

FALLS CHURCH KIWANIS LITTLE LEAGUE

Coaching Handbook

2025 Edition

This handbook establishes the coaching standards and expectations for FCKLL Team Managers and Coaches of Record



INTRODUCTION

Thank you for choosing to volunteer your time to the development and mentoring of players in Falls Church Kiwanis Little League (FCKLL). FCKLL has a rich history of teaching baseball skills to youth in the greater Falls Church area. Our ultimate goal is to promote baseball by making it fun. One part of the fun is learning skills that allow success and achievement in the sport. The promotion of the sport via skills development ultimately lies in activities and training on the field. FCKLL acknowledges that managers and coaches are at the core of this development process. This manual is provided as a resource for all league managers and coaches to assist in developing coaching skills and efficiencies in relation to on and off the field duties.

HANDBOOK GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this manual is to:

1. Enhance and refine manager and coach “age appropriate” baseball knowledge
2. Establish clear expectations for player development
3. Ensure productive and well-run practices.

This manual is specifically intended to focus on the levels from T-ball through Majors.

LEAGUE ORGANIZATION

FCKLL is a non-profit corporation registered with the Commonwealth of Virginia and chartered by Little League Baseball, Inc. The program is administered by a board of directors and operated by volunteers. The board is elected at the annual meeting of the corporation held each year during the second week in September. Everyone associated with the league is urged to attend this meeting. In addition, the board of directors meets regularly throughout the year. Any parent/guardian of a child participating in the league is encouraged to attend. Refer to the FCKLL website for times and locations. For more information please refer to the FCKLL Parent and Player Handbook.

INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS BY LEVEL

Think of the following goals as the outcomes you are aiming to achieve across the season. We encourage you to revisit these goals at least once during the season, assessing which players need your focused coaching.

TEE BALL

Mental Aspects:

- Understands good behavior in the dugout.
- Maintains alertness in the field during opponents at-bats.
- Knows each position.

Hitting:

- Maintains appropriate stance in relation to home plate.
- Holds bat with two hands.
- Makes consistent contact with ball.
- Maintain balance during swing.

Base Running:

- Understands the four bases; base order.
- Listens to coaches when running bases.
- Understands to avoid running into outs.
- Understands to run in the base path.
- Understands to avoid hit balls.

Fielding:

- Catches ball consistently at short distance.
- Comfortably fields easy ground balls.
- Catches balls above waist with glove up.
- Uses two hands to secure catch.

Throwing:

- Steps with leg opposite their throwing arm.
- Steps toward target.
- Makes accurate throws at shorter distances.
- Understands when throwing poorly (short-arming or shot-putting the ball); attempts to correct.

Level A

Think of the following goals as the outcomes you are aiming to achieve across the season. We encourage you to revisit these goals at least once during the season, assessing which players need your focused coaching. In addition to T-ball goals:

Mental Aspects:

- Demonstrates positive sportsmanship.
- Requires minimal reminders to pay attention in the field.
- Understands appropriate response to winning and losing, strike outs, etc.

Hitting:

- Holds bat at top of palm, relaxed grip, knuckles generally aligned.
- Shows acceptable level of fear of ball at plate.
- Keeps hands up, timing swing appropriately.
- Strides forward toward the pitcher (not “stepping out”).
- Consistently hits ball delivered from coach.

Baserunning:

- Runs hard to bases.
- Understands how to take extra bases; picks up coaches.
- Can safely slide.

Fielding

- Plays catch well at short distance.
- Fields easy ground balls consistently.
- Makes throw to 1st base from 2B or SS (with a crow hop).
- Proper glove positioning and movement.
- Grasps ready position (even if not consistently in that position)
- Moves toward pop-ups; calls for ball.
- Return balls hit to OF to infield quickly.
- Understand force outs vs. tag plays.

Throwing

- No short-arming or shot-putting.
- Strides toward target.
- Non-throwing elbow or glove generally pointed toward target.
- Make accurate throws at shorter distances.

Level AA

Think of the following goals as the outcomes you are aiming to achieve across the season. We encourage you to revisit these goals at least once during the season, assessing which players need your focused coaching.

In addition to A goals:

Mental Aspects

- Maintains concentration throughout inning while in the field.
- Demonstrates sportsmanship toward teammates, other teams and umpires.

Base Running:

- Consistently rounds bases, especially first.
- Consistently look to advance (aggressive).
- Quickly react to base coach commands.
- Understands to step on near-side, near-corner of bases.
- Slides without apprehension.

Hitting:

- Understands, if not consistently demonstrating, proper loading.
- Steps at pitcher.
- Can swing powerfully when asked.
- Consistently take aggressive swing, is looking to hit.
- Understands strike zone range.

Fielding

- Plays catch from at least 60' without issue.
- Comfortable catching balls in front of their face.
- Consistently able to laterally shift to field grounders.
- Demonstrates grasp of fielding fundamentals - glove out, back flat, head down, work under and through the ball.
- Only shows apprehensiveness on sharper hit balls.
- Moves toward line drives to catch.
- Understands, if not able to consistently perform, backhands and forehands.
- Generally knows what to do with the ball when fielding in common situations.
- Makes effort to get under fly balls.

Throwing

- Able to use crow hop for long throws.
- Make accurate throws to 1B from P, 2B and shallow SS.
- Can throw with relative power when asked.
- Able to drive off back foot for longer throws.

- Ball thrown with more backspin than sidespin.
- Beginning to be able to long toss as part of warm up and strengthening.
- Understands 4-seam grip, even if doesn't consistently use it.

Pitching

- Throw at least 30 pitches without soreness in arm.
- Throw 50% hittable pitches.
- Knows where to stand on mound.
- Able to stride toward home plate consistently.
- Can field the pitching spot after delivering pitch.
- Ball delivered with more backspin than sidespin.
- Arm in proper arm slot (not sidearm or $\frac{3}{4}$ motion)(elbow is not leading the pitch).
- Able to hold ball with some air space between palm and ball (not yet holding ball in finger tips).

Catching

- Confidently positions self as close to home plate as possible without interfering with batter.
- Squats with both legs bent (not kneeling on one or both knees).
- Consistently catches well-thrown strikes.
- Protects throwing hand during pitches.
- Consistently remains facing forward on balls in the dirt (doesn't turn back on ball, or to the side).
- Hustles to passed balls without prompting.
- ~75% of balls get thrown back to the pitcher without issue.
- ~50% of throws to second base are receivable by fielders.

Level AAA

Think of the following goals as the outcomes you are aiming to achieve across the season. We encourage you to revisit these goals at least once during the season, assessing which players need your focused coaching.

In addition to AA goals:

Mental Aspects

- Maintain focus throughout game.
- No reminders whatsoever about sportsmanship, umpire calls, appropriate winning/losing behavior, etc.

Hitting

- Aggressively approaches every at bat, seeking hits.
- Emerging discipline at the plate, taking poor pitches regularly.
- Makes consistent contact on pitches strikes.
- Understands, if not consistently able to demonstrate, how to adjust to offspeed pitches (slow stride motion, maintain hands back).
- Able to hit outside strikes (to opposite field) with some regularity.
- Able to make mental and physical adjustments for two-strike situations
- Understands what a bunt is, and how to pivot into bunt position (even if they cannot place a bunt down well).
- Shows separation with hips opening, hands remaining back momentarily, then following.
- Hips able to open, powering their swing.
- Able to load their swing appropriately.

Base Running

- Steals appropriately, receiving signals from coaches.
- Understands situations to take extra base (when ball is in front of runner).
- Able to read situations and avoids “running into trouble.”
- Consistently gets reasonable secondary leads, and a good jump on hit ball.
- Understands tagging up, and what to do in both line drive and pop-fly scenarios.
- Understands to avoid being tagged in a rundown.
- Slides proficiently and safely.

Fielding

- Plays catch from at least 80' without major issue.
- Catches ~50% of fly balls hit forward, left, and right.

- Fields ~75% of ground balls hit directly to them; slightly lower % for balls hit to their side.
- Consistently knows where to throw ball after fielding.
- Consistently in "ready position" during pitch.
- Knows how to cut-off, or throw to cut-off.
- OF and P grasps backing up positioning for a variety of plays, even if this doesn't consistently happen.
- Reads hops well, positioning self for short-hop or long-hop (minimal medium-hops).
- Aggressive to all hit balls.
- Can make backhand catches, and attempt a throw afterward.

Throwing

- Make accurate throws from 80'.
- Able to use crow hop for long throws.
- Makes accurate throws to 1B from deep SS and 3B with regularity.
- Throws with relative power regularly.
- Able to drive off back foot for longer throws.
- Able to long toss as part of warm up and strengthening.
- Throws with backspin, not sidespin.
- Defaults to 4-seam grip for throwing all fielded balls.

Pitching

- Throws at least 50 pitches without soreness in arm.
- Throws 60% hittable pitches.
- Able to throw inside with confidence (doesn't default to only outside pitches for fear of hitting batter).
- Begin to use off-speed pitch (change-up only).
- Understands how to drive rear leg, even if this is inconsistent.
- Knows how to properly pitch from the stretch position without illegal pitch/balk motion.
- Shows good basis for pitching with proper leg kick, rear leg drive, proper arm slot, closed hip/shoulder.
- Recognizes game situations, position in count, strength of batter.
- Handles adversity and recovers during game; survives failure and pitch again.

Level Majors

Think of the following goals as the outcomes you are aiming to achieve across the season. We encourage you to revisit these goals at least once during the season, assessing which players need your focused coaching.

In addition to AAA goals:

Hitting

- Recognize and react to coach's signals.
- Understand situational hitting.
- Take good swing and still take pitches out of the strike zone
- Bunt for hits and to advance base runners.
- Understand mechanics of adjusting to off-speed pitches

Base Running

- Recognize and react to coach's signals.
- Understand maximum distance to advance on fly ball pending decision on return after catch or go to next base.
- Get a good jump off base every pitch.
- Slide aggressively.

Fielding

- Play catch from at least 90'.
- Catch fly balls with relative ease, including balls requiring "going back" on the ball.
- Field hard hit ground balls whether in infield or outfield.
- Know what to do with ball after fielding.
- Understand techniques and duties in rundowns.
- Be in "ready position" during pitch.
- Execute proper footwork to be in position for throws, catches, and tags.
- Shortstop takes responsibility for adjusting positions of other infielders pre-pitch.
- Center fielder takes responsibility for adjusting positions of corner outfielders pre-pitch.
- Understand need to be visible and vocal in communications while play is in progress.

Throwing

- Make accurate throws from 90'.
- Have good balance and direction on all routine throws.
- Make throw to home plate from shallow outfield depth.

Pitching

- Throw a maximum of 85 pitches without soreness in arm.
- Effectively use off-speed pitch.
- Recognize game situations, position in count, strength of batter.
- Knows how to “Field the position”.
- Handle adversity and recover during game.
- Survive failure and pitch again.

Catching

- Move to right and left to block balls.
- Take charge of team and be a leader.
- Direct infielders during relay and cut-off.
- Field balls in front of plate, including bunts, and make accurate throws to all bases.
- Make accurate throws to second and third base on steals.
- Move quickly to fielding position for pop-ups.
- Understand positioning for tag play.
- Recognize situations where backing up first base is necessary.
- Use bull pens to practice runner stance and blocking balls.

RUNNING AN ENGAGING AND PRODUCTIVE PRACTICE

Too often, coaches work with their entire team at one time. This results in players standing around, creating distractions, and at worse, losing interest in the game.

If coaches and parents are in agreement, consider performing stretch, run, and throw beginning 15 minutes prior to the beginning of scheduled field time to maximize the number of activities that can be run on the field.

Common mistakes when running practices include:

- Making a practice plan up on the fly
- Batting practice for everyone, with players primarily shagging balls for an hour+
- Inefficient throwing of batting practice, resulting in poor at-bats
- Attempting to coach yourself, and not delegating to other volunteers
- Failing to communicate how you want stations run with volunteers, or what role you need volunteers to play.

As a coach, your aims in practice should include:

- Maximizing repetitions for players across fielding, base running, hitting, throwing, and situational awareness.
- Keeping players moving and always “in the action” - do this through use of stations, group activities, etc.
- Share your plan ahead of practice with your volunteers so they understand what role you need them to play and don’t slow the practice down.
- Provide videos of recommended drills and techniques with coaches (and potentially players) in advance of practice.
- Careful with Youtube - if you don’t understand “the what or why” of a drill, don’t use it.
- Break up mental asks (i.e., learning defenses), with fun contests and games (i.e., knockout, amazing catches, football throws, etc.)
- Throwing quality BP, even if this means moving closer to the plate to give your players quality reps at the plate. **To extent possible, conduct BP in a cage to allow field use for other drills.**

PLAN FROM THE TOP DOWN – SEASON GOALS TO GAME ACTIONS

OUTLINE SEASON GOALS

- Detail skills needed at each position.
- Set expectations to measure how individuals and team will be expected to perform.
- Establish plans which will improve player skills, enhance team cohesiveness, and address areas needing attention based on game analysis.

BUILD INCREMENTALLY

Individual skills

- Throw
- Receive
- Hit
- Run
- Pitch
- Catch

Unit skills

- Infield
- Outfield
- Battery

Team skills

- 9 player situational baseball

BUILD SKILLS THROUGH ALL ACTIVITIES

- Communicate to players that stretch, run, and throw are not “warm-ups”, but are drills which require use of fundamental baseball skills. Inform players of reasons for doing drills productively and relationship to techniques used in fielding, hitting, running, throwing.
- Dynamic Warm Ups - much science has shown ineffectiveness of traditional static stretching *before* performing an activity (i.e., touch toes). Dynamic stretching is vastly preferred ahead of an event. Static stretching should be used after an event to support muscle strengthening once warm. Dynamic stretches can include:
 - A-Skips / B-Skips
 - Hamstring scoops
 - Lunges (forward or stationary)
 - Side lunge or curtsy squats
 - Arm circles (large to small, forward and reverse)
 - Bear hugs
 - Running progression (50% to 75%)
 - Reverse jog

- Shuffle with arm swings
 - Carioca
 - A-Skip/Power skip height
 - A-Skip/Power skip distance
 - Knee highs
 - Butt kicks
 - Frankenstein walk
 - Knee huggers
- Establish a set of 4-6 dynamics, and eventually have the players run these while you get practice fully set up.

- Run/Sprints
 - Build good running techniques
 - Turnover rapidly
 - Start low, progress to upright (shoulders still forward, legs bent at ankle NOT hip)
 - Land with feet near to under the body (not striding out and landing on heels)
 - Ensure landing point towards ball of foot and not landing on heels
 - Drive hands towards target (eliminate side-to-side hand swing)
 - Keep head still (dampen head bobbing)
 - Relax face
- Throw
 - Arms and bodies should be at performance level after stretches.
 - § Do not overdo the number of throws.
 - § A small number of good throws is more valuable than a larger number of throws made with poor mechanics.
 - Make throws at increasing distances appropriate for age group.
 - § Cement feet/Figure 8s x 10 at first distance
 - § Flex T/Rockers x 10 at incremented distance
 - § Single-Step Throws x 6 at incremented distance
 - § Step Behinds/Two-Step Throws x 6 at incremented distance
 - § Crow hop x 4-6 at final distance. Be sure to have players put significant “air” under the ball.

(Proper long toss can be performed with both pull-downs (hard, level throws) x6 prior to full long-toss for more advanced/strong players working to develop velocity, but for 95% of Little Leaguers, this step should be skipped in the throwing progression.

- Warm-up throwing IS practice. Make it productive. Build game reps into throws, receptions, and exchanges

§ Never “practice the third out” by receiving the ball and doing nothing with it.

§ “Make the next play” by doing exchange and footwork for a following play.

- Infielders simulate dropping a tag, a throw to another base, or making a relay throw
- Outfielders do crow hop
- Catchers practice exchanges, tags, and throwdown techniques

SAMPLE PRACTICE PLAN

Needs: 1 hitting net, tee, fungo, 1 bucket balls

Warm up - dynamic stretching, A-skips, karaoke, lunges, frog jumps, planks

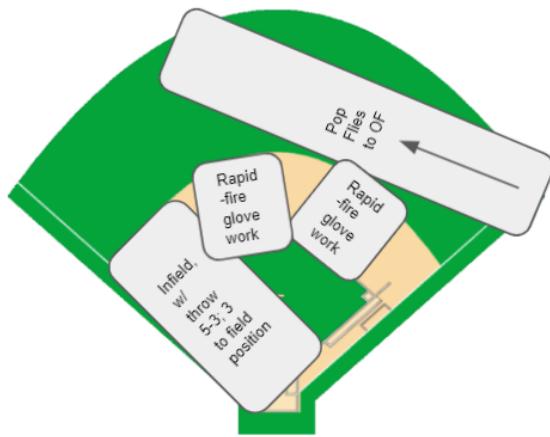
Throwing drills - wrist only, from knee, figure 8s, rockers, progressives, long throw, quick transfers

Set Intention and Goal for Practice: Focused defensive work; reflect on last week's game citing what worked and what needs improvement.

Team Discussion: Fielding fundamentals refresh. Ready position. Out = glove out, back flat, head down. Under = work down-to-up, play ball from underneath, short-hop or long-hop (avoid medium-hop). Through = work through ball, funnel to chest, footwork to throw.

Mixed Stations - 3-4 players/group; 5 min/station - quick refresh on fielding form ahead of breaking out.

1. OF pop flies (Coach Jeff) - Focus on reading ball, getting under it with fwd momentum at catch, getting in front of grounders. Mix of liners, arcing liners, pop ups.
2. Hard grounders. (Coach Mike) 2-3 at 3B, 1 at 1B. Have 1B also field spot. Hit ball relatively hard.
3. Rapid fire glove work. (Coach Bob) At SS spot. Ball off bat. Focus on side-to-side. Mix in back/fore hands. Kids flip ball back to coach.
4. Rapid fire glove work. (Coach Chris) At 2B spot. Ball off bat. Focus on direct hits, working through ball. Kids flip ball back to coach.



Sim Time (situation play review)

Review runner on 1B and 2B, with ball hit to OF. Cut 2, Cut 3. Emphasis on kids making the calls. Coaches as baserunners.

Quick Intrasquad Scrimmage. All batters start with 2-1 count.

P: Jon. C: Evan. Hitters: Jesse (to C immediately after hitting), Nolan, Mikey, Jimmy

P: Nolan. C: Jesse. Hitters: Fred (to C), Evan, Lefty, Elle.

P: Elle. C: Fred. Hitters: Jon (to C), James, Henry, Mikey.

P: Jeff. C: Jon. Hitters: Evan, Jesse, Nolan, Mikey.

Baserunning and/or Signals Review

Secondary leads from 2nd. Review steal sign and bunt sign.

Fun Close: Relay races around the bases.

LEAGUE OPERATIONS

SCHEDULE

Any questions regarding scheduling should be directed to the level coordinator and the scheduler/assistant scheduler. Generally around the first week of April, a schedule will be released that includes all games and practices for the regular season. Please know the schedule is subject to change.

Spring Season

The [league calendar](#), posted at fckll.org will have the latest on season practice start dates, as well as first sets of games, Opening Day details, and other key events. The game schedule continues into early June with the exception of Memorial Day weekend.

For Levels A through Majors, there is an end-of-season playoff. Details on the brackets can be found within the [Special Rules](#) for each level.

Fall Season

Practices begin mid-to-late August as determined by the scheduler and the fall ball coordinator. Generally games will begin on the Saturday after Labor Day and continue through the last Saturday before the end of Daylight Savings Time.

Procedures for Scheduling During the Season

All managers are requested to send their individual schedule preferences/constraints to the scheduler as soon as they are known. The scheduler tries to take all of these into account when determining the practice and game schedules. Not all requests can be honored over the course of a season; you may need your Coach of Record or other League Volunteer to help.

All practices that are moved must be approved by the scheduler. Moving of games, for reasons other than weather or field availability, must be approved by the scheduler, umpire in chief, affected managers, and the level coordinator.

If a manager wants to move or add a practice into an open slot at a field, the manager needs to communicate with the scheduler and confirm the change prior to updating their team. If a manager is unable to use a scheduled practice slot, please make the scheduler aware so that others can use the field.

Regarding requests for fields in general, the scheduler will honor them on a first come/first served basis. Where feasible, preference is given to the upper levels.

TEAM ADMINISTRATION, COMMUNICATION & SCORING

The Team Manager is responsible for making sure that all necessary communication to the parents be performed in a timely manner. For the majority of Team Managers will opt to use the GameChanger Team Manager app, which is integrated with the FCKLL website. This app will dynamically update as schedules are posted and changed. You can use this app for team-based messaging, scorekeeping, and even video-streaming games.

Teams at the A level and higher will also need scorekeepers. Most will opt to use the GameChanger Team Manager app. The home team is considered the official scorekeeper. Scoring disputes or concerns should be raised with the Level Coordinator.

Uploading Scores

For Level A and above, the Home Team Manager is responsible for uploading their team's score to the FCKLL.ORG website after the game concludes. To post your score, log in to the FCKLL site, go to Team Central > Team Director > Calendar > Results and input the score.

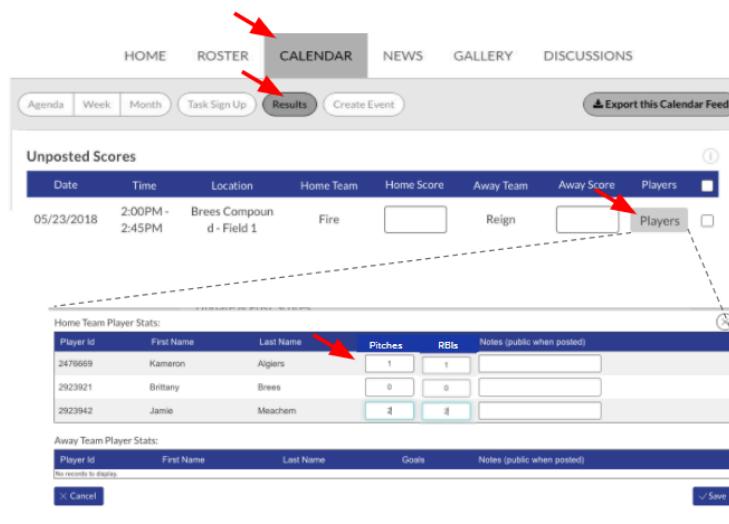
More detail can be found in the [technology overview video](#).

Uploading Pitch Counts

For Level A and above, both the Home and Visiting Team Managers must post their pitcher's pitch counts to the FCKLL.ORG website. This can only happen AFTER the Home Manager has uploaded the score. To do this, log in to the FCKLL site, go to Team Central > Team Director > Calendar > Results and input the pitch count.

More detail can be found in the [technology overview video](#).

Inputting Game Scores & Pitch Counts



Date	Time	Location	Home Team	Home Score	Away Team	Away Score	Players
05/23/2018	2:00PM - 2:45PM	Brees Compound - Field 1	Fire		Reign		<input type="checkbox"/> Players

Player Id	First Name	Last Name	Pitches	RBIs	Notes (public when posted)
2479669	Kameron	Algiers	1	1	
2923921	Brittany	Brees	0	0	
2923942	Jamie	Meachem	4	4	

Player Id	First Name	Last Name	Goals	Notes (public when posted)
No records to display				

HOME team head coach is to enter the score after the game.

Please do this **asap** once your game finishes. If you will be delayed, please contact your Level Coordinator.

Calendar > Results > Input Score

After the score posts, then both coaches **must enter their Pitch Counts**. You also have the option to assign RBIs at this point, if you'd like.

Contact Level Coordinator with any issues.

Field Status and Team Communication for Weather Events

Managers are the primary communication channel for their team during the season. In rare instances, where league-wide closures due to weather occur, there may be a league-wide email. Typically, some fields are playable, others are not, so coaches need to be the communication hub.

There are 3 key areas to check for field status:

- 1) FCKLL Field Status Widget – FCKLL's operations team will keep field status updates current on the FCKLL.ORG website. **This is your best source of current field status.** These are listed both at the bottom of the homepage, as well as the [fields page](#). These updates are time-stamped for piece of mind.
- 2) Your Team Central Site on FCKLL.ORG – Within the Team Central tab, you can locate your team's specific calendar. Impacted events will have a notification of "cancelled" or "postponed" next to them based on the conditions. Please note, typically the field status on the home page will be updated before games are cancelled/postponed in the system.
- 3) GameChanger Team Manager – Your schedule will be synced with the league's scheduling system and cancellations or postponements will show up here.

EQUIPMENT

Protective cups

All male players at all ages playing catcher must wear a protective cup. Managers should verify that players are properly equipped prior to assigning them to catcher. Majors and AAA players should be required by managers to wear protective cups regardless of their position. Players at other positions at the AA and lower levels should wear a protective cup during all practices and games.

Bats

All bats must be "[USA Approved](#)" bats. Bats without such a label are NOT permitted. No USSSA or BPF 1.15 bats are NOT permitted. This is for player safety reasons; please read more at the link above.

The following tables provide a general guideline for bat length:

AGE	BAT LENGTH
4-6	24-25"

6-7	25-26"
7-8	26-27"
8-9	27-28"
9-10	28-30"
10-11	29-30"
11-12	29-31"

Weight in Pounds	Player's Height in Inches								
	36-40	41-44	45-48	49- 52	53-56	57-60	61-64	65-68	69- 72
Less than 60	26"	27"	28"	29"	29"	--	--	--	--
61-70	27"	27"	28"	29"	30"	30"	--	--	--
71-80	27"	28"	28"	29"	30"	30"	31"	--	--
81-90	--	28"	29"	29"	30"	30"	31"	32"	--

Helmets

Helmets must be worn by all players that are at bat or performing any other drill with a bat, players serving as base coach, leaving the dugout to retrieve a bat, or spots a pitcher warming up outside of a bullpen must wear a helmet. Helmets must have a NOCSAE certification clearly imprinted on the helmet.

Catcher's Equipment

Catchers must wear the following equipment: chest protector, mask with helmet and throat protector, shin guards, and protective cup. Catcher's equipment must be properly sized. If equipment does not fit your players properly contact your level coordinator or the quartermaster for replacement.

Hitting Donuts/Weights

The use of donuts is forbidden during practices and games.

GAMES & RULES

UMPIRES

The umpiring staff is comprised of paid youth umpires and volunteer adult umpires. Umpires receive training prior to the start of the season under the direction of the Umpire in Chief. **Any**

concerns, questions, feedback, or other commentary related to umpires should be directed to the Level Coordinator and the Umpire in Chief. Under no circumstances should umpires be openly and publicly questioned, disagreed with, or otherwise engaged in a critical manner by coaches. Mistakes will surely be made; bad calls are very much part of baseball. These volunteers and local youth umpires should not have to endure any issues with coaches, particularly given this is a youth sport.

Umpires are provided for all AA, AAA and Majors games. A-level games should be umpired by managers, coaches and/or appropriately knowledgeable parents.

RULES

FCKLL is an officially sanctioned Little League organization, and abides by Little League playing rules. Team Managers and Coaches are responsible for knowing and understanding these rules. We encourage you to download the Little League Rules App to have a convenient copy of these rules. Please note that for post-season All-Star play, Little League issues slightly modified rules.

FCKLL additionally has locally established "Special Playing Rules" which are uniquely determined by our Board and Level Coordinators. Please know these special rules, which supercede standard Little League rules at FCKLL events.

FIELD USAGE AND CARE

BULLPENS

The bullpens located at Westgate 1 are used to warm-up pitchers as part of the pre-game routine and during the game to have pitchers warmed up for relief. Only a properly equipped player with the appropriate catcher's gear may catch a pitcher. Managers should stand outside of the cages as they work with the pitcher and catcher. In addition, during practices and as part of pre-game warm-ups the bullpens may be used to hit only wiffle balls. Live batting practice or the hitting of real baseballs, or weighted balls, should not occur in the batting cages due to risk of injury (from balls ricocheting off the fencing) or damage to the fencing). Under no circumstances may bats be swung in the bullpens during games.

FIELD CARE

FCKLL takes great pride in our wonderfully maintained fields. Work such as seeding and mowing are performed by an outside contractor paid by FCKLL. However, the bulk of field prep is provided by Field Captains, a small group of dedicated volunteers who prep and chalk the fields throughout the playing season. Coaches should support the field captains by raking the fields before and after practices.

After each game, it is the home team's responsibility to rake the field. Raking should be performed in a direction parallel to the base path. This will minimize the amount of dirt that is distributed onto the grass. Holes (especially on the mound and at home plate) may be filled with loose dirt using the back of the rake. Also use the rake to tamp down any loose dirt in filled holes. Further details on field care can be found [here](#).

Please address any field concerns to your Level Coordinator, who will relay those concerns to our field captains.

SEASON EVENTS

OPENING DAY PARADE

The official start of the FCKLL season is usually kicked off with a morning march through Pimmit Hills and ending at Westgate. Players assemble and organize according to team and march as a team to Westgate. A flier with directions is distributed to managers and team parents prior to the event. Managers should be sure that the flier is distributed to all parents.

MEMORIAL DAY PARADE

Every year FCKLL participates and marches in the Falls Church Memorial Day Parade. All managers, coaches and players are invited to march in the parade as representatives of FCKLL. In addition, the league will usually build a float. Participation in the parade is encouraged but not mandatory. Parents of all players must sign a release form prior to participation.

FUNDRAISING & SPONSORSHIPS

HIT-A-THON

FCKLL's primary fundraiser is the Hit-A-Thon. Typically held in May, this event allows players to fundraise for the league, and culminates in a "home run derby" style contest, with various prizes and winners. There is also an Adult Hit-A-Thon and Home Run Derby contest at the end of the fundraising week. Details are on the FCKLL calendar and website, and you will be notified during the season.

SPONSORS

Sponsors are critical to the funding of our league and maintaining ties to our community. Managers are encouraged to recognize our sponsors by reaching out to the team sponsor during the season, and thanking the sponsor. Team Managers are provided with a plaque to award to their team sponsor – please make sure this is delivered in a timely manner at the end of the season. Coaches are encouraged to invite your sponsor to team events and provide them a schedule of events, providing the sponsor with team updates throughout the season, hosting your team party at a restaurant that sponsors FCKLL, and delivering your team sponsor plaque in-person at the end of the season. Many sponsors proudly display them. It is nice if some of the players can help with delivery. Note that some sponsors are more interested in participating in the league than others and it is most important that we reach out to them to show our appreciation.

BASEBALL BASICS

Note that the following are general guidelines for fundamental baseball techniques. Some coaching philosophies may vary slightly from those indicated below. However, it is most important that players are taught consistently. Furthermore, the following rules will typically result in a better response from players:

- “Less is more” – focus on one item at a time in a drill and only correct the players that are not properly executing that particular skill or mechanic.
- For younger levels work on only the most fundamental skills until those are performed regularly
- Do not correct minor mistakes that are not affecting performance
- Do not be quick to make corrections. Take time to observe the player before making suggestions.
- Find time to focus on strengths as well as weaknesses in order to instill confidence.

SAFETY

Attention to health and safety is a key part of a coach’s job.

- Educate parents and players on requirements for hydration and nutrition prior to, during, and after games.
- Verify that all equipment meets Little League standards and is safe for use.
- Perform periodic inventory of first aid supplies and ensure that a kit is on hand for all team activities.
- Pay particular attention to bat safety.
 - “Bat in hand = helmet on head” is a sound starting point, regardless of whether player is in or out of cage.
 - Enforce safety zones around all bat drills.
- Consider use of “helmet on” requirement for catchers whenever ball is in play (if adopted, mandatory for any potential plays at plate; optional for pop-ups).
- Teach pitch evasion as part of hitting drills.

HITTING STANCE

- Bat should be held at the top of the palm, near the base of the fingers. Many players will “bury” the bat in the deepest part of the palm. Grip should be relaxed, not clinched.
- Align knocking knuckles. Check by grasping bat and point index fingers. Both index fingers should point in the same direction.
- Feet slightly more than shoulder width apart.
- Feet point forward (railroad tracks).
- Knees are slightly bent.

- Hand placement can vary depending upon comfort and coaching philosophy but hands should be in a comfortable position similar to just laying the bat on the shoulder, then slightly elevating the hands to “ear height” from that position. Hands that are low will likely create problems.
- Elbows relaxed and pointing downward. Do not keep back elbow up.
- Bat at 45 degree angle.
- Loose grip on bat during stance. Coach should be able to easily pull bat out of batter’s hands. Grip tightens at swing and contact. This can often be an undetected flaw that results in poor bat speed.
- Chin is tucked into front shoulder. Head remains still.
- Maintain balance.
- Minor bat movement or minor body movement is welcomed up to the pitch delivery. Batter should not be a statue as the pitch is delivered.

LOAD

- The Load phase is the “storing of energy” for the swing, where the batter is readying to swing.
- Weight shift to back leg – 60% on back leg.
- Front foot on balls of feet.
- Front knee may be slightly angled inward.
- Hands may make a slight “J” shape in the air, or in some cases, shift upwards slightly. Hands should **not** move “backwards”.
- Bat may “wrap” a bit behind head but not enough that the pitcher could see the end of the bat barrel.
- Shoulders may turn slightly, but player should not move head or turn back to pitcher.

STRIDE

- The stride should be slow, short and soft. The stride can/should adjust to the pitch speed. Fastballs requiring getting the front foot down quicker, whereas change-ups require a slower drop of the foot.
- Some players may not stride or may place foot down in same place, particularly if they have a wider stance to begin. This is okay, but often these players are forsaking some power.
- Front foot should be pointed at a ~45 degree angle to the pitcher after the stride, permitted the hips to fully rotate/open towards the pitcher. A “closed” foot, failing to open towards the pitcher, will restrict power tremendously.
- Stride should precede the swing and begins approximately when the pitcher is at his release point.
-
- Hips do not open until stride is complete.

SWING

- Movement of the hips and turning the pelvis toward the pitcher precedes the swing.
- A great stride requires “separation” of the hips and hands. Hips rotate open powerfully, and hands slightly lag the hips. This separation generates maximum power in the swing.
- Think of the hips pulling the upper body, which then begins the swing.

- Belly button pointing over pitcher's head.
- Hands should precede the bat. Lead with the knob of the bat, with the barrel whipping through the swing zone.
- Head remains still.
- Contact is made in front of the centerline of the body.
- Weight should remain balanced. Shifting weight to the front foot will result in a loss of balance and power.
- During the swing, a power hitter's back foot may momentarily leave the ground. This is ok, even encouraged for power hitters. Do not "coach this out of" players who naturally possess this trait.
- Front leg should be straight/stiff (like the letter I). Back leg should be bent (like the letter L).
- Batter is "stacked" with head over hips over back foot. It should be possible to draw a straight line through these three points.

EXTENSION

- After contact, bat continues through the hitting zone with top hand in a "palm up" position if the hand were to be opened.
- Bat barrel points in direction of hit before the hands roll over to the finish position.

FINISH

- After extension swing should continue to "wrap around" the shoulders.
- Back foot should rotate to face the pitcher. "Laces Facing Pitcher".

BUNTING

This section will focus solely on sacrifice bunts. Suicide bunts and bunting for hits require differences in when to commit to the bunt; pitch in/out of strike zone; footwork; and placement of bunted ball.

- Do not "square to the ball" by bringing back foot up even with front foot. This exposes your face and chest to the pitch and makes it very difficult to evade a hit-by-pitch situation.
- Bunt only balls in the strike zone,
- Front foot is at front of plate.
- Close in on plate to ensure that you can cover the entire plate with your bat without jabbing out at the pitch.
 - Anything beyond the tip of the barrel when you are in a bunting position is out of the strike zone.
- Go to bunt position when pitcher starts his/her motion:
 - Pivot front and back foot to have toes pointed to pitcher.
 - Bend back leg and drop back knee to facilitate use of back leg as an elevator to take the torso and bat down on pitches.

- Move top hand to barrel of bat.
- Get bottom hand off the knob.

§ Hand at knob contributes to bat wobble.

§ Consider use of “break bat into thirds” approach with bottom hand moved to top of handle tape.

- Place bat at top of strike zone with slight upward slant to barrel.
- Place eyes at bat level.

§ Anything above the bat/eyes is out of the strike zone.

§ The eyes and bat stay lined up as the back leg is used to lower the body and bat to make contact with pitches lower in the strike zone; the upward slant of the barrel remains.

- Put the barrel of the bat in front of and parallel to the front of home plate when you are in set position:

§ Do not pull the barrel back when adjusting to the pitch (angling the bat diagonally over the plate and directing any bunted balls into foul territory).

§ Change bat’s hitting angle by using the bottom hand.

- A simple choice is to bunt outside pitches to the first base side; middle-in pitches to the third base side.
- A “sacrifice” bunt is, by definition, an anticipated out. Keep cement feet through contact and do not attempt to run before the ball is on the grass.

- Do not aim at the foul lines. A foul ball does not advance the runners. Sacrifice bunts should be placed in an area safely inside the foul lines, but not directly back to pitcher.

SLIDING

Bent leg slide

- Make a figure 4 by tucking one leg under the other while sliding into the base.
- Maintain your speed while beginning the slide.
- Do not jump at the bag; start slide far enough out to let momentum carry you to bag.
- Point your leading foot’s toes towards the bag so that you do not jam your ankle into the base.

- Put your arms up into an “I surrender” configuration to keep you from slamming your hand into the ground, possibly incurring a jammed finger or an injured wrist.

FIELDING READY POSITION

- Feet more than shoulder width apart.
- Knees bent.
- Infield, both hands out in front with palms up, belt level or lower.
- Outfield, hands lightly on thighs in relaxed position with body weight neutral; ready to move in any direction upon hit.
- On balls of feet. Bouncing, or taking small steps towards the batter are encouraged.

GROUND BALL

- Approach to ball is a two step motion – Throwing side foot and then fielding side foot. (e.g. for a right handed thrower, the cadence is “right, left, field”)
- Upon fielding:
 - Head down - coach should see the top of the player’s hat
 - Glove out with hands extended outward, but balance still maintained
 - Knees bent, butt down.
 - Flat back.
- Field ball out in front of body.
- Glove side foot slightly in front of other foot.
- Glove should start on ground. “Work down to up” do not have players “work up to down” (this often presents as the player “flicking” their glove down at the last moment to field the ball).
- For basic grounder, throwing hand should remain in front of the player, but not resting on the glove. Use throwing hand to secure ball in glove. Don’t encourage players to “set their throwing hand on top of their glove” – this is recipe for broken fingers.
- Videos
 - [Fielding basics drill](#)
 - [Ready position](#)
- If the ball is popped up behind you, the first move is a drop step in which you swivel your hip and take an aggressive stride in the direction you will be running.
 - Run with glove down; extend glove only to make catch.
 - It is faster to “run through” the catch than it is to lunge for the ball.
 - Do not try to get to the spot at the same time as the ball – beat the ball to the spot and make an easy play.

- Outfielders have priority on any pop-up that could be caught by either an infielder or an outfielder.
- Infielders call, “BALL, BALL, BALL” to give a verbal differentiation between an outfielder’s call (MINE) and an infielder’s call (BALL).
- Infield priority on a pop-up is:

§ Shortstop has first priority.

§ Second base is next.

§ First baseman and third baseman take any balls not being called for by second baseman or shortstop. For balls in foul territory, teach 1B/3B (or any player) to first “find the fence” and then play the ball.

§ Catcher gives way to the fielders who play on the dirt

§ The pitcher is the final option.

FLY BALL

- First move puts you closer to the baseball – in, out, right, or left. If the first move is to simply stand up out of your ready position, you have lost distance to the ball.
- If the ball is behind you, the first move is a drop step in which you swivel your hip and take an aggressive stride in the direction you will be running.
 - Run with glove down; extend glove only to make catch.
 - It is faster to “run through” the catch than it is to lunge for the ball.
 - Note that the baseball will curve towards the foul line. Receive the ball with hands in a “goal post” alignment with the baseball targeted to hit the logo on your hat after it passes through the goal posts. If possible, keep your motion going through the catch (“behind the baseball”) to set up a strong throw to the infield.
- Keep the ball in front of you on a ground ball or liner. Going to a knee to ensure the ball does not get past you is acceptable.
- On balls hit into the gaps between the center fielder and the corner outfielders, the center fielder has priority in making the catch. To ensure no collisions, loudly yell, “MINE, MINE, MINE” once you know you are making the catch.
- If you are not catching the ball, go to a back-up position (for fly balls hit to other outfielders; grounders hit to infielders in front of you; or to where a throw might go on a continuance of the play).

- On pop-ups hit between an outfielder and an infielder, the outfielder always has priority in making the catch.

THROWING

- Rotate ball in throwing hand to 4-seam grip. Teach kids the 4-seam early and often.
- Step forward with throwing side foot. This foot should be pointed at 90 degree angle from target.
- Form flex-T position.
 - “Strong front side” with elbow at shoulder level and pointed to target.
 - Back elbow at position where line could be drawn from rear elbow through front elbow to target.
- Step towards target with glove side foot and throw.
 - Glove stays high and on line with intended path of throw.
 - Body comes towards glove.
 - Glove does not wrap around player’s butt after release.
 - Ensure extension of throwing hand towards target..
 - Throwing hand finishes long and low with no wrap around upper body.
 -
- Follow through by releasing back leg and allowing torso to bend into the throw.d allowing the throwing side leg to follow..

RECEIVING

- Present an open glove target to the fielder.
- Other than first basemen/catchers, receive ball “thumb to glove” to facilitate exchange
 - Time spent exchanging gives distance to the runners.
 - Throwing hand at distance from glove (or behind the glove for outfielders) adds time to the exchange.
- Ensure fielder does not push ball away from body upon reception and/or drop hands before bringing glove up for exchange.
- Unless anchored to the bag for a play, move your body to the baseball to make a reception and to be in a position to make a following throw.

PITCHING

Five Links in the Pitching Chain - Called links because, like a chain, if one link breaks, the whole chain loses its strength: All five steps must be done correctly to throw consistent strikes. - The Five Links are explained more in the Ripken Baseball video, “The Fundamentals of Pitching.” This

video is geared more toward older kids, but has a lot of useful stuff for Little League level coaches/players.

Some basics:

For AA players and any new pitcher, try to keep things simple.

- Throw from the stretch only; no wind up
- Four-seam fastballs only (Introduce two-seam fastballs and change-ups to AAA pitchers that have command of the four-seam fastball.)

Emphasize safety – as in so many other activities, the right way to do it is also the safest way to do it. For AA pitchers, this means that they must finish their pitching motion facing the plate with their glove in front of their body, preferably near, but not blocking, the face.

If you are unsure how to best teach pitching in a safe manner, please ask our head of player development for pointers.

Please carefully follow all [Little League pitch count guidelines](#), based on your player's League Age.