

Virginia Baseball Club
Coaches Certification

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT & GOALS FOR ACHIEVEMENT

This is the guideline for the mental and physical development of the youth league player from Tee-ball through the major levels. It contains goals specific to each level that should be met upon the completion of the season if the player is to advance to the following year it should be the objective of the coach to help each player achieve these goals during the course of the season. The stages of development will vary from one youth association to another due to different structure and rules from one level to the next. For example, a double A league with player pitch will develop pitchers and catchers at an earlier stage than those with machine pitch. However, the machine pitch league will most likely see overall knowledge of the game learned at a faster rate due to more batted balls put into play. If your league has different names for each level of play refer to the age groups.

TEE-BALL LEVEL (ages 5-7)

MENTAL ASPECTS:

- 1) Ability to sit on bench during team at-bat, pay attention to game, and know when it is their turn to hit.
- 2) Ability to pay attention in the field and consistently see ball off bat.
- 3) Know each base.
- 4) Know each position by name.

PHYSICAL ASPECTS:

- 1) **Hitting**
 - a) Consistent stance in relationship to homeplate.
 - b) Ability to make consistent contact.
 - c) Hold on to bat with both hands throughout swing.
 - d) Ability to keep balance during swing.
NOTE: Coaches make sure Tee is placed toward the front of the plate and no higher than the thigh. Most tees are designed with the stem in the middle of the plate, which is the incorrect contact point DO NOT allow tee to be set too high. The tee placed too high and too deep will promote flawed swings.
- 2) **Baserunning**
 - a) Know to run all the way to base.
 - b) Learn not to run into outs.
 - c) React to fly balls even though few will be caught.
- 3) **Fielding**
 - a) Ability to play catch at a short distance.
 - b) Ability to catch easy ground balls (roller).

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- c) **IMPORTANT:** React to ball above the waist with glove fingers up, not the palm. Players will not develop catching skills before this occurs.
 - d) Begin to react to balls on throwing arm side by turning glove to backhand.
- 4) **Throwing**
- a) Begin to turn glove side to target before the throw.
 - b) Step toward target.
 - c) Make accurate throws from at least 20’.

SINGLE A LEVEL (AGE 8-MACHINE PITCH)

MENTAL ASPECTS:

- 1) Understand how the game is played-basics.
 - a) Names of positions and role of each.
 - b) What is an out and how they made-strike out, force out, catch ball in air, and tag out.
 - c) What is a run and how they are scored.
 - d) How to get on base
 - 1) *Hit*
 - 2) *Error*
 - 3) *Fielder choice*
 - 4) *Walk and hit by pitcher-even though it is not being used at this level*
 - e) Basic rules of play.

PHYSICAL ASPECTS:

- 1) **Running**
 - a) Know to run through first base.
 - b) Aware of other runners.
 - c) Ability to see and hear base coaches.
- 2) **Hitting**
 - a) Proper stance.
 - b) Proper grip.
 - c) Balance during swing
 - d) Always display an eagerness to hit.
 - e) Make consistent contact.
- 3) **Fielding**
 - a) Ability to play catch from at least 40’.
 - b) Ability to field easy ground balls.
 - c) Consistently use proper glove position to catch ball at upper body (fingers up!)
 - d) Often turn glove to backhand on balls to throwing arm side.

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- e) React to balls hit to right and left.
- 4) **Throwing**
 - a) Consistently turning glove side to target.
 - b) Make accurate throws from at least 40'.
- 5) **Catching**
 - a) Catch most balls thrown in strike zone.
 - b) Ability to receive ball without turning head and body to side
 - c) Ability to throw ball back to pitcher

NOTE: All players should be given basic instruction in catching, and any player who desires to catch should be given opportunity. There are not enough catchers being developed at the minor league levels.

DOUBLE AA LEVEL (ages 9-10, PLAYER PITCH)

MENTAL ASPECTS:

- 1) Ability to maintain concentration throughout inning.
- 2) Often know that to do with the ball when fielding.
- 3) Know that shortstop is captain of infield and centerfielder is captain of outfield.

PHYSICAL ASPECTS:

- 1) **Baserunning**
 - a) Ability to round bases, especially first.
 - b) Consistently look to advance (aggressive).
 - c) Quickly react to base coach commands.
 - d) Consistently steps on proper area of base.
 - e) Slide when appropriate.
- 2) **Hitting**
 - a) Consistent hip turn and balance in swing.
 - b) Consistently takes aggressive swing.
 - c) Begin to identify strike zone.

NOTE: The mechanics of the swing and an aggressive attitude are very important at this stage, even if no contact is made (hand-eye coordination will catch up). Players should not advance to live pitching until they can take an aggressive swing.

- 3) **Fielding**
 - a) Ability to play catch from at least 60'.
 - b) Ability to catch east ground balls to the right and left.

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- c) Ability to catch low fly ball.
 - d) Understand ready position.
 - e) Catch ball with two hands.
 - f) Consistently use backhand to catch balls on throwing arm side.
- 4) **Throwing**
- a) Start to use crow hop for long throws.
 - b) Make accurate throws from 60'
 - c) Often uses proper grip.
- 5) **Pitching**
- a) Ability to throw at least 30 pitches without soreness in arm.
 - b) Ability to throw 50% strikes
 - c) Know two seam and four seam fastball.
- 6) **Catching**
- a) Use proper stance.
 - b) Catch all pitches in strike zone.
 - c) Ability to block balls in dirt directly in front.
 - d) Ability to make throw to second base.

TRIPLE AAA LEVEL (ages 9-12)

MENTAL ASPECTS:

- 1) Overall understanding of basics of game is as important as physical skills. Knowledge of the game can make up for physical deficiencies and will accelerate future development at the majors level.
- 2) Understanding sportsmanship and good conduct essentials.
- 3) Show confidence at plate and in field.
- 4) Ability to handle adversity and failure and channel emotions.

PHYSICAL ASPECTS:

- 1) **Baserunning**
 - a) Ability to determine when to take extra base when ball is in front of runner.
 - b) Basic understanding of common situations.
 - c) Consistently get good jump off base every pitch.
 - d) Slide aggressively.
- 2) **Hitting**
 - a) Aggressive approach every at bat.
 - b) Ability to take good swing and still take pitches out of strike zone.

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- c) Make consistent contact.
 - d) Understand mechanics of adjusting to off-speed pitches.
- 3) **Fielding**
- a) Ability to play catch from 80’.
 - b) Fly balls forward, left, and right should be caught with relative ease.
 - c) Ability to field medium speed ground balls.
 - d) Consistently know what to do with ball after fielding.
 - e) Consistently in “ready position” during pitch.
 - f) Ability to make back hand catch and make throw to opposite direction.
- 4) **Throwing**
- a) Make accurate throws from 80’.
 - b) Body should have good balance and direction on all routine throws.
 - c) Long, fluid arm motion.
 - d) Ability to use momentum for long throws.
- 5) **Pitching**
- a) Ability to throw 50 pitches without soreness in arm.
 - b) Ability to throw 60% strikes.
 - c) Begins to use both sides of plate.
 - d) Begins to use off-speed pitch.
 - e) Recognize game situations, position in count, strength of batter.
 - f) Ability to handle adversity and recover during game.
 - g) Confidence to survive failure and pitch again.
- 6) **Catching**
- a) Ability to move to right and left to block balls in dirt.
 - b) Take charge of team and be a leader.
 - c) Direct infielders during relay and cut-off.
 - d) Field balls in front of plate, including bunts, and make accurate throw to all bases.
 - e) Understand positioning for tag play.

MAJOR LEVEL (AGES 10-12)

MENTAL ASPECTS:

- 1) Play with confidence at all times.
- 2) Know situations-count, outs, score during at bat and in field.
- 3) Anticipate-know “what to do when ball is hit to me or anybody else.”
- 4) Look for continuation of play or defense.
- 5) Thorough understanding of game.

PHYSICAL ASPECTS:

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- 1) **Baserunning**
 - a) Confident, aggressive, and alert at all times.
 - b) Consistently look to take extra base.
 - c) Advance on all passed balls.
 - d) Ability to adjust slide away from tag.
 - e) Ability to dive back to base.

- 2) **Hitting**
 - a) Ability to see ball out of pitcher's hand.
 - b) Good understanding of strike zone.
 - c) Ability to make pitcher throw strikes.
 - d) Understand contact zone and hit to all fields.
 - e) Ability to adjust with two strikes.
 - f) Consistently hit average pitcher hard.
 - g) Ability to execute sacrifice bunt.

- 3) **Fielding**
 - a) Range and ability to go back on fly ball.
 - b) Ability to play catch from 100'.
 - c) Consistently in position to back up play.
 - d) Aware that all nine players are involved each time ball is put into play.
 - e) Communication used at all time.
 - f) React to hard hit balls and make an attempt to catch.
 - g) Ability to charge ground balls and throw on the run.
 - h) Understand and execute standard defensive plays.

- 4) **Throwing**
 - a) Ability to make accurate throws from at least 100'.
 - b) Position players should always throw with four seam grip.
NOTE: Coaches should strive to have all players able to make long, accurate throws. Players who can not throw efficiently will find it very difficult to adjust to the 90' diamond the following year.

- 5) **Pitching**
 - a) Throw above 60%
 - b) Consistently use both sides of plate.
 - c) Change speeds effectively.
 - d) Ability to field position and react to line drivers.
 - e) Ability to handle pressure of close game situations.
 - f) Back up bases.

- 6) **Catching**
 - a) Ability to frame strike zone.
 - b) Make strong, accurate throw to first, second, and third.

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- c) Ability to move aggressively to right and left to block ball in dirty.
- d) Aggressively pursue ball and wild pitch - accurate toss to pitcher at home plate.