

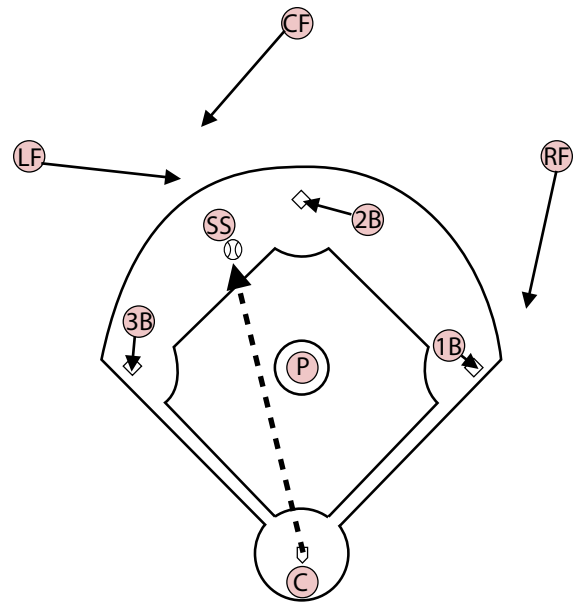
Shortstop: Fields the grounder. Either steps on second base and throw to first base for double play - or - flips to second base - or - gets lead runner at third base.

Third baseman: Cover third base. Be ready for throw from shortstop

Left Fielder: Back up right fielder.

Center fielder: Back up shortstop

Right Fielder: Backup first base



Groundball to 3B : Runner on 1st or runners on 1st & 2nd

Catcher: Cover home plate

Pitcher:

First baseman: Check that the batter touches first base and then cover the base inside. Be ready for throw from second base.

Second baseman: Backup shortstop.

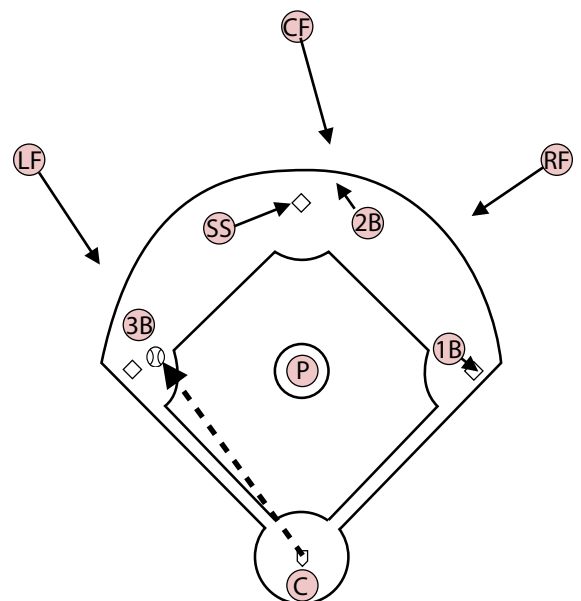
Shortstop: Cover second base for the throw from third baseman, step on the base and throw to first base (if less than two outs)

Third baseman: Field the ground ball and step on 3rd base (if players on 1s & 2nd base. Throw to shortstop at second base.

Left Fielder: Back up third base.

Center fielder: Back up second base, be ready for bad throws.

Right Fielder: Backup second base, be ready for bad throws.



3. Single with bases empty

Single to left: Bases Empty

Catcher: Cover first base in case the runner takes a too-wide turn

Pitcher: Backup and throw to second base.

First baseman: Check that the batter touches first base and then back up the incoming throw to second base

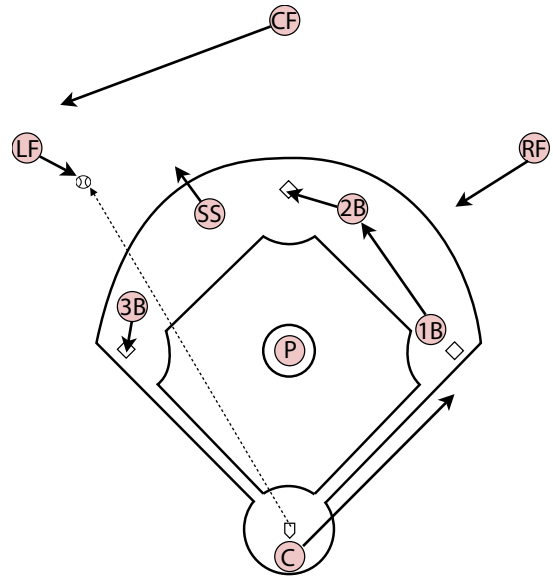
Second baseman: Cover second base.

Shortstop: Pursue the ball; then line up between the left fielder and second base to take the cutoff throw.

Third baseman: Covers third base.

Left Fielder: Field the ball and throw it to the cutoff man (the shortstop.) If the shortstop is out of position, throw to second base.

Center fielder: Run to back up the left fielder



Single to Center: Bases Empty

Catcher: Cover home plate

Pitcher: Stay near the mound and backup any throw to second base.

First baseman: Check that the batter touches first base and then cover the base inside.

Second baseman: Go to second base to take the throw.

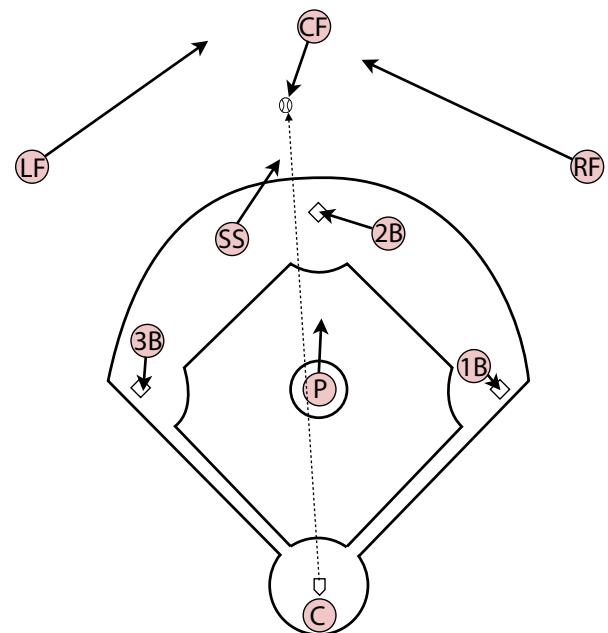
Shortstop: Go out to be the cut off man for second base.

Third baseman: Cover third base.

Left Fielder: Backup the center fielder.

Center fielder: Field the ball and throw it to second base or the cut off man (shortstop)

Right Fielder: Backup the center fielder.



Single to right: Bases Empty

Catcher: Cover home plate

Pitcher: Follow the flight of the ball and decide where to backup (usually second base).

First baseman: Check that the batter touches first base and then cover the base inside.

Second baseman: Pursue the ball then take the cutoff position between the right fielder and second base.

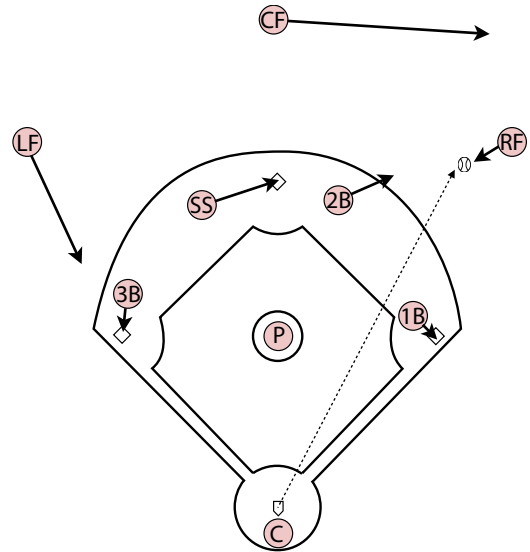
Shortstop: Cover second base.

Third baseman: Cover third base.

Left Fielder: Move toward the infield in case the right fielder makes a bad throw to second base.

Center fielder: Field the ball and throw it to second base or the cut off man (shortstop)

Right Fielder: Field the hit and make the cutoff throw to the second baseman. If the second basemen is out of position, throw to shortstop at second base .



4. Single with runners on bases

Single to left: Runner on first - or - Runners on first and third.

Catcher: Cover home plate

Pitcher: Follow the flight of the ball and decide where to backup (usually third base).

First baseman: Check that the batter touches first base and then cover the base inside.

Second baseman: Cover second base.

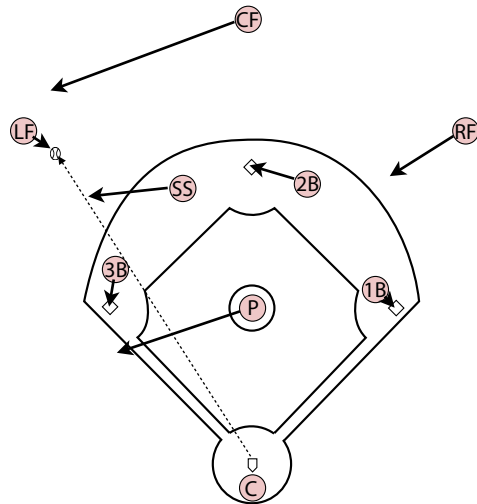
Shortstop: Lineup between the left fielder and third base, for the cutoff throw.

Third baseman: Backup the shortstop (then cover third base once the ball is caught).

Left Fielder: Move toward the infield in case the right fielder makes a bad throw to second base.

Center fielder: Field the ball and throw it to the cutoff man (shortstop). If the shortstop is out of position throw it to third base.

Right Fielder: Move toward the infield to field any bad throws.



Single to center: Runner on 1st or runners on 1st & 3rd

Catcher: Cover home plate.

Pitcher: Follow the flight of the ball and decide where to backup (usually third base). Be ready to receive the ball to end the play.

First baseman: Check that the batter touches first base and then cover the base inside.

Second baseman: Cover second base.

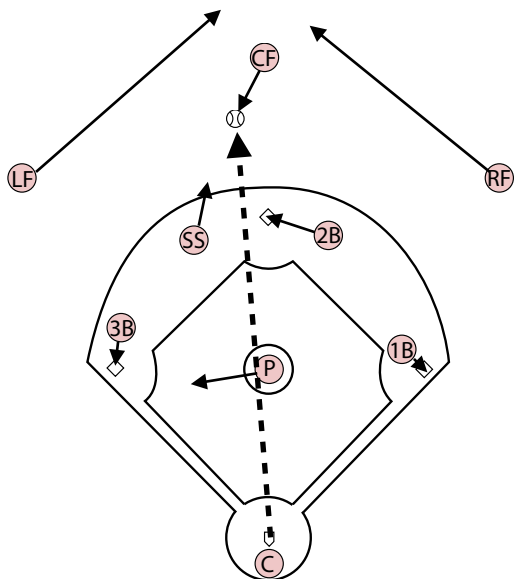
Shortstop: Lineup between the left fielder and third base, for the cutoff throw.

Third baseman: Backup the shortstop (then cover third base once the ball is caught).

Left Fielder: Backup the center fielder.

Center fielder: Field the ball and throw it to the cutoff man (shortstop). If the shortstop is out of position throw it to third base.

Right Fielder: Backup the center fielder.



Single to right: Runner on first - or - runners on first and

Catcher: Cover home plate

Pitcher: Backup third base.

First baseman: Check that the batter touches first base and then cover the base inside.

Second baseman: Cover second.

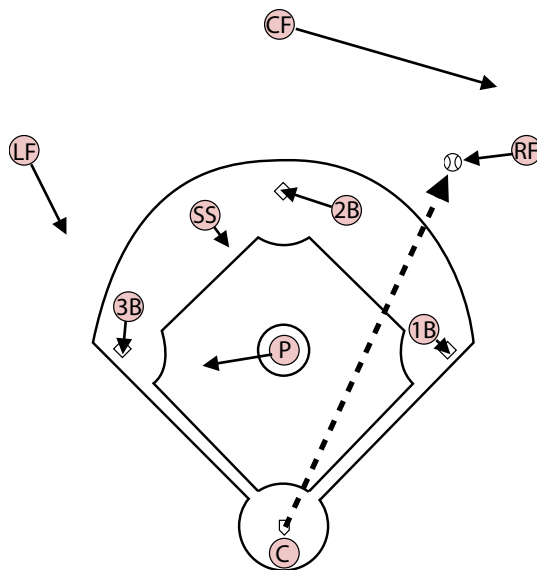
Shortstop: Lineup for the cutoff between the right fielder and third base.

Third baseman: Cover third base.

Left Fielder: Backup throw to third base.

Center fielder: Backup the right fielder

Right Fielder: Field the hit and throw it to the cutoff man (the short stop).



Single to Left: Runner on 2nd, or runners on 1st & 2nd or bases

Catcher: Cover home plate

Pitcher: Backup and throw to home plate. Be ready to receive the ball to end the play

First baseman: Cover first base

Second baseman: Cover second base.

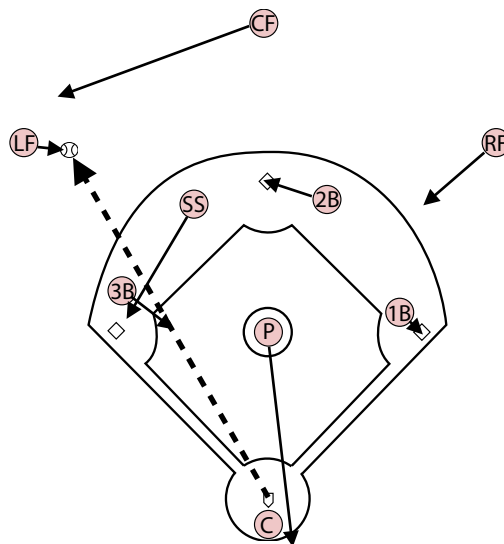
Shortstop: Cover third base.

Third baseman: Take cut off position for a throw to home plate.

Left Fielder: Field the ball and throw it to the cutoff man (third baseman).

Center fielder: Backup the Left fielder.

Right Fielder: Backup any throw to second.



Single to Center: Runner on 2nd, or runners on 1st & 2nd or bases loaded

Catcher: Cover home plate

Pitcher: Backup the catcher at home plate.

First baseman: Cover first base

Second baseman: Cover second base.

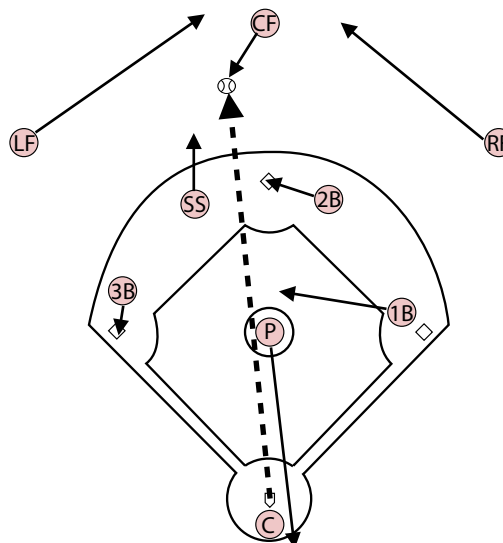
Shortstop: Take cut off position for a throw to third base.

Third baseman: Cover third base.

Left Fielder: Backup the center fielder and then become a quarterback... Tell the center fielder where the throw should be going.

Center fielder: Field the hit, listen for the left or right fielders instructions, throw to one of the two cutoff men: the shortstop (if the play is at third base) or the first baseman (if the play is at home plate).

Right Fielder: Backup the center fielder and then become a quarterback. Tell the center fielder where the throw should be going.



Single to Right: Runner on 2nd, or runners on 1st & 2nd or bases loaded

Catcher: Cover home plate

Pitcher: Stand outside of the base paths between third and base and home plate, watch the play evolve, and back up the throw (usually to home plate.)

First baseman: Take the cutoff position for the throw to home plate.

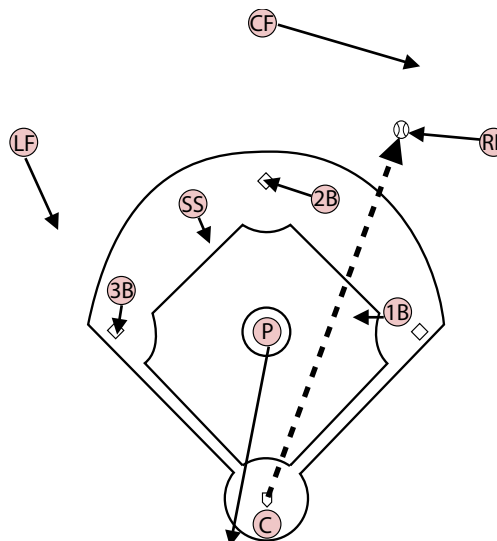
Second baseman: Cover second base.

Shortstop: Take cut off position for a throw to third base.

Third baseman: Cover third base.

Left Fielder: Come toward third base in order to be able to backup at third - or - second base, depending on where the play is evolving.

Center fielder: Backup the right fielder and tell



5. Double or Triple with bases empty

Double possible triple down the left field line: Bases empty

Catcher: Cover home plate

Pitcher: Backup third base

First baseman: Make sure the batter touches first base; then trail the runner to second base.

Second baseman: Go to the train position behind the shortstop, Stay near second base.

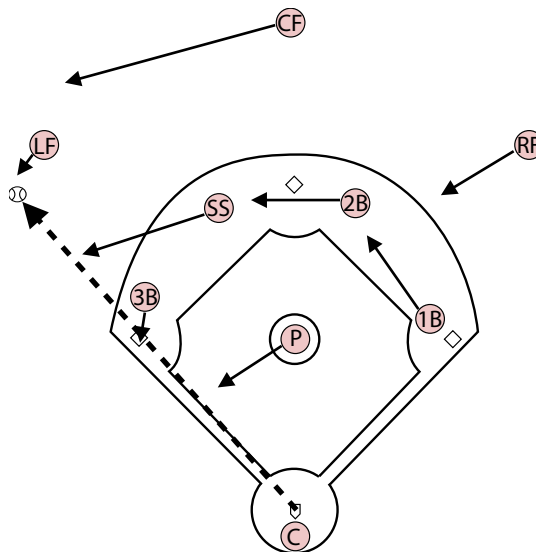
Shortstop: Take cut off position down the left field line.

Third baseman: Cover third base.

Left Fielder: Field the hit and make the cutoff throw to the shortstop.

Center fielder: Backup the left fielder.

Right Fielder: Backup any throw to second base.



Double possible triple to left center field: Bases empty

Catcher: Cover home plate

Pitcher: Backup third base

First baseman: Make sure the batter touches first base; then trail the runner to second base.

Second baseman: Go to the train position behind the shortstop, Stay near second base.

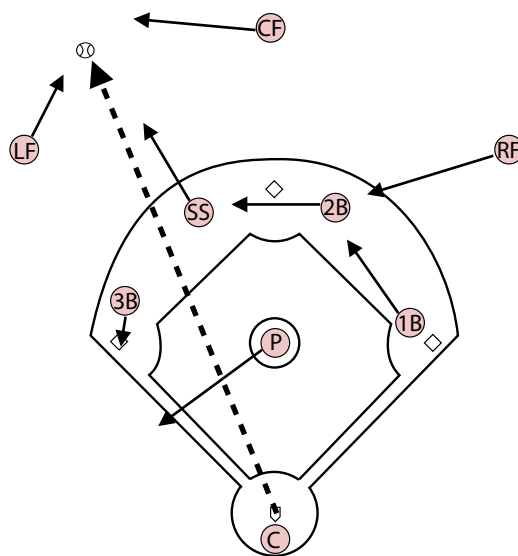
Shortstop: Take cut off position down the left field line.

Third baseman: Cover third base.

Left Fielder: Field the hit and make the cutoff throw to the shortstop.

Center fielder: Backup the left fielder.

Right Fielder: Backup any throw to second base.



Double possible triple to right center field: Bases empty

Catcher: Cover home plate

Pitcher: Backup third base

First baseman: Make sure the batter touches first base; then trail the runner to second base.

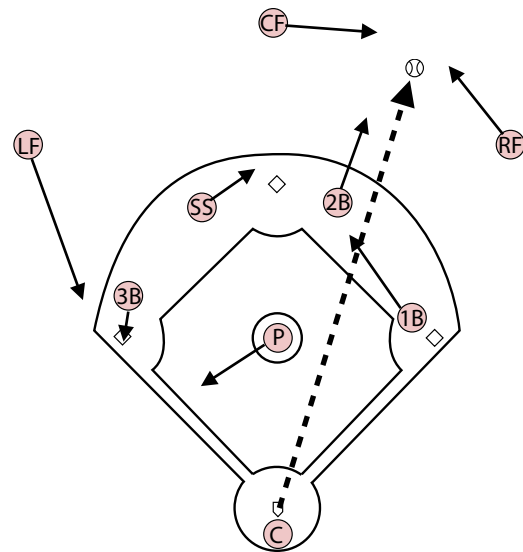
Second baseman: Line up with third base and the center fielder for the cutoff throw.

Shortstop: Go to the trail position behind second base.

Third baseman: Cover third base.

Left Fielder: Backup any throw to third base.

Center fielder: Field the hit and make the cutoff throw to the second baseman.



Double possible triple down the right field line: Bases empty

Catcher: Cover home plate

Pitcher: Backup third base

First baseman: Make sure the batter touches first base; then trail the runner to second base.

Second baseman: Line up with third base and the right fielder for the cutoff throw.

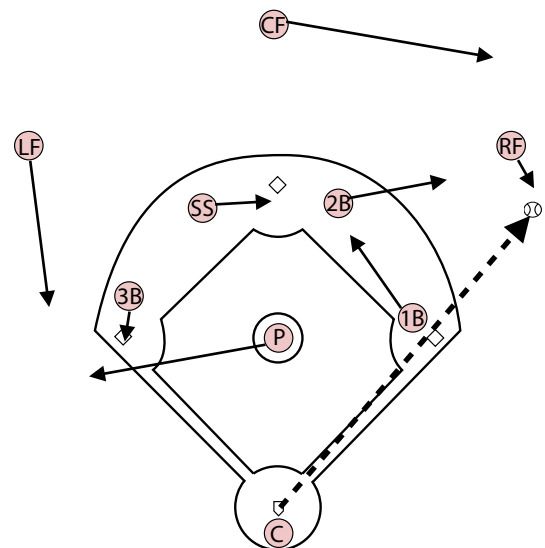
Shortstop: Get to the trail position behind the second baseman.

Third baseman: Cover third base.

Left Fielder: Backup any throw to third base.

Center fielder: Backup the right fielder.

Right Fielder: Field the hit and then make the cutoff throw to the second baseman.



Double possible triple to left field line: Runners on base

Catcher: Cover home plate

Pitcher: Stand between home plate and third base (closer to home), watch the play evolve and backup the throw.

First baseman: Make sure the batter touches first base; then trail the runner to second base.

Second baseman: Get to the trail position behind the shortstop. Let the shortstop where to throw.

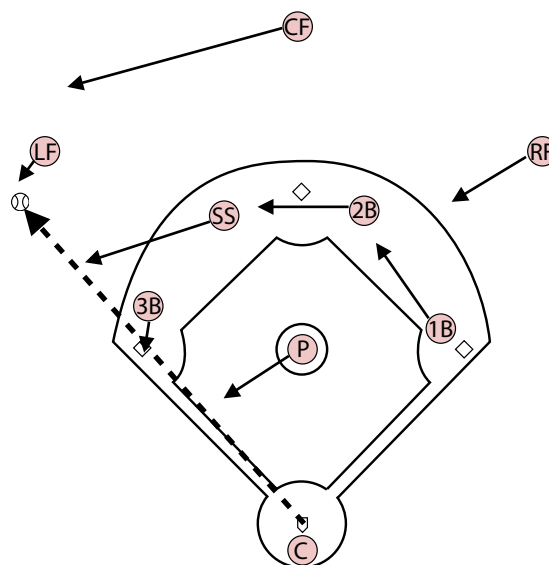
Shortstop: Line up between home plate and the left fielder for the cutoff throw.

Third baseman: Cover third base.

Left Fielder: Field the hit and make the cutoff throw to the shortstop.

Center fielder: Backup the left fielder.

Right Fielder: Backup any throw to second base.



6. Double or Triple with runners on base

Double possible triple to right center field: Runners on base

Catcher: Cover home plate .

Pitcher: Stand between home plate and third base (closer to home), watch the play evolve and backup the throw.

First baseman: Take the cutoff position for a throw to the plate.

Second baseman: Line up with home plate and the fielder for the cutoff throw.

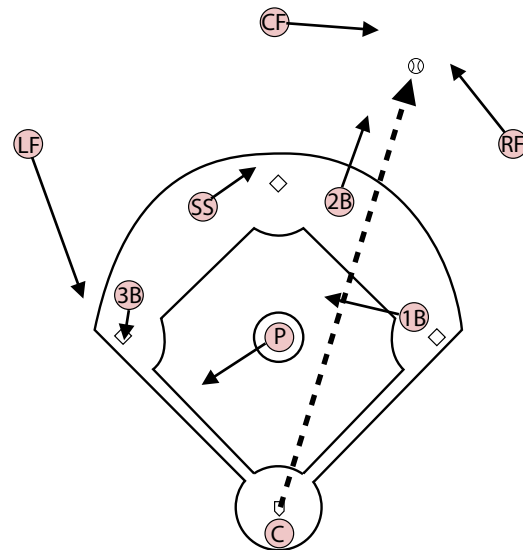
Shortstop: Get to the trail position behind the second baseman. Tell the second baseman where to make the throw.

Third baseman: Cover third base.

Left Fielder: Backup any throw to third base.

Center fielder: Field the hit and make the cutoff throw to the second baseman.

Right Fielder: Backup the center fielder.



Double possible triple down the right field line: Runners on base

Catcher: Cover home plate

Pitcher: Stand outside of the base paths, watch the play evolve and back up the throw.

First baseman: Take the cutoff position for a throw to the plate.

Second baseman: Line up with third base and the right fielder for the cutoff throw.

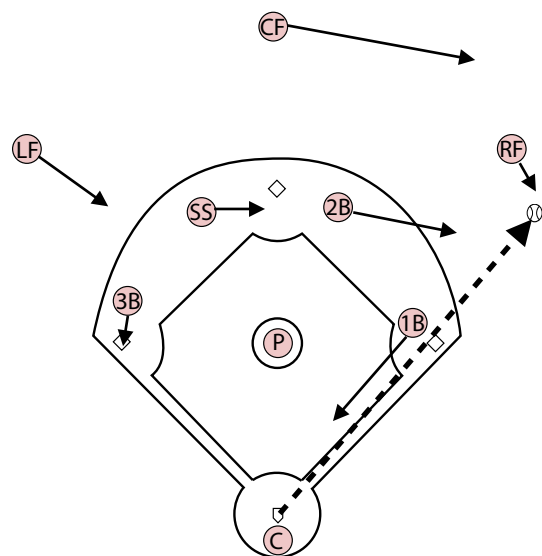
Shortstop: Get to the trail position behind the second baseman.

Third baseman: Cover third base.

Left Fielder: Backup any throw to third base.

Center fielder: Backup the right fielder.

Right Fielder: Field the hit and then make the cutoff throw to the second baseman.



Double possible triple down the right center field: Runners on base

Catcher: Cover home plate

Pitcher: Stand between home plate and third base (closer to home), watch the play evolve and backup the throw.

First baseman: Take the cutoff position for a throw to the plate.

Second baseman: Go to the trail position behind the shortstop. Let the shortstop where to throw.

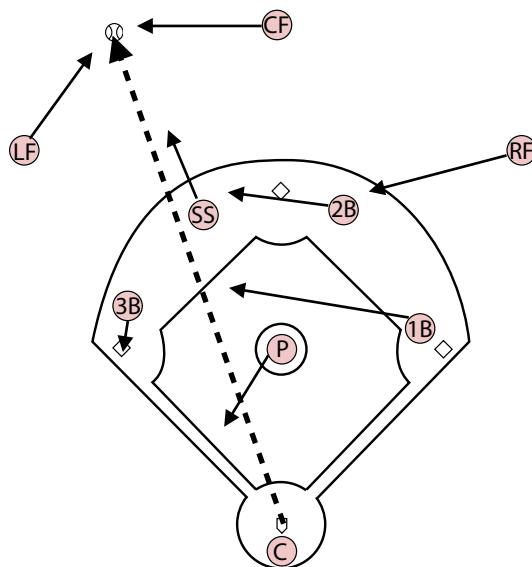
Shortstop: Line up with home plate and the fielder for the cutoff throw.

Third baseman: Cover third base.

Left Fielder: Backup the center fielder.

Center fielder: Field the hit and make the cutoff throw to the shortstop.

Right Fielder: Backup any throw to second base.



Double possible triple down the field line: Runners on base

Catcher: Cover home plate

Pitcher: Stand between home plate and third base (closer to home), watch the play evolve and backup the throw.

First baseman: Make sure the batter touches first base; then trail the runner to second base.

Second baseman: Get to the trail position behind the shortstop. Let the shortstop where to throw.

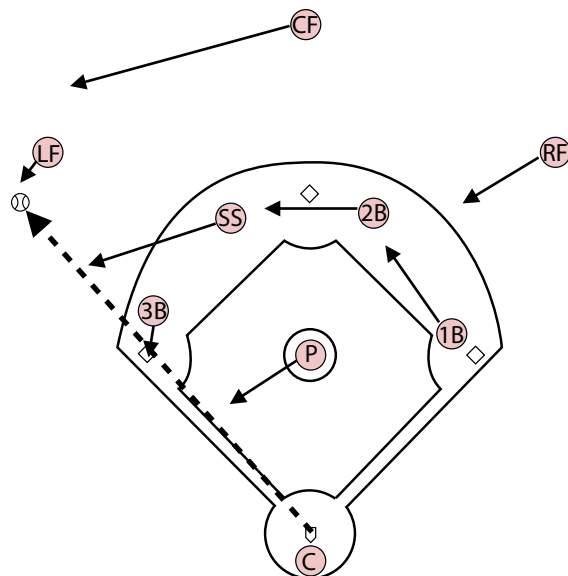
Shortstop: Line up between home plate and the left fielder for the cutoff throw.

Third baseman: Cover third base.

Left Fielder: Field the hit and make the cutoff throw to the shortstop.

Center fielder: Backup the left fielder.

Right Fielder: Backup any throw to second base.



7. Pop Flys

Pop fly to shallow right field

Catcher: If the bases are empty, back up a possible throw to first base, otherwise cover home plate.

Pitcher: Call for a fielder if the ball is in the infield proper, if not cover first base

First baseman: Call for a catch if you feel you can make the play; however you must back off if the right fielder or the second baseman calls for the ball.

Second baseman: Call for a catch. but back off if the right fielder calls you off.

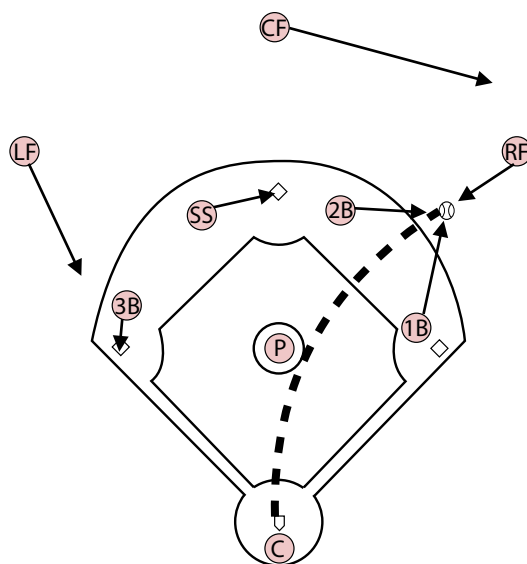
Shortstop: Cover second base.

Third baseman: Cover third base.

Left Fielder: Back up any throw to third base.

Center fielder: Back up the right fielder

Right Fielder: Call for the catch if you feel you can make the play. All other fielders



Pop fly to shallow left field

Catcher: If the bases are empty, back up a possible throw to third base, otherwise cover home plate.

Pitcher: Call for a fielder if the ball is in the infield proper, if not cover third base

First baseman: Cover first base

Second baseman: Cover second base

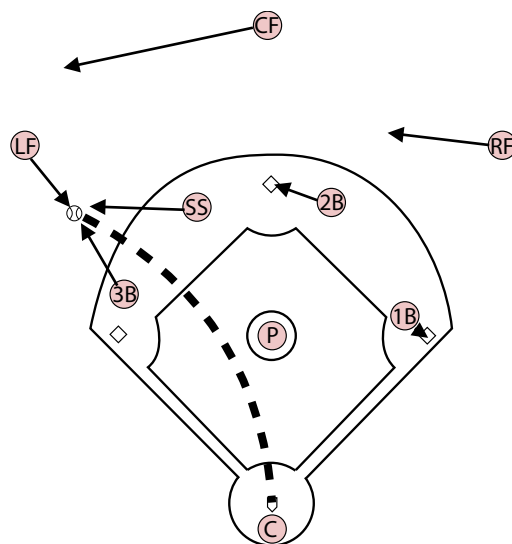
Shortstop: Call for the ball if you think you can make the play. Give way if the left fielder calls for it.

Third baseman: Call for the catch if you feel you can make the play; however you must back off if the left fielder calls for the ball..

Left Fielder: Call for the catch if you feel you can make the play. All other fielders must yield to you.

Center fielder: Back up the left fielder

Right Fielder: Backup any throw to second base.



Pop fly to shallow center

Catcher: Cover home plate.

Pitcher: Direct the infielders. If the shortstop and second baseman both go for the ball, cover second base if the first baseman is unable to do so.

First baseman: Cover first base unless the shortstop and second baseman both go for the ball - then you must cover second.

Second baseman: Call for the ball if you think you can make the play. Back off if either the center fielder calls for it or if the short stop called for it before you do. Either you or the shortstop must retreat to cover second base.

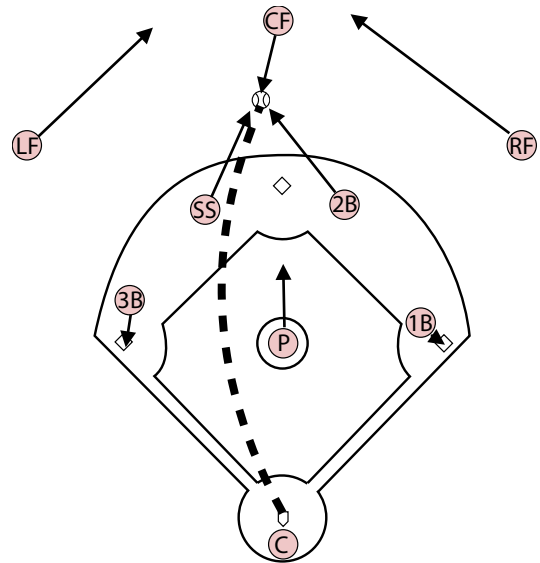
Shortstop: Call for the ball if you think you can make the play. Give way if the center fielder calls for it or if the second baseman calls for it before you do. Either you or the second baseman must retreat to cover second base.

Third baseman: Cover third base.

Left Fielder: Backup center fielder

Center fielder: Call for the ball if you think you can make the play. All other fielders must yield to you.

Right Fielder: Backup center fielder.



8. Passed Ball

Passed Ball - Player in scoring position 2nd base and / or 3rd

Catcher: Retrieves pass ball. Either makes play at home plate or throws to pitcher covering home plate

Pitcher: Covers plate, is ready to receive ball thrown from the catcher.

First baseman: Cover first base.

Second baseman: Cover second base.

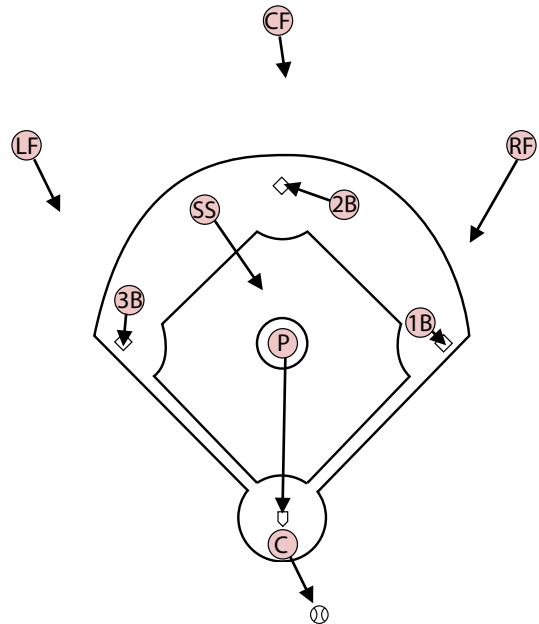
Shortstop: Cover the pitcher for a bad / overthrow from catcher to pitcher.

Third baseman: Cover third base.

Left Fielder: Be prepared to cover third baseman

Center fielder: Be prepared to cover second baseman

Right Fielder: Back up the first baseman



9. Dropped 3rd Strike

Dropped third strike: 1st base unoccupied or two outs

Catcher: Retrieves dropped third strike. Catcher tags the batter or throws to first base.

Pitcher: Assist catcher in locating the ball.

First baseman: Cover the base inside be ready for throw from catcher

Second baseman: Cover second base.

Shortstop:

Third baseman: Cover third base.

Left Fielder:

Center fielder:

Right Fielder: Back up the first baseman be ready for a bad / overthrow to first base.

