



## ROOKIE SENIOR COACHING MANUAL

### Baseball Ages 7/8 (mostly)

**RS Coaching Vision:** To teach the kids of Rookie Senior the necessary skills, both physical and mental, in order to be able to make the jump to AA and enjoy the game at that level.

**RS Coaching Mission:** To give the coaches the tools and the proper language to teach the kids of Rookie Senior how to:

1. Do a proper warm up routine with dynamic stretching and also a proper throwing routine and how to cool down and static stretch.
2. Properly run the bases for all situations and also within the rules of the baselines.
3. Properly stand in the batter's box; properly hold the bat in their hands, use weight shift and direction in the swing.
4. How to use their gloves for proper catching technique no matter where the ball is thrown.
5. Continue their progression in proper throwing techniques
6. Start to learn how to line themselves up with a relay throw and to know which base the ball will be going to. In addition we will teach all of the positions where to go because everyone on the field has a job.
7. Continue to teach the kids the catcher position and progress with the skills at this level. Start to teach how to block the ball with their pads.
8. Start to teach kids the pitching position to transfer to next year.
9. We will continue to teach the kids where the proper positions are on the field of play according to what position they are playing.
10. Teach the kids how to use their hands for ground balls and also how to position their feet during receiving a ground ball.
11. Continue to progress with fly balls and allowing kids to get comfortable with this skill.

**By the end of the year we would like to the kids to know:**

**1. Warmup:**

- a. How to do a proper dynamic warmup.
- b. How to do a proper throwing warmup.

**2. Batting:**

- a. How and where to stand in the batter's box.
- b. How to hold the bat in their hands and also in relation to their bodies.
- c. How to use weight shift in their swings and also what direction we should be promoting with the swing.

**3. Base-running:**

- a. How to run through first base, how to stop after the base, and what side of the foul line they should be running on.
- b. How to run to first base and round it on a hit past the infielders.
- c. How to properly round each of the bases in case of extra base hits.

**4. Catching and Throwing:**

- a. How to use their gloves depending on where the ball is thrown to them.
- b. How and when to use 2 hands when catching.
- c. How to properly hold the baseball (what grip, how many fingers, and where is their thumb).
- d. How the separation of the hands works and initiating the ball going down to their back thigh and the glove starting to work in the opposite direction.
- e. Where their front foot should go when they are throwing to their target.
- f. Closing off their front shoulder and have it pointed to their target.
- g. What their glove hand and arm should be doing during the throw.
- h. Where their head and eyes should be looking.
- i. What the follow through should look like.

## **5. Defensive Positions and Relays:**

- a. We would love to have the kids know if they are playing any position where they should be standing in that position and why (might be a work in progress).
- b. Each kid should have a chance to play all positions and should be told that every position is important.
- c. Kids should get to learn how to do relays with throws from the outfield, how they should position their bodies and also how to line themselves up with the fielder who is going to throw the ball and also the base it is being thrown to.
- d. With these positions we want to be teaching basic ground ball and fly balls. Fly balls might be tricky at this stage so start small and progress. For ground balls we want to be rolling the balls most of the time to get the kids to work on the 2 hand approach. Ball should go into the glove and the throwing hand should come on top of the ball in the glove.

## **6. Catcher Position: (Catcher position is a very important position in baseball and it gets overlooked a lot in the little league ranks. As an association we are planning on doing a better job of grooming kids to become catchers and understand the position through more practice and instruction. Rookie Junior is a great place to start)**

- a. Kids should know how to put the gear on and where each of the pieces of equipment goes.
- b. We should be teaching the catchers how to stand and where they should stand in relation to the plate.
- c. We need to teach the kids how to properly receive the balls. (Even though it is likely they will not be able to). It is habits we want to build from the ground roots.
- d. When the ball is in the dirt we should be showing the kids how to get in front of the ball (this is a skill that will be a work in progress as many kids need a lot of repetition in order to get comfortable blocking balls).

**7. Pitching Position:** (In the division above which is AA we start to pitch and if we don't prime all of our players in the mechanics of pitching for next year it becomes a very long year. So during this season we want to practice pitching with proper mechanics as much as we can)

- a. We want to teach the kids how to pitch from the stretch at this age in order to limit the amount of unnecessary movements. The stretch is when the player is starting in the position with their front shoulder pointed to home instead of their chest facing home, and the outside of their back foot is against the pitching rubber.
- b. From this starting position we want to teach the player to have the ball in their glove and throwing hand on the ball which will all be in the middle of their chest and eyes looking at their target which should be the catcher's mitt.
- c. We want to teach the kids how to properly leg lift and how high it should be, when to separate their hands (throwing hand and glove), how to stride to home plate, how to land balanced, and how to follow through.

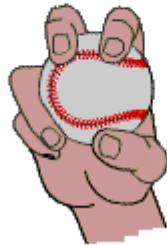
### **Coaches Language:**

We want to be promoting the same language use throughout the league so that no matter who the kids have as a coach they are building on the foundational skills they learned the previous years. This means that us as an organization needs to be diligent about teaching our coaches the language that we would like to use. This will always be a work in progress as we might find that some language works and others don't so we will be continuing to update the language we use until we get it fully integrated in our league.

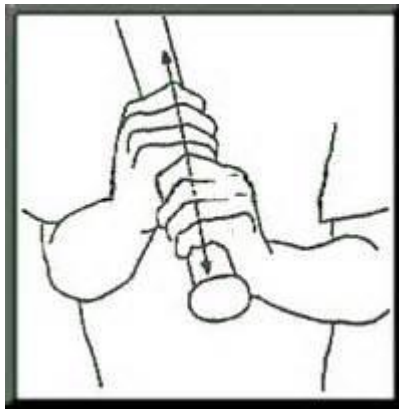
#### **1. Baseball Language:**

- a. Front side, Glove hand side: This is the half of the body which has the glove on the hand). e.g. **If they are right handed throwers this is the left half of the body etc.**

- b. Back side, throwing side: This is the half of the body which has their throwing arm). E.g. **If they are left handed throwers this is the left half of the body.**
- c. Four seam: The grip on the ball that is used for throwing by all positions in the field because it produces the most accurate throw. The player places 2 fingers (3 if they have small hands) across the horseshoe and thumb under the baseball. As long as the fingers are across the horseshoe it doesn't matter if the large part of the horseshoe is to the left of the fingers or the right.



- d. Knocking Knuckles: These are the knuckles that we want lined up (or somewhere close to lined up) when the kids hold the bat. This grip allows the most flexibility in the wrists to allow us to keep the barrel of the bat staying flat through the zone and to not allow our wrists to roll over which would produce a weak hit.



- e. Dynamic Warmup: This will be our warmup we use from this level all the way through our baseball careers. There has been much research on not static stretching before we play sports but more dynamic movements to get our muscles ready for use. We want to promote the static type stretching after physical use is over.
- f. Swing Direction: This is the direction the barrel is taking over the course of the swing. What we want to promote is that kids are taking the barrel through contact up the middle third of the field. E.g. **If a right handed hitter swings the barrel towards 3<sup>rd</sup> we say he/she is pulling off the ball and will not produce full contact. If a right handed hitter swings the barrel in the direction of first base we say that the hitter is pushing the bat through contact and again will not produce solid contact.**
- g. Weight Shift: We will talk about weight shift and this is the primary source of power in our swing. In the swing along with direction of the barrel going through the middle of the field we want our bodies to be moving (slightly) in the direction of the middle of the field. When we tell kids to take their stride we want to make sure that it isn't a back foot to front foot movement but a shift of our overall weight (which means we will watch for the kids hips moving forward with the overall body. Some things to watch for are that we don't want kids front foots moving separate and away from our bodies. We also want to watch that kids do not get too much weight over their front foots (the angle of their shin should be slightly back in relation to their front foot.
- h. Fingers to the Sky: This is what we want to teach the kids when they are catching the ball unless the ball is below their waist. When their fingertips are towards the sky the palm of their glove will be facing where the ball is coming from.

## **2. Coaches Language to promote Growth in our Kids Minds:**

Baseball is a hard game to play and there is a lot of individual failure and also pressure on kids to make plays, get hits, make no errors when in actual fact the pros make mistakes all of the time. We want to train the kids to think about the process of the game and not end results. As parents we all want what is best for our kids but some of the languages we use with the kids promote the wrong mindset for our kids to be successful in this game and also in all other aspects of their life. As coaches we need to be conscious of what we are telling and not telling our kids as it affects them in ways that we never expect.

- a. Praising Final Results: We want to stay away from praising hits, catches without promoting the process to achieve the hit or catch.
- b. Praising Hard Work: We want our kids to work hard at everything they do but we seldom praise this part of the game before the “hit” or the nice “Catch”. Because this game is very much a spotlight sport we tend to praise the end results.
- c. Fixing kids Abilities: We do this all of the time when we place kids in a certain category. This kid is weak; this kid has a strong arm, wow that kid has a great swing, that kid is slow etc. What we want to think about is that all kids can get better and improve through hard work and effort and being challenged to get better with proper coaching.
- d. Challenging kids: When kids are praised to look smart, look good through final results they tend to not challenge themselves past their comfort zones and never get better. (Kids that think this way are afraid to make mistakes because they fear they will look bad, not get it right, fail and therefore will feel like failures). We want to promote a healthy environment where kids look forward to challenging themselves to get better and where we promote mistakes or failures as a chance to learn.
- e. Persistence & Effort: Up above we talk about praising hard work which should be the primary focus of language for coaches. To elaborate we need the kids to know that when they fail if they are persistent and keep working at it and be persistent they will eventually learn and improve

what they are working on. We want our kids to think that effort masters everything and not god given ability.

**I hope that this is helpful in this upcoming year and we will continually help with the language over the course of the year and keep adding to how we want to help in the teaching of our kids in not just physical skills but also this mental side of the game.**



## DYNAMIC WARMUP, THROWING PROGRESSION, COOL DOWN STRETCH

### Warmup:

1. Get the kids to do a run/jog to get the body moving and warm. This run or jog does not need to be a long one but just long enough and with enough tempo that they are breathing faster than normal.
2. Get the kids in 2 groups 1 in front and 1 behind on one of the foul lines and at the same time put a coach about 20 ft. away from the line as the distance marker for the next exercises.
3. First exercise here is high knees. Teaching points are for the kids to stay leaning slightly forward. Drive the knees up. Use the arms (opposite arm with opposite leg). High knees out to the coach and then jog back to the line. 2 sets
4. Second exercise is Butt kickers. Kick the feet back so that the heels of the shoe kick your butt. Again using the arms with the kicks. Opposite leg/Opposite arm. Do them out to the coach and jog back to the line. 2 sets
5. Third exercise is lunges with twists. Make sure the kids are going down into their lunge before the twist happens. The kids should twist towards the side where the front leg is out front (not fast jerky twists but one continuous move). They can walk 2 steps between lunges. The kids lunge and twist out to the coach and then jog back to the line. 1 set
6. Fourth exercise will be sumo squats. Kids take a big step forward and turn either left or right and then squat down keeping their back straight. Come back up and take another step forward and then turn the other way and do another squat. We want to promote wide steps forward and sitting down and back and trying to get the kids not bending over at the waist but using their legs. Make it out to the coach and then jog back.
7. Fifth exercise will be a run out to the coach and a back pedal back to the line and we want to do 2 sets of this one in a row. For this one have the coach move out further to around 30ft.

8. Arm circles: Keep the arms straight and keep the circles tight. Thumbs turned up. Go forwards 10sec and backwards 10 sec.
9. Arm raises: Thumbs face up and raise straight arms out directly to your side. Do 10 reps. Then do 10 reps going at 45 degrees so somewhere in between the front and the side.
10. Arm Pull's with finger clamped. Kids will clamp their fingers in front of their bodies and try to pull their hands apart. 10 sec. While still trying to pull the hands apart do forward circles with the hands for 10 and then the opposite direction with the hands.
11. Arm Pushes. Put the palms of your hands together in front of your body and also the forearms together and get the kids to push each arm and hand against then other one. 10 sec. Turn the hands so that the outside of the hands push against each other as well as the forearms. 10 sec
12. Body Twists. Get the kids to widen their feet to more than shoulder width apart, bend the knees, arms up at shoulder height and straight out. Twist one way and then the other 10 reps. Then bend at the waist and get the kids to do the same thing down towards the ground 10 reps.

Throwing Progression:

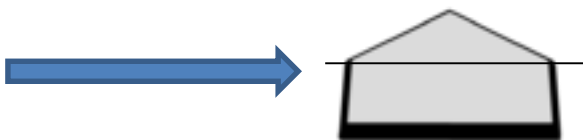
1. 45 degree Angle (feet) throw 10 throws each
2. Figure 8 Throw 10 throws each
3. Rock and Fire Throw 10 throws each
4. Step and throw 10 throws each
5. Move back to baseline if they can and do 10 throws each

**READY TO START PRACTICE OR GAME (UNLESS YOU DO PREGAME GROUNDERS OR OTHER PREGAME WARMUPS**

## BATTING

### How and where do we stand in the batter's box:

1. How close do we stand to the plate:
  - a. Our youth are taught to lay the bat down across the plate with the very end of the bat on the outside part of the plate and the knob of the bat towards them in the batter's box. The idea here is that the kids put their feet where the knob of the bat is in the batter's box and this should allow them to cover the plate with their bat. This is too close to the plate for most hitters so if you are going to use this method I will suggest putting the end of the bat in between the middle and the outer part of the plate. This will allow our hitters to hit the inside pitch and also get to the outside pitch with arm's extended.
2. Do we stand near the front of the batter's box or near the back:
  - a. Big league hitters stand near the back of the batter's box only because they are facing uncomfortable velocity from pitchers that exceed 95 miles per hour.
  - b. A good rule of thumb to teach hitters is to put the middle of their bodies in line with the widest part of the V on the plate. We should also be teaching our kids that they only move back in the box when they get older and face faster pitching.
  - c. A lot of coaches will tell their kids to move to the front of the box because the pitcher is slow but this is not teaching the kids to work on one of the most fundamental and valuable parts of hitting which is timing.



**This is the widest part of the V where we should be lining up the middle of our bodies in relation to the plate.**

3. How should our bodies look when we are in the batter's box:

- a. We should be teaching our kids to be athletic in the batter's box which means knees bent but not too far and that they should not really be standing straight up even though they see big leaguers do it on TV.
- b. Big leaguers do different things to their stances only because it helps their timing. Big Leaguers can get to their positive hitting positions from their unique starting points.
- c. We want to put kids into a successful starting position from the beginning.

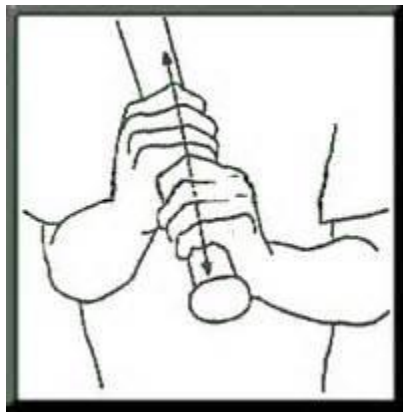


**This is a pretty good starting point for kids to be in where their knees are not bent too much and they are also not standing straight up.**

4. How should we be holding the bat:

- a. We should be teaching our kids to be holding the bat in their fingers as much as we can and as much as they are comfortable holding it there. Some kids are stronger than others and this will be comfortable for them and some are weaker and might not feel right but this is what we want to get to. The fingers are much stronger than the deep part of the hands.

- b. Hands should be butt up together with each other with your front side hand on the bottom and your backside hand on top. If kids are more comfortable with their hands a little bit apart it is not too big of a deal but eventually we want to get to where kids grip the bat with 2 hands together.
- c. A rule of thumb is have the kids' knocking knuckles lined up but there can be some leniency with this as some will be more comfortable with a little adjustment from this starting position. This is to provide as much flexibility in the wrists and will allow the least amount of rolling over of our wrists.
- d. Once our hands are on the bat we should be holding the bat over our back shoulder with our hands somewhere around shoulder height. Again a little leniency here is just fine. Hands should also be a little bit away from the body and not resting against the body.



**This is a right handed batter and the player's left hand is the bottom hand. Notice the hands are butt up together and the bat is in the fingers.**

## 5. Weight Shift and Direction:

- a. We want our players to use weight shift as their power source as it is the best method. To promote this to our younger hitters we want to get them into the habit of doing a short stride towards the pitcher. Some kids will stride further than others but we want to emphasize not so long that we are too wide to do anything else and not too short so that it doesn't allow us to shift our weight. (Keep in mind we are not trying to over coach at this point as we want the kids to focus on one or 2 things at a time and the stride/weight shift is an important fundamental movement for the swing).
- b. Things to watch out for are players moving their weight all the way over their front foot which is something we don't want to promote. The other thing we want to watch for is the player that moves his/her front foot away from their body/center of gravity without moving the whole body in a positive forward motion towards the pitcher.
- c. We as coaches should also be promoting 1 other thing at this level and that is to be swinging the bat in the direction of the pitcher (where the ball is coming from). Some things to watch for is the kid that swings towards 3<sup>rd</sup> base or 1<sup>st</sup> base and that will most likely be a directional problem with their front foot stride.

## Recap

- Teaching our kids where and how to stand in the batter's box
- Teaching our kids how to hold the bat and where to hold the bat in relation to their bodies.
- Teaching our kids the athletic position they should be in
- Teaching our kids the Stride/weight shift towards the pitcher
- Teaching our kids swing direction which should be toward middle of field.

## **Hitting Drills:**

1. Hitting off of the tee: This is a great way for the kids to do the techniques we want them to adopt without having to worry about a moving ball.
2. Soft Toss: Most of the time when we under hand the ball to our kids we should be in front of them so that they can learn the direction of the stride and the direction of the swing. It is sometime tough for kids to do everything successfully when the ball is coming to them from the side.
3. Pitching Machine: This means the little blue slinging pitching machines which are great if players can make consistent contact with the ball. This shows them a ball coming at them in the same manner a pitcher would deliver a pitch and it also comes from the same direction.
4. Variations: If a kid has trouble hitting the ball we might need to modify things for them until their contact is more successful. If you have to get a big barrel plastic bat with more surface area do it. The other end is the same if a kid shows great skill continues challenging them maybe with smaller whiffle balls or smaller squishy balls or faster pitching etc.

## BASE-RUNNING

1. Running to 1<sup>st</sup> for a hit in the infield (running through the bag):
  - a. When we hit the ball and it stays in the infield we will be running to and through first base. We need to be teaching the kids to run in foul territory where there will usually be a 'running lane.'
  - b. We want to teach the kids to hit the front of the base with their lead foot (not on top and not at the back).
  - c. Once they have hit first base with their lead foot we teach the kids to break their running stride down to small chatter steps to slow their momentum as fast as possible (we don't want kids running all of the way down the foul line). When they are breaking their strides down we teach them to look over their right shoulders to see if the ball got by the first base person.
  
2. Running to 1<sup>st</sup> for a hit to the outfield:
  - a. On a ball hit past the infield and into the outfield we will be teaching the kids how to round first base and get on a good path to second base.
  - b. We teach the kids to take a few strides out of the batter's box and then start to take a path that looks like a banana around first base. Once the player has taken a few strides out of the box we will get them to start to run towards the first base coaches' box and then back towards first base making a nice smooth turn (great idea to use a pylon or glove on the ground to show the kids what path they should be running).
  - c. When the kids get to first base we teach them to hit the inner corner of the base when rounding it. If it is just a single to the outfield we teach the kids how to take an aggressive turn around the bag and then stop and come back to the bag. If the outfielder bobbles the ball with an aggressive turn they can sometimes continue on to second base.



3. Running to 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> on a double:

- a. When a player has hit a ball that is going to be a for sure double we want them to get into the banana turn around first right out of the batter's box
- b. This is the exact same as a single hit to the outfield so we want the player stepping on the inside part of the base as well and making a nice direction to second.
- c. If the ball gets by the outfielder then the player recognizes and starts immediately to make another banana turn to go around second and head for third.

4. Running Home from 2<sup>nd</sup> on a single:

- a. This is the exact same motion as we would on a single from the batter's box so we use the same teaching methods as we would with a player running from the batter's box rounding first base and on their way to second.

**Recap:**

- Teaching our kids to run through first and stop as soon as they can
- Teaching our kids to look over their right shoulder for pass ball
- Teaching our kids to step on the front part of first base
- Teaching our kids to do a banana turn and step on inside of base
- Teaching our kids a wider turn on a double

### Base Running Drills:

1. Swing and run: When doing base running drills we should always try to have the kids swing the bat so that they get used to the whole movement. When they do it is always fun to throw them a whiffle or a soft ball to hit.
2. Second and Home: This can be a fun game while teaching kids how to round the bases with proper turns. 2 teams (1 at second, and 1 at home plate) race against each other and the winning team is first to have all of their players cross their starting line.
3. Singles & Doubles: This is where the player will hit the ball and coach calls out infield, single, double and the player must make the decision on how to run the bases.

**Base running is a major part of baseball and the kids should know it by the time they get to AA and AAA. This should be a major part of all practices so that it becomes second nature for the kids. It is also something great you can do at practices in between doing other drills to get the kids running and moving and getting a bunch of energy out of their systems while learning a key part of the game.**

## THROWING AND CATCHING

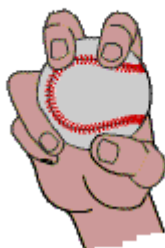
### 1. Catching:

- a. We want to teach the kids to be catching with 2 hands most of the time if the ball is right to them or slightly off center but it is awkward to use 2 hands when the ball is to either side of them.
- b. Because the kids will need to catch the ball, not just in front of them, but over their heads, below their knees, out to the backhand, out to the forehand we want to be giving the kids all of the opportunity to use their glove every way they will under normal game circumstances.
- c. We want to teach the kids that the glove will move from forehand to backhand with fingers to the sky and palm of the glove facing the ball (this will be for all catches where the ball is above the waist) all of the way to forehand and backhand with the fingers facing the ground and still having the palm facing the ball (this will be for all balls below the waist). The above the waist and below the waist is a slightly loose guideline as there will be some deviation from the norm.

### 2. Throwing:

- a. Throwing is one of the most dynamic and stressful movements in all of sport so we want to develop good mechanics early on in baseball. Since throwing a baseball is a high velocity movement we want to teach the movements to the kids and not static stationary positions within the movement of the throw (just means that we want to use full mobility of the arm for teaching throwing)
- b. For this age group we want to focus on a couple of key components of the throw and then progress from there as they get older.
- c. The first thing we want to teach the kids is the grip they use when throwing the baseball other than pitching. We want to use the 4 seam grip or the grip that has the fingers across the seams of the horseshoe. Kids of this age might be able to use 2 fingers to grip the baseball but if they cannot it is perfectly normal for them to use 3 fingers across the seams. We want this to be second nature to the kids as they get older so that they will not have to even look into their gloves to grip the

- baseball. Every throwing drill we do we want to emphasize the 4 seam grip to the kids.
- d. Second is our starting position which will always be facing our target with our chest and with the ball in our gloves with our throwing hand on the ball with 4 seam grip in the middle of our chests (every single time we want to start from this position when we are doing our throwing drills).
  - e. We also want to teach our kids that the first movement when they split their hands is the ball goes down to their thighs. When they do this splitting of the hands the front side (glove) starts moving in the opposite direction (to the target)
  - f. Another thing we want to emphasize to the kids is that when they are throwing the step they take with their front foot should always be in a direct line towards their target. We need to correct kids that take their front foot anywhere other than to their targets.
  - g. We also want to teach the kids to have their eyes always fixated on the target they are throwing to. Head and eyes should be looking at their target (which should be their throwing partner's chest area which is where their glove target should be).
  - h. The last thing we want to pay attention to is their glove/front side arm and what it does during the throw. We should not be teaching the kids to pull it in as that promotes rotating off to the side away from their target but it should tuck back in towards the body as the body moves towards its target.



**This is a 4 seam grip and should be used**

### **Recap:**

- Teaching our kids to catch with 2 hands when it is applicable
- Teaching our kids when the glove should be fingers to the sky
- Teaching our kids when the glove should be fingers to the ground
- Teaching the kids how and when to use forehand
- Teaching the kids how and when to use the backhand
- Teaching the kids how to start when preparing to throw
- Teaching our kids how to hold the ball
- Teaching our kids the first movement out of the glove
- Teaching our kids once the hands break the ball goes down to their back thigh
- Teaching our kids where our front foot goes and where our front shoulder should be pointing to (Our Target)
- Teaching our kids where the glove arm goes during a throw
- Teaching our kids to always look at their target.

### **Drills for Throwing:**

1. **45 degree feet:** for this drill have the players put their back side foot stationary with the instep facing their target. The front foot will be at a 45 degree angle (not toward their partner and not back beside their other foot but somewhere in between. The players keep their knees bent and don't move their feet. They have to rotate their trunks so that their front shoulders face their partners and then throw. (This drill promotes the proper trunk and hip separation needed when throwing the baseball.
2. **Glove and Ball Figure 8:** Have the player's sideways to their partner but have the front foot pointed to their throwing partner and also chest facing their partner. Ball and Glove start in middle of the chest. The player does a figure 8 and when they get back to their chest they separate the ball and glove ball goes down to the back thigh, glove goes out to target and the player throws the ball. This drill promotes loose and long arm action.
3. **Rock and Fire:** This drill has kids starting with their feet further than shoulder width apart and from back foot to front foot they should be in a straight line to their throwing partner. Starting with ball and glove at their

chest the player rocks his/her weight to their back leg, then separates their hands, rocks their weight to their front foot and simultaneously throws the ball and follows through over their front leg.

4. Step and throw: This drill is how it sounds so we just need to focus on the kids stepping directly to their target. We want to promote good direction with their throw so it is a good idea to teach the kids 1, 2, 3 step and throw (for a right hander that will mean stepping in the direction towards their throwing partner in a pattern of left foot, right foot, left foot and throw)

## DEFENSIVE POSITIONS AND RELAYS

### 1. Defensive positioning:

- a. This one is a hard one at this level during games but we should work on it to allow the kids to learn where each of the positions are supposed to be played and give them a basic idea of what the role of each position has in the event of a ball being hit into play. Please don't worry if the kids don't get it because over time and reinforcement as long as it starts early the kids will catch on. Keep in mind that kids are sponges and their ability to learn and pick things up at a young age is better than we sometimes give them credit for.
- b. In practice go through each of the positions and give the kids some ground balls or little pop flies (depending on infield and outfield) in each of the positions and do this a few times during the season. Make sure all of the kids get to play all of the positions unless there is a safety issue such as at first base with a player that has a tough time catching the ball.
- c. During the games let's encourage the kids to cover all plays depending on where they play. This will involve having lots of help in the field and having parents & coaches working with all of the kids. Before the game go over what each position should be doing so that all of your helpers and coaches are on the same page.

### 2. Catcher Position:

- b. This is a very important position in baseball and one that gets neglected in practice. We need to continue to get as many kids in the catchers gear and getting practice at this position to allow them to get comfortable with a ball coming towards them (unless the player really does not want to play the position).
- c. We want to continue to teach the kids at this stage in their catcher development is to keep the glove palm facing the pitcher (this is hard for the kids as the catcher's mitt is very heavy), keep the throwing hand either behind the mitt or behind their same side leg so that it is out of the way of the ball and will not get hit. They can crouch in a low comfortable position and do not need to be in a squat (this is

- unnecessary to teach until they get older). We also want them to stay square to the pitch meaning that their chest is facing the ball because all of the padding they have should be facing the pitcher (we just don't want the kids turning to the side to catch the ball.
- d. 1 thing a coach can do to show the kids that the ball does not hurt them if it hits them is to get them into the gear and gently underhand balls to their masks and also to the shin guards and to their chest protectors. They will start to get used to the ball hitting their padded areas and be more comfortable with it if they have felt it previously.
  - e. When the kids start to get good at this position we should be teaching them to get in front of the ball and let the ball hit their pads to block the ball.

### 3. Pitching:

- a. This is an important year and we want to prep our kids (all of them unless they show a lack of simple throwing mechanics) to pitch for next year.
- b. We want to teach our kids the proper mechanics that will set them up to be successful in the years to come.
- c. We will start to teach the kids from the stretch position (guy on base position) because we want to limit any movements that are really unnecessary at this point in time. This position is where the pitcher's back foot is against the pitching rubber and if they throw right handed their chest is facing third base and their left shoulder is pointed towards home plate. It is opposite if they throw left handed.
- d. The ball and glove will start in the middle of their chest just like our throwing drills and our throwing hand will be on the ball with our 4 seam grip.
- e. From this position we will teach the kids to lift their front legs to where their thigh is parallel to the ground (we like to promote parallel to the ground because that is a good feel point for most but if some kids are flexible and want to go higher that is ok as well as long as they are balanced). In this position they should not be leaning back to get their leg higher, they should be nice and balanced and looking at their target.



- f. The next movement we want to teach is to take their lifted leg down towards the ground and out to home plate in one motion (we do this so that our direction is to the plate and not somewhere else). As our front leg is coming down and out to the plate our hands are separating so that our throwing hand (with ball) goes down to thigh, as well as our glove side (glove or front elbow) goes out towards home plate.
- g. When the pitcher lands with their front foot they should be balanced, the front hip should be opening up (pelvis rotating to face home plate) and all direction going towards home plate.
- h. Pitcher turns upper body toward target and releases the ball and finish in what we call a follow through where the throwing arm should finish on the outside of their front leg and their chest should be close to their front thigh. Through the force of this action their back leg will come around to help with the deceleration of the arm and land in a good position to field the ball (they should be facing the batter)

**Pitching is a hard position for kids if they struggle with normal throwing mechanics and we should be aware of this before we let every kid pitch. The idea is to have the throwing mechanics pretty understood by the players before they get on the mound so really teaching so that the kids understand the basic mechanics of throwing will allow more kids to try pitching out.**

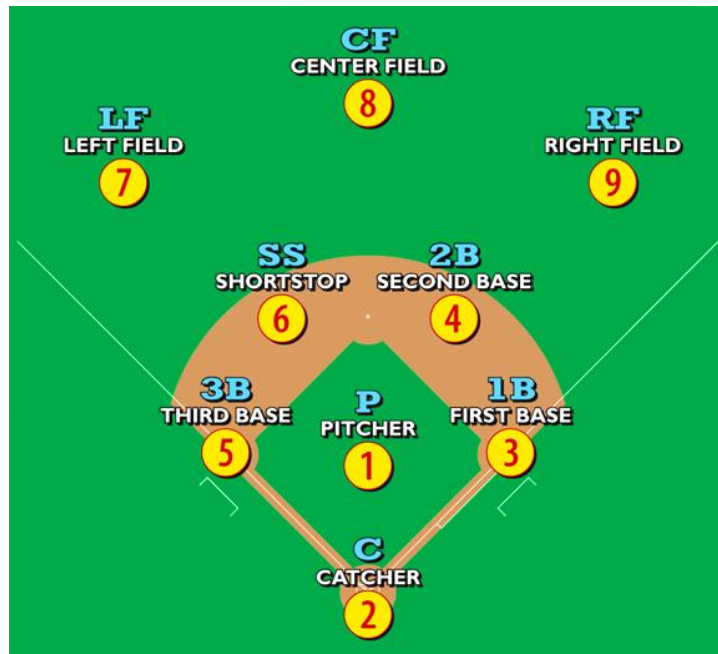
4. Relays:

- a. We don't need to teach kids everything about the relays but we need to start to teach them how to do a simple relay. We want to teach this age group the foundation of a relay and if they can learn this then teaching them the more technical stuff about relays and cut-offs when they get older will be much easier.
- b. We want to teach this age group that in order for a ball to come in from the outfield to a specific base there should be one player with the ball in the outfield, one player at the base where the throw will be going to, and also 1 player in the middle to "relay" the throw or to be the middle-man.

- c. We also want to teach this age group the proper way to receive a relay throw which way to turn and how to transfer to crow hop and relay the throw. We want to get the kids to be turned so that the glove hand side is towards which base the ball is being thrown to. This makes a much easier transition to catch the ball and throw to the base.
- d. A great game/competition is to split your team into 2 and to do a relay game at the end of practice where the kids have to get the ball from one end of their relay line to the other by throwing the ball through all of the middle kids and they all have to turn the proper way.

5. Ground Balls and Fly Balls:

- a. We want to teach this age level how to use their hands and how to use their feet to get in front of the ball.
- b. For ground balls we want to teach the kids how to let the ball get into their glove (glove should be open and palm facing the ball) and once the ball gets into the glove we need to teach the kids to put their throwing hand on top of the ball. When they get older this pattern allows the player to get the ball out of the glove quicker and also since the throwing hand is on the ball the transfer from glove to throw allows the player to make the throw a lot quicker.
- c. With ground balls we want to also teach this age group how to move their feet towards where the ball is going to be and get their bodies (chest) behind the ball (in front of).
- d. The progression from last year should be that we get the kids to start opening up their feet to shoulder or a little wider than shoulder width apart while receiving the ground balls.
- e. For fly balls we need to continue to progress with how much practice we put into them. Once kids get comfortable catching balls above their heads we can start to challenge them to improve. Variations for this could be getting a bigger (somewhat bouncy and soft) ball and doing non glove easy fly balls to get the kids comfortable looking at a ball above them and learning to move their bodies to where the ball is coming down. Or the other way if kids are getting good at it challenge them by moving the ball around so that they have to move their feet.



This is the general positioning of the player on the field.

Doing relay drills is fun for the kids and they get to learn how to line themselves up when they are the middle person and also they learn how important it is to make the throws accurately to their partners.

Drills for defensive positioning and relays just need a little creativity. If the kids are getting something out of a drill that mimics the play in a game they are learning and above all if they are having fun doing it they will enjoy the game that much more.

#1 rule is that we make baseball a fun environment for our kids to learn in. Use everything at your disposal to make drills fun and challenging and different. Kids love different and when practice changes often and keeps being fun the kids will want to continue coming back and that right there is exactly what we are looking for.

### Practice Planning:

1. Planning a practice does not need to be rocket science just organized.
2. If you have a plan of what you want to work on in practice and put it down on paper you are a step ahead of the game.
3. It is too hard to come to practice and make stuff up on the spot so please plan your practices.

### What you need for Practice planning:

1. Goal/Purpose: What is the purpose of practice today? What specifically are we going to work on today? Write that down at the top of your practice plan. It could be 1, 2, or even 3 things.
2. Warmup: Every practice needs a warmup so write down a warmup you want your kids to and it should be dynamic movement's not static stretches. This part of the practice plan will also include your throwing progression warmup
3. Skills and Drills: After you have written the warmup down pick some drills you want to do that will allow your kids to get better at the skills you have designated as your practice goal.
4. Base running: Always include some sort of base running, if you can, into your practices.
5. Fun Game: The end of practice should have a fun game involved so that the kids get to leave the field having fun.
6. Cool down and Stretch: This is where you do some sprints/lower body exercises and also static stretch.
7. Time Limit: Keep practise at this level short and to the point. Keep the kids moving and try to not have a lot of standing around during practice. Beside the sections of practice you have written down put a time limit on each section as this keeps practice moving. If a drill is going really well keep it going and take something else off the list to put on a later practice.

Below are 2 outlines of what should be on a practice plan

# Practice Plan

© QCBaseball.com

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Page: \_\_\_\_\_

Objectives:

Time: -  
Activity:  
Details:



Time: -  
Activity:  
Details:



Time: -  
Activity:  
Details:



Time: -  
Activity:  
Details:



Time: -  
Activity:  
Details:



Notes:

# PRACTICE PLAN

---

**Focus:**

---

Warm-up/Calisthenics:

Time:

---

Throwing/Catching:

Time:

---

Drill 1:

Time:

---

Drill 2:

Time:

---

Drill 3:

Time:

---

Drill 4:

Time:

