

AAA/U9/U10 League

Stretching and Warmups

- Players should get to the field 30 mins before game
- Stretches and warmups required before doing any throwing or hitting
- Warmups can be led by one player (i.e., you can assign a team captain and give them a game ball). Encourage the captain to call outs and play, i.e., “2 outs and play is at 1st, etc.” when in the field during the game, or have the whole team involved in callouts.
- Coaches and players should go over any signs before game—keep signs very simple at this age
- Situational Awareness: Emphasize that each player should go over in their head where they will make the play each time a new batter is up or when the runners move to different bases.

Throwing>Pitcher>Wind Up Motion

- Demonstrate foot position on rubber; centered is best for learning
- Demonstrate arm and glove position at break; compact pump is best
- Demonstrate closing the hip on the leg lift. Drill> balance exercise w/ bent back leg to drive
- Arm motion with full draw downward past hip pocket
- Landing leg; “soft” front; relaxed ankle w/toe point
- Follow through to other hip pocket
- Drill>Practice pitching from both the wind-up and stretch

Throwing>Catcher>Consistent Throws to Pitcher

- Throws back to pitcher should be chest high and have “pop”. No lobs or wild throws
- Practice short arm throws “archer” from crouch and standing
- “Wrist snap”

Throwing>Catcher>Throwing to 3rd

- Catcher should step in front (preferred) or behind RH batter; no throws over the top of the hitter
- RF backs up throw

Throwing> Infield/Outfield>Throwing On the Run

- Catch the ball first!
- OF always throws full overhand “spear”; no $\frac{3}{4}$, “archer” or sidearm
- IF “archer” or “spear” depending on distance
- Shoulder alignment—“gun sight”
- “Crow hop” review (rear foot fills spot vacated by front foot; no step in front or behind b/c it twists shoulders)
- Drills> bucket drills for grounders and pop ups (high repetition throwing)

Throwing>Introduce Long Toss

- Introduce long toss during warm up throws. Gradually increase distance. #1 way to improve arm strength and accuracy

Fielding>Catcher>Blocking Balls

- Remind catchers to tuck their throwing hand under thigh, behind ankle or back—whichever is most comfortable
- Blocking pitches in dirt (over plate)
 - Glove open; fills gap in legs—not trying to catch ball in glove
 - Chin is tucked
 - Chest protector blocks ball
- Introduce slide to both right and left side of plate to block pitches
- Drills> toss to catcher varying the location of the wild pitch

Fielding>Pitcher>Covering 1st

- Break to base on any ball hit to 1st or 2nd baseman
- Approach to bag; use shallow approach if possible, teach this vs. direct
- Pitcher should display open glove target to the fielder through the run to the bag
- Drills> practice this with 1st baseman regularly

Fielding>Pitcher> Cutoffs

- **Review from AA/U7/U8:**
 - *Cutoffs I with pitchers*
- Pitcher also backs up:
 - 3rd base on throw from outfield (Cutoffs II)
 - Home on throw from outfield (Cutoffs III)

Fielding>Infield/Outfield>Positioning

- **Review from AA/U7/U8:**
 - *Outfield*
 - *CF has priority and dictates position of other OF*
 - *Balls hit in gap CF> LF/RF. LF/RF responsible to call off CF. OF not catching backs up.*
 - *IF should defer to OF call off on 'flare'*
 - *SS has priority over 2nd and 3rd baseman, primary responsibility of baseman is the base on gap balls*
 - *Infield has priority over pitcher and catcher on infield (fair or foul) pop-ups*
 - *Pitcher has priority in front of mound*
 - *Catcher has priority on all short "bunts"*

Fielding> Infield/Outfield>Charging the Ball

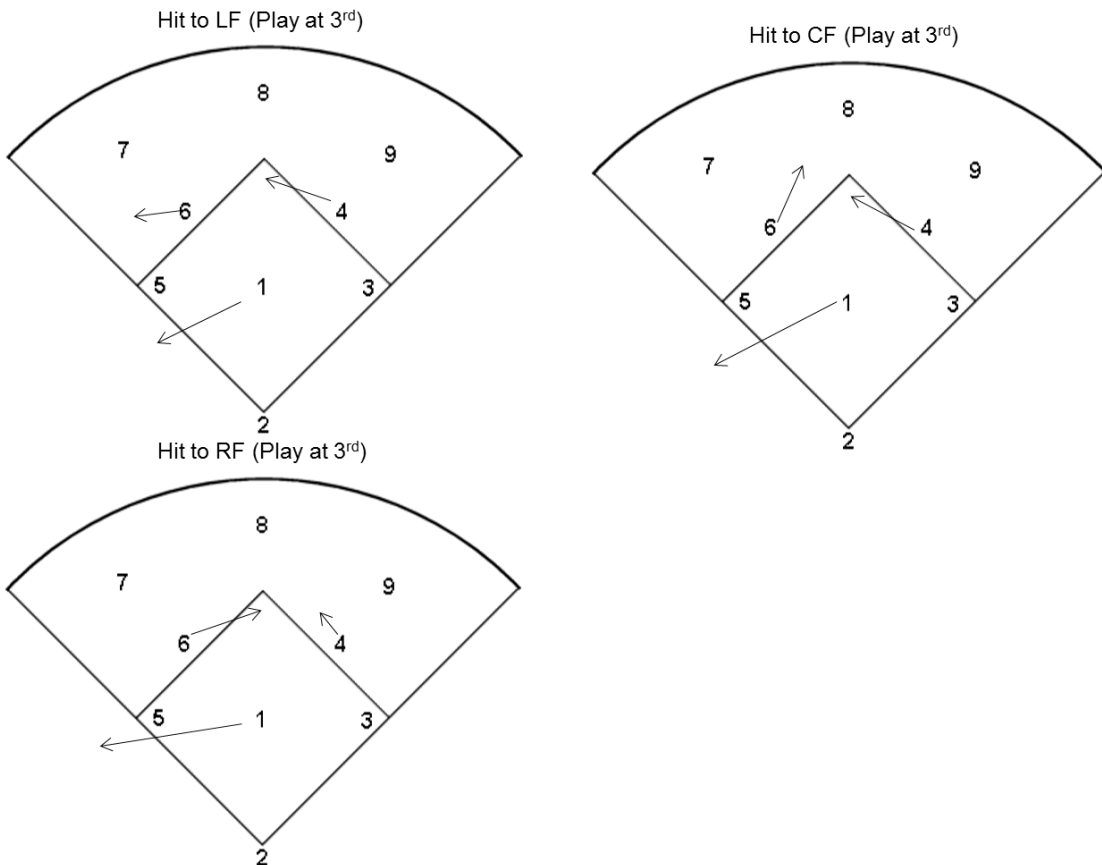
- No “duck waddling” to the ball. Run, plant, catch, throw
- Drills>bucket drills (high repetition fielding on both glove and hand side throwing drills)

Fielding>Infield/Outfield> Positioning>Going Back on the Ball

- Turn, run, catch, throw; unless it’s the last out in the inning OF should always throw the ball back to cutoff as quickly as possible
- If possible, over-run the ball slightly and set up for a catch and throw moving forward
- Drills> practice going back and catching balls hit over both shoulders

Fielding>Infield/Outfield>Cutoffs II

- **Review from AA/U7/U8**
 - *Cutoffs I –remind all players that runners cannot advance when pitcher has ball on the mound; make sure to get the ball back to the pitcher asap*
- Add: Cutoffs to 3rd
- Introduce throwing to the glove side of the cutoff man—if possible. This will be reinforced more fully in Cutoffs III.



Fielding>Infield/Outfield>Playing 1st Base

- For left-handed throwing 1st baseman, left foot contacts base and vice versa
- Square up to the ball in athletic stance, foot on (infield side)center of base, reposition foot if necessary to either infield side corner of the base to make catch
- For errant throws reinforce that it is most important to catch the ball, even if you need to vacate the base
- Drills> have 1st baseman practice squaring up, footwork and catching throws to both sides of base

Fielding>Infield/Outfield>Tagging the Runner

- 1st base: if runner makes a turn into the field always apply tag to runner; if unsure tag and wait for the umpire to make the call
- 2nd and 3rd base: concentrate on making the catch by facing thrower; rotate body and feet to straddle the bag; place tag on runner's foot (if sliding) or lower leg (if standing); less chance runner can knock it out of glove; avoid 'swipe' tags, 'phantom' tags, and lunging forward to meet runner in base path
- Home plate: avoid collisions by staying in front of plate; do not block the plate or base path; if you don't have the ball and you block the runner's path you can be called for obstruction
 - Use a two handed tag by cradling ball in glove with free hand; low athletic stance that allows movement toward runner; feet a bit more than shoulder width
 - Sliding runner: runners may try to slide past the plate and tag it with their hand, or slide to the back of the plate, so apply a sweeping two handed tag to the runner's hand, foot or leg
 - Upright runner: expect collision; "death grip" on ball with free hand cradled in the glove to make tag (avoid placing the tag too hard on the runner or pushing them so as to incite the other team)

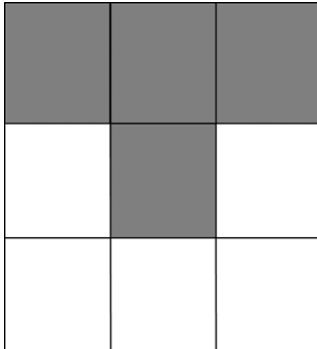
Hitting>Swing >Hands and Arms>Barrel Extension

- Discuss the "sweet spot" on the bat—generally between the bat CG and barrel—you can feel it on the tee
- The most power comes when baseball contacts the bat barrel just before the wrists break
- Discuss the swing plane for high and low pitches
- Drills>practice hitting middle of the plate high and low pitches using the tee. Practice, practice, practice!!

Hitting>Swing>High/Low Pitches

- Emphasize the importance of punishing pitchers for throwing high in the strike zone "zone of death." Need to be very aggressive on high pitches anywhere in the strike zone.

- Low pitches are more difficult to hit than high pitches
- Very important to have an aggressive, “knees bent” stance to hit the low pitch—keep back straight and don’t bend at waist to hit low pitch



 - Zone of Death for Pitchers

Hitting> Stance> Weight Shift

- Power comes from the hip drive—hips should stay closed then “pop” open quickly as weight is transferred from back to front foot
- Drills> practice “popping” hips

Running> Footwork>Pop-Up Slide

- Hands up; preferably not dragging on the ground
- Whichever leg is more natural for the player to tuck under; does not matter
- Always bend the straight leg when sliding
- Drills> see various videos online; HS players to demonstrate

Running>Ball Awareness>Tagging Up

- Runners should practice tagging up on all fly balls to outfield and be aggressive using the tag
- Rule: on any line drive with even a remote chance of getting caught, always return to the base as soon as it is hit. Do not get doubled up on a line drive.