



Broadneck Baseball & Softball Club

# Age Group Learning Objectives

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# Six Goals for T-Ball

## Mental Side of the Game

- ❑ Connection to Teammates – Emphasize the opportunities to share an “adda boy” or “adda girl” with a teammate when they succeed.
- ❑ Teach them to be “ok with being bad at a new skill” (excited that they are starting a journey toward something fun...a new skill) and to celebrate incremental successes as they work on the new skill.
- ❑ The power of the deep cleansing breath – in through their nose, making their belly extend out (hand on their belly to emphasize this), then out through their mouth. Emphasize and celebrate anyone who takes a deep breath before a swing or throw.

## Learning the Basic Rules

- ❑ The right direction to run when the ball is hit
- ❑ Running past first base;
- ❑ Runners must touch the bases
- ❑ How to record outs (catch the ball in the air, throw to first, or tag the runners)

## Throwing Mechanics

- ❑ Among the challenges in teaching young players to throw are the throws they see and mimic. The throws they see are impacted by two factors. The first is their lack of confidence in catching a thrown ball. Players often take something off of their throws out of concern for a teammate on the receiving end or as a method of trying to help the chance of their throw being caught. The second is the adults they mimic often slow their own mechanics to push the ball softly to the young player. The result is that the T-ball player rarely sees or feels a throw incorporating a full body turn, full arm action, and full extension and finish.
  - ❑ All of the above points to the benefits of throwing to non-human targets (target on a fence, or for distance to a cone).
- ❑ Grip: In other sports (soccer, basketball, football) the size of the ball changes as players grow. In baseball the circumference of the ball at T-ball is the same as what is used in the major leagues. This creates a challenge for the grip used by young players. It may be necessary for the player to use 3 or even 4 fingers on the opposite side of the ball from the thumb (instead of the traditional two fingered grip). Show them these options and help them find a grip that works.

- ❑ Turn the body so that the glove side front shoulder points toward the target.
- ❑ Glove hand and throwing hand are together at the center of the chest.
- ❑ The movement to get into the power position is similar to the outward motion of a jumping jack. The step toward the target happens at the same time as the arms separate. The throwing arm should be at its max height when the glove side leg lands (marking the time that the body should be rotating to execute the throw). ([LINK](#))
  - ❑ Another way to cue the movement of the throwing arm is “thumb to thigh, fingers to the sky” (since the throwing hand should track from the center of the chest in a circular motion past the thigh ending with the fingers pointing to the sky – with the elbow slightly above the shoulder. The direction the throwing hand palm faces is not particularly important (we want the throwing hand to be at max height when the lead leg lands)
- ❑ Push off the back foot, rotate the hips and release the ball.
  - ❑ Keep the throwing arm elbow above the shoulder;
  - ❑ Head and eyes remain steady (stacked on top of body) looking at the target throughout
  - ❑ Arm finishes on glove side of body
- ❑ The sequencing of throwing is VERY similar to the sequencing used for hitting. Coaches can connect these movements to help emphasize the common aspects:
  - ❑ Stepping forward and moving the hand (throwing) or hands (hitting) back to create a separation that they can feel across their stomach. Similar to drawing back a arrow on a bow to create some stored energy. This action is the “load” and while it doesn’t need emphasized at this age level, you can complement it when you see it.
  - ❑ Initiating the swing and throw with a push of the rear leg and a rotation of the hips.
  - ❑ Generally relaxed and loose during the initial stance, the load, and the initial movement forward. The only feeling of tension is the squeeze at contact (swing) and the feeling of snapping the fingers at release (throwing). Otherwise most of the motion for the swing and throw should be loose and relaxed to maximize the benefits of natural athleticism.

## Catching and Fielding

- ❑ Catching for younger players can be worked on with whiffle, tennis, or soft baseballs in a practice station separate from throwing.
- ❑ Follow the ball with the eyes into the glove, move your feet and / or bend your knees to put your head behind the glove hand as you catch the ball
- ❑ Use two hands to catch and field;
- ❑ Catching a thrown ball:

- ❑ Give a target with two hands up out in front of body
- ❑ As the ball is moving toward you, hands work together (“thumb to thumb” putting the throwing hand near the glove so it can quickly move in after the catch.
- ❑ Make an extension move to catch the ball (work away from the natural tendency to absorb into the body)
- ❑ “Fingers up” on balls above the waist (includes low throws that with a bend of the knees the receiver moves the ball above the waist) – (work away from the natural tendency to catch balls at chest level with the palm up).
- ❑ Catching a ground ball: “Apes & Alligators”
  - ❑ Apes: Wide base, knees bent, bend over at the hips to keep butt high (push hips to the rear) with a flat back (hinging at the hips to avoid a rounded back), hands out (about the length of your ball cap between your toes and your glove...should allow for a slight bend in the elbow of the glove hand)
  - ❑ Alligators: Throwing hand is down with the glove hand (alligator with a “cross bite” chomping on the ball once in the glove)
    - ❑ Can be worked on with a soccer ball and a soft baseball without a glove

## Hitting

- ❑ **Batting Safety** (when not to swing bats, wearing batting helmets) – This starts with showing up to the field and ends in the parking lot after practice. Carry a bat holding the barrel unless it is your turn to swing as part of a drill. Hula hoop near home plate as the “bat drop zone” to emphasize dropping the bat before they run as well as not throwing the bat as a continuation of the swing.
- ❑ How to hold the bat
  - ❑ Grip in your fingers, [Door Knocking Knuckles lined up](#)
  - ❑ Hands near rear arm pit, barrel above the batter’s helmet (knob pointing where the catcher would be at older age levels)
  - ❑ Arms relaxed (deep breath in and out, let the arms fall on the breath out)
- ❑ How to stand
  - ❑ [10 toes forward](#) (pointing at plate, and at the same distance to the plate)
  - ❑ Shoulder width, comfortable, athletic stance (jump up and land with feet apart) – the result with a slight bend of the knees and a slight tilt at the pelvis and generally upright posture is the goal)
- ❑ How to swing the bat
  - ❑ Step, Twist, Hit (beginning to work on sequencing and hip shoulder separation)
  - ❑ Rotate around the spine
    - ❑ [PVC drill, where the athlete spins to take the PVC to the tee](#)
    - ❑ [Ball constraint drill \(aids with rotation, “short to it,” and on plane\)](#)

- ❑ Short to It – Long Through It
  - ❑ A slightly undersized bat or “choking up” (moving hands up the grip an inch or two) will help young players groove a “short to it” swing. A bat that is too long or too heavy for the player can cause a “casting” motion where they throw their hands away from their body as they initiate the swing (making the path to the ball long)
  - ❑ [Slow motion fence swings](#) (external cue to groove the movement to keep the knob of the bat moving toward the pitcher inside of the ball). Avoid the hitter shrugging the shoulders to avoid contact with the fence, instead emphasize the path of the knob of the bat.
  - ❑ Second Tee 12 inches toward the catcher and 12 inches toward the opposite batter’s box from the Tee with the ball on it. Extend the 2<sup>nd</sup> tee up as an external cue (avoid hitting the 2<sup>nd</sup> tee) to groove a “short to it” swing that eliminates “casting of the hands” and a long loopy swing.
  - ❑ Hitting of soccer balls off of the tee for distance. A “wristy” swing won’t be able to drive the ball as far as a swing that pushes the hands to and through the ball.
    - ❑ Emphasize the concept that the steering wheel of the swing is the hands and arms and the engine of the swing (where the power comes from is the legs, hips, and trunk). If they want to hit the ball further, go back to the PVC drill for a few reps to emphasize the lower half twist – ending with hips pointing at the pitcher, then back to hitting the soccer ball.

## Learning positional play

- ❑ If the ball is hit to your buddy, let him or her field it (note to coach: try not to put more than 10 players on a field at a time).
- ❑ Terminology (to help you distribute the team to different areas of the field):
  - ❑ Infield vs Outfield
    - ❑ Next Level: Names of the defensive positions
  - ❑ Names of the Bases

# Six Goals for Rookies

## Mental Side of the Game

- ❑ Playing the game 1 pitch at a time
  - ❑ “Be where your feet are”
    - ❑ When you are in the dugout, look for opportunities to cheer on a teammate
    - ❑ When you are in the field, focus on fielding opportunities
    - ❑ When you are at the plate focus on that at bat (not what happened last time up, or worrying about what might happen 30 seconds in the future. Focus on the next pitch)
  - ❑ “Take out the trash and recycle the past” (get rid of any frustrations, or disappointments from a missed swing, or a bad play...learn from what just happened (recycle)) so you are ready to be focused and confident for the next opportunity
    - ❑ When that transition to the present is a little harder than normal use these tools (utilizing the concept that your brain can only focus on one thing at a given moment...so force in productive thoughts and actions to eliminate room for focus on the past or worry about the future)
      - ❑ Deep breath: Focus on what the breath sounds like or feels like
      - ❑ Move around: Walk, bounce, hop on one leg, arm circles
      - ❑ Connect with others: Communicating about the current situation, game chatter in general, or encouraging someone else
- ❑ This is the first year players will make an out and return to the dugout. Practice that skill in practice. Emphasize returning to the dugout with your head up; emphasize teammates encouraging the teammate who made the out “nice contact, way to hustle to 1B, good job moving the runner over”; emphasize that getting out is part of the game and transitioning to cheer on the next teammate at bat is a great opportunity to demonstrate strength.
  - ❑ As you progress you can take this to the higher level of giving a teammate a little space for a few seconds and then moving in to help them focus on cheering for the next batter (a swarm of teammates coming to a player as they run off the field after an out can be counterproductive).

## Learning the BasicRules

- ❑ Scoring a run; three outs constitute an inning



- ❑ Force outs
- ❑ Tagging up; base running (when you don't have to run; not running into or past teammates on the base paths);
  - ❑ Following a coach's signals
    - ❑ To stop on the base (one hand points to the base one hand up)
    - ❑ Make a turn (rotating the arm in a circle)
    - ❑ Stop and return to the base (both hands up)
    - ❑ Slide (both hands down)
      - ❑ Proper Sliding – dirt or grass stain should be on the “bottom of your bottom and upper thigh” ; lead foot off the ground (not digging into the ground); other foot tucked under the lead foot knee (not rolled up under your bottom; hands up (avoids them being caught under the body)
  - ❑ When the ball stays in the infield, and you have any doubt - slide feet first into the next base.

## Throwing Mechanics

- ❑ Introduce the four-seam grip
- ❑ Using the feet to create direction with the glove side shoulder, step, and throw
  - ❑ Left, Right, Field, Right Left Throw
- ❑ Introduce the concept of generating momentum toward the target and following the throw.
  - ❑ Left, Right, Field, Right Left, Shuffle (1 or 2) Throw

## Catching and Fielding

- ❑ Running with proper arm swing (even with the glove arm) – arms locked at 90 degrees swinging from the shoulder where the hands move from the hip to out in front of the face. The arm swing is designed to help the legs drive up. Use this during a warm up (rapid fire high knees) and also work on the arm swing isolated sitting on the ground with feet out in front. Praise good arm swing hustling on and off the field for defense, running the bases, and attacking the ball, covering bases, and moving to back up on defense
- ❑ Moving in to “Play the ball” to avoid having the “ball play you”
  - ❑ The goal is to move your feet to field a 1 inch short hop (or the occasional “Sunday (big) hop”
- ❑ Working “across the line” (rolled balls) to generate momentum toward the direction of your throw
- ❑ Kneeled series for standard, forehands and backhands;
- ❑ Introduce the underhand flip; first-base fundamentals; crossover and drop steps.

## Hitting

- ❑ Choosing the right bat
  - ❑ A bat that is not too heavy or too long for the player to swing with a “short too it / long through it” path. The test for this is the Tee Drill described in the tee ball section
    - ❑ Second Tee 12 inches toward the catcher and 12 inches toward the opposite batter’s box from the Tee with the ball on it. Extend the 2<sup>nd</sup> tee up as an external cue (avoid hitting the 2<sup>nd</sup> tee) to groove a “short to it” swing that eliminates “casting of the hands” and a long loopy swing.
    - ❑ If the player’s swing makes contact with the “second tee” the swing is long.
    - ❑ If the player’s swing can’t consistently make contact with the ball on the tee, then they can’t control the bat (you may need to increase the size of the ball on the main tee to accurately judge bat control (as developing hand eye coordination may be the reason for inconsistent contact as opposed to a bat that is too long or too heavy)).
- ❑ Pitching Machine
  - ❑ **Safety:**
    - ❑ Players don’t get near the machine
    - ❑ Coaches operating the machine have a dual role of safely deflecting players away from the machine (e.g. the kid playing the position of pitcher on defense who may move toward the machine to field a ground ball)
    - ❑ Players should run to and from the dugout on a path that keeps them from crossing the line between the machine and home plate
  - ❑ Developing comfort with the machine (can be done in phases watching balls get pitched from the on deck circle or from behind the back stop, then standing in the box without a bat, then catching balls from the machine in their glove (standing in the batter’s box)
  - ❑ Hitting pitched balls (the impact of the ball coming from the machine can create some physical discomfort in the hands & wrists);
  - ❑ Introduce drill work to emphasize timing (soft toss, short toss).
    - ❑ Cone drill (cone directly under the player with their feet are spread apart on either side of the cone in their stance). The load has them take a slight movement with their front knee to the cone. The swing has them drive their back knee to the cone as they rotate their hips.
    - ❑ On the back swing of the underhand soft toss or front toss the player should load (stride and take their hands back slightly)
      - ❑ When the pitcher moves you begin to move.
      - ❑ This allows the load to be slow and under control

- ☐ Tie this back to reps off the machine...when the ball is being lowered into the machine the batter should begin his load.

## Learning Positional Play

- ☐ Learn the positions and the areas each player should cover;
- ☐ CRABB
  - ☐ Communicate:
    - ☐ Basic fun chatter (to help stay alert)
    - ☐ “Runners on \_\_\_\_\_” / Force Out at \_\_\_\_\_”
  - ☐ Ready: Baseball ready every pitch (athletic stance)
  - ☐ Attack: Move fast when the ball is put in play
  - ☐ Bases: cover the nearest base when the ball is not hit to you;
  - ☐ Back Ups: If you aren’t fielding the ball or covering a base, move to back up a throw to the base nearest to you.
- ☐ Throwing the ball in quickly from the outfield. Backing up those throws (introduction of the “maroon line” that connects the ball to the base to the back up man)

## Six Goals for Juniors

### Mental Side of the Game

- ❑ Reinforce playing the game 1 pitch at a time from the Rookies section
  - ❑ The concept of competing ties in here. Acknowledging that a score is being kept & that there will be a team with more runs at the end of the game.
    - ❑ There's an amount of exhilaration that comes with competing. The best way to manage exhilaration and not let it spill over into negative categories (frustration, disappointment, etc.) is to leave the tallying of the final score as a single event at the end of the game.
      - ❑ Break the game down into individual pitches, individual opportunities to "Win" or "Learn."
      - ❑ The best way to "WIN" is to focus on "**What's Important Now**"
      - ❑ If an individual pitch doesn't work out, learn from it to prepare for the next opportunity. If the final score leaves you without a win, focus on Learning. The only true Loss is when you don't learn.
  - ❑ As we introduce competition and talk about the score and winning, it's important to emphasize "taking care of the game" concepts.
    - ❑ Sportsmanship with the other team and umpires should be emphasized.
      - ❑ "The game doesn't work without a team in the other dugout."
      - ❑ "The umpire is trying his best, but just like us he isn't perfect and will make mistakes."
- ❑ Introduce "Positive Mental Attitude"
  - ❑ Confidence affects performance. Use "I Will Statements." ("I WILL hit the ball" versus "I WANT to hit the ball")
  - ❑ Negative thoughts (or "nerves") affect performance. Learn to recognize those thoughts. Stop, take a deep breath, give yourself an "I Will Statement," then continue.
    - ❑ Related: If you attempt to use "Don't make a bad throw" or "Don't swing and miss" your brain discards the "Don't" and leaves you with "Make a bad throw" or "swing and miss." Another reason why positive statements are the best approach.

## Learning the Basic Rules

- ❑ Reinforce tagging up; base running (when you don't have to run; not running into or past teammates on the base paths);
  - ❑ Following a coach's signals
    - ❑ To stop on the base (one hand points to the base one hand up)
    - ❑ Make a turn (rotating the arm in a circle)
    - ❑ Stop and return to the base (both hands up)
    - ❑ Slide (both hands down)
      - ❑ Work on pop up slide (pushing off the leg in contact with the ground at the end of the slide to be ready to move again)

## Throwing Mechanics

- ❑ "Use the four-seam grip to develop spin
- ❑ Release point: Over the top of your shoulder, out in front of your body, throwing downhill – Not pushing the ball to the target. ([link](#)) ([link](#))
- ❑ Pitching Mechanics
  - ❑ Start with the stretch:
    - ❑ Ball in throwing hand in a "sign taking stance"
    - ❑ Come set with feet slightly apart (6 inches or so), hands together at center of chest
    - ❑ Relaxed
  - ❑ Jumping Jack rhythm. 2 jumping jacks (out, in, out, in, out...then bring glove side leg up and hands to center of chest...then step, twist, and throw.
    - ❑ Stride length approximately equal to player's height. Walk it off and mark it during practice.
  - ❑ Glove side arm is their scope, or sight, or aiming tool. Take nose to catcher and chest to glove as they finish.
  - ❑ The back leg and hips are the engine. Use the back foot in the ground and hip rotation to trigger the throw, have the back leg come forward after the push and rotation of the hips. The back side should push enough so that the front leg straightens as the pitch is released.

## Catching and Fielding

- ❑ Moving in to "Play the ball" to avoid having the "ball play you"
  - ❑ The goal is to move your feet to field a 1 inch short hop (or the occasional "Sunday (big) hop"

- ❑ Working “across the line” (rolled balls) to generate momentum toward the direction of your throw
- ❑ Introduce the concept of “eat it” for plays where the fielder should hold onto the ball and not make a throw (e.g. after a bobble a play where the runner is very close to reaching the base before the throw is made)

## Hitting

- ❑ [Six absolutes of hitting](#)
- ❑ Staying compact/tight. ([Link](#))
  - ❑ “Short to it, long through it.” ([link](#))
- ❑ Hand/Bat path. Start your swing by taking the knob of the bat to the ball.
  - ❑ ([link](#)) ([link](#))
- ❑ The barrel should travel along the path of the ball as you “shove” the barrel through the ball. Here’s [a drill idea for staying on plane](#).
- ❑ Reduce head movement. If your head/eyes move during a swing, it’s like creating additional movement on a pitch. ([link](#)) ([link](#))

## Learning Positional Play

- ❑ Reinforce CRABB
  - ❑ Communicate:
    - ❑ “Where are the runners?” “Where are the plays?” transitioning to “Where should I be?”
    - ❑ When is there a force out?
      - ❑ “Who am I working with?” SS/2B communicating about a potential force at 2<sup>nd</sup> “I’m working with you on a force.” SS/3B communicating about a potential force at 3<sup>rd</sup>.
    - ❑ When must you tag a runner?
    - ❑ If a ball is hit (location), I need to be (location)
  - ❑ Ready: Baseball ready every pitch (step-step/ready)
  - ❑ Attack: Whether moving in to put yourself in position to field an easy hop, or moving to the side to cut off a ball in a gap, or running to get under a pop-up - the player’s first steps should be explosive. As they work toward the final position, then can chop their feet and get into the ideal fielding or receiving position.
  - ❑ Bases: Cover the nearest base when the ball is not hit to you;
    - ❑ Pitcher covering first.
  - ❑ Back Ups: If you aren’t fielding the ball or covering a base, move to back up a throw to the base nearest to you.
- ❑ Introduce basics of cutoffs and relays.

- ❑ Using the correct terminology
  - ❑ Relay (throw): When the OF does not have the arm strength to reach the target base, a relay is required
  - ❑ Cutoff (hold): Used when the OF makes a throw to the target base and (1) the throw is off-line, (2) the throw will be too late for a play, or (3) will prevent other runners from advancing.
  - ❑ A ball that is hit past the outfielder will most likely require a relay. A ball hit in front of an outfielder MAY require a cutoff. The optimal target for the outfielder's throw is on a line to the target base, only being "cut off" if it meets the above criteria.
- ❑ The option of the outfielder making a low line drive throw that is online and may make a hop or two as it heads to the base is generally better than a high looping through that is offline. This will evolve into throws that are dialed in to give the infielder a consistent 15-20 foot single hop and not take the time to have the relay man involved.
- ❑ Getting the middle-infielder to the midpoint of the maroon line
  - ❑ The maroon line: The line that connects the outfielder with the ball through the relay man to the base he is throwing to.
- ❑ The relay man runs to the maroon line with his head on a swivel so he gets fairly close on his own. Hands up yelling "relay, relay"

# Six Goals for Minors

## Mental Side of the Game

- ❑ Positive Self Talk: Give players some ideas of things they can say to themselves to stay focused & boost confidence (Little engine that could “isms”)
- ❑ Routines
  - ❑ At the plate: Deep breath, focus eyes on the sweet spot on the barrel, loose waggle of the bat to relax the body...
  - ❑ On the mound: Foot on the rubber, pick up & focus on the catcher’s mitt, deep breath as you move to the set position...
  - ❑ If there’s any thinking or “processing the past” to be done – do it outside of the batter’s box and behind the mound. In the batter’s box and on the mound are “no thinking zones.” Any “thinking” in the batter’s box should be limited to something along the lines of the Roberto Clemente simplicity “see the ball, hit the ball.” Any thinking when in contact with the rubber on the pitcher’s mound should be limited to a simple repeatable boost of positivity (e.g. “relax and fire”). The ideal state is no thought and “in the zone.”

## Learning the Basic Rules

- ❑ Runner on 2<sup>nd</sup> (no runner on 1<sup>st</sup>) Advancing to 3<sup>rd</sup> from 2<sup>nd</sup> on a ground ball that “goes behind you” (ground ball to the right side of the infield).
- ❑ Batter looking for the opportunity to take 2<sup>nd</sup> base on a single when there’s a play being made at 3<sup>rd</sup> or home.
- ❑ Balls and Strikes.
  - ❑ It’s more important to have hitters develop a sense of timing (loading on time and initiating the swing so the barrel is in the hitting zone when the ball is there) than it is to have them develop a sense of balls and strikes. Be sure that hitters have a firm grasp of timing (even if they are swinging at some bad pitches). Overcorrecting with “be sure it’s a good pitch” can inject some tentativeness into the swing.

## Throwing Mechanics

- ❑ Use the four-seam grip to develop spin



- ❑ You might be able to move some players from their 3 and 4 finger grip to a 2 finger grip (depending on hand size)
- ❑ Introduce the short arm action of a run down throw (elbow wrist exchange without a large arm circle – eliminating the thumb to thigh portion of the throw).
  - ❑ Basic Run Down Mechanics: Receiver calling for the ball, flashing hands, and closing as ball is traveling to them. Avoid fakes.
- ❑ Pitching Mechanics (Reinforce)
  - ❑ Start with the stretch:
    - ❑ Ball in throwing hand in a “sign taking stance”
    - ❑ Come set with feet slightly apart (6 inches or so), hands together at center of chest
    - ❑ Relaxed
- ❑ Jumping Jack rhythm. 2 jumping jacks (out, in, out, in, out...then bring glove side leg up and hands to center of chest...then step, twist, and throw.
  - ❑ Stride length approximately equal to player’s height. Walk it off and mark it during practice.
  - ❑ Glove side arm is their scope, or sight, or aiming tool. Take nose to catcher and chest to glove as they finish. Keep most of the players energy working along the line between the rubber and home plate.
  - ❑ The back leg and hips are the engine. Use the back foot in the ground and hip rotation to trigger the throw, have the back leg come forward after the push and rotation of the hips. The back side should push enough so that the front leg straightens as the pitch is released.

## Catching and Fielding

- ❑ [Glove Care:](#)
  - ❑ Setting your glove down facing down with the pocket open
  - ❑ Taking care of your glove
- ❑ Standing stationary rolled series with glove side foot landing as ball makes contact with mitt
- ❑ Circle the cone drill to emphasize the choppy steps and eyes down as you approach the hop you will field and the movement across the ball with glove foot landing as you field the ball to generate rhythm and momentum
- ❑ Introduce fielding on the run as an option to attack a short hop or a slow roller.
  - ❑ Ability to run some distance with eyes down (flat back)
  - ❑ Push your glove through the path of the ball. Field to the side of your feet (looks a little like an OF on a do or die play).

- ❑ Introduce the concept of “eat it” for plays where the fielder should hold onto the ball and not make a throw (e.g. after a bobble a play where the runner is very close to reaching the base before the throw is made)

## Hitting

- ❑ Review and Reinforce: Grip, Stance, and Getting the stride/separation (aka load) completed on time.
  - ❑ [Link to a 10:29 Video with all 3 concepts](#)
  - ❑ [Link to a 7:44 Video that focuses on proper timing for getting into the “hitting position”](#)
- ❑ Introduce staying on plane (matching the path of your barrel to the line the pitch follows on its way to the plate). Starts with the ability to track a pitch and hold their bat or a pvc tube along the pitches path crossing the plate. If they can identify the plane of the pitch, they have a fighting chance of matching it with their swing.
- ❑ Build comfort hitting with a kid pitcher throwing.
- ❑ Introduce safely turning toward the catcher when a pitch comes at you
- ❑ See note on balls & strikes and the emphasis on timing over “knowing the strike zone”
  - ❑ Teach the players to understand the umpire’s strike zone. In most youth games umpires have a strike zone that extends wider than the plate (often between the inner batter’s box lines).
    - ❑ Encourage players to understand this and communicate with teammates early in the game, so they can be ready to attack those pitches and not miss out on opportunities to swing.
    - ❑ Positioning in the box so they can cover the outer part of the plate and 3-4” beyond is key.
- ❑ Introduce the concept of “Yes, Yes, Yes” and “Yes, Yes, No” (an attacking mentality on every pitch)
  - ❑ First yes: Load (every pitch) when to initiate is an individual thing, but generally a starting point is when the pitcher’s knee gets to the high point in his motion. Identifying this timing is what happens in the dugout waiting your turn and is finalized in the on deck circle.
  - ❑ Second yes: Initiate the swing with the back hip so that all you have left is fire the hands
  - ❑ The 3<sup>rd</sup> step is either a Yes (fire the hands and swing) or a No (hold the hands back and stop the last part of the swing).

## Learning Positional Play

- ❑ Reinforce the positions and the areas each player should cover;

- ❑ Covering bases on a steal, receiving throws from the catcher on a steal
- ❑ CRABB
  - ❑ Communicate:
    - ❑ Tell two people the number of outs every time we get an out (one of those people should be an outfielder, keep them engaged). Have some fun with this.
    - ❑ “Go Where the ball takes you.” With multiple force out choices, the direction you are moving when you field the ball dictates the easy out.
    - ❑ “Check him and get one” when there are runners on 2<sup>nd</sup> and/or 3<sup>rd</sup> (who aren’t forced) and there are 0 outs or 1 out.
  - ❑ Ready: Using a hop or steps into a Baseball ready stance every pitch (athletic stance). Then backing up to reset for the next pitch. “Doing the dance” in and back every pitch. All defenders should be in sync and “land” in the ready position as the ball crosses the front of the plate.
    - ❑ Practice by flipping a ball in the air and they clap as it is caught or they take their hop or step and land as the ball is caught.
  - ❑ Attack: Make an aggressive move
    - ❑ To get to an easy hop,
    - ❑ Cut down the time it takes to get the ball to 1<sup>st</sup> base. Use a stop watch to emphasize the time aspect of making ground ball plays.
  - ❑ Bases: Call for the ball when your base is the correct base to make the play.
    - ❑ Based on the direction the ground ball takes the fielder (e.g. runners on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, ground ball that takes SS toward 3<sup>rd</sup> (“3,3,3”).
    - ❑ Pitcher covering 1<sup>st</sup> (catcher yelling “get over there”) on balls to right side
  - ❑ Back Ups:
    - ❑ If you aren’t fielding the ball or covering a base, move to back up a throw to the base nearest to you.
    - ❑ Backing up return throws to the pitcher
      - ❑ R1: 2B & SS pinch to middle, 3B steps toward 3B
      - ❑ R2: 2B pinch middle, SS takes steps toward backing up 3B
- ❑ Basics of cutoffs and relays.
  - ❑ The maroon line: The line that connects the OF with the ball through the relay man to the base he is throwing to.
  - ❑ The relay man runs to the maroon line with his head on a swivel so he gets fairly close on his own. Hands up yelling “relay, relay”
  - ❑ An “off side” player moves into position behind the base & on the maroon line to back up the throw to the base.

Special set of items that represent rule differences from Juniors to Minors

- ☐ Dropped 3<sup>rd</sup> strike ?
- ☐ Covering home on passed balls / wild pitches

# Six Goals for Majors

## Mental Side of the Game

- ❑ Visualization: show them that the brain can't tell the difference from a simulation of a successful rep (a visualization of hitting a line drive) and actually hitting a line drive. Let players lay on the grass and talk them through a few successful swings right before you have batting practice.
- ❑ Sometimes the Other Team Wins a Pitch: If your job is to throw a strike and you throw a strike and the hitter's job is to hit that pitch and he does and the ball happens to travel between two infielders and falls for a single or he hits it hard and it goes between two outfielders - then the hitter won that pitch. That is not only ok, it's a part of the game. Keep doing your job and focus on winning the next pitch.
  - ❑ It's exhausting and counterproductive to over celebrate every pitch you win and be full of sadness on any pitch the other team wins. Allow the game to flow, don't try and control the flow, control the direction (looking forward to the next pitch) and the speed (not too fired up and never overly bummed) of your canoe using your oar as you enjoy the flow of the game.

## Learning the basic rules

- ❑ Balks
  - ❑ Pitchers are fielders when they are not in contact with the pitcher's plate (aka the rubber). They can fake or turn without penalty.
  - ❑ Sign Taking Stance (the position the pitcher is in when he is on the rubber and getting the signal from the catcher). He should hold the ball in his pitching hand (not in his glove)
    - ❑ OK: Turning shoulders to look at runners
    - ❑ Balk: Turns shoulders quickly, fakes a throw to 1B
  - ❑ Set Position (the pitcher has brought his hands together)
    - ❑ OK: Any throw to a base with a runner (including a throw to a base without coming set)
    - ❑ Balk: Not stopping in the set position before throwing home, any fake to 1B, RHP swings lead leg behind rubber and throws to 3B, LHP swings lead leg behind rubber and throws to 1B
- ❑ Dropped 3<sup>rd</sup> strike

- ❑ When the catcher fails to catch the 3rd strike the batter is safe whenever:
  - ❑ 1B is unoccupied at the time of the pitch (Runner on 2nd, Runner on 3rd, or Runners on 2nd and 3rd)
  - ❑ There are 2 outs (even with a runner on 1st, when there are two outs the batter is safe until the catcher throws to 1B
    - ❑ If the bases are loaded with two outs, the catcher can step on home plate to get the 3rd out.
- ❑ Infield Fly Rule
- ❑ Baserunning
  - ❑ Leads
    - ❑ Basics
      - ❑ Pitcher off the rubber – you are on the bag
      - ❑ Pitcher on the rubber – you are off the bag
      - ❑ Getting to a consistent distance without looking down or back to the bag
      - ❑ Standing returns
        - ❑ 1B: Left foot on bag, right foot and rest of body on the fair territory side of 1B
        - ❑ 3B: Lead in foul territory, return in fair territory
      - ❑ Diving Back returns
        - ❑ Right foot crosses and lands “outside the body” to allow a lowering of the chest and hips and a push off to accelerate the dive back.
        - ❑ Cup the hand for impact at the back corner of 1B
        - ❑ Work to your knees and then step on the bag, ensuring your foot is on the bag before you remove your hand (“foot to hand”)
- ❑ Steals
  - ❑ Confidence in your return will help you get good steal jumps
  - ❑ The right distance for your lead
    - ❑ Too large of a lead puts pressure on you. We want to put pressure on the defense (and avoid taking unnecessary risk and putting pressure on ourselves)
  - ❑ Jumps
    - ❑ Your jump (turning to begin to run toward 2nd or 3rd on a steal attempt) doesn’t have to be a razor thin reaction to the initial movement by the pitcher. Teach the players to see the differences in the initial 6 inches of movement by the pitcher when he picks or steps off and when he goes home. These observations will build

comfort and confidence, which will enhance their reaction and acceleration.

- ❑ Pitchers and fielders controlling the running game
  - ❑ Picks to 1B (feet in a hoola hoop, short arm action)
  - ❑ Picks to 2B
    - ❑ Can fake to 2B
    - ❑ Glove side turn (Daylight), on big primary lead
    - ❑ Inside Move (on early, aggressive secondary lead)

## Pitching and Throwing Mechanics

- ❑ Wind-up versus stretch (option for some pitchers, but not a mandatory addition, some guys can just keep going only from the stretch)
- ❑ Change Up grips and importance of maintaining the look of your fast ball
  - ❑ There are lots of choices for change up grips. The fundamental is to remove your strongest finger (index finger) from the center of the ball.
    - ❑ A three finger grip with the middle finger in the middle moving the index and ring finger toward the side of the ball
      - ❑ If the players hand is small, a four finger grip may be able to gain more control (pinking and index finger on the side with the middle and ring finger in the center of the ball)
    - ❑ The “circle change” - Make an “ok” with your fingers and put the “circle” of the “ok” on the side of the ball. Your middle and ring finger are behind the center of the ball
  - ❑ Encourage players to spend some of the warm up “catch play” time building comfort with change up grips.
- ❑ Short arm action for infielders (use of the run down elbow wrist exchange for shorter throws and feeds). Soft toss feeds to players with hands at center of chest and forearm parallel to ground. Catch the ball with a slight (1-2” down stroke and a simultaneous pull back of the elbow); then complete the whipping action of taking the hand back and elbow forward; and throw by “exchanging the elbow and wrist”
- ❑ Level 2 Run Down Mechanics
  - ❑ [1 Throw and a Tag](#) (when run down starts with runner “close” (10-15 feet) from the player with the ball.
    - ❑ Clear to create a throwing lane, show the ball while you run, get the runner to full speed

- ❑ Receiver clear to match the throwing lane created by the player with the ball, GOAL: catch the ball moving at full speed with enough room to keep the pressure off of us – close enough to allow you to get the runner within 2-3 steps after he's changed direction (if you tag him before or as he is changing direction, you probably called for the ball too late)
- ❑ 2 Throw and a Tag (when the run down starts with a runner “far” from the player with the ball. The receiver creeps in slowly to close the distance and calls for the ball to create a 10-15 feet separation (which puts us in a “1 Throw and a Tag scenario). The player with the ball stays under control during the first throw, he doesn't need to get the runner to full speed, his GOAL: make a good throw on time.

## Hitting

- ❑ Understanding the areas of the zone where you hit the best and looking for your pitch.
- ❑ Drill work (tee, soft toss, short toss, stick-ball, lob toss, one-arm drill);
  - ❑ [Understand the drills](#)
    - ❑ Tee
      - ❑ Placement (Be sure you can “cover the outside pitch” as you align – avoid being too far away from inside and middle pitches, will help avoid “grooving” a long swing
        - ❑ Inside Pitch: In front of your lead leg after your stride
        - ❑ Middle Pitch: In line with your lead foot after your stride
        - ❑ Away Pitch: In line with your belt buckle
      - ❑ Eyes track from an imaginary pitcher to the ball on the tee and the head and eyes remain “on the empty tee” after contact
    - ❑ Soft Toss
      - ❑ Important for feeder to have a slow back swing before they toss the ball. That slow back swing is when the batter should load. A controlled pace on the feeder's back swing will help the batter develop an under control load
      - ❑ The ball should land in the same spots the tee would be in for in, middle, and away pitches. Best to throw a ball that arcs a bit and drops into those spots than flat moving past the hitter
    - ❑ Short Toss
      - ❑ Same importance of a back swing by the feeder to emphasize the “when I move, you begin to load”
      - ❑ A “shove” of the ball forward is the best approach. Helps to create an on plane swing. A loop in these feeds is not as productive.



- ❑ [Sacrifice bunting.](#)
  - ❑ Move up in the box (toward the pitcher) to improve the angle for keeping more bunts fair.
  - ❑ Divide the bat into thirds (move bottom hand up to top of grip and top hand pinches bat near bottom of barrel)
  - ❑ Wide athletic stance to make room for back knee to bend and lower the level of the bat using the legs (avoid “dumping” the barrel - tipping the barrel down to get a low ball)
  - ❑ Hold the bat out in front of the eyes so that you can see the ball and the bat at the same time. (With the knee bent, athletic stance this barrel position marks the top of the strike zone. So the hitter should not move the bat up, if the ball tracks above the bat, pull the bat back and take that pitch).

## Learning team fundamentals

- ❑ Next level cutoffs and relays;
  - ❑ Positioning & Communication
    - ❑ (The player at the base being thrown to offers a “Right \_\_\_\_ or Left \_\_\_\_” with the number of steps for the relay man’s final adjustment.
    - ❑ Keeping in mind the relay man should be offset slightly to his throwing arm side so that a throw along the maroon line is easy for him to make a glove side turn to the base he is throwing to.
    - ❑ The relay man peaks at the runners if he can to gauge where his throw is likely to go. The players on the bases spend most of their time scanning the runners to determine where the throw should go, a little of their time helping line up the relay man.
    - ❑ The player covering the base commands “Cut & 1, 2, 3, or 4 (identifying what base to throw to) or “Cut Hold” if the relay man should catch the ball and run it into the middle of the infield.
  - ❑ OF Throwing Rules Part 1
    - ❑ Identifying the lead runner and knowing that we throw the ball 2 bases in front of the lead runner on a single and 1 base in front of the lead runner on a fly ball
    - ❑ Directly to 2B on any OF bobble
- ❑ Basic bunt defenses;
  - ❑ Runner on 1<sup>st</sup> only vs Runner on 2<sup>nd</sup> (or 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>)
    - ❑ R1: 1B stay at 1B, 3B crash, P has left side

- ❑ R2 (or R1 & R2): 1B crash (2B shades toward 1B to cover 1<sup>st</sup>), P has right side, 3B stays at 3B to avoid fake bunt steal (3B comes to get any hard hit balls.
- ❑ Basic first-and-third situations;
  - ❑ Options when the team steals the runner at 1<sup>st</sup>
    - ❑ Throw to Pitcher, Fake to 2<sup>nd</sup> and look to 3B, Throw through and take the out at 2B
- ❑ Underhand flip (box drill) and double plays;
- ❑ Infield and outfield communication and priorities on fly balls
  - ❑ Communication to assist the player making the play
    - ❑ “In” / “Back” / or “You’re Good”
      - ❑ The offside fielder has a better view of the trajectory of the ball and the position of the teammate trying to make the play.
      - ❑ Adjust the intensity and number of times you say “In” or “Back” to dial in the amount of movement you think your teammates needs
  - ❑ Between players converging
    - ❑ “Mine, Mine Mine” by OF & “I got it, I got it, I got it” by IF
      - ❑ OF has priority over IF, CF priority over other OF
      - ❑ Safety suggestions:
        - ❑ Practice communication without a ball in flight first
        - ❑ Outfielders can slide, infielders should stay on their feet
    - ❑ SS priority in IF, 2B has priority behind 1B

## Six goals for the Babe Ruth and Colt Divisions

### Mental Side of the Game

- ☐ The challenges of the different parts of a game
  - ☐ Arriving and transitioning your focus from life to baseball
  - ☐ Warming Up: Not just your body, but your mind too
  - ☐ 1<sup>st</sup> Inning: Being tuned in from the beginning
  - ☐ Middle Innings: Risk of some boredom or lack of focus
  - ☐ End of the Game: Dealing with pressure for the impending outcome

### Throwing Mechanics and Pitching

- ☐ Emphasis on use of your lower half, and core to throw the new longer distance to home
- ☐ Breaking balls;
- ☐ Pickoff mechanics; flat-work (drills);
- ☐ [Introduction to long toss.](#)
  - ☐ The distances and speeds in the video won't apply to our young athletes, but the two phases (going out / stretching phase & the pull down phase) are the keys to take away from the video.

### Hitting

- ☐ Introduce situational hitting
- ☐ Hit and run; productive outs
- ☐ Sacrifice bunting versus bunting for a hit
- ☐ Understanding the count.

### Baserunning

- ☐ First-and-third situations
- ☐ Steal breaks
  - ☐ Momentum at 2B
  - ☐ Pitcher time to Plate + Catcher Pop Time vs Your 78 ft “steal time”
    - ☐ Old School vs New School at 1B
- ☐ Delayed steals
- ☐ Reading situations and reacting to them.

## Fielding

- ☐ Outfield Technique
  - ☐ Glove Side Turn
  - ☐ Opening Hips on Drop Step
  - ☐ Getting behind fly balls to catch them with momentum coming through toward relay man
  - ☐ Deke on balls that will fall in front of them
  - ☐ Ability to transition speed without head bobbing
- ☐ Backhands and when to use them;
- ☐ Double-play depth;
- ☐ Pitcher covering first
  - ☐ Review the standard play for receiving a flip from the 1st baseman (difference on the 90 foot diamond)
  - ☐ Add in covering 1B on double plays that will flow 3-6-1 (when 1B is moving away from 1B)
- ☐ Advanced infield communication: Speed of the runners

## Learning team fundamentals

- ☐ Controlling the Running Game
  - ☐ Pickoff plays
    - ☐ Timing Picks
  - ☐ Middle IF controlling the number of looks by the pitcher
- ☐ Bunt defense with Runner at 2<sup>nd</sup> (SS rotates to 3B allowing 1B & 3B to crash) -
- ☐ First-and-third defense - Runner at 1<sup>st</sup> leaving early
- ☐ Pop-up and fly balls working toward the fence and dugouts
  - ☐ Catcher moves toward the fence and communicates to the 1B & RF or 3B & LF as they approach the fence.
    - ☐ “Got Room” - Player knows the fence will not come into play
    - ☐ “Fence - Fence” - Signals to the player that they need to put their arm out and find the fence
- ☐ Double plays and underhand flips vs feeds (communication)
- ☐ Advanced Cuts and Relays
  - ☐ Tandem Relay on sure doubles (3 bases in front of lead runner)
  - ☐ 1B Trailer into 2B
  - ☐ Catcher and back guy in tandem watching runners to make correct base call.
- ☐ OF Throwing Rules Part 2

- ❑ Outfielders play with an imaginary triangle in front of them (roughly 30 feet sides to the triangle – they are on 1 point of the triangle and the triangle is drawn in front of them oriented toward home plate. The triangle shrinks with faster lead runners, with reduced arm strength for the outfielder, or with a larger lead late in the game.
- ❑ If you field the ball inside the triangle, throw to the lead base (2 bases in front of the lead runner on a single on the ground, 1 base in front of the lead runner on a caught fly ball)
  - ❑ Throw at a height “through the relay man” catchable by the relay man to help keep the back side runners from advancing
- ❑ If you field the ball outside the triangle, throw to 2B to limit total bases.

# Development of Catchers

## Rookies

- ☐ Wearing equipment – importance of correct size (use of a binder clip to cinch up loose straps on chest protector)
- ☐ Juniors
- ☐ Interactions with the umpire
- ☐ Stance: Receiving Stance (Feet, target)
- ☐ Throwing hand safety
- ☐ Distance from Batter
- ☐ Return throws to Pitcher

## Minors

- ☐ Stance: Sign giving vs Receiving (Feet, target)
- ☐ Introduction to Blocking – technique, dry blocks, whiffle balls, tennis balls
- ☐ Receiving
- ☐ Basics – Sit quiet on strikes. Be an athlete and try to catch everything
- ☐ Throws to bases
- ☐ Steals
- ☐ Fielding Your Position
- ☐ Tag Plays at home
- ☐ Force Plays at home
- ☐ Retrieving wild pitches

## Majors

- ☐ Fielding Your Position
- ☐ Bunts
- ☐ Foul Tip Rules
- ☐ Enhanced Blocking – Reps with baseballs, lead with glove – block with chest
- ☐ Mound Visit Basics – what to say, what not to say
- ☐ Scanning Runners and the batter while you give signs
- ☐ Tracking defense – is everyone in position
- ☐ Calling Pitches

## Babe Ruth & Colt

- ☐ Moving defenders based on what you are seeing from the batter (early, late)
- ☐ Fielding Your Position
- ☐ Communication with the pitcher on bunts between you
- ☐ Advanced Blocking – keeping the ball close and recovery to throw after a block
- ☐ Advanced Receiving – Turning close pitches into strikes, balls up & down, curve ball receiving.