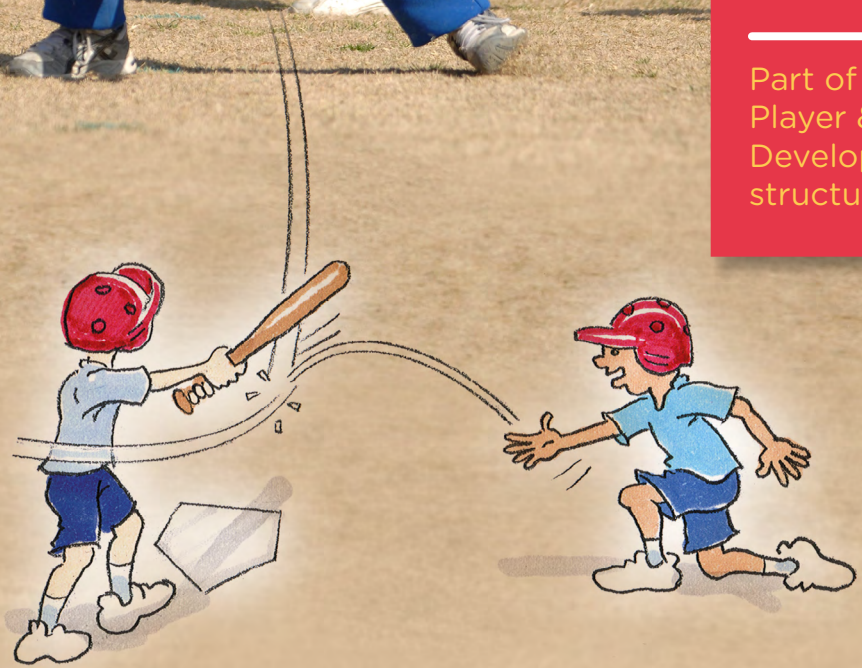




NCAS Level 2 Coaches Manual

Part of the
Player & Coach
Development
structure



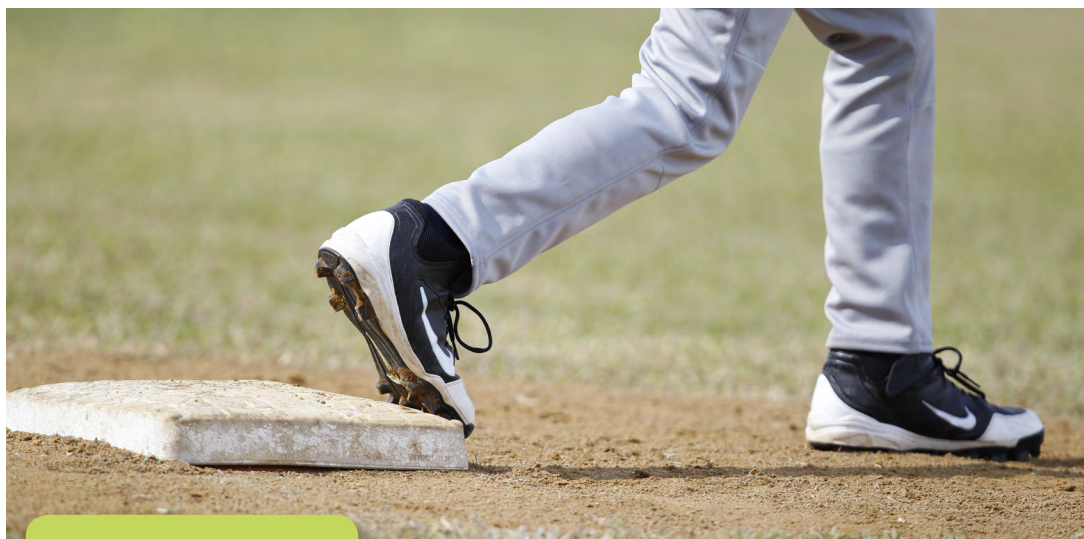
Australian Government
Australian Sports Commission

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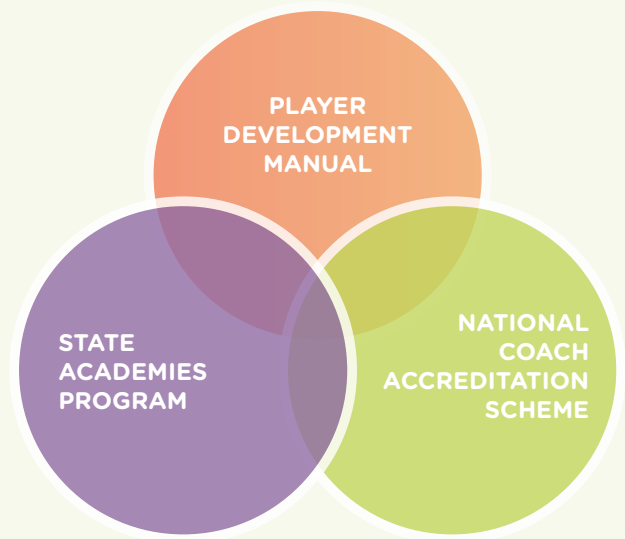


Welcome

to the ABF National Coach Accreditation Scheme: Level 2

As the National Head Coach, I would like to welcome you to the new NCAS Level 2 Manual. The National Coach Accreditation Scheme (NCAS), developed in close cooperation with the Australian Sports Commission (ASC), is a competency-based scheme that is structured to provide a graduated series of standards, which coaches must achieve in order to gain the relevant level of accreditation. This Manual is designed to help you acquire the competencies required for Level 2.

The NCAS is part of Baseball Australia's three-pronged Player & Coach Development structure and intended to improve the appeal of baseball to participants and spectators. The NCAS, Player Development Manual, and the State Academies Program are the three primary vehicles that share the philosophy, activities, and instruction being used to develop a lifelong interest and expertise in our game.

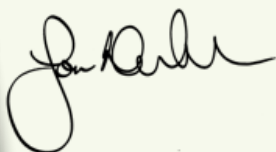


The breadth and depth of baseball knowledge available in Australia has advanced greatly over the last 20 years. Accordingly, our approach to the development of our coaches and players has been steadily evolving and will continue to do so. You will find the NCAS places a huge emphasis on coaches being equipped with a large number of ideas on activities and drills, and less on technical instruction. This bias has a strong scientific basis: Humans develop physical skills by being actively engaged in purposeful activity, rather than by listening to someone tell them how the experts do it. It also makes training and learning a lot more fun!

There is no benefit in having players attempt activities for which they are not ready. Therefore, NCAS presents a graduated approach to types of activities best suited for each level of player, from Aussie T-Ballers and novices to drills and routines regularly used by players in Major League Baseball. The coaching material is carefully designed to provide optimal long-term development of our players, while retaining an emphasis on participation and enjoyment.

The contents of this manual are designed to be beneficial to players and coaches at the intermediate to advanced levels of the game in Australia. I hope that it will provide the necessary guidance for Baseball Australia's exciting new challenges and expectations.

Yours in baseball,



Jon Deeble
Australian National Team Manager



Skill Acquisition

Introduction

How does a child learn to walk, talk, or ride a bike?

Is it because an adult sat the child down, provided them with detailed instructions, cajoled them into repetitive practise, and/or criticised them when they didn't do it properly? Not after usually it's by being given the chance to try it and learn by doing.

Children learn skills best when they see others doing something they want to be able to do. They try to do it themselves, and gradually make better approximations until they can do it. Parents and other adults may provide encouragement and support, but mostly kids – and even adults – learn by doing.

In an ideal learning situation, skill acquisition occurs subconsciously while the participant is having fun. This type of learning is called implicit learning.

To the untrained eye, the approach to Aussie T-Ball and Little League training may appear to lack structure, or instruction. However, there is actually a proven coaching technique at work – implicit learning.

Simply stated, children learn by doing and active learning is more enjoyable for children. Coaches want to be effective and to establish a positive attitude towards physical activity. Therefore, coaches should concentrate on arranging opportunities to learn by the use of interesting and varied activity.

The following summary explains the benefits of implicit learning and is from a report for the Australian Institute of Sport, written by Damian Farrow, one of the world's leading authorities on skill acquisition.





What is Implicit Learning?

One of the biggest fallacies among the coaching community is the belief that an expert's skills and wisdoms can somehow be directly transferred to young novices. If, from the very beginning, a child can be perpetually supervised, told precisely how to do things, and have the details explained with perfect clarity, then any youngster with potential can "make it" in sport.

It just doesn't work that way. In the real world, skill and expertise are acquired only through years of experience. Experimentation, creativity, and "getting it wrong" (i.e., failure) are all a crucial elements of the learning process.

Many traditional coaches use a form of explicit teaching. These coaches use verbal instruction to explain how to do things and often concentrate on "correct" technique, rather than activity, to teach a student how to perform a skill.

Explicit learning typically results in the student being able to verbalise how to perform the skill, although it does not guarantee the student can physically execute the skill.

Well-structured implicit learning activities, on the other hand, typically lack instruction about how to perform the skill. Instructions are typically limited to what the student is trying to accomplish in this activity (e.g., "Hit the target with the ball!"). Activities are shaped so that by attempting to accomplish the goal, the student is subconsciously acquiring a skill.

Implicit learning often results in a student being able to perform the skill without necessarily being able to say how they do it. Interestingly, this is a characteristic possessed by many champion athletes: They can "just do it," but they can't necessarily tell someone else how they do it.

This is also how children learn to walk, talk, and ride a bicycle. Parents guide their children as they learn, but they don't usually provide much instruction about how to do things.

What are the benefits of Implicit Learning?

Skills that have been explicitly taught are more likely to falter under stress, because the student is more likely to think too much about how to do things (i.e., “paralysis by analysis”), rather than concentrate on getting the job done. This can compound into unnecessary anxiety and have a negative long-term effect on a child’s confidence.

Implicit learning strengthens subconscious processes, because the brain subconsciously attempts to work out the best way to achieve the desired result, and allows the body to make adjustments naturally to execute the skill without interruption from the conscious brain. Over time, the body discovers the most efficient way to do something. Young athletes are then able to play, and learn as they play, which makes for a happy and healthy experience.

Several scientific studies have found that skills learned implicitly are:

- More permanent; and
- Less likely to breakdown under pressure (because they are attained by and stored in the subconscious).

Is there no place for Explicit Learning?

Explicit instruction is most effective when athletes have accrued enough experience to put the explicit coaching into context, relate to the explanation, and understand its benefits. Players must first build their databases of physical activity and challenging situations, so they can later derive value from explicit coaching.





How does a coach design Implicit Learning activities?

Evidence supports the use of an implicit learning approach with players of all ages, including young beginners. It is the basis of the game-based learning approach, in which skills are taught in a variety of mini-games and drills that are fun, yet challenging. Game-based learning is meant to continually test not only physical skills, but decision making and tactics as well.

However, it is not realistic to simply remove instruction and expect learning to occur. The tasks and activities need to be structured with a particular purpose. Materials and activities presented in the National Coach Accreditation Scheme are designed in such a way.

The secret is to draw the student's attention away from thinking about the technique required to perform the task at hand. Students will watch and learn from others who are better than themselves. Such experiences are far more valuable than a coach trying to tell a young novice how to do something. The coach's primary duties are to ensure safety, make sure all students know the goal of the activity, and then let the students try it for themselves.

Other implicit learning strategies include:



Explain skill requirements by analogy or metaphor, so the need for explicit verbal information is minimised (e.g., “Swing like you are chopping down a tree!”).



Encourage experimentation by providing instructions that have nothing to do with achieving a particular result, but will lead the students to discover for themselves the best way to do things (e.g., “Try holding your glove in different positions!”). Young novices always remember things they have taught themselves, which is great for developing self-esteem.



Ask students to perform a secondary task while simultaneously performing a primary skill. Instruction, such as, “Hit only the balls with the red dot on them,” triggers young novices to subconsciously develop the ability to track a moving ball while consciously searching for the balls with red dots on them.



Design games using different scoring systems and/or boundaries that require players to use new strategies to win the game. Simply tell the players the adjusted scoring system and/or boundaries and just let them play (e.g., “Okay, it’s now double points if you catch the ball with one hand, but you can also lose two points if you drop the ball using only one hand!”). Allow young athletes the time to determine the most appropriate strategies and responses, rather than explicitly explain the solution to them.



Many coaches use the T.R.E.E. anagram to remind themselves to consider a variety of adjustments:

Teaching

Adjust the type of instruction you provide;

Rules

Change a few rules to make a big difference;

Environment

Play on different surfaces or on a windy day;

Equipment

Use different types of balls or bats.

Conclusion

Explicit instruction will always be a part of coaching, but coaches should remain aware that it is not effective for players that lack years of experience.

Implicit learning is the most appropriate and effective learning strategy available to young novices.

Young athletes develop best when given the opportunity to be actively involved in a wide variety, and large volume, of physical activity. Not only will children learn, but those children will learn how to learn as they figure things out for themselves.

Often, the best instruction for a young athlete is simply:

"See if you can!"



NCAS Level 2 Competencies

General Coaching Knowledge:

- Demonstrate awareness of a coach's duty of care
- Identify safety issues and manage the risks of baseball
- Identify the elements of a training session for Juniors
- Plan a training session for juniors
- Name and locate the nine standard defensive positions on a baseball field
- Outline a philosophy and strategies for maintaining "good tempo"
- Recall the rules of a baseball game modified for Junior players
- Use inclusive coaching principles to rotate player positions equally

General Coaching Activities:

- Modify activities as required according to the TREE guidelines
- Include cross-sport activities
- Use a game-based learning approach to conduct activities and mini-games
- Organise a modified baseball game for Juniors

General Coaching Instruction:

- Explain FUNdamental safety guidelines to players
- Communicate a "fast tempo" philosophy

NCAS Level 2 Competencies

Continued

Long-Term Athletic Development (LTAD) Knowledge:

- Outline the LTAD model and approach

Long-Term Athletic Development (LTAD) Activities:

- Conduct a structured warm-up that ties into LTAD model

Long-Term Athletic Development (LTAD) Instruction:

- Provide instruction on the correct execution of unloaded squat and lunge walk.

Hitting Activities:

- Conduct activities designed to encourage hitters to track the ball and hit it hard

Hitting Instruction:

- Explain the intent of the swing
- Teach hitters effective drills for developing their swing

Throwing Knowledge:

- List the key risk factors of injury for young pitchers

Throwing Activities:

- Engage players in a variety of activities to develop their throwing ability
- Use simple drills to teach pitching mechanics

Throwing Instruction:

- Teach pitching from a set position using the key coaching points for this age level
- Provide simple instructions on pitching in a game

NCAS Level 2 Competencies

Continued

Fielding Activities:

- Involve players in fielding activities with varying levels of challenge
- Utilise activities designed to encourage players to catch a fly ball

Fielding Instruction:

- Position the catcher correctly in relation to hitter and home plate
- Teach groundball basics
- Instruct catching the ball with hand in backhand position
- Teach players the names and locations of the standard nine defensive positions

Running Knowledge:

- Outline a progressive approach to developing sliding technique

Running Activities:

- Conduct base running activities
- Conduct low risk sliding activities

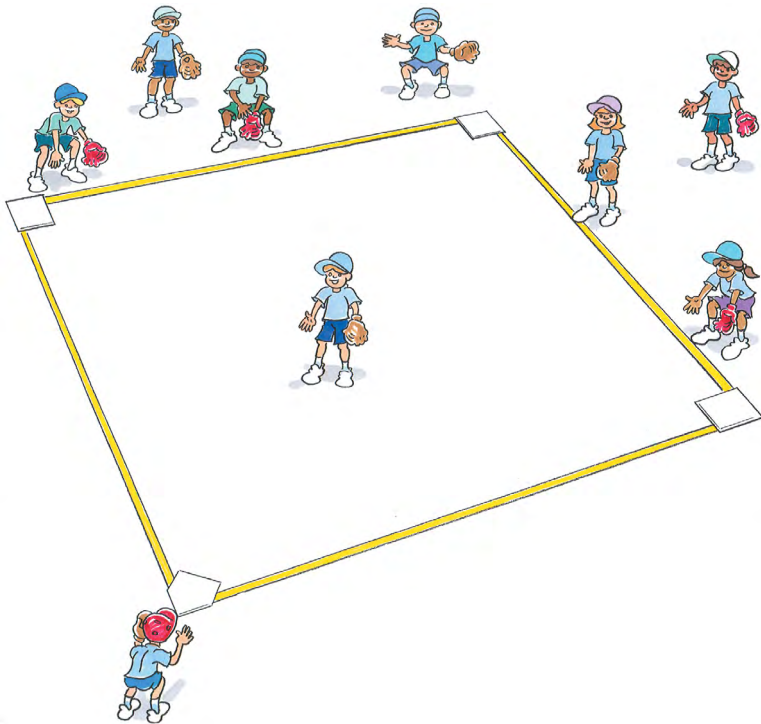
Running Instruction:

- Insist players run hard on every batted ball
- Encourage base runners to make their own decisions

Coaching Baseball

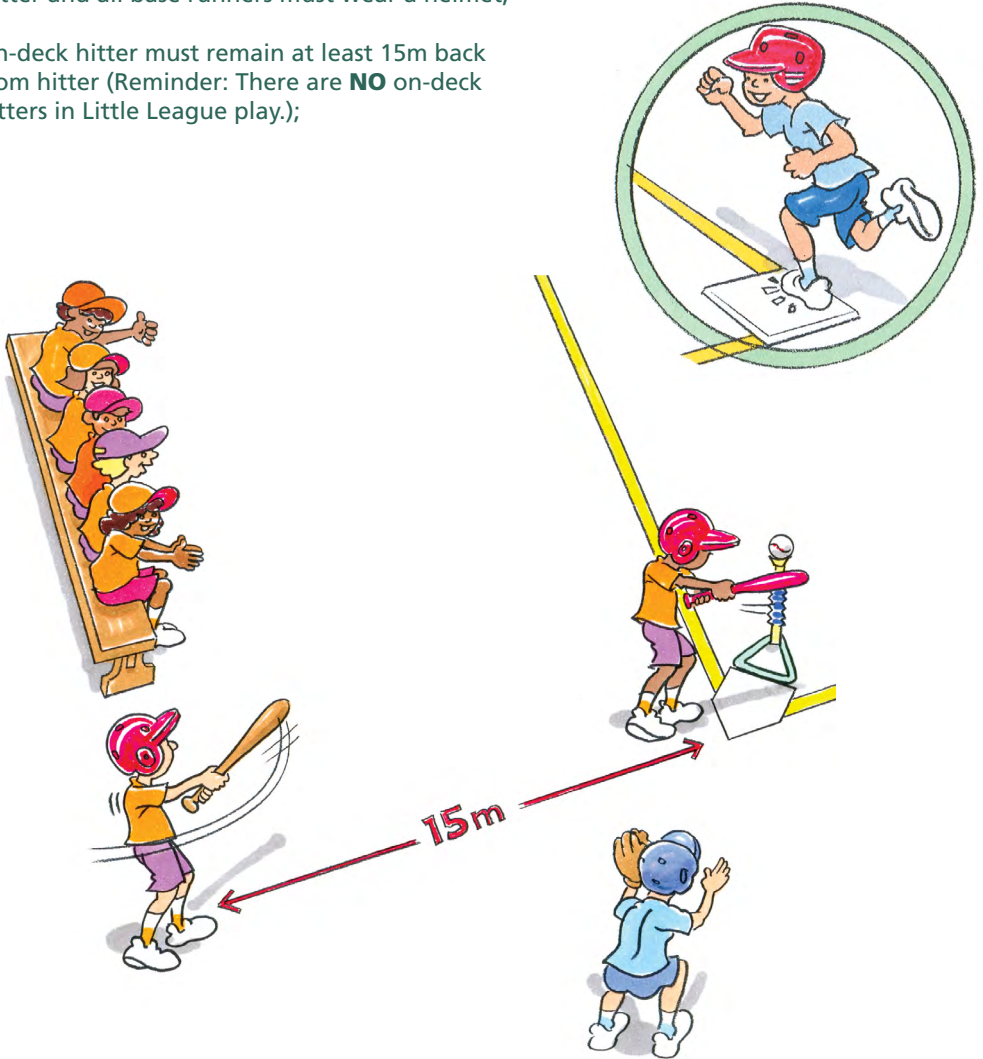
Demonstrate awareness of a coach's duty of care

- A coach assumes a certain duty of care: he or she must treat and supervise team members in the same way as would a prudent parent.
- Harassment, bullying and abuse are completely inappropriate, whether by team members or the coach.
- The Coaches Code of Conduct is an integral part of Australian baseball. It must be signed and adhered to.



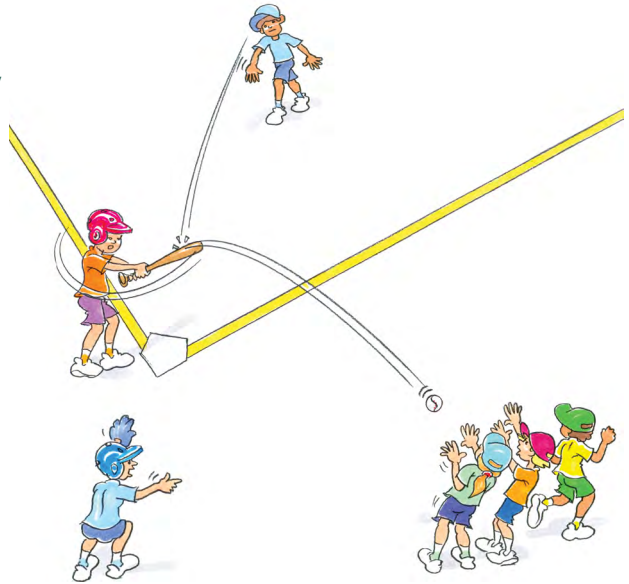
Identify safety issues and manage the risks of baseball

- 1 Ensure the playing area and surrounds are safe;
- 2 Hitter and all base runners must wear a helmet;
- 3 On-deck hitter must remain at least 15m back from hitter (Reminder: There are **NO** on-deck hitters in Little League play.);



Identify safety issues and manage the risks of baseball

4 Bats and balls can be dangerous and may fly unexpectedly in any direction;



5 Encourage players to avoid unnecessary collisions.

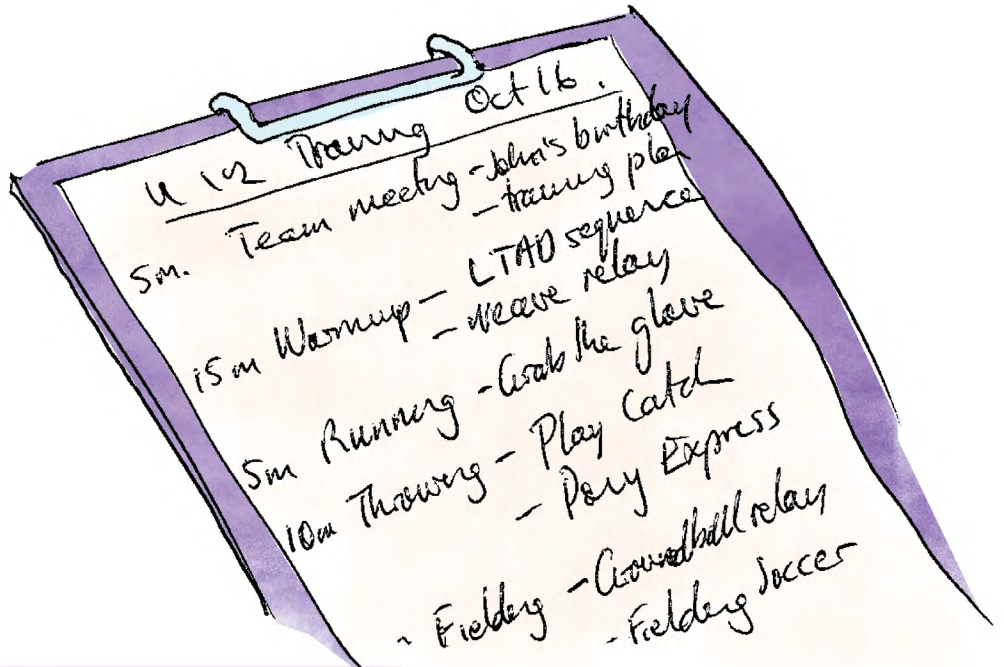


Identify the elements of a training session for juniors

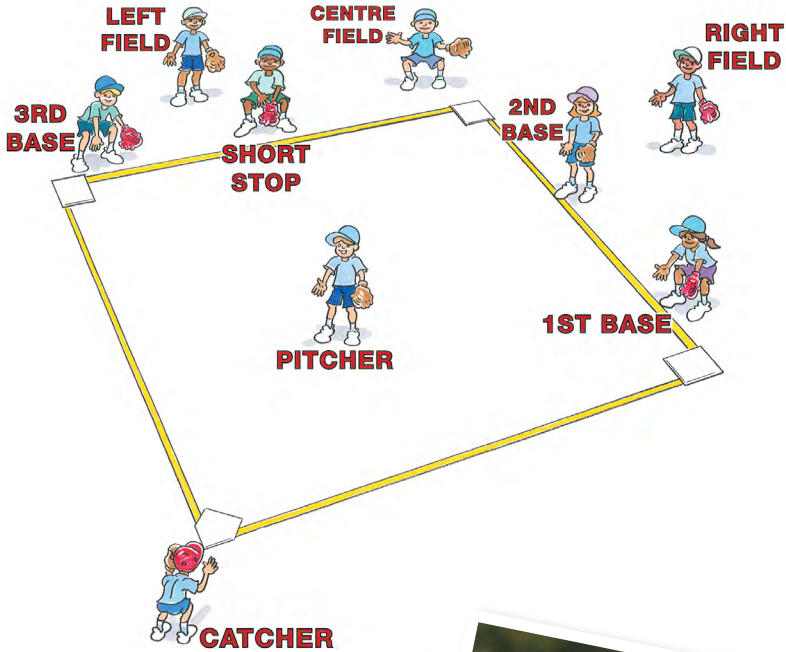
Team meeting: Outline the plan for the day	2-5 minutes
Structured warm-up	10-15 minutes
Throwing activities	10-20 minutes
Running activities	5-15 minutes
Fielding activities	15-25 minutes
Hitting activities	20-30 minutes
Optional: Scrimmage or game-based activity	15-45 minutes
Feedback: Discuss training, next event, etc.	2-5 minutes

Plan a training session for juniors

Use the above outline to plan a comprehensive session plan for a rookie-ball team.



Name and locate the nine standard defensive positions on a baseball field



Outline a philosophy and strategies for maintaining "good tempo"

- 1 The game is best played at a fast tempo. Players should be encouraged to be energetic and enthusiastic at all times, during both training sessions and games.
- 2 Four specific instances at this level:
 - a. 60-second changeover;
 - b. Catcher ready;
 - c. Gloves organised; and
 - d. Run hard on all hit balls.



Recall the rules of a baseball game modified for junior players

NB: local variations are permitted

Player-pitch baseball modified for junior players

Baseball is played by two teams of nine players each. The object is to score more runs than the opposing team. Here is a set of rules for a modified player-pitch game, which is similar to Rookie Ball and suitable for young players.

How to score a run

To score a run a player must touch all the bases (e.g., first, second, third, and home plate) in order around the diamond. Each player takes a turn as a hitter (also sometimes called a batter). The hitter becomes a base runner if the hitter safely reaches base.

Starting the game

At the start of play the fielding side takes up its positions in the infield and outfield areas. The first hitter assumes his/her batting stance in the hitter's box next to home plate. This is called a plate appearance or at bat.

Pitching

The pitcher takes his/her position on the pitcher's mound near the centre of the diamond (note that young players frequently play without a pitcher's mound). There is a small rubber plate on the mound, and one foot must be in contact with the plate in preparing to pitch and during the actual delivery.

Play starts when the plate umpire calls play. The pitcher must then pitch the ball to the hitter. The pitcher throws the ball with the intention for it to pass over the home plate and within the strike zone (i.e., the area between the knees and armpits in the hitter's normal stance). The pitcher cannot throw the ball directly at the hitter.

The umpire will call a strike if the pitcher accurately pitches the ball through the strike zone without the hitter making contact, regardless of whether the hitter swings. Any pitch the hitter swings at and misses is also a strike. A foul ball occurs when the hitter hits the ball into foul territory (i.e., the area behind the foul lines). Foul balls count as a strikes, unless the hitter already has two strikes. The hitter continues to bat if he/she hits a foul ball with two strikes against him/her. The umpire will call ball if the pitch is low, wide, or high of the strike zone.

How does a hitter get on base?

If the pitcher delivers four balls in the same plate appearance, the hitter is allowed to walk freely to first base without making a hit. This is known as being awarded a base on balls (or a walk).

The hitter chooses which pitches to swing at and hit. Once the ball is hit into fair territory, the hitter becomes a base runner and must immediately drop the bat and run to reach first base. If the base runner touches first base before a player in possession of the ball, the runner is safe. Upon reaching first base, he/she can run to the next base, if they feel it's safe to do so.

Base running

Hitters who do not complete the circuit of the diamond become base runners and thereafter attempt to move from base to base as each subsequent hitter takes a plate appearance.

If the ball is hit with a base runner on first base, that base runner is forced to advance to second base, because two runners are not allowed to share the same base. This creates a force situation. A base runner is not forced to advance to the next base if any base behind him/her is unoccupied.

An inning

Each team bats in turn. The half-inning ends when three players of the batting team have been put out. The inning is completed when both teams have batted. A full game consists of nine innings unless the score is tied. Extra innings are played in order to decide a winner after nine innings, but young players usually play for five innings or to a time limit. The home team has the advantage of batting in the bottom of the inning (i.e. the last half-inning of each inning). The away (or visiting) team bats first, in the top of the inning.

How can a hitter and/or base runners get out?

- Any hitter that collects three strikes in one plate appearance is out. That player must return to the dugout and wait until his/her next plate appearance to hit again. The pitcher is credited with a strike out.
- The hitter is out if a ball hit in the air (a fly ball) is caught by a fielder in fair or foul territory.
- A forced base runner is out if he/she touches the base that he/she is advancing to after a fielder in possession of the ball touches that same base.
- A base runner is out if a fielder tags him/her (i.e., touches him/her with a glove or hand holding the ball while the runner is between bases).
- When a hitter is out as result of a fly ball, all base runners must return to the base they occupied prior to that fly ball.
- Any hitter who is out must return to the team's dugout and wait until his/her next plate appearance to hit again.
- The hitting team continues to bat in turn until three outs are made. After they take the field on defence and allow the other team a half-inning of batting; the team then continues to bat from where they finished in the last inning,
- Substitutes are allowed at any time. Often the pitcher is replaced, because the physical pressure of repeatedly pitching balls takes its toll during a game. The nine players bat in strict rotation and the substitute must take the place of the player he/she replaces in the batting order. A player may not re-enter the game after he/she has been removed by a substitute.
- When three outs have been made, the half-inning is completed and the opposing team bats. The match ends if the home team (i.e., the team that bats in the bottom half of the inning) has scored more runs than the away team at the end of the top of the final inning. Otherwise the home team bats in the final inning in a last ditch attempt to win the game before its completion.

ROOKIE BALL

As the name suggests, Rookie Ball (also known as Coach-Pitch or Zooka Ball) is a modified game of baseball to suit younger players that are new to the game. Rookie Ball bridges Aussie T-ball and proper baseball. Rookie Ball is played according to the rules of baseball, except that neither team pitches to the other. Instead, a Designated Pitcher (or a Zooka-like machine) pitches the ball to the hitters. The intention is to consistently deliver more strikes, so that players learn to hit the ball, run the bases, and field hit balls at a higher tempo.

General

- Team size may be eight or nine players.
- A game may be played between teams of unequal numbers. It is permitted, though not mandatory, that one team may lend players to the other in order to equalise numbers.
- A half-inning ends when three outs are made or the hitting team scores six runs.
- A team may score no more than six runs per half-inning
- Teams may field as many players as the opposition (a maximum of nine fielders) and bat any number.
- It is important to emphasise game-sense activities, the development of basic motor skills, and basic baseball skills when training players at this age and skill level.

Pitching

The Designated Pitcher is a coach, or other designated individual, from the batting team that pitches the ball to his/her team's hitters. The Designated Pitcher must be at least 15 years of age.

Batting

- The hitter is awarded a single base hit – and all other base runners advance one base only – if the hitter hits the ball directly to the Designated Pitcher. Designated Pitchers should wear a glove for self-protection, but they must make every effort to avoid touching any batted ball.
- Only one ball is allowed on the playing field at any given time.
- There are no bases on balls (i.e., walks) or strikeouts in Rookie Ball.
- Each hitter is granted three (3) swings at pitches, after which a tee is provided for the hitter to hit off. The hitter continues his/her plate appearance until he/she hits the ball into fair territory. (Use only full rubber tees or folding tees. No hard metal tees.)
- A hitter using a tee must hit the ball a minimum of 15 feet from the tee for the hit to be considered to be in fair territory.

Base Running

- There is no stealing of bases, or advancing on passed balls and wild pitches, in Rookie Ball.
- Base runners may not leave their base until the hitter makes contact with the ball.
- If the umpire observes such infringements, the base runner is sent back to the base last legally occupied. If the pitch is hit into fair territory, the infringing base runner is ruled out. All other plays resulting from that hit shall stand.
- Base runners may not advance beyond the base they are approaching at the time of the first throw by an infielder

(e.g., a routine throw to a base, or a relay throw from the outfield). This is to encourage players to make the throw and not be too worried about missing the target. The play is automatically deemed dead after the first throw.

- Time out may only be called by the umpire once the ball is in the possession of a player in the infield, and it is deemed that no other plays will reasonably take place.



Fielding

- The Designated Pitcher cannot field the ball.
- Infielders must assume their initial fielding position behind the base paths.
- Outfielders must be well behind their infielders before play can resume. An appropriate distance is approximately five meters behind the infielders.
- All fielders shall remain stationary when the umpire calls "play ball" and as the ball is pitched.
- The fielding team can position a pitcher on the pitching rubber (or nearby designated mark) to field balls hit in the vicinity of the Designated Pitcher.
- There is no Infield Fly rule in Rookie Ball.
- If a fly ball is caught by any fielder, the hitter is out, the play becomes dead and no base runner(s) may advance or be put out.



Use inclusive coaching principles to rotate player positions equally

- In all teams there will be varying levels of ability, but it is unacceptable at this level to continually play the better players in key positions. It is essential that all children receive equal opportunity and are encouraged to participate fully in all aspects of the game.
- All players get equal time in each position. Divide positions into three groups: infield, outfield, and battery (pitcher, catcher and first base). Players rotate throughout the season. Players spend the entire game in one group, and rotate each inning to a new position within that group. Example: Player A plays catcher, pitcher, first base, catcher, pitcher, first base this week, and Player A will play second base, third base, shortstop, second base, third base, shortstop next week.
- The batting order should be arranged in order of fielding position (e.g., pitcher bats first, catcher bats second, first baseman bats third, second baseman bats fourth, third baseman bats fifth, shortstop bats sixth, left fielder bats seventh, centre fielder bats eighth, and right fielder bats ninth). This method of setting batting order simplifies the process, teaches the players position numbers, and rotates each player's batting position from week-to-week, so every child gets a chance to lead off the batting order at some stage of season.
- When practising, a coach needs to know whether an activity is being used to reinforce something the players already know (i.e., rehearsal), or to challenge them to expand their abilities and knowledge (i.e., learning). Learning activities can be made challenging to the extent that success is unlikely, but almost within the player's grasp. Learning new skills, and the willingness to try to master something new, should always be rewarded as these are important life lessons and key to the development of champions.

- A key skill for coaching is the ability to adjust activities to cater for varying individual ability and need. All drills and activities can be adjusted by modifying the rules, the equipment, or the environment (e.g., coaches can adjust distances, rules, pace, rules, or the competitive element).
- Coaches should maintain the philosophy that competitive games are fun, but winning is not the goal. Promote good sportsmanship, stay enthusiastic and reward effort rather than success. Do not disparage and confront the umpire.

	Infield	Outfield	Battery
Game 1	Jimmy Alice Mark	Lachlan Matthew Stephanie	John Sammy Justin
Game 2	John Sammy Justin	Jimmy Alice Mark	Lachlan Matthew Stephanie
Game 3	Lachlan Matthew Stephanie	John Sammy Justin	Jimmy Alice Mark
Game 4	Jimmy Alice Mark	Lachlan Matthew Stephanie	John Sammy Justin






Modify activities according to the **TREE** guidelines

The anagram T.R.E.E. is used to remind coaches of the different ways an activity can be modified.

T eaching	Adjust the type of instruction you provide;
R ules	Change a few rules to make a big difference;
E nvironment	Play on different surfaces or on a windy day;
E quipment	Use different types of balls or bats.

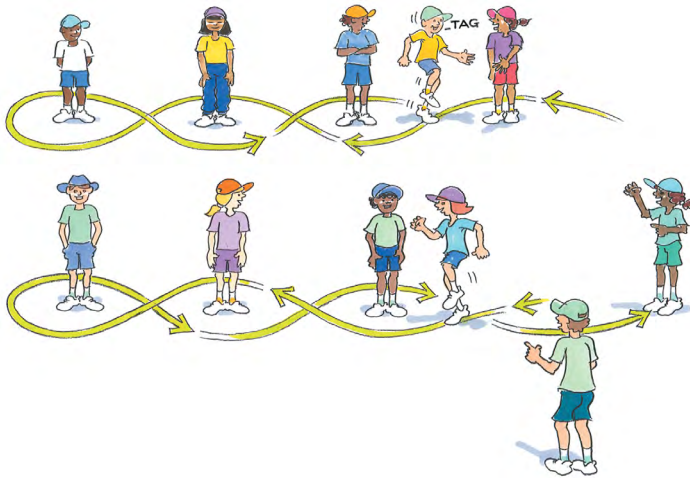
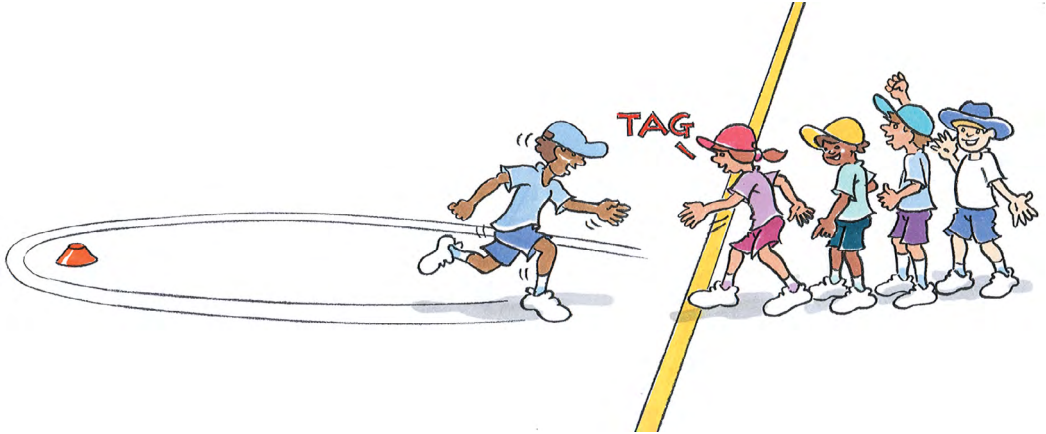
Use cross-sport activities

Use a game-based learning approach to conduct activities and mini-games in at least one of the following ways:

-  Play baseball with the hitter kicking a football;
-  Play "fielding soccer" with a netball, allowing any type of pass;
-  Play "Roll-a-goal" using a football;
-  Play "force-em-back" with tennis racquet and ball;
-  Invent something new and interesting.

Use a game-based learning approach to maximise engagement and participation

- Sprint Relay:** Teams of 5-6 line up in single file. On the "go" signal from the coach, the first person runs down around cone and back to tag next person. Continue until whole team is back in original position, standing straight.



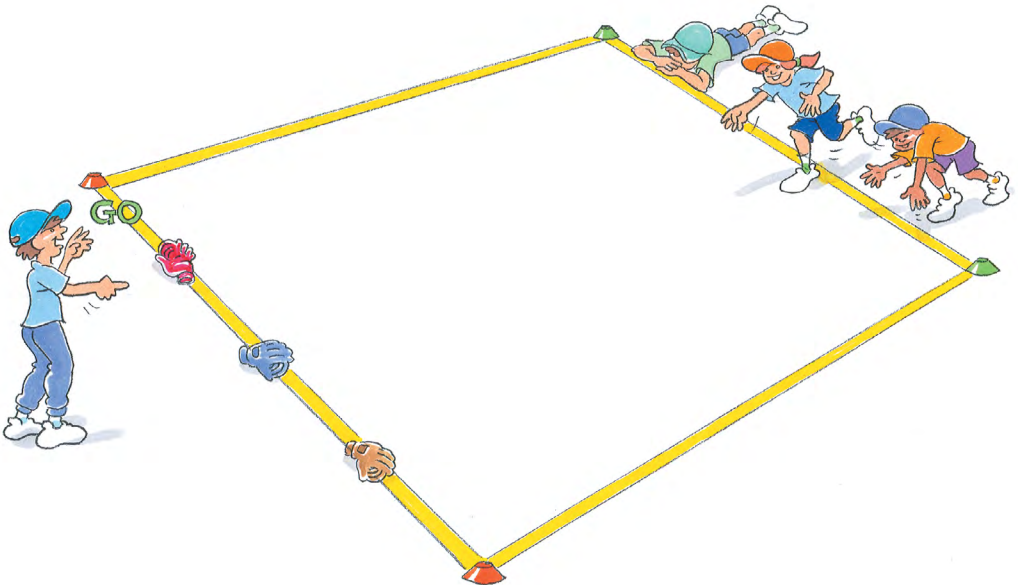
- Weave Relay:** Teams of 5-6 players line up with 1-2m apart. On the "go" signal from the coach the last person sprints down weaving between each member of his/her team. Players then go around front person, and weave back to tag next person in line. The second runner weaves down around front person and around back and tags third runner. Repeat until front runner weaves back to his/her position.

- 3 Chain Relay:** Line players up, in groups of four-to-five, behind a cone. On the “go” signal from the coach the first runner runs down around a cone about 10-20m in front, continuing to the back of team. Then whole team hold on to each other’s waists and run as a “chain” down around front cone and back to original cone without breaking the chain. If the chain is broken all players must stop and reconnect before they continue the relay. After the team returns to the original cone, the new front runner runs a circuit around the cone and joins the back of team. The group then again runs as a chain. This sequence continues until all runners have run individually and all runners have run at head of chain.

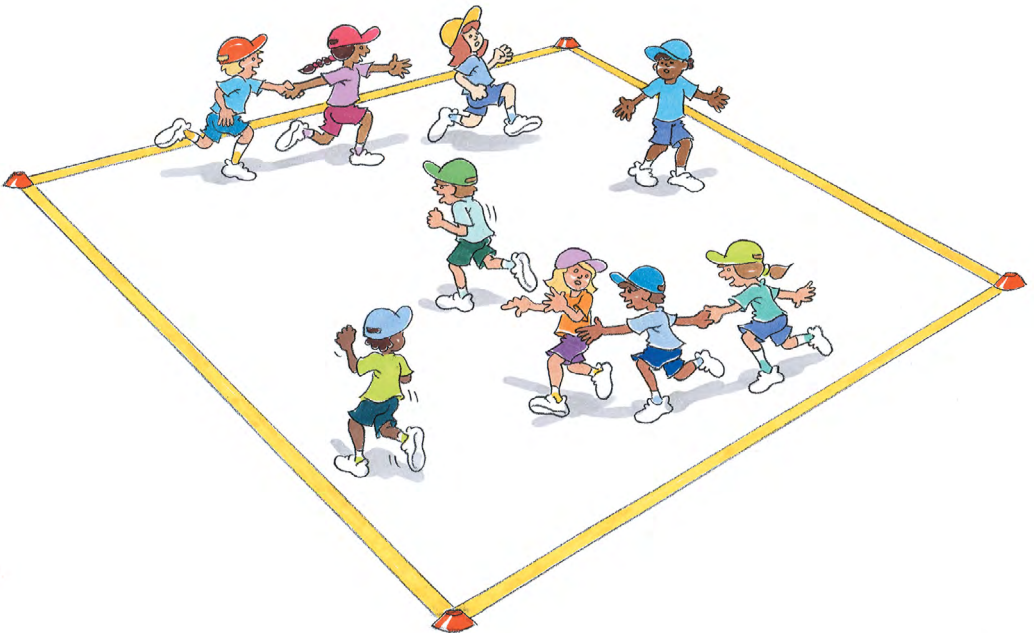


- 4 **Grab the glove:** All players lie face down on the ground in a straight line. The coach spreads enough gloves for each player out in front of the team at various distances. On the “go” signal from the coach the team stands and races to get a glove.

Variation: Leave one fewer gloves than players in a series of elimination races.



- 5 Chain Tag:** The team spreads out in a designated area marked by cones. Two players are nominated as taggers. They join hands to form a chain. The chain then runs to tag as many runners as possible. Once tagged, that player must join the chain. As the chain grows to four players, it must split into two pairs. The game continues until every player has been tagged. Only outside arms (i.e. arms not forming the chain) can tag runners. Chains must keep the grips connected during the tag.



Organise a modified baseball game for Juniors

Safety issues

Helmets are required. Maintain safe distances and awareness of swinging bats and flying balls. Avoid collisions.

Philosophy

Competitive games are fun, but winning should not be the chief focus. Promote good sportsmanship, stay enthusiastic, and reward effort rather than success. Never say anything negative about or to other participants – including umpires, scorers, and/or players and coaches of either team.

Organisation

Sit players in hitting order on the bench. Arrange gloves and drinks for ease of access. Parents are not allowed in the dugout or on the field of play. Everyone runs to position or dugout at the end of each half-inning.

Preparation

Write your line-up (batting order and defence), and include copies for scorers, umpires and opponents. Conduct a team meeting and thorough warm-up, including hitting and fielding practice, if feasible. Ensure everyone is on time and ready.

Basic rules

Ensure all players understand foul balls, fly balls, force outs, tagging, hitting in order, and scoring. Learn about any local rules (e.g., number of strikes, number of hitters, outs per inning, throwing bat, etc.).



Explain FUNdamental safety guidelines to players

Ask players sit on one knee with all eyes on the coach. Explain the critical importance of keeping everyone safe and then thoroughly explain the following points:

- 1 Ensure the playing area, and the surrounding area, are safe;
- 2 The hitter and all base runners must wear helmets;
- 3 The on-deck hitter must remain at least 15m back from the hitter;
- 4 Bats and balls can be dangerous and may unexpectedly fly in any direction; and
- 5 Avoid unnecessary collisions.

Communicate a “fast tempo” philosophy

Encourage players to be energetic and enthusiastic at all times. Baseball is best played at a fast tempo, so ensure all players and coaches take every chance to show good tempo, including:

- Run as fast as you can every time you hit the ball;
- Be in position early when playing defence; and
- Run on and off the field at the end of each half-inning.

When the team finishes batting:

- The catcher is ready;
- The gloves are organised on the bench, so they can all be located easily;
- Teammates carry gloves to players who just batted or were on base when the half-inning ended; and
- Retrieve helmets and bats quickly.

When the team finishes fielding:

- Everybody sprints off the field and into the dugout;
- Gloves placed together in a specified location; and
- First two hitters quickly fetch helmets and bats, move to on-deck circle, and wait for umpire to start the half-inning.

Long-Term Athletic Development (LTAD)

Outline the FUNdamental stage of the LTAD model and approach

- Long-Term Athletic Development (LTAD) is an approach that attempts to provide age-relevant activities and challenges to produce the best possible long-term outcomes for each player.
- The first stage lasts until onset of puberty and is called the FUNdamental Stage. The FUNdamental Stage focuses on the establishing all-around movement capability, learning through activity (i.e., a games-based approach), and establishing a positive attitude toward physical activity.
- The warm-up provided within this Manual is much more than a warm-up. It is a mild conditioning activity to start the LTAD process.
- Competitive elements will emerge naturally among young children, which render adult-imposed competition of little, if any, value.

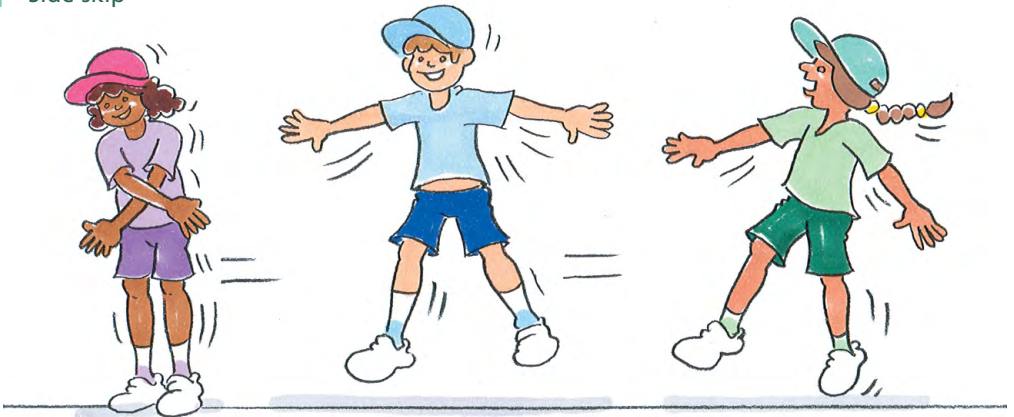


Conduct a structured warm-up that ties into the LTAD model

Moving Activities:

Form lines along the outfield foul line, with the players moving 5m to 20m into the outfield...

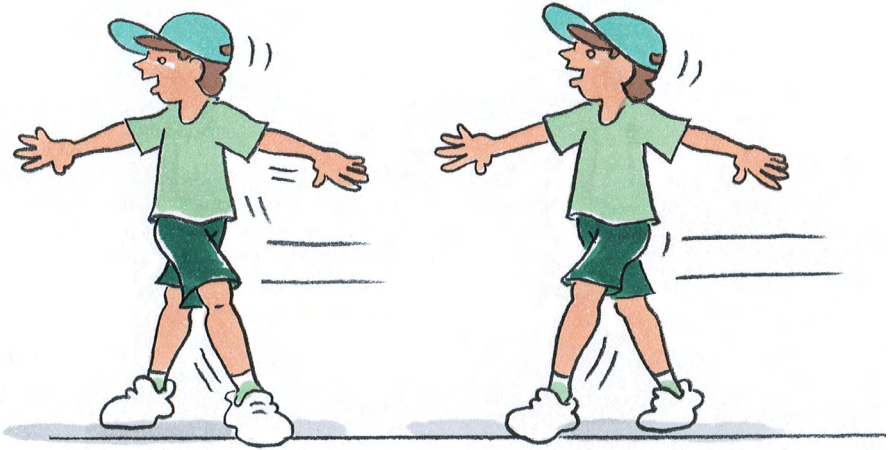
1 Side skip



2 360



3 Carioca



4 Lunge walk with high knee



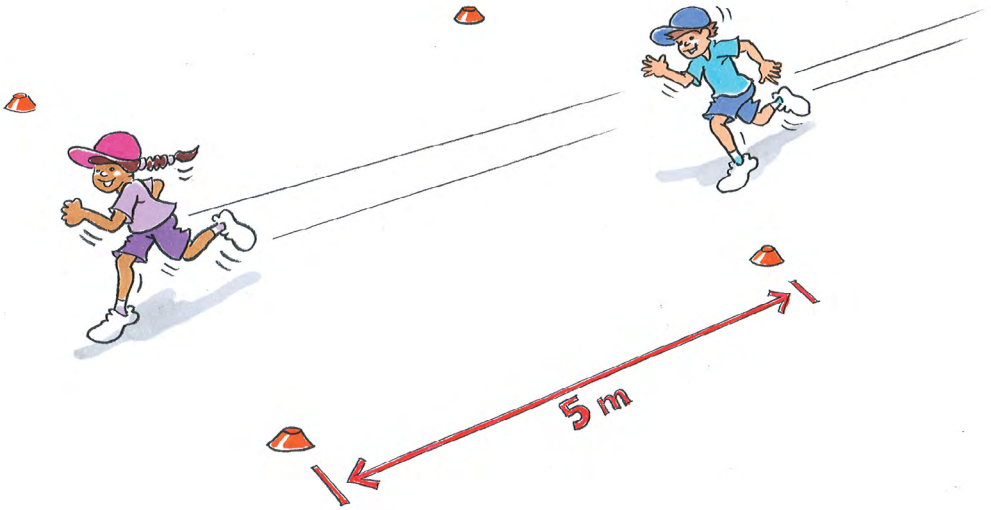
5 Frankenstein



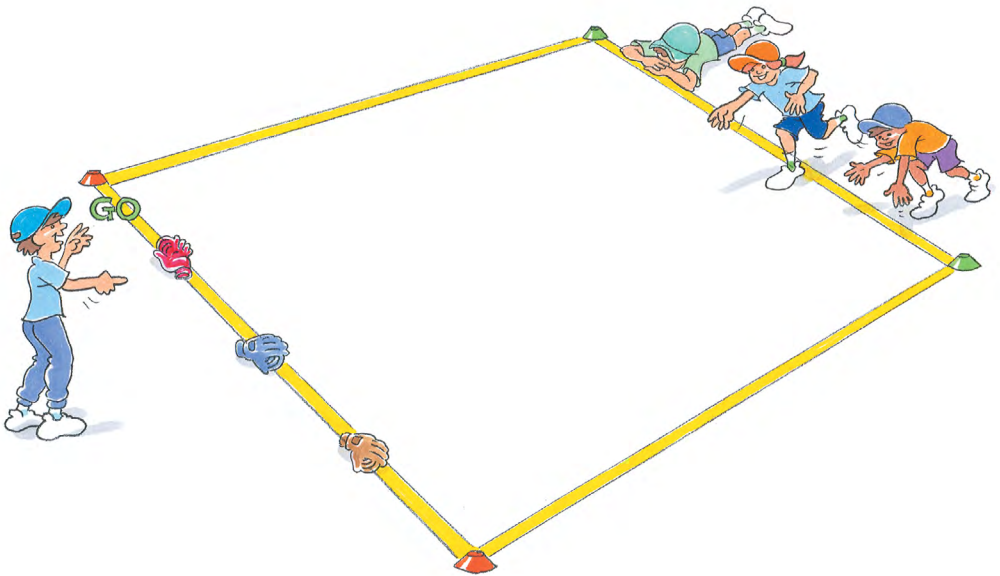
6 Walking knee circle



7 Flying 5m sprint (3-5)



8 Beach flag 10m sprint (3-5)



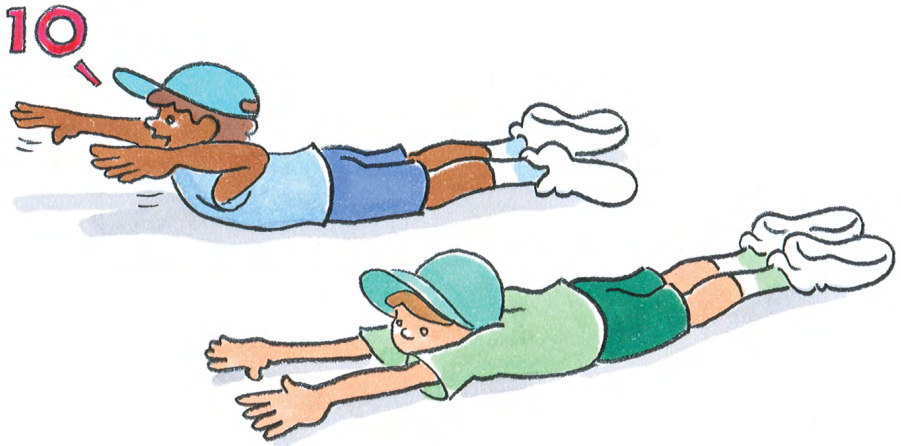
Conduct a structured warm-up that ties into the LTAD model

Stationary Activities:

1 Arm march (5 each side)



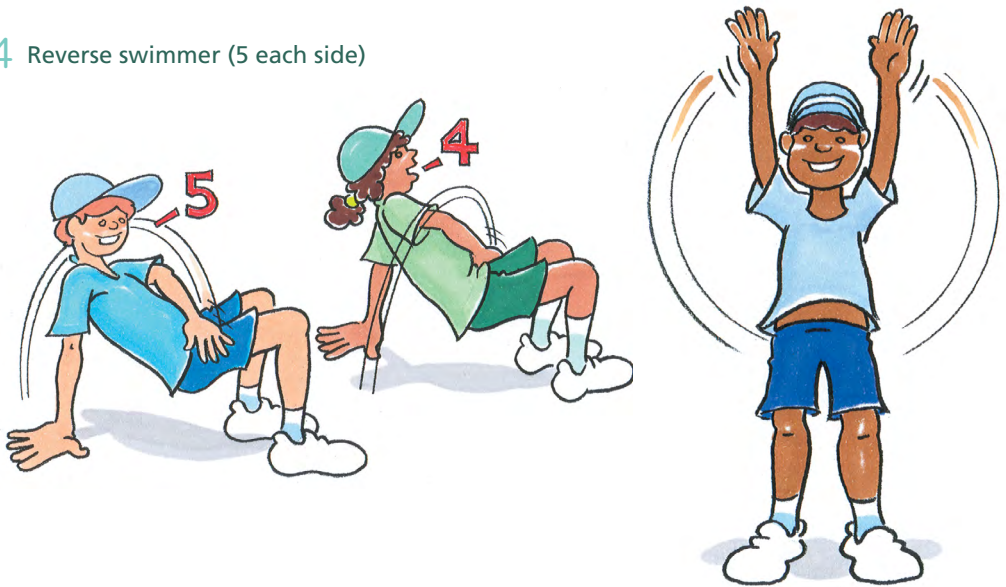
2 Scapula Superman (5-10)



3 Swimmer (5 each side)



4 Reverse swimmer (5 each side)



5 Arm swing: up and down; across & back; goal posts; back pats; and trunk twists (5 of each)

Provide instruction on the correct execution of unloaded squat and lunge walk

1 Unloaded or Body Weight (BW) squat:

- Feet remain flat on ground throughout movement;
- No wobbling of the knees (stability);
- Knees remain directly above the feet (stability and control);
- Back remains straight and may lean forward, but not bend forward; and
- Try to lower the hips below the knees. Many children will be unable to do this, but that is the goal. Ultimately, children should be able to get the buttocks down near the heels (full range of motion).



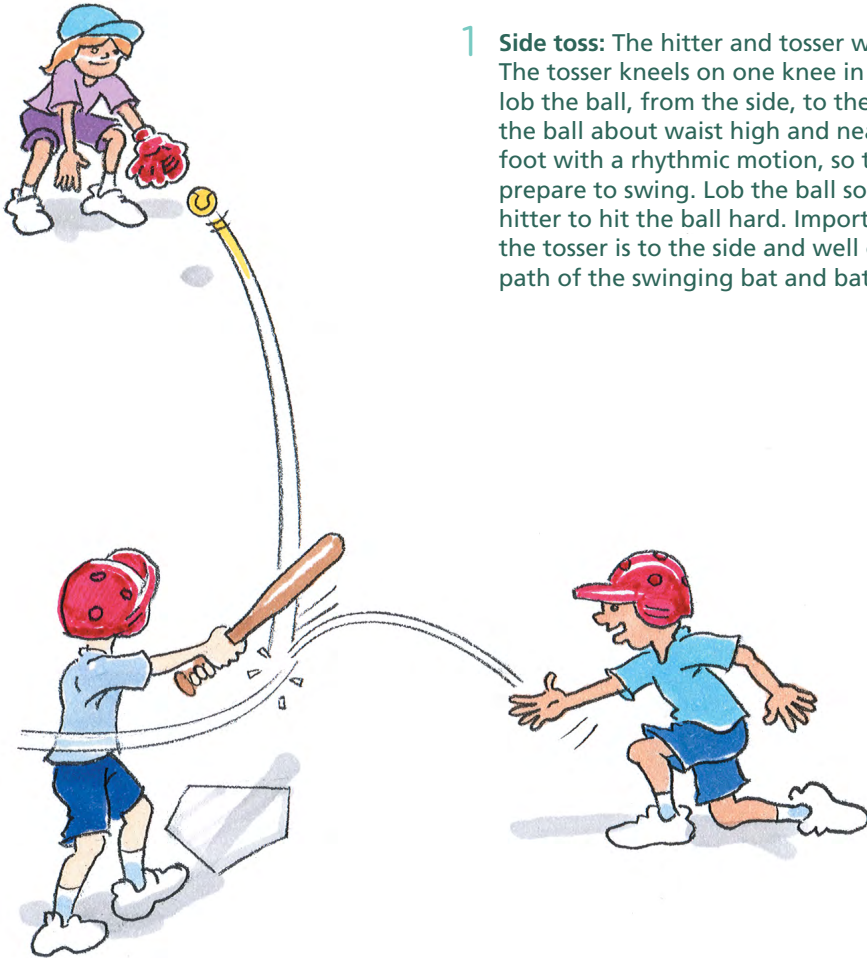
2 Lunge walk (with high lift):

- In the lowest position the trunk should be upright in a long lunge with no wobbling, with the rear knee brushing the ground. The front knee remains behind the front toe.
- In the highest position there should be no wobbling with the support leg fully extended, and the other leg fully folded up.



Hitting

Conduct activities designed to encourage hitters to track the ball and hit it hard



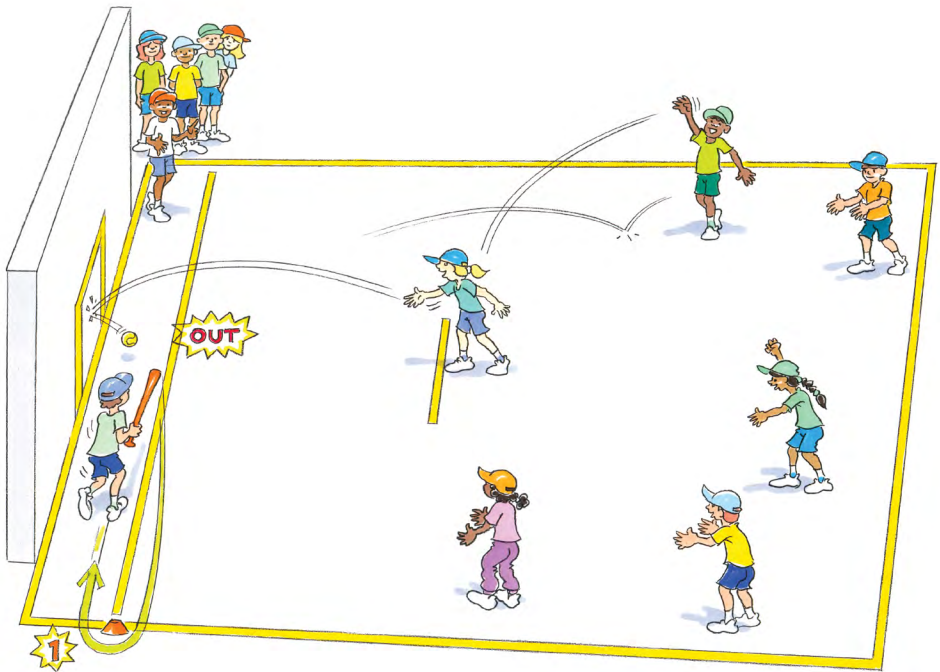
- 1 **Side toss:** The hitter and tosser work in pairs. The tosser kneels on one knee in position to lob the ball, from the side, to the hitter. Toss the ball about waist high and near the front foot with a rhythmic motion, so the hitter can prepare to swing. Lob the ball softly to allow hitter to hit the ball hard. Important: ensure the tosser is to the side and well out of the path of the swinging bat and batted ball.

2 Continuous baseball: Select two even teams, one hitting and one fielding. Spread fielders throughout the playing area. The pitcher stands 10-12m from the strike zone (i.e. a hoop, chalk or tape marking). Use one cone to be the only base.

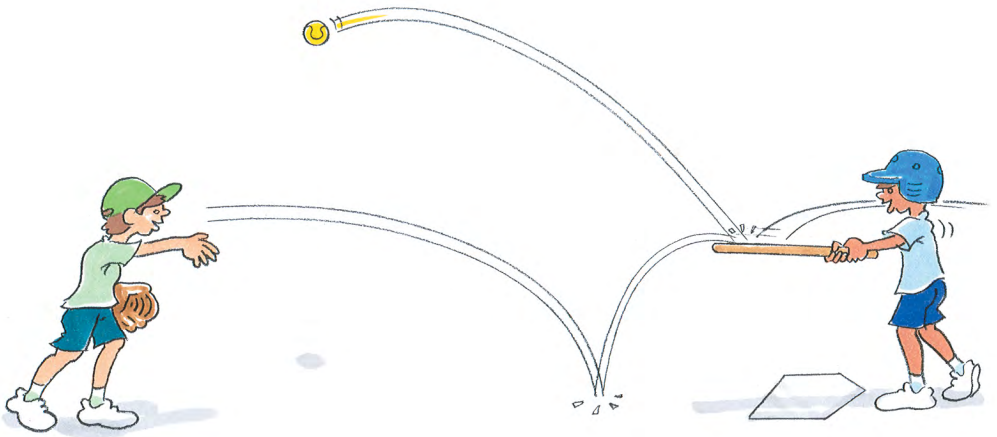
After hitting the ball, the hitter runs around the cone and back to the strike zone to score a run. Fielders field the ball and throw it back to pitcher who attempts to hit the strike zone whether

the hitter is back or not. The hitter is out if his/her hit is caught or if pitcher hits the strike zone.

A hitter that has been made out must quickly pass the bat to the next hitter before the pitcher pitches the ball. The game is continuous i.e., the pitcher pitches whenever he/she has the ball). The hitting team changes at the end of each inning. Change the pitcher regularly; every player should pitch.



- 3 **Stick ball:** Play baseball with a tennis ball and a taped broomstick handle if you want. The ball is pitched by a teammate of the hitter and must bounce once on the way to the plate. Use a variety of rules with input from the players. Ask the kids: How do you score points? How do you get out? Where are you allowed to hit the ball?





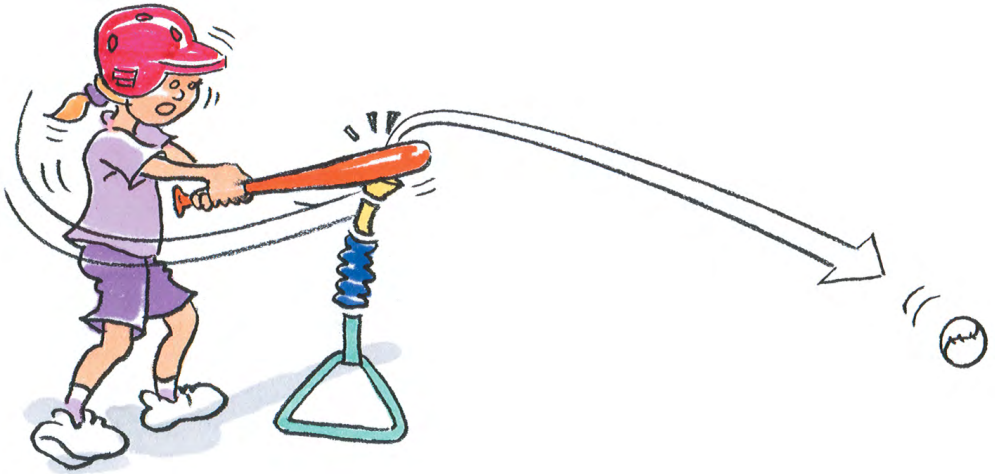
Explain the intent of the swing

The goal is to hit long line drives. A “line drive” is ball that is “driven” hard so that it travels in a straight line. In order for the ball to travel a long way, it will need some elevation, but should not be lifted in a loopy arc.

Remember: The aim is to drive it to the wall. This goal must be the focal point throughout all hitting drills and each plate appearance.

Teach hitters effective drills for developing their swing

- 1 **Dry swings:** Hitters take practice swings without hitting anything (especially each other). Be careful to not over-coach – avoid talk about the grip, having the elbows up or down, etc. Sometimes it helps to have inexperienced players watch one of the better teammates and copy him/her. It's best to let players figure it out for themselves. Instruction should be limited to:
 - a. Stance: Keep an athletic and balanced stance, side-on to the pitcher, with the bat held naturally in vicinity of rear shoulder;
 - b. Load: Shift weight back to prepare for a forceful swing;
 - c. Release: Find the best way to get the barrel of the bat travelling hard and flat through the contact zone.



- 2 Place a tee ball in a wide variety of locations (e.g., in and out, up and down, forward and back). Always focus on releasing the barrel through the strike zone, and then work on expanding that contact zone.

Throwing

List the key injury risk factors for young pitchers

Inappropriate pitching can lead to injury at any age, but most particularly in those who pitch prior to the growth plates in the elbow maturing. The most important risk factors for young pitchers are:

1. Overuse and/or throwing when fatigued;
2. Throwing hard;
3. Poor mechanics;
4. Throwing curveballs and/or sliders.

By far, the biggest risk to young arms is pitching too much. Below is a list of practices related to elbow surgery for pitchers aged 12-15 years old in the United States:

- Regularly pitching with fatigue – 36 times more likely to need surgery than those who do not;
- Pitching more than eight months per year – 5 times more likely to need surgery than those who do not;
- Averaging more than 80 pitches per outing – 4 times more likely to need surgery than those who do not;
- Pitching harder than 85 MPH – 2.5 times more likely to need surgery than those who do not.

Best practice is to avoid fatigue. Pitch counts are a helpful tool, but pitch counts alone will not work without education, the spread of good information, and an attitude of caring for our pitchers. We must all help with this.

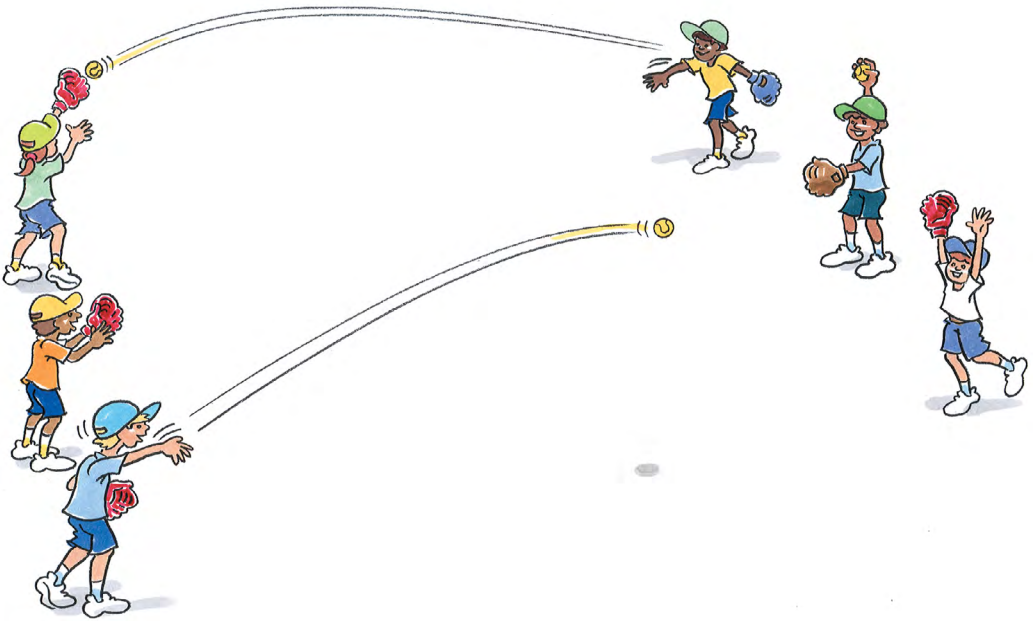
In an ideal world, there would not be a need for pitch count rules. Pitch counts would ideally be used as a guideline: The best rule would be that a pitcher is removed when he becomes fatigued and is not allowed to pitch again until he/she feels completely recovered. That is how Major League Baseball operates with their million-dollar arms.

However, we do not live in an ideal world where youth players, parents, and/or coaches always have the best knowledge – or even the best intentions. Youth pitchers, and the adults charged with their care, do not always look for fatigue, and do not always take the child off the pitching mound when he/she is fatigued. Instead, inexperienced coaches often try to get the most out of the young pitcher without proper concern about the price that child may pay in the future.

Pitching limits are the best solution. However, any reasonable limits will always be too much of a constraint for some children and dangerously loose for other children. Sadly, a small percentage of children and/or adults will try to manipulate whatever system is put in place by scheduling the amount kids pitch on certain days, playing in multiple leagues, etc. We all must do our part to make these damaging practices completely unacceptable.

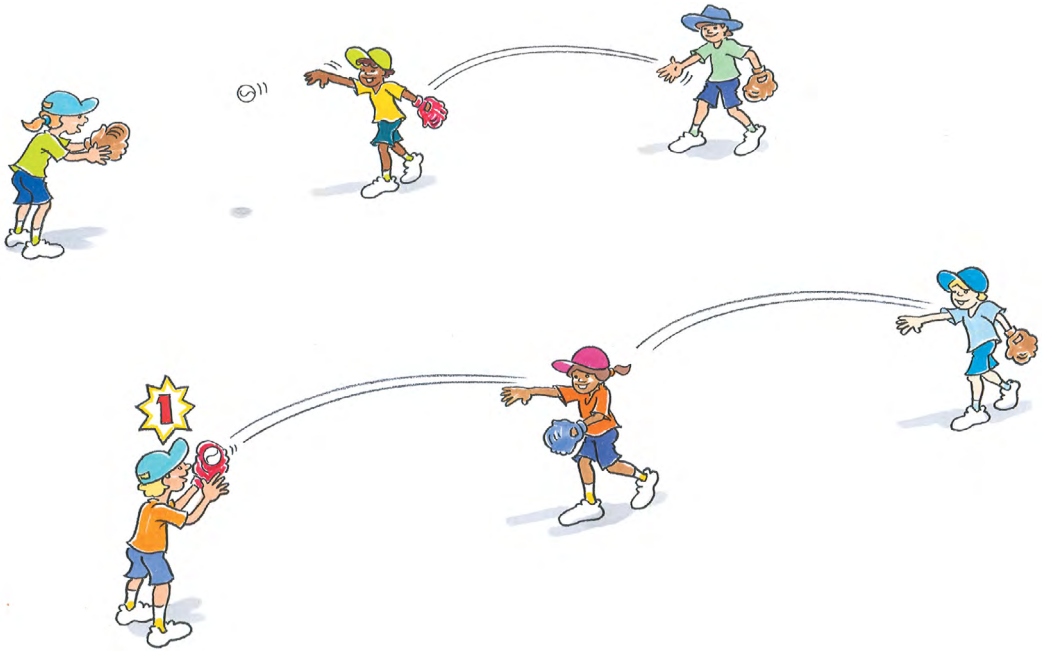
Engage players in a variety of activities to develop their throwing abilities

- 1 **Play catch:** Ensure each pair is throwing ball parallel to other pairs. Adjust task to suit individuals.



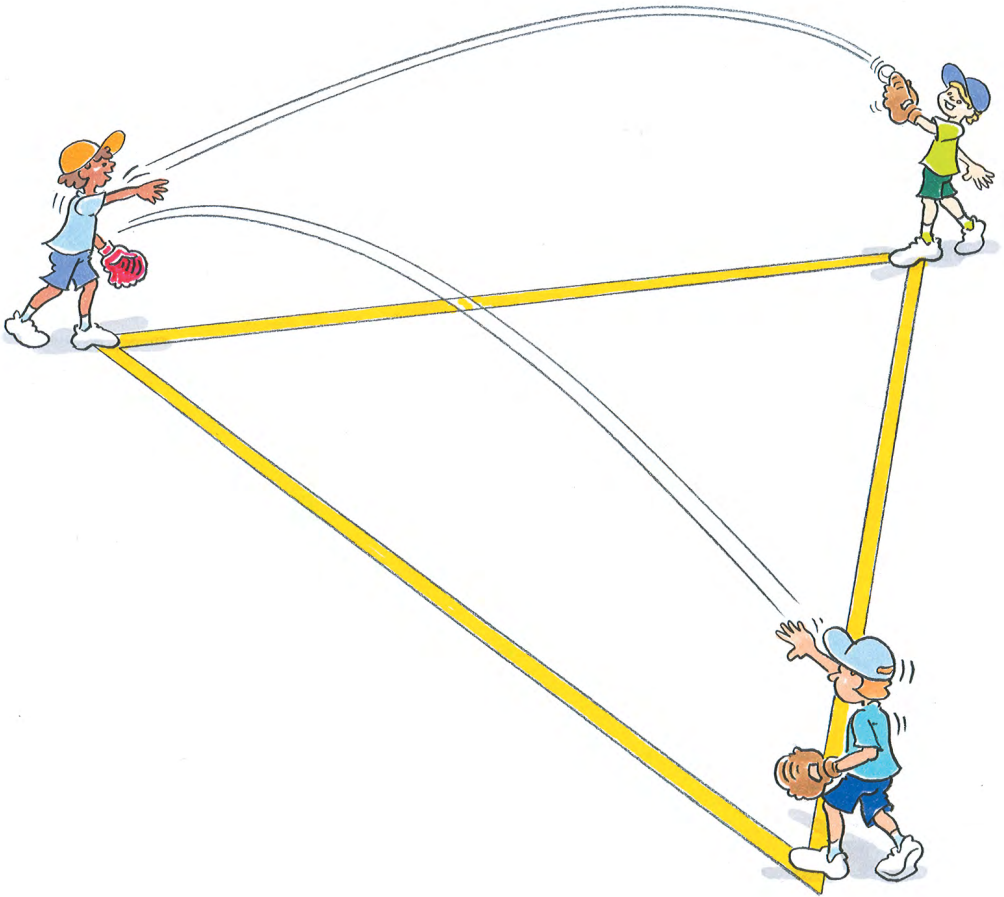
2 Pony Express (a relay race): Spread players, in teams of four-to-six, about 5-15m apart in line. The ball starts at one end and must pass in relay. Each player catches and then throws in turn, along the line and back.

Variations: Assemble the team in a circle and throw the ball clockwise or anti-clockwise; try to beat previous best time; two teams in competition.



3 Square or Triangles: Space players, in groups of three-or-four, about 5-15 m apart. Throw the ball around the triangle or square clockwise. Encourage footwork.

Variations: *Throw anti-clockwise or reverse pivot.*



Use simple drills to teach pitching mechanics



Front Step Pitching Drill

SKILL OBJECTIVE

Players learn the balance position required in pitching

EQUIPMENT

Baseball Glove, Bucket or Crate, and Small Towel.

SET UP

Players will place front foot on bucket in balance position, then stride directly to target and use a dry throwing motion to rehearse throwing hard.

OPTIONS

Hooking the middle of a small towel under the first two fingers and trying to make it snap out in front. Depending on age/ability, they can throw a ball to a partner).

SKILLS TO PRACTICE

Players will maintain balance and control while on the back pitching leg, step and plant the front pitching leg and emphasize follow through.

Follow Through Pitching Drill

SKILL OBJECTIVE	Players learn a full follow through.
EQUIPMENT	Baseball Glove, Bucket or Crate, 1 Baseball, and Partner
SET UP	Players get enough space to complete a full stride with no impediments. With front foot already planted, players will place a bucket adjacent to the centre of the body, "load" the back side slightly and rehearse pitching using a dry throwing motion (without a ball) or throw to a partner 45-60 feet away. The back foot rolls up onto toe then lifts up and over the bucket to emphasise the follow through.
SKILLS TO PRACTICE	Throwing shoulder finishes lower than front shoulder; back foot rolls up onto toe and lifts over bucket.

Throw at Target

SKILL OBJECTIVE	Players learn to throw accurately
EQUIPMENT	Glove, Target (e.g., Frisbee, rubber disk, rag, etc.), Fence, and 5 Baseballs.
SET UP	From 45-60 feet, players will throw at target, keeping score of how many times they hit the target out of, say 10, attempts. Try to improve every week.
SKILLS TO PRACTICE	Visual target acquisition and feedback.

Teach pitching from a set position

1 Set position:

- Align the body side-on to home plate with the throw-side foot against the pitching rubber and the glove-side foot closest to home plate;
- Maintain an athletic stance without tension and with weight evenly distributed;
- Join the hands in the middle of the body, just below rib cage.

2 Knee and hand lift:

- To commence delivery, lift joined hands and the glove-side knee at the same time; lift this knee to hip height and the hands to neck height;
- Keep eyes on target from the time the glove-side knee reaches its maximum height until the ball reaches catcher.

3 Finish position:

- Pass the throwing hand below the glove-side knee;
- Remain balance on the front leg;
- Finish with the sole of the throw-side foot facing the sky.

Use these guidelines to have players rehearse pitching delivery into a screen or to teammates.



Provide simple instructions on pitching in a game

A coach can revisit the mechanics of the delivery prior to the start of the game, but once the game starts guidelines for pitching should be as simple as possible.

It takes a long time to learn to pitch consistently, so be patient. Let young players concentrate on trying to hit the glove and allow their bodies to subconsciously make the necessary mechanical adjustments. Practice is the only appropriate time to help them with their technique.

1 Start in the set position, although, let young players use a windup if they want, because they are meant to have fun above all else;

2 Throw the ball to the catcher's glove.

**And that's it!
Nothing more
is needed.**

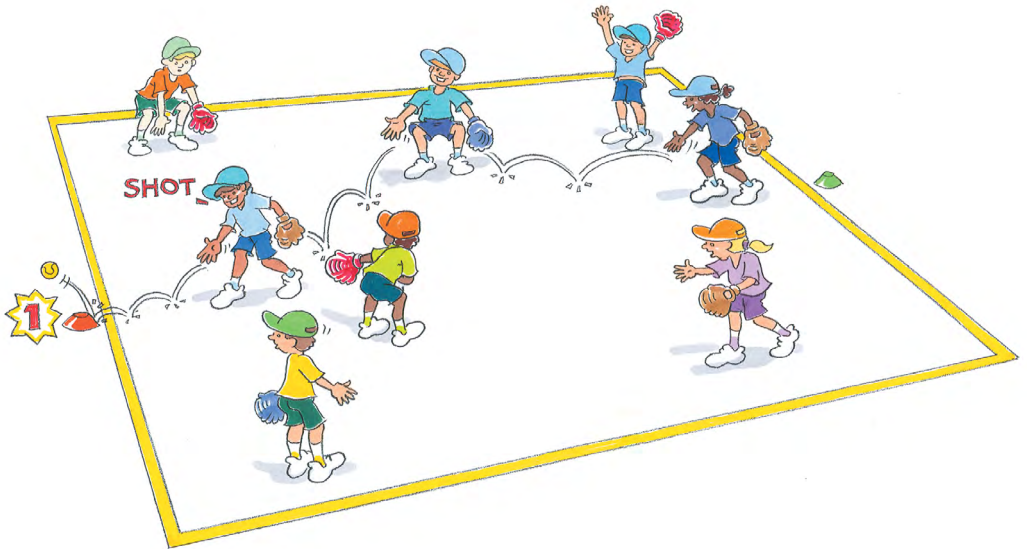


Fielding

Involve players in fielding activities with varying levels of challenge

- 1 **Fielding Soccer:** Two teams spread out in a rectangular field, approximately 20m-by-40m, with a target (e.g., cone, milk crate, etc.) at each end. One team in possession of the ball at centre court, attempts to advance toward goal by passing to teammates with underarm rolls only (the ball should bounce twice). The player with the ball may not run.

Teammates try to position themselves to receive pass while the opposition attempts to intercept passes, but the opposition cannot be closer than 5m away from the player in possession of the ball. Once near the target, the player with the ball can call out "Shot". All players then stop, and allow a free underarm shot at cone. A hit counts as one point. The opposition gets ball to start at cone after a shot is taken, regardless of whether or not a point was scored. **Variation:** Team loses possession on a fumble.

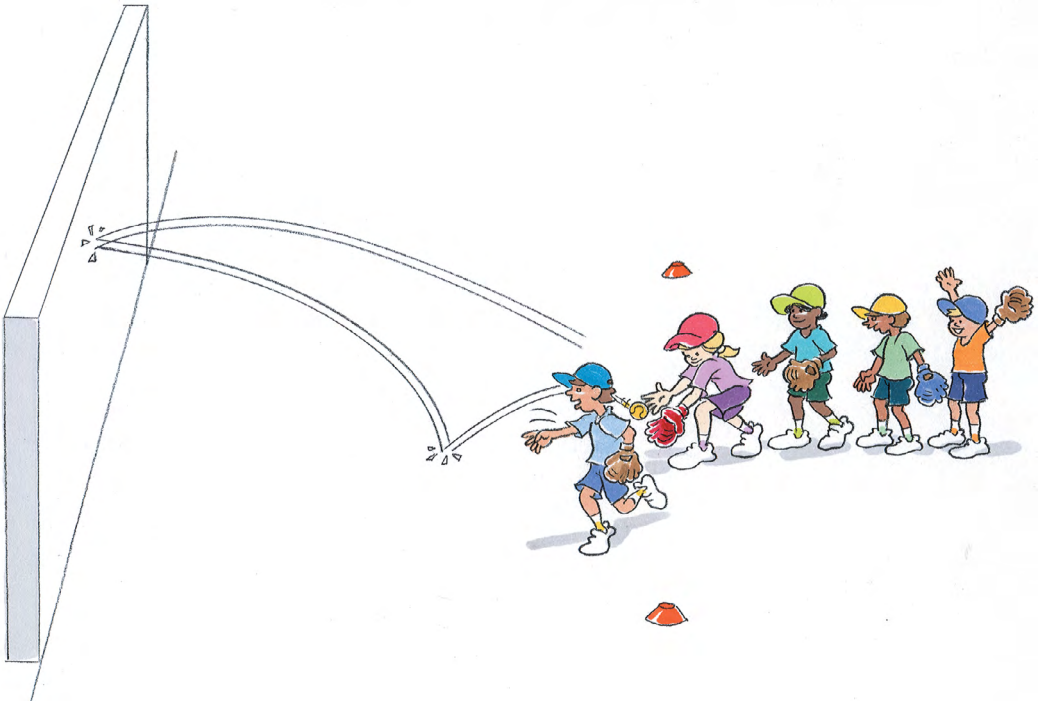


2 Baseball Squash: Line up two-to-10 players in front of a wall, with an imaginary line between two markers 8-20m from the wall. Players line up and must play in sequence, like a batting order. The first player throws the ball at the wall and attempts to bounce the ball off the wall and between the markers. The ball must bounce on the ground before it passes the markers.

The next player fields the bouncing ball before it crosses the markers and repeats the same throw as the first player. Each player must sprint to the back of the line immediately throwing the ball. Repeat the cycle until somebody gets ball past the markers or forces the next player fumble.

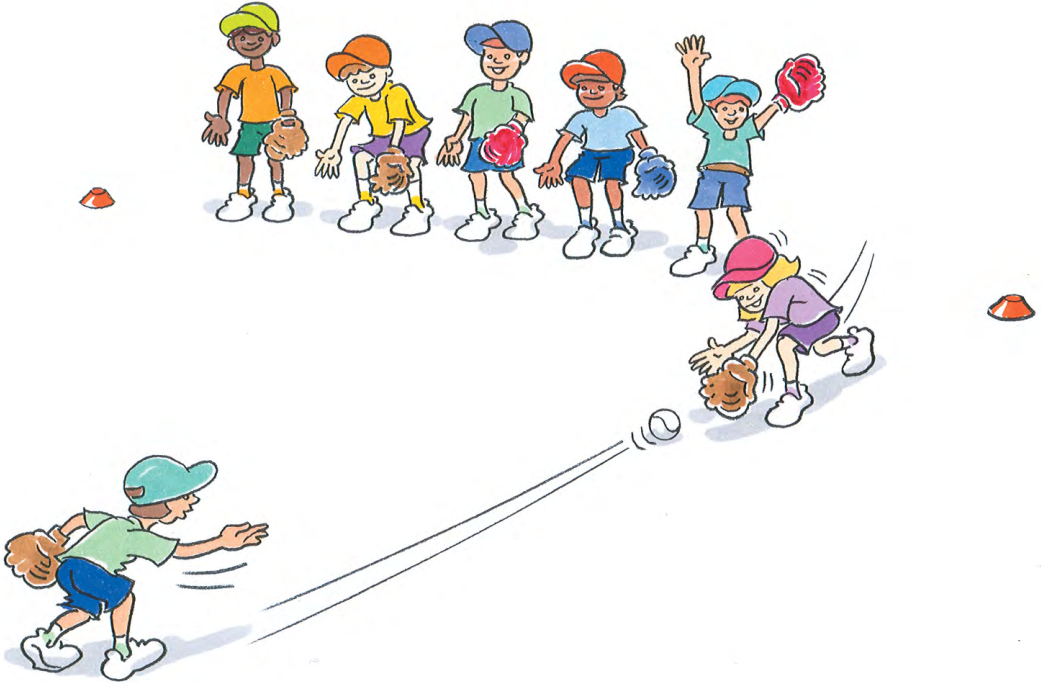
Speed and accuracy are important. Keep individual tally.

Variations: *Players lose a point if the ball bounces outside of the markers or players lose a point if the ball is not fielded before it stops rolling (i.e., soft throw strategy).*



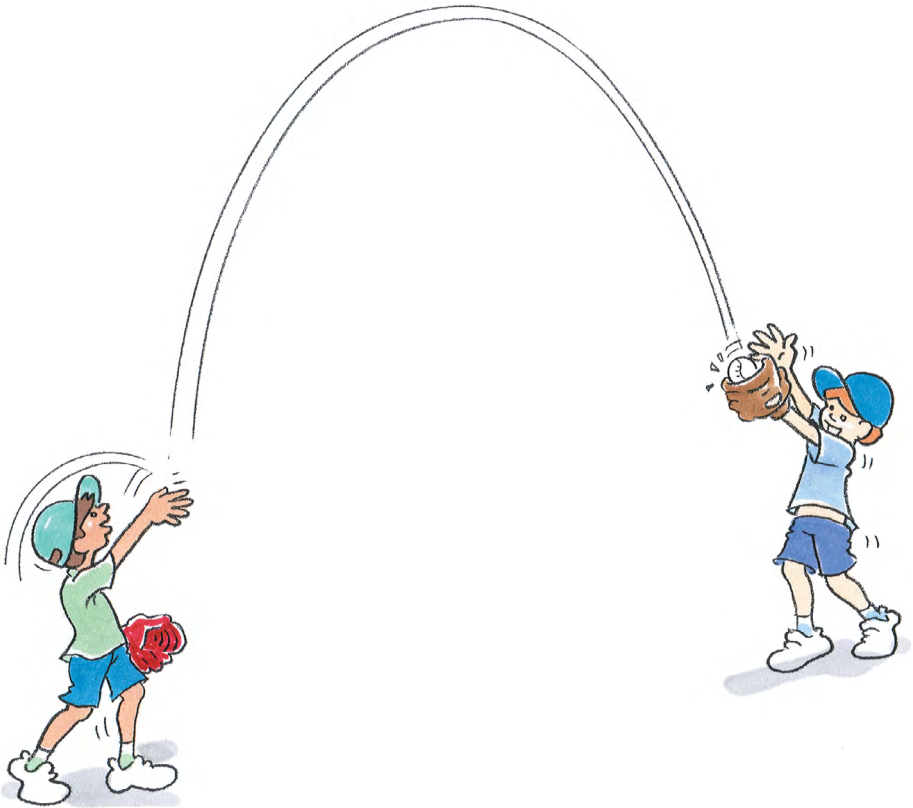
3 Groundball relay: Form two-to-four teams of equal numbers with four-to-eight players on team. The teams stand side-by-side and face the team “leader,” from 5-15m away. The leader rolls the ball to the teammate farthest to the leader’s right. That teammate fields the ball and rolls it back to the leader.

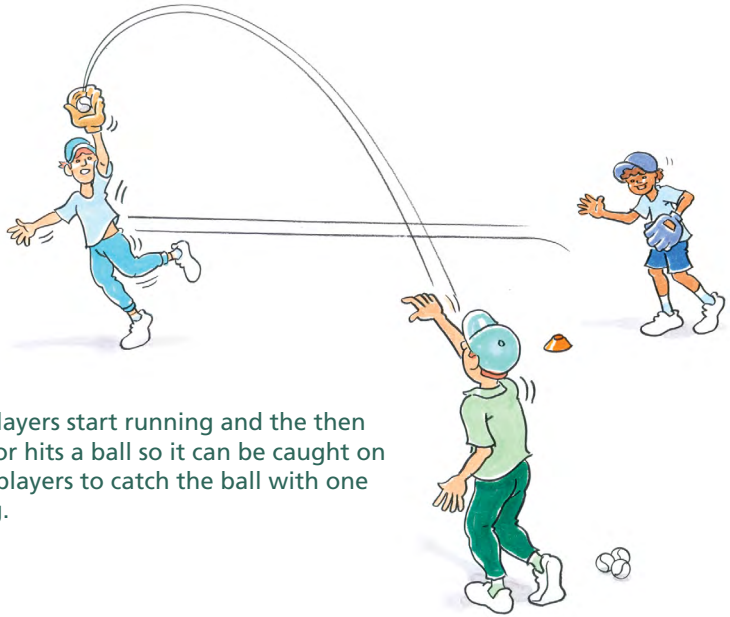
The leader then rolls the ball to the second teammate from his right, and so on. The teammate farthest to the leader’s right becomes the new leader after the last teammate (farthest to the leader’s left) fields the ball. The leader runs to the back of the line once he/she has rolled the ball to all his/her teammates.



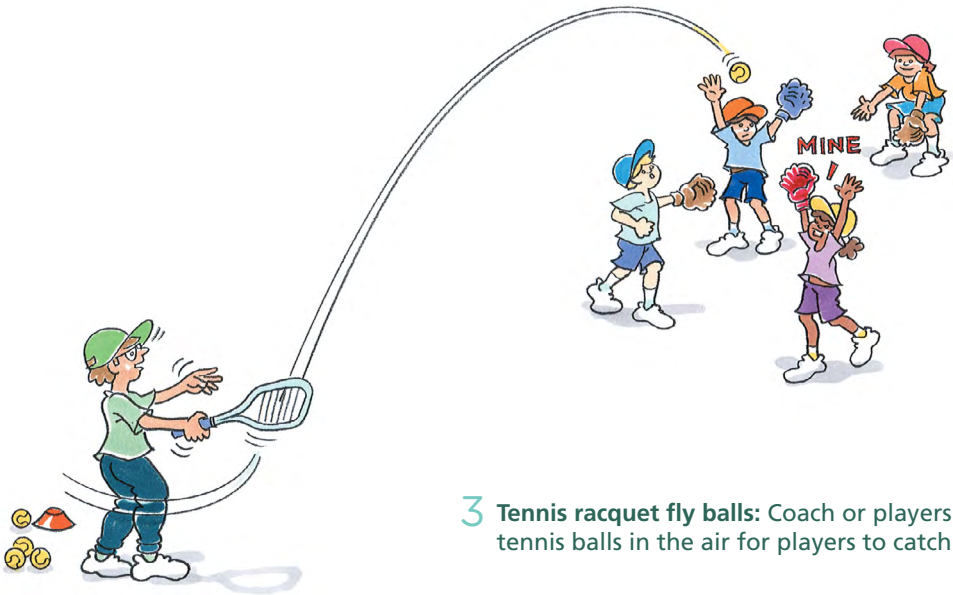
Utilise activities designed to encourage players to catch a fly ball

- 1 **Partner lobs.** In suitable pairs, alternate throwing the ball up for the other to catch. Challenge players to catch the ball above their eyes.





2 Running fly balls: Players start running and the then coach lobs, throws or hits a ball so it can be caught on the run. Challenge players to catch the ball with one hand when running.

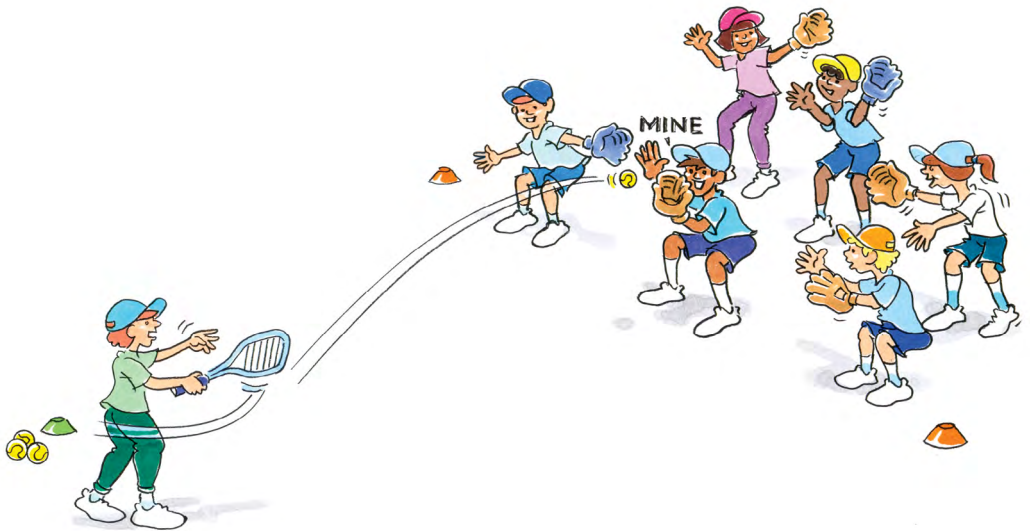


3 Tennis racquet fly balls: Coach or players hit tennis balls in the air for players to catch.

4 Over-the-line: This is a competitive game that can be played with a tennis racquet and tennis balls. Form two teams of equal numbers and ability. Each hitter attempts to hit ball between two markers placed 10-25m away and the same distance apart. Adjust the distances to suit the level of the players.

The ball must pass between the markers and touch the ground on the far side to score a point; defending team can position themselves anywhere to prevent batted groundballs from passing between markers, and to prevent fly balls from landing over the line between the markers. The hitter continues to hit until he/ she fails to score. All players get to hit at least once, then teams swap roles.

Variations: *Team has a set number of outs per inning; each hitter hits until a given number of 10 outs are made; ball can be hit from a tee with a bat; and/or a coach can lob to the hitter from the side or from behind a protective screen.*



Position the catcher correctly

- 1 Crouch as far forward as you can without being hit by a swing;
- 2 The glove can usually be held above the hitter's back foot;
- 3 Catchers cannot catch the ball at the correct height if positioned too far back;
- 4 Align the centre of the body, and the glove, with the centre of plate.



Teach groundball basics

1 Ready position:

- Be alert with a wide base;
- Be balanced, athletic, and ready to go in any direction; and
- Keep arms alive and in the best position to move in any direction.

2 Go get the ball:

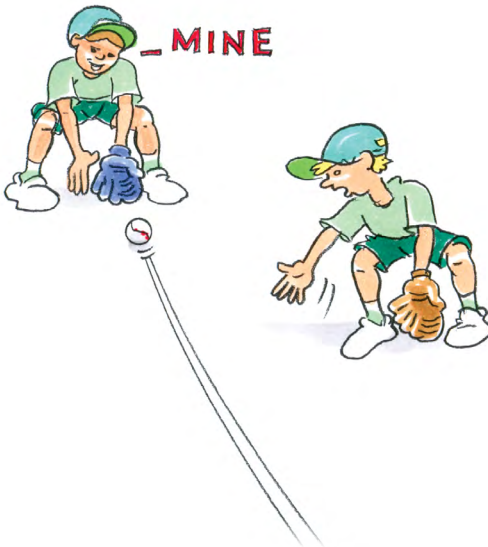
- Read the ball's direction, bounce, speed, spin, etc.;
- Move quickly to get into the best position to field the ball;
- Don't stand and wait – be active and aggressive; and
- Lower into fielding posture as you approach the ball.

3 Field the ball:

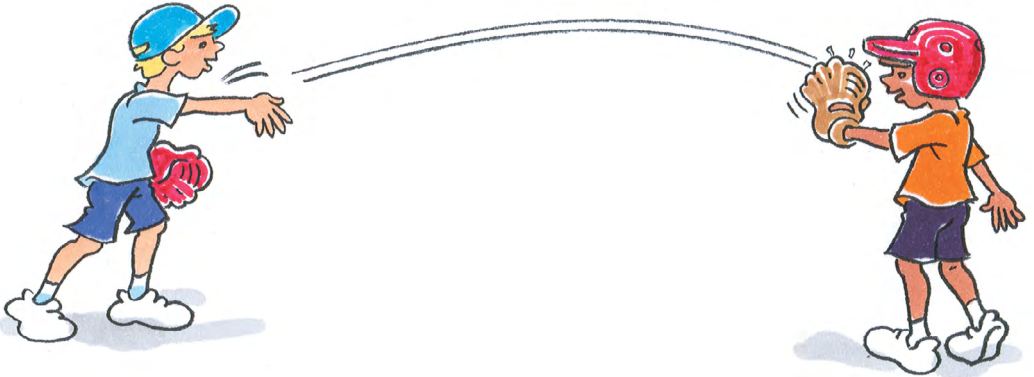
- Move through the ball as you field it;
- Use a wide base;
- Keep your head over the path of the ball; and
- Keep your hand and glove in front of your face, so you can watch the ball into the glove.

4 Replace your feet:

- Hop like a crow with the right to the left and the left to the target.



Instruct catching the ball with hand in backhand position

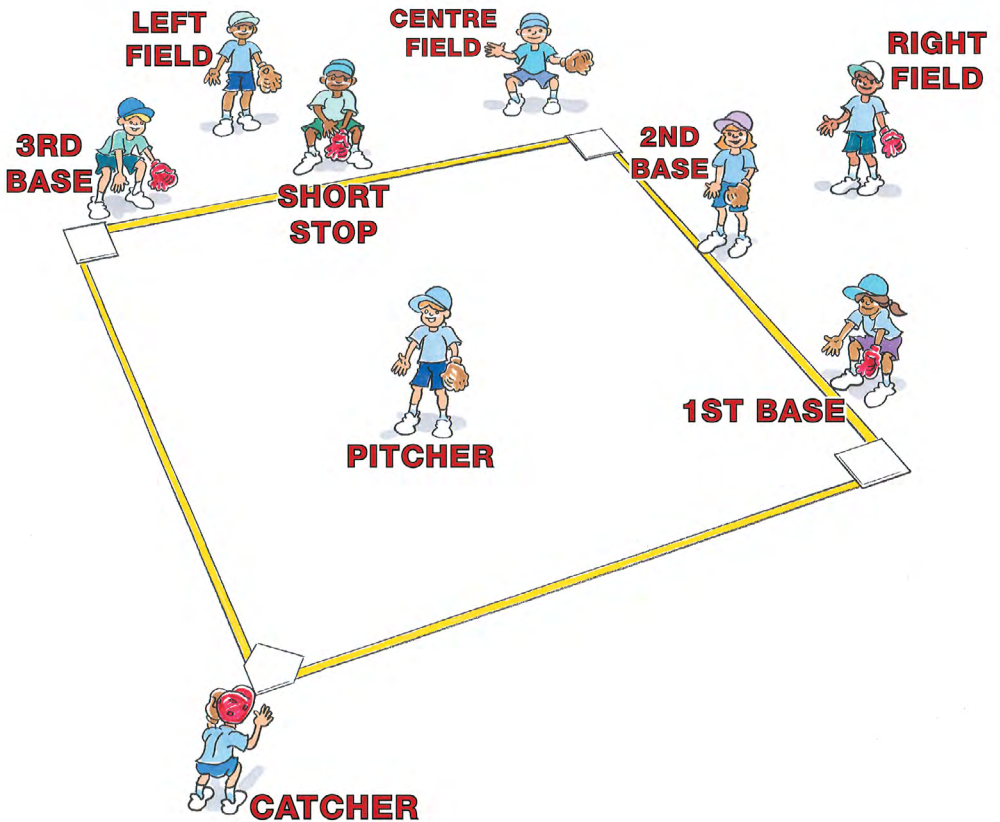


Fielders must learn to catch a ball thrown to their backhand side.

- Receiver stands side-on with glove-side shoulder toward thrower;
- Thrower lobs ball above waist to face-side of receiver. Receiver reaches forward to catch ball on his/her backhand (i.e., thumb lower than fingers and with palm facing the ball); and
- Gradually square the receiver to the thrower, as players become more comfortable using the backhand.



Teach players the names and locations of the standard nine defensive positions



Running

Outline a progressive approach to developing sliding technique

1. On a soft surface, have the players to sit down cross-legged and then extend whichever leg is on top so that toes of that foot point directly upward. Leave the other leg folded underneath the top thigh. Keep the trunk upright and look straight ahead. This is the basic sliding posture.



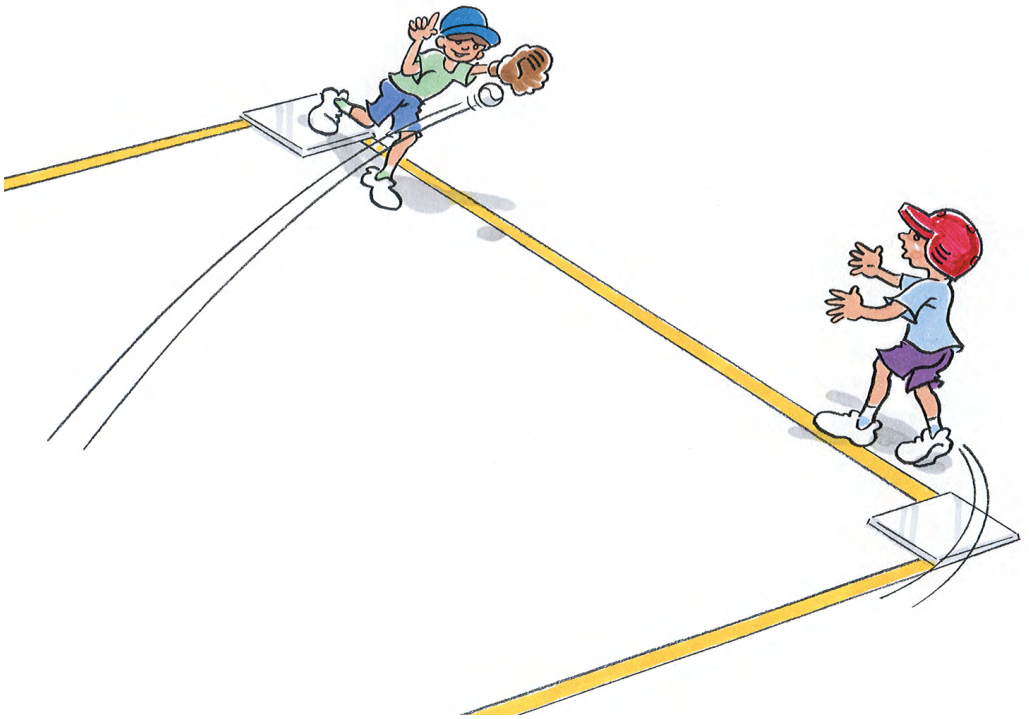
2. Have the players lift themselves up from this position to one where front foot is flat on ground, and the rear knee is on ground with the lower leg folded across under body with the trunk upright.
3. Have the players sit down into sliding posture several times.
4. Have the players drop down quickly into sliding posture a couple of times, then try doing it with a jumping action.

5. There is no way to learn to slide slowly. Let players try sliding on a soft and/or slippery surface, such as a wet sheet of plastic or a big sheet of cardboard. Ensure players do not jump up prior to sliding, because that will cause too much impact on the ground. Just run hard and fold the rear leg underneath as the front leg is extended.
6. Stress to players that the faster they run the less downward force there will be and the better they will slide.
7. Encourage correct posture and instruct players use the same mechanics as they did in the introductory activity. Try to stay balanced throughout the slide.



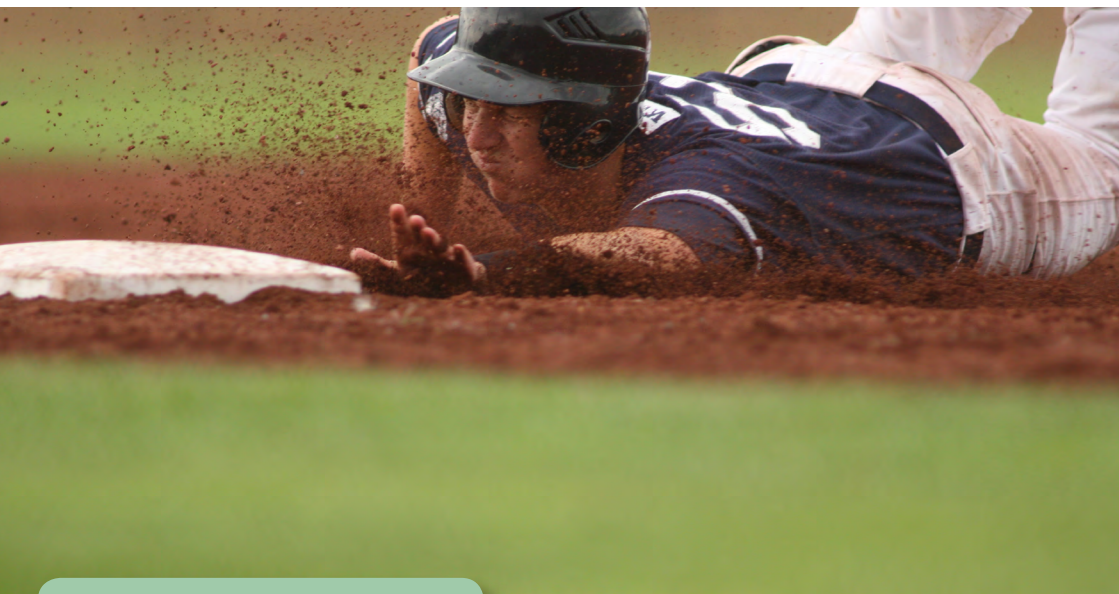
Conduct base running activities

A good base runner always knows where the ball is!



Keep running until someone – your coach or your opponent – forces you to stop!

- 1 Home plate-to-first base on an infield ground ball:** Accelerate hard; turn head to find ball; continue to accelerate through first base; touch the front edge of bag; look right after touching first base to search for a possible overthrow and the opportunity to advance to second base.
- 2 Home plate-to-first base on a ground ball through the infield:** Accelerate hard; turn head to find ball; swing wide to get best turn to second base; touch the inside corner of the base and go as far toward second base as fielders will allow.
- 3 First base-to-third base on a base hit to outfield:** Take a good secondary lead; read the ball off the bat as you run; break hard on contact; swing toward right field to get a better turn at second base; make a good turn and touch the inside corner of the base; maintain speed all the way to third base.
- 4 Second base-to-home plate on a base hit to outfield:** Take a good secondary lead; read the ball off the bat as you run; break hard on contact; swing toward left field to get a better turn at third base; make a good turn and touch the inside corner of the base; maintain speed all the way to home plate.
- 5 Tag up at third base:** Take a good secondary lead; read the fly ball off the bat; quickly return to third base; face home in a sprinter's crouch with stronger foot on third base; turn head to keep eyes on ball; accelerate once ball is caught; sprint hard all the way through home plate.



Conduct low risk sliding activities

- 1 Wet plastic sheet:** Lay a large sheet of plastic. Spray it with a hose or sprinkler. Do not use detergent to make it slicker. With shoes off, players run up one at a time and slide as far as they can and maintain balance throughout. Locate a base at the end of the plastic sheet, so players can practice making contact and standing up.



- 2 Cardboard sheet:** Use a large piece of cardboard on a thick grass surface for sliding practice, similar to above. No water required.



- 3 Protective clothing:** Players wear oversized jeans or baggy tracksuit pants to encourage players to practice safely sliding on grass and/or dirt.
- 4 Wet or slippery grass:** Players slide in uniform on a thick grass surface. Avoid damage to groomed surfaces, such as the infield.

Insist hitters run hard on every batted ball

- Runners run hard to remind themselves, their team, and the opposition that they never quit trying. Run at maximum speed, even if it's an "automatic" out.
- Run hard "through the bag" on an infield grounder, even after you are out.
- Take a hard turn and advance to second base until the defence stops you. Exploit mistakes and laziness.
- Run hard to second base on every "routine" pop-up.
- When on base, work hard to advance two bases on every single and three bases on every double.

Encourage base runners to make their own decisions

- Decision making ability is a critical attribute in a base runner, but it takes time and practice to properly develop those abilities. The runner, not the coach, must make the decision to advance to the next base.
- A good base runner knows the location of the ball at all times and makes the decisions that consider all relevant factors – such as running speed; game situation; jump; exact position of ball, runner, and fielder; and arm quality of the fielder.
- When in doubt, be aggressive and attack the next base.
- Help players learn from their mistakes through questioning and post-game reviews.



Glossary

BALL: A pitch which doesn't enter the strike zone, and is not swung at by the hitter

BASE: An object placed at each right angle of a baseball diamond.

BASE ON BALLS (or WALK): Four balls occur on a hitter before he/she has three strikes or hits a fair ball.

BASERUNNER: An offensive player who has safely reached first base and is still "on base".

HITTER: Offensive player who attempts to hit the ball from home plate

BATTING TEE: Metal support with rubber tubing on which the ball is placed to facilitate hitting.

CATCH: Thrown or batted ball held by defender.

DEAD BALL: Ball not playable. There are four situations in which the ball is 'dead':

- a. umpire may rule ball dead;
- b. foul ball roller;
- c. foul fly that leaves entire playing area; or
- d. logical situation that stops play (i.e., hitter hit by pitch).

DEFENCE: The fielders who take positions within baseball field.

ERROR: A mistake made by a defender that allows a runner or hitter to reach a base they would not otherwise have reached.

FAIR BALL: A hit ball that stays inside the foul lines until it passes beyond first or third base and does not first touch the ground in foul territory.

FAIR TERRITORY: The area between the two foul lines, which are at a right angle to one another. (The line itself is considered to be in fair territory, so a ball resting on a foul line is deemed to be 'fair').

FIELDER: Any defensive player. Each position has a specific name.

FLY BALL: A hit ball that goes up in the air.

FORCE: When a ball is hit, the base runner must advance to next base if all bases behind him or her are occupied. Such a runner must reach the next base before a fielder holding the ball.

FOUL BALL: A grounded ball that is outside the foul lines when it passes beyond first or third base, or a fly ball that lands anywhere in foul territory

GROUND BALL (or GROUNDER):
A hit ball that travels along the ground.

HALF-INNING: Three outs allowed to the offensive team before it must take defensive positions.

HOME RUN: A hit that travels far enough to enable the hitter to run around all bases without any errors being made by the defensive team. This scores a run for the team, as well as any runners who were on base at the time.

INNING: Six outs in which teams have alternated on offense and defence.

Glossary Continued

LIVE BALL: The ball is in play - the usual state of the baseball.

OUT: Elimination of an offensive player.

PITCH: Ball thrown by the pitcher to the hitter – the usual way to initiate play in baseball.

RUN: The advance of an offensive player from home base to first, second, third and home base again. Each run is a point for the offense.

SAFE: Offensive player advances without being eliminated and may remain on the base to which he/she advanced.

SAFE HIT: A hit ball that enables the hitter to reach base without an error being committed by the fielding team.

STRIKE: A pitched ball that:
 a. enters the strike zone;
 b. the hitter attempts to hit but fails; or
 c. results in a foul ball with less than two strikes on the hitter

STRIKE OUT: Hitter misses the third strike and is eliminated. Umpire may rule strike out if pitch enters the strike zone, even though the hitter doesn't attempt to hit it.

STRIKE ZONE: Rectangular area formed by the width of home base, the armpits and the top of the knees of the hitter.

TAG OUT: Defender touches offensive player between bases hand holding ball and eliminates him/her.

TAG UP: Base runner remains on base until defender touches fly ball and then attempts to advance.

TIME OUT: Umpire declares that play is suspended; ball is dead.

UMPIRE: Game regulator.

WALK: See BASE ON BALLS.