

CHALLENGER DIVISION GUIDELINES

Amended & Board Approved 2016
Visiting Coaches, Players, and Parents

Division Sponsor – Neovia Integrated Insurance Services

Challengers love their time with your teams.

Challenger parents are supportive, are there to help, and are **very** grateful for your time in working/playing with their children. We hope these suggestions will create an enjoyable, rewarding experience for everyone.

Challenger players have a variety of special needs and/or unique learning styles. It is important to remember they are kids first, and kids with special needs second. Start with modifications as simple as possible and use peer models, other visual aides and demonstrations. The goal should be for these players to have fun, build self-esteem, celebrate small successes and socialize with their peers and buddies.

Format for Practice / Games

1) Introductions: Learning names and pairing with a Little League “buddy” for the entire game.

- A “Buddy” should make practice fun. Encouraging phrases such as “Good Job!”, “Great Try!”, “You Can Do It!”, etc. should be used frequently.
- “Buddy” will assist and “shadow” player in practice drills such as batting, throwing, catching and running bases.

2) Work on Basic Drills: Running, Catching, and Hitting.

- Start with simple warm-ups and running the bases two times with buddy.
- Playing catch: Have the buddy throw the ball on the ground, then the player throws the ball back normally, through the air, or modify to the player’s ability.
- Simple drill(s) with a lot of visual demonstrations. For fly balls or catching, bean bags or soft rubber balls will be provided for players with fine motor or vision difficulties.
- Practice hitting: There will be no running of bases at this station; just hitting. Please ensure all kids are hitting in the same direction. Each player will get five hits. When not hitting, player fields the hit balls with their buddy.

3) Game Against Visiting Team: Challenger players get 2 times at bat, hitting the ball, and running the bases. Buddy stands near home plate and runs with the player if needed.

4) Cheer at End of Play Time: Parents, coaches, volunteers, and visiting players make a human tunnel for Challenger players to run through 2 or more times. This is their favorite way to end the game.

Things to Consider

- All Challenger players are different – age, gender, severity of challenges as it relates to their ability. We have players who can talk, being able to answer simple questions and others who cannot. Some like to be touched, others don’t. Some have minor physical challenges and require little assistance and several are exceptionally bright. We have runners, walkers, and some in wheel chairs.
- There are usually more ways the players are alike. They love and seek routine things that are familiar and comfortable.
- Most have sensitivity issues. They don’t like sunlight in their eyes, so please keep drills away from the sun. Most have a problem with loud noises or sudden noises. Try to approach players from the front.
- Many have issues with wearing gloves or helmets, so move slowly and do not force.
- Only give one instruction at a time.
- Most importantly, call players by their name, be their friend, and encourage their participation and applaud their accomplishments, big or small.
- Remember, Challenger parents are eager to assist and to ensure your success.