



SIMSBURY LITTLE LEAGUE
SOFTBALL COACH MANUAL

JUNIORS



JUNIORS SKILLS

The Junior division serves to help players refine the skills developed throughout their Little League experience and prepare them for High School softball. Advanced concepts in strategy are continued at this level including set defensive strategies and plays.

1. Basic softball rules –additional rules for Majors (infield Fly / Drop 3rd Strike)
2. Batting
 - Repetitions
 - Introduce situational hitting
 - Understanding the count
 - Bunting / Sacrifice bunt / Fake Bunt
 - Slap Hitting
 - Look to base coach for signs before batting
3. Running
 - Run through 1st Base / Round 1st base, take 2
 - 1st and 3rd situations
 - Sliding
 - Stealing / delayed steal
 - Signs from base coaches
 - Reading situations and reacting
4. Fielding
 - Reinforce basic - Force Play, situations, Call for the Ball
 - Fly Balls
 - Get to the Ball first / Eye on the Ball / Glove fingers up / Catch ball with 2 hands
 - Grounders
 - Get behind the ball / Fingers down, pocket facing ball / Hands in front of body
 - Sweeping the glove, two hands close together
 - Situations
 - Bunt Defense
 - 1st and 3rd defense
 - Pick Off Plays
 - Stealing / Delayed Steal
 - Double play depth
 - Position depth with less than 2 outs / with 2 outs
 - Cut-offs / Relays
 - Positions – understand the role of each position and proper mechanics of each. Also where to go when the ball is not hit to you.
 - Infield communication

5. Pitching / Catcher

- Review Pitcher / Catcher transition on pass ball/wild pitches.
- Review Pitcher covering home plate
- Pitcher
 - Warm-ups / Pitching motion / Release /Change ups
 - Practice during week, not just at scheduled practices
- Catcher
 - Practice throwdowns to all bases /blocking / shifting/tagging at plate/ drop 3 strike

GENERAL PRACTICE GUIDELINE

1. Warm-ups

- Start with throwing on one knee to warm up
- Full Throw
- Jog (bases / outfield etc)
- Circle up to do dynamic stretches such as
 - Jumping jacks
 - Donkey kicks
 - High Knees
 - Walking Lunges
 - Arm circles (forward and backwards)
 - Grapvines

2. Batting Practice

- Batting cage (AAA, Majors and Juniors Only)
- T-work all levels
- Softball Toss all levels
- Bunting (AAA, Majors & Juniors, possibly AA)

3. Drills / Stations

- Examples
 - Cross Fire
 - Situations
 - UConn Drill
 - FlyBalls / Cut-offs etc

4. End with Something Fun

- Examples
 - Scrimmage
 - Hit the Bat Game
 - Pickle
 - Relay Race

Practice & Game Warm-Ups/Cool Downs

Warm-Ups

For younger players, 10 minutes total of blood-pumping, body-moving activity can help raise the body's core temperature and loosen up muscles for the practice or game. These are not static stretching exercises, but active dynamic warm-ups.

- Start by having players run from foul pole to foul pole, then do some agility exercises:
 - High knees
 - Butt kicks
 - Karaoke run<
 - Jumping jacks
 - Arm windmills
 - Neck circles

- Throwing
 - All players begin on one knee (throwing hand side), facing their partner, about 10 feet apart. Throwing elbow is extended in the direction of the partner, ball in hand, glove hand under, and supporting throwing elbow at a 90 degree angle. With a flick of the wrist, player throws ball to the partner, focusing on correct 12 to 6 o'clock ball rotation. This is a wrist throw only, no arm. 15-20 reps.
 - Still Kneeling, players move 10 yards apart and begin a full-motion throw. Fingers on the throwing hand begin at the hip (fingers by the thigh). Arm rotates back, bringing ball over the head (elbow up high). Player brings the arm straight over the top of the shoulder (fingers to the sky). Finally, player pulls down through the ball, focusing on 12 to 6 o'clock rotation (wave bye-bye). Wrist is straight and follow through continues down through the body. 20-30 reps.
 - Players should make all catches with 2 hands, concentrating on the exchange between glove hand and throwing hand.
 - Players should now stand up and begin throwing from a standing position. Key to the continued development of players is encouraging them to focus on every throw.

Cool Down

After a practice or game, don't just send your kids home. Muscles need to be worked to get new oxygen in and remove the waste by-products of exercising.

- Have players run a lap around the field, then sit in a circle and stretch muscles
 - arm windmills
 - neck circles
 - hurdler's stretches for the quads and glutes
 - Twisting exercises that stretch the side muscles and back also are good. As an example, sit on the ground, placing the foot of a bent leg on the opposite side of an outstretched leg's knee, and twist your torso across the upright knee. Then switch legs and twist the other way.