



## **Minors (age 10 and under)**

There are two main goals in this division:

- Provide an enjoyable softball experience for players and parents
- Provide a solid fundamental understanding of the basics and some advanced play of Fastpitch Softball

Skill Set Outcome: by the end of the season, each player should understand:

- Skill set outlined for Rookies and Juniors
- Offensive strategies such as the strike zone and when to swing, and bunting
- Advanced fielding and batting mechanics, advanced situational awareness
- Stealing
  - No hesitation on pitch release
  - Head down, looking only at next base (not the catcher), pump arms, hands go ear to pocket
  - Listening to base coach
  - Sliding / no overrunning next base
- Sliding: for safety, girls need to learn to slide
  - Make a figure four with the legs
  - Throw hands up (can practice this by grabbing handfuls of dirt and throwing the dirt up and behind while sliding)
  - Get the back all the way down on the ground
  - Sliding late/too close to the bag can cause injury – teach them to slide early
- Defending against the steal
  - Catchers practice throwing to 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> on a steal
  - SS takes the throw at 2, but holds her position until she knows the ball's not hit to her (ball, base, back up)
  - Fielder catches the ball and makes a quick low tag
- Dropped 3<sup>rd</sup> Strike rule: help catchers, pitchers and batters understand this rule
  - Batter may advance to 1<sup>st</sup> with less than 2 outs and 1<sup>st</sup> base unoccupied
  - Batter may advance to 1<sup>st</sup> with 2 outs even if 1<sup>st</sup> is occupied
  - To avoid the catcher throwing the ball across the running lane, 1<sup>st</sup> base gives a target inside or outside the diamond depending on where the ball takes the catcher
- Pitcher covers home on past ball/wild pitch with runner at 3<sup>rd</sup>
- Outfield hitting the cut
  - Ball to the right of center, 2<sup>nd</sup> base is the cut, SS covers 2<sup>nd</sup>
  - Ball to the left of center, SS is the cut, 2B covers 2<sup>nd</sup>
  - Baseman lines up the cut calling, "left 1" to move the cutoff step wise to the left, "right 1" to move the cutoff step-wise to the right
  - Practice getting rid of the ball quickly back to the infield
- Outfield back up responsibilities
  - All outfielders back each other up on balls to the outfield (flies or grounders)
  - RF backs up throws to first base including pick off attempts from the catcher, and throws from leftfield to second base
  - LF backs up throws to 2<sup>nd</sup> from the right side and throws to 3, including steal attempts
  - CF backs up all throws to 2<sup>nd</sup>



- Relay technique
  - position feet to stand sideways toward target
  - receive ball on left side of body for righties
  - throwing hand up near the glove
  - feet moving toward the target as receiving the ball, quick release
  - work to increase speed of footwork, and catch and release
- Bunting mechanics
  - Square all the way around, belly button facing the pitcher
  - Bat high by the eyes, barrel slightly higher than the handle and angled slightly forward
  - Legs bend to go down and up, bat stays still
  - A ball at the eyes or higher, pull the bat back
  - Understand the rule that with 2 strikes, a failed bunt attempt (foul or missed) is an out
- Fielding a bunt
  - Feet positioned aligned with first base
  - Pick up ball with glove and hand together, pivot and throw to the inside of the bag
- Coverage on a bunt
  - Corners charge or “crash” toward the plate
  - 2B covers 1st
  - SS may cover 3<sup>rd</sup> on a runner going from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup>
  - 2B and SS hold their position before breaking for coverage (ball, base, backup)
  - Fielder at 1<sup>st</sup> gives a target inside the diamond
- Additional fly ball mechanics
  - Reinforce the idea that outfield is the last line of defense, first step is always back
  - Run to the point where the ball will land and get positioned (get there ahead of the ball)
  - Be moving forward upon catch, for faster release/return, crow hop toward the target
  - On hard grounders, drop to a knee creating more space to block the ball with the body
- How to pick up a stopped ball
  - Use the bare hand, position feet aligned with target (base or cutoff)
  - Pivot or hop step and throw
- Good mechanics for making a tag at a base/plate
  - Fielder is in a ready stance with knees bent – no need to have foot on bag
  - Positioned just in front and inside the baseline to avoid a collision
  - Catch the throw and make a quick low tag
- Catching mechanics on low pitches to keep the ball in front:
  - dropping to knees
  - create a bowl with the body
  - using shoulders to block down the ball
- One-throw double play
  - fielder tags the base or runner, then throws to 1<sup>st</sup>
  - fielder catches a fly, then throws to the base behind a runner who did not tag up
- Defender avoiding obstruction on extra-base hit
  - Fielders must clear a path for runners to round bases
  - Contact between runner and fielder when fielder is not making play on the ball results in runner being granted the next base
- Discipline at the plate:
  - waiting for a good pitch to hit
  - protecting with 2 strikes (understanding about widening the strike zone)