

Minors BB & SB Curriculum

1. Baserunning
2. Catcher
3. Batting
4. Infield
5. Outfield

Baserunning Curriculum (Minors Level)

Objectives:

- Improve ability to run the bases efficiently
- Learn to steal bases and advance on passed ball and wild pitches
- Develop ability and knowledge at tagging up and taking extra bases when possible
- Develop players' abilities to practice situational baserunning including anticipating opponents mistakes
- Learn to take signs from base coaches

Expectations:

- Players should be practicing at least one new baserunning fundamental (knowledge) or skill as a part of each practice
- All players will steal or advance on a passed ball at least once over the course of the season
- Integrate baserunning skills into the warm-up each practice for more efficient use of practice time

Curriculum

- How to leave the batter's box when the ball is batted
- Understanding base coaches' role and taking direction from the base coaches while advancing
- Running to first base
 - run through the base, turn head towards foul territory to look for overthrow, stay in foul territory
 - when & how to round the base
- Thinking ahead on the bases

- Know the number outs
- Know the situation
- Learn what a secondary lead is
 - Coaches should begin to encourage players to get in the habit of taking a secondary lead at the minors level
- What to do if a ground ball is hit
- What to do if a pop fly is hit
 - Recognizing a safe distance to be off a base
- Receiving signs from base coaches
- How to round each base (bellying out)
- Sliding
- Understand the rules of stealing and how to steal a base
- Advancing on a wild pitch
- Understand the rules of tagging up

CATCHER INSTRUCTION (Minors)

Objectives:

- Learn proper set-up & stance
- Improve receiving & blocking techniques
- Develop catcher throwing fundamentals
- Learn to be the field leader, including communication & responsibilities

Expectations:

- Each team should have a minimum of 2 catchers who adequately master the Minors curriculum by the end of the season
- Catchers are to be given individual or small group instruction on some portion of the fundamental skills outlined in this curriculum at least 1x per week.
- Catchers should be working in full gear with pitchers as a regular part of each practice

Catcher's Curriculum

- **Set-up & stance:** Set-up should be low & wide with both your legs & feet. Weight should be distributed on the inside of your feet with concentration of weight at the balls of your feet.
 - **Bases empty:** lower stance & target with throwing hand behind back for safety.
 - **Runners on 1st or 2nd:** "Ready" position (butt should be positioned higher & throwing hand should be in a fist, behind your catching hand thumb).

- **Receiving & blocking:** When receiving good pitches your body needs to be “quiet”. Avoid rotating the shoulders, and also avoid excessive movement up & down and side to side. Catching the ball with your glove hand smoothly and gently. **Framing pitches** when necessary.
 - Thumb up on pitches to your left.
 - Thumb down on pitches to the right

Blocking: Keep shoulders square to pitcher so that ball bounces off your body back towards the pitcher. Close the whole between your legs with the glove. Head facing down and chest out so that the ball will be deflected towards the infield.
- **Throwing:** There are two main rules with any of the approaches. 1st stay low, and 2nd avoid stepping on the plate so you do not slip.
 - **Jump Pivot** produces a quick release and requires a strong arm. While staying low you will hop with your feet shifting to the 6 & 12 positions.
 - **Jab Step** is for catchers with weaker arms. Take a small pivot step with your right foot towards the back point of the plate & stride with your front foot towards second while raking with the ball back. This approach is slower and more deliberate, but produces a stronger base for throwing off of and thus a stronger throw.
- **Communication & Responsibilities:** Encourage and reinforce good pitching. Take trips to the pitcher’s mound to talk to the pitcher when the pitcher is upset or struggling to throw strikes. Tell him that you are going to catch his pitches and get him some strikes. Back-up 1st base on ground balls with no one on base.
- **Being the field leader:** Let the team know how many outs there are with every new batter. Call out who is covering second in a stealing situation.

Advanced Catcher skills & knowledge:

- Learn to field bunts and short hits and make throws to the bases

Hitting Training (Minors level)

Objectives

- Develop a consistent batting stance
- All players will recognize the dimensions of the strike zone and identify strikes for hitting
- Proper positioning in batter’s box for hitting all pitches in strike zone
- All players will understand pitch counts and improve ability to make contact and expand zone as necessary for two strike counts

- Learn situational approach to hitting; including knowing the count, bunting & RBI situations

Expectations

- Goal of 40 swings at every practice (tee, soft-toss, &/or BP)
- Development of stance and swing fundamentals as to hitter's curriculum below
 - (All players should master #'s 1-3)
- Learn to bunt and acquire knowledge of when bunting is appropriate
- Advanced player skill: All players will learn to do soft toss with teammates.

Hitter Curriculum

1. Grip and hand position
 - Bat in finger tips
 - Line up knocking knuckles
 - NOT in palm
 - Loose hands
2. Stance and Position in box
 - There is no wrong position
 - Feet shoulder width apart (athletic position)
 - Preferably a straight/neutral stance
 - Balanced position achieved by "getting rhythm" (light bounce in knees)
3. Stride and weight transfer
 - Slow take back – "bow and arrow" approach
 - Reach with front foot – toe first (DON'T move weight forward) Power transfer thru hips
 - Stay Straight – head & eyes level
 - Transfer weight – hands go straight to ball
 - KEEP FRONT SHOULDER DOWN ON BALL (chin to shoulder)
4. Swing & follow through
 - Level swing (for liners and grounders)
 - Do NOT look up! Again, shoulder down!
 - Head Down.

INFIELDER INSTRUCTION (Minors level)

Objectives:

- Demonstrate mastery of “set position”
- Improve upon independent pre-pitch positioning and a basic understanding of common situations
- Develop knowledge of cut-off roles and back-up responsibilities
- Demonstrate mastery of knowing when to apply a tag and when there is a force out
- Learn proper method for tracking balls hit in the air beyond the infield

Expectations:

- All fielders should be fielding a minimum of 30 groundballs on each game day and during each practice
- All players should master the proper technique for fielding a ground ball by season’s end

Infielder Curriculum

- **Set position and situational positioning**
 - Ready Position – glove at waist facing up, steps in as pitcher delivers, bend at knees and waist
 - Understand double play depth, infield in, and cheating to a base for covering a steal.
 - Recognize how to line-up a throw as the cut-off or relay man (hands up: Hit me! Hit me!)
 - Understand double play depth & infield in
- **Receiving ground balls**
 - Proper ground ball fielding technique (head low, glove out front, button of cap)
 - Sense of urgency to get to the ball quickly
 - The throw – plant feet and make strong accurate throw
 - Crow-hop for long throws
- **Fielding balls in the air**
 - Run to the ball, do not back pedal
 - Calling the ball
 - Get to ball fast
 - Plant feet and throw ball back into the infield quickly
- **Communication & Responsibilities:**
 - Let outfielders know the number of outs before each batter
 - Let catcher know when a runner is stealing
 - Back-up on every play
 - 2nd &/or SS back-up pitcher on throw back from catcher with runners on base
 - Cut-off

Advanced Infielder skills & knowledge:

- Throwing “around the horn” – learn how & when appropriate
- Have players run their own infield drills with hitters hitting grounders to infielders off of a tee

- Learn to sweep tag
- Positioning of body for lining up a cut-off
- Drop-step for balls hit in the air

Outfield Training (Minors)

Objectives:

- Learn proper positioning & the outfielder's "set" position
- Develop proper fielding techniques for receiving both ground balls and fly-balls
- Master the "crow-hop"
- Properly judge the flight of a batted ball
- Throw to the appropriate cut-off man

Expectations: (Outfielders have 3 major assignments)

- All players should practice outfielding skills regularly in practice
- All players should field a minimum of 20 fly balls or pop-up at every practice
- Players should be aware of the 3 major assignments (below for outfielders)

1. **Take a base hit away** from a batter whenever possible. (Catch the fly ball).
2. **Cut down the length of base hits.** (Hustle and work together to hold the batter and/or runners to the minimum number of bases).
3. **Keep runners from advancing** whenever possible. Get to the ball fast and get it in fast! (Throw to the right cut-off or base; throw strongly and accurately).

Outfielder's Curriculum

ON EVERY PITCH – an outfielder must:

- Be in the correct position. (see positioning below)
- The outfielder should watch the batter and **not** the pitcher, as the ball is being delivered to the plate
- As the batter strides to hit, the outfielder should be moving forward slightly in the set position.
- He should **listen to the sound of the bat meeting ball**. With a little experience it will tell him how hard the ball is hit.
- The outfielder *always* breaks FAST! (*Drop-step, crossover step & pivot step*)

ON BALLS TO THE OUTFIELD – an outfielder must:

- **Fly balls:** Get to the ball fast and wait for it. Never drift to a ball.
- **Ground balls:** Try to get it off an early hop. The longer and slower it rolls the trickier the hops become. Get to grounders FAST!
- Run on your toes, not your heels. Running on heels makes your head bounce and makes tracking a fly ball more difficult. Especially important on balls hit over your head where you have to turn and run.
- Use your bare hand to block the sun. (if necessary)

POSITIONING

- Identify where to position oneself on the field
- Opposite field outfielder should move in closer than pull side outfielder.
- Play power hitters to pull (shift).

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Calling the Ball
- The outfielder makes the call on all fly balls dropping behind the infield.
- Outfielders should **back each other up on every outfield play.**
- Each outfielder should **back up the base in front of him on every infield play.**

Advanced outfield skill & knowledge:

- Recognize situations when it is appropriate to throw through the cut-off man