

The Coach's Checklist

- ✓ Where to stand at the plate
- ✓ Body Position/Stance
- ✓ Grip
- ✓ Bat Angle
- ✓ Vision
- ✓ Mechanics

Proper Swing Mechanics

Stance:

- The feet should be about shoulder width apart.
- Front foot should be open (105 degrees), back foot should be slightly closed—toe forward, heel back.
- The knees must be slightly bent.
- The hands should be near armpit level.
- The barrel of the bat should be pointed toward opposite base (3b—rt, 1b—lft)—this is to insure that the lead arm is extended but slightly bent at the start of the swing.

Trigger:

- Hips are slightly open, shoulders slightly closed—ideally the trigger should accomplish this—the shoulders simply rotating very slightly back..

Fire:

- The rear knee should trigger to a slightly bent position—this creates a slightly upward swing, on the same plane as the delivery of the pitch (slightly downward).
- The front foot opens (135—180 degrees)—this opens the hips, and the hips pull the hands through with increasing speed.
- Have hitters focus their [ending] vision approximately 6-10 feet in front of the plate.
- The hitter's head should not follow the body when it turns.

Follow:

- After contact is made with the ball, the barrel of the bat should maintain a smooth, slightly upward path.
- Do not stress hands rolling over—instead stress that the hands should end by the front shoulder—this prevents the long, looping (and therefore slow) swing.
- The hitter's chin should be over the shoulder area at the completion of the swing.
- Weight should be relatively balance, focused on the inside of the rear thigh, or inside of the rear foot—not the front foot

Bunting

Pivot and Square Positions depending on player comfort.

Emphasize the pivot approach and make sure to teach players how to properly turn front shoulder in and tuck chin to take inside pitches (it's better to get hit in the back/ribs/back of helmet than to try and back away and get hit in chest/hands/face).

Upper hand position: Hold bat with palm or between thumb and index finger, at midpoint of bat

Bat 45° to ground at top of strike zone

Knees bent

Hands forward toward pitching mound

Let the ball come to you and move to ball vertically with entire body and not to just reach out with arms.
Do not lunge for ball.

Batter is out if they hit the ball while stepping outside the batter's box

NOTES:

MINORS HITTING COACH SUGGESTIONS

In addition to live batting practice, which usually requires the entire infield, a hitting stick, soft toss or tee practice into a net, or whiffle ball practice can be used to evaluate a player's swing. Strive for 100 swings per player per batting practice.

Have players point both feet straight toward the pitcher, shoulder length apart, and then coil so that shoulders are in normal hitting position—they can feel the shoulders simply spin or recoil forward, pulled by the position of the hips. This demonstrates the open hips, closed shoulders position.

Focus on swinging at strikes and borderline only during bp with special emphasis to leave the pitches at shoulder level and above alone! Help them learn to stay of the "high cheese". Kids like the high fastball because they can see it so well.

Use one of the tee's that has multiple positions and have players focus on hitting balls on the outer half to the right side and driving balls up the middle during bp/whiffle ball.

Consider the following deficiencies:

- *Uppercut* – Practice on 1 knee (back knee down). When bat is lowered to swing, the bat will hit the ground.
- *Uppercut* – Place glove between forward bicep and body while swinging. Also can have player start with bat touching rear shoulder to start (ie Cal Ripken in the 90's) to help player be aware of what his hands are doing during load.
- *Uppercut*: this is usually due to the dropping of the hands—have the batter focus on starting the swing with the bat touching the back of the rear shoulder.
- *Lunging Forward* – Practice while standing on back foot only while swinging. Have player start with front toe on ground only and majority of weight on back side to help remind them to stay back on the ball. Lunging is often a result of teaching a weight shift to the front foot—the weight stays on the inside of the rear leg.
- *Turning Head* – Place glove on head, palm side down while swinging.

For bunting practice we start with kids in pairs throwing underhand to the hitter along the sideline (remember the kids with the bat must have a helmet). This is just to get the right body and bat position. We then have kids rotate at the plate where a coach (or pitching machine) is throwing RIF5 balls or softer for the kids to get the feel. We also draw two circles in the dirt along the baselines to show where we want the ball to end up.

Also for bunting we have a couple of bats that have gloves attached so kids practice "catching" the ball with the bat.

NOTES:

The Coach's Checklist

- ✓ Positional Responsibilities
- ✓ Fundamental Infield Body Mechanics
- ✓ Where's The Play
- ✓ Player Preparedness For Each Play
- ✓ Fundamental Infield Mechanics
- ✓ Force and Tag Out

Basic Positional Responsibilities: Infield

All bases need to be covered on a hit ball. Emphasize that everyone has something to do on every play whether it's in their direction or not. Examples:

- Coverage of 1st base
 - 1st baseman
 - Pitcher
 - 2nd base (bunt coverage)
- Coverage of 2nd base
 - Ball hit left, 2nd baseman
 - Ball hit right, Shortstop
- Coverage of 3rd base
 - 3rd baseman
 - Shortstop
- Coverage of Home
- Left fielder/3rd base should backup throw coming into 2nd from outfielder during a single to right.
- Pitcher as defender
 - Covering 1st base
 - Covering home plate
 - Backing up 3rd base
 - Covering for bunt

Knowing the play: Must stress the importance of each fielder expecting the ball to be hit to them and they know and understand what they are going to do when the ball comes to them and what they are going to do if the ball does not come to them.

Outfield Relays including proper position (straight line), proper mechanics (turn glove side), and proper throw-to (know the play, ball in front of base runner).

Fundamental Infield Mechanics

- Stay low on a wide base - feet apart, knees bent, butt down, arms hanging relaxed between knees.
- Move to the ball.
- Establish triangle - wide leg base, arms out in front, maintain balance. (Check with heel tap.)
- Glove below the ball - arms can pull up easier than push down.
- Cradle ball on heel of glove for quick grab by throwing hand (on top). Make sure players focus and finish one part of the play before moving to next (ie player's focus doesn't move from fielding to throwing until ball has been completely secured.)

Situational Defense

MINORS INFIELD BASICS

Bunt coverage

1st baseman and 3rd baseman charge home plate and yell "bunt"

2nd baseman covers 1st base

Shortstop is responsible for base coverage of 2nd and 3rd.

Do not commit to a base too early.

Base stealing coverage and back-up

2nd base coverage is predetermined prior to pitch. Back-up required in short outfield. Center fielder back-up is also required.

3rd base coverage requires back-up from shortstop and left fielder. Make sure to teach proper spacing for backup. Left fielder should be crashing straight to the foul line and not in towards 3rd

Run Down (Pickle): The Cross Over Method

Try to run base runner back to originating base and not advancing base.

When running toward base runner with ball, keep ball in bare hand above head level

Throw ball with wrist flip rather than full arm

Only 3 players should be involved in a run down and emphasis should be on securing tag with 3 or less throws.

Make sure that players not involved in run down move in to provide backup but do not jump into the rundown.

Example:

Runner on 1st – single into right. 2nd base moves out to provide cut with 3rd providing voice calls for alignment and ss is covering 2nd, with left field and pitcher moving in to provide back up at 3rd.

Throw comes in to 3rd ahead of runner and he attempts to retreat to 2nd.

3rd Baseman moves towards runner and makes throw to ss at 2nd after runner commits to returning to 2nd and is at least halfway back.

3rd follows his throw on right hand side to keep ss-3rd throwing lane open and circles around and covers 2nd (should not actually stand on the base but should be 5-10 feet in front of bag to cut down on the area the runner has to maneuver).

- At this level it might be better to have 2nd step in and take this position since some kids might not have the ability to circle around and cover in timely manner but either way 3rd should follow throw and move to either cover or back up base he just threw to.

Pitcher has stepped in from providing backup and is now covering 3rd again standing a few feet in front of bag to narrow the distance the runner has to operate and create shorter throws between fielders.

Catcher has held his position in case of poor throw which would cause a resulting attempt for home by runner.

SS chases runner to 3rd and makes throw to pitcher @ 3rd as soon as runner crosses halfway point (emphasis that we want to get the runner out as he attempts to return to 2nd rather than as he's approaching 3rd since that way if bad/late throw or mismatch occurs the runner hasn't advanced.)

Pitcher makes catch of ss throw and attempts to chase down and tag the runner or make throw to 3rd baseman standing in front of 2nd to apply tag. Player waiting to receive throw should be standing slightly to the throwing side of pitcher to allow for a clear throwing lane. This is when we want to get the runner so this throw should be later than the others in an attempt to allow a catch and tag out in front of 2nd.

MINORS INFIELD COACH SUGGESTIONS

Ball-in-glove fielding—one line at ss, one line at 2b, one player each at 1b & 3b, have players put ball in glove, they are to slap glove on ground, while stepping with their glove foot, look the ball into their throwing hand, and throw to the base. Then rotate to that base, with the player who caught the ball moving to the end of the line. This is important because you must teach players to field ground balls and take only one step (with their throwing foot) before throwing.

Players can learn to shuffle their feet to get them in position. Proper footwork is important in both fielding and throwing. If you field the ball while stepping with your throwing foot, you have to take two steps to bring yourself back into throwing position, taking extra, unneeded time.

After all players master this you move to:

Rolling the ball;

Throwing the ball; and finally

Hitting the ball to them.

*ball-in-glove fielding decreases the fear of being hit by batted balls—you can stress footwork and keeping the head down and over the ball which will minimize their chances of being hurt.

*you can easily add backhand fielding (off the throwing foot, not the glove foot)—teaching them to shuffle their feet to get them in proper position.

No glove fielding. Coach tosses balls to player who must use bare hands to field.

Rubber band glove closed so throwing must be used to trap ball on glove.

Place bill of hat in mouth so vision is blocked and player must keep head down to see the ball.

Hit balls to players without glove. Player must move to ball and allow ball to go between legs.

Goalie Drill – One kid is playing “goalie” with his glove hand as another kid tries to roll the ball passed him between two cones. The “goalie” does not need to catch the ball, just hit it away using his glove. This can help with foot movement, getting low on the ball, and a general good workout.

One thing coaches have to learn is not to let kids get by doing the wrong thing. Coaches need to watch and stop a player when his footwork or body is not doing the right thing and have him do it until he gets it right. Letting a kid practice over and over doing the wrong thing is problematic and counterproductive.

MINORS OUTFIELD BASICS

The Coach's Checklist

- ✓ Outfield Mechanics
- ✓ Outfield Responsibilities
- ✓ Outfield Relays

OUTFIELD MECHANICS

- Two hand catching
- Drop step
- Moving to where ball will be
- Front catch, side catch, back side catch
- The outfield throw
- Getting ball in front of runner

OUTFIELD RESPONSIBILITIES: RIGHT FIELD

- Backing up 1st Base;
- Backing up Center Field
- Backing up 2nd Base

OUTFIELD RESPONSIBILITIES: CENTER FIELD

- Backing up Right Field
- Backing up Left Field
- Backing up 2nd Base

OUTFIELD RESPONSIBILITIES: CENTER FIELD

- Backing up Center Field
- Backing up Third Base
- Backing up 2nd Base

OUTFIELD RELAYS

Outfield to 2nd base Right Side of centerline, 2nd baseman is cutoff person
 Left Side of centerline, shortstop is cutoff person

Outfield to 3rd base Shortstop is primary cutoff person. 2nd base should be the cut to 3rd on balls to right fielder and ss should cover 2nd.

Cutoff person is responsible for positioning themselves midway and inline between ball and target base and/or fielder at the base the throw in coming in to is responsible for providing direction to the cut man to get him lined up). Outfielder is directed to throw the ball low and directly at target base. Player covering target base has responsibility for yelling "cut" or "no cut".

At this level focus should be on always hitting the cut man as most outfielders will be unable to consistently make a long throw on target so emphasize hitting the cut man with a short quick throw.

MINORS
OUTFIELD
COACH SUGGESTIONS

MINORS BASE RUNNING BASICS

The Coaches Checklist

- ✓ Running to 1st Base
- ✓ Running to 2nd Base
- ✓ Running to 3rd Base
- ✓ Running Home
- ✓ Proper Sliding
- ✓ The 4 Basic Running Plays

Base running is a fundamental part of the game and overlooked by a lot of coaches. Base running should be taught and practiced as any other part of the game.

Running The Bases

Running to 1st Base:

Running out of the batter's box should be taught (this can be done as a warm-up exercise):

- Breaking down at 1b— On ground balls the player is watching the ball until it's fielded, then running straight through the bag, hitting the bag and then using a shop-step to slow down
- Looking down and to the right, in order to read a bad throw.
- On balls hit to the outfield, making a turn past 1b that is related where the ball is hit—rf—shorter turn, cf—wider turn—lf—longer turn.

Running to 2nd Base:

- Start in athletic position;
- Pick up signs from 3rd Base Coach;
- Watch pitch;
- See back of catcher – go;
- Fly ball – stay close, prepare to tag or go;
- Ground ball – go.
- See back of outfielder – go for third;
- Watch fielder, pick up base coach (3/4 of way).

Running to 3rd Base:

- Start in athletic position;
- Pick up signs from 3rd base coach;
- Watch pitch;
- See back of catcher – go (aggressive method);
- Fly ball – stay close (check position of SS and 2B);
- Ground ball (depends on status of 1st base);
- See back of outfielder – go home;
- Do not look at field – look at base coach.

Running Home

- Start in athletic position;
- Pick up signs from 3rd base coach;
- Watch pitch;
- Fly Ball – DO NOT GO, stay on bag always;
- Ground Ball – situational;
- Kids should always slide at home unless *very* obvious it is not necessary. Ensure you coach kids to avoid collisions at the plate (that goes for you catcher's too – remember a catcher cannot block the plate ***until*** the ball is in play to him.).

The Four Basic Running Plays

- Straight run—ground ball force play--on a hit ball with two outs—straight steal.
- Fake steal.
- Stop-and-go—if there is a line drive in the infield, wait to see if it's caught and then either return or run to next base.
- Tagging up on fly balls in the outfield or on foul fly balls—this has increasing complexity, when to tag, when to go half way—typically at 2b you always tag on fly balls with no outs, and always at 3b.

Basic Base Running: Fly Balls

- Less than 2 outs, runner on 1st base or 2nd base – runner should leave base far enough so that runner can safely advance if ball is dropped or return if ball is caught.
- Less than 2 outs, runner on 3rd base – runner should tag up and attempt to score
- Two outs – Always run

Basic Base Running: Steals

- Base runner cannot leave until ball crosses plate
- When stealing, start low until at full speed
- Focus on base, not incoming ball
- Slide into base
- Listen for guidance from base coach

Basic Base Running: Sliding

- No head first dives allowed unless returning to base
- One leg bent and tucked behind other (legs in shape of number 4)
- Hands up and in the shape of a fist
- Slide on butt not side

NOTES:

MINORS
BASE RUNNING
COACH SUGGESTIONS

The Coaches Checklist

- ✓ Pitch Count and Use of Pitcher Rules
- ✓ Pitching Mechanics
- ✓ Pitching Concepts

Pitching Rules

It is very important that every Head Coach/Manager, Assistant Coach, parents, and players understand Little League's pitch count rules. Do not be the coach who "does not get it".

- 10 years old and younger – 75 pitches maximum
- 11 years old and older – 85 pitches maximum
- Other rules apply for rest periods
- Read your Green Book!

Pitching Mechanics

All situations need to be appropriate for the individual, but as a league we are encouraging teaching pitching from the wind up. Focus should be on limiting the amount of movement during windup and to have smooth/relaxed motions throughout. No herky-jerky movements!!

Correct wind up position starts with pivot foot on the rubber and front foot to side and slightly in front of pivot foot. Toes pointing to home and shoulders/hips square to home with hands held comfortably in front of body somewhere near chest area as this limits the amount of movement from the glove to backwards arm extension.

Slight step to the left with front foot just enough to facilitate turn/pivot of the back foot to get the backside of the pivot foot lined up with the frontside of the pitching rubber. Player should be balanced throughout this turn with legs relaxed and bent.

Front foot comes up with knee to waist level or just above as the front shoulder turns in to point towards home.

Eyes on target all the way thru this motion.

Throwing arm is extended back and up making sure the hand and elbow never move behind the body (what I mean by this is that for a right handed pitcher the throwing arm should never extend behind the body towards 1st but should be in line with the body towards home or towards the 3rd base side) which will cause extra stress to shoulder/elbow.

Glove hand extends towards home (as throwing arm moves back) and is then tucked into the body as the pitcher strides forward driving off the pivot foot. This helps pitchers complete the rotation of their upper body and achieve proper follow thru by tucking the front arm in and using it to help pull the throwing side thru towards target and helps the hips swing open to allow proper placement of the front foot.

Front leg strides out to a comfortable distance – should not try to stride out too far, this will cause the pitcher to throw "up hill" as the long stride usually causes the back shoulder to dip. This is a "tall and fall" approach (and not a "drop and drive" approach).

Throwing arm moves straight thru to home with elbow leading the shoulder as the torso is rotated. Throwing arm should make a backwards L (from home plate perspective) with the ball at top of head height as the front foot comes down with fingers staying on top of the ball.

Front side is used to pull thru and help throwing arm/torso rotate thru and ball is released out in front and body swings thru to complete the pitch with the pivot side finishing towards the plate and throwing arm coming all the way thru and finishing down and across the body.

Pitching Concepts

Pitchers need to be coached and practiced on the basic tools a pitcher uses to be effective:

- Velocity
- Location
- Change of Speeds

As a league we do not encourage the use of curve balls – that is to say pitches that use the pitchers arm in a manner that can be detrimental. There are many varieties of pitches that can be used that do not involved putting strain on a pitcher's arm. If a pitcher complains of his arm hurting...listen to him. He is telling you something isn't right.

MINORS
PITCHING
COACH SUGGESTIONS