

# San Ramon Valley Girls Athletic League



## Coaching Manual

Version 2010v3



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# SRVGAL Coaches Guide

The purpose of this guide is to provide all managers and coaches with a foundation in the fundamentals and skills required to play fast pitch softball. It is highly important that each player be exposed to the same quality of information as they develop and mature during their years with SRVGAL. With a uniformity of coaching, throughout the age groups; players, managers, and their future teams, will be the beneficiaries of a higher level of play.

When dealing with your players, keep the following points in mind:

1. Be positive and supportive. All players, whether 18 or 5, need to know you're behind them. We all do better when we think we can. Help your players think they can.
2. Be patient. Improvement takes time, allow your players time to improve.
3. Keep everything simple.
4. Tell your players what to do verses what not to do. Give players constructive information by telling them what to do and how to do it, instead of saying don't do this and don't that. In order to get better, your players must be told, and must understand just what to do.
5. Avoid the terms right and left, instead use glove-side and hand-side. Your right-handed explanation to a left handed player becomes very confusing.
6. Avoid making robots, allow for individual variations as long as it does not take away from the basic fundamentals.
7. Encourage by removing fear .... fear of you, fear of the ball, and fear of failure.
8. Practice doesn't make perfect, it makes permanent. Perfect practice makes perfect.

## Fundamental Skills required to play Fastpitch Softball

### Defensive Fundamentals

- Throwing
- Catching
- Fielding Ground Balls
- Fielding Fly Balls
- Defensive Skills
- Player Positioning
- Bunt Coverages
- Run Downs
- Runner on 3<sup>rd</sup>
- Runners at 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>
- Outfield Play
- Cut-offs and Relays

### Offensive Fundamentals

- Hitting
- Bunting
- Base Running
- Stealing
- Sliding and Diving
- Tagging Up



## San Ramon Valley Girls Athletic League **COACHES' CODE OF ETHICS**

I Hereby Pledge To Provide Positive Training, Care And Encouragement For My Players Participating In SRVGAL By Following This Code Of Ethics.

- I will encourage good sportsmanship by demonstrating positive support for all players, parents, coaches, umpires and league officials at every practice and games.
- I will demonstrate mutual respect toward other coaches, umpires and all league officials on and off the field.
- I will place the emotional and physical well-being of my players ahead of my personal desire to win.
- I will read and understand SRVGAL's current Operating Rules, Specific Age Division Rules and familiarize myself with the ASA Official Rules of Softball.
- I will control and be fully responsible for the conduct of my team players, parents and spectators.
- I will insure that my players play under safe conditions and on safe fields.
- I will remember that the game is for the girls and not for the parents or coaches.
- I will do my best to teach the girls the game of Fast Pitch Softball while at the same time making it enjoyable and fun.
- I will be a good role model and always be on time and be in attendance for all practices and games.
- I will organize and conduct well planned practices for learning skills and be fair toward all players for playing time and playing positions.



## EXPECTATIONS OF TEAM PARENTS

Make sure that your daughter arrives to games and practices early

Have your daughter prepared for games and practices

Attend your daughter's games

Cheer for all the team members

Be a supportive parent for the entire team

Be supportive to the manager and coaches

Communicate any concerns directly to the manager

Encourage your daughter to communicate her issues directly with the manager

Always communicate with the manager in appropriate ways

Be a model of good sportsmanship

Be a positive role model

Respect and support coaches and umpires

Understand that softball is a difficult game for your daughter to learn

Learn the skills your daughter is being taught and look for ways work with her on those skills

Be there when you daughter is successful or struggling for success

Be supportive of the **entire team** whether they win or lose

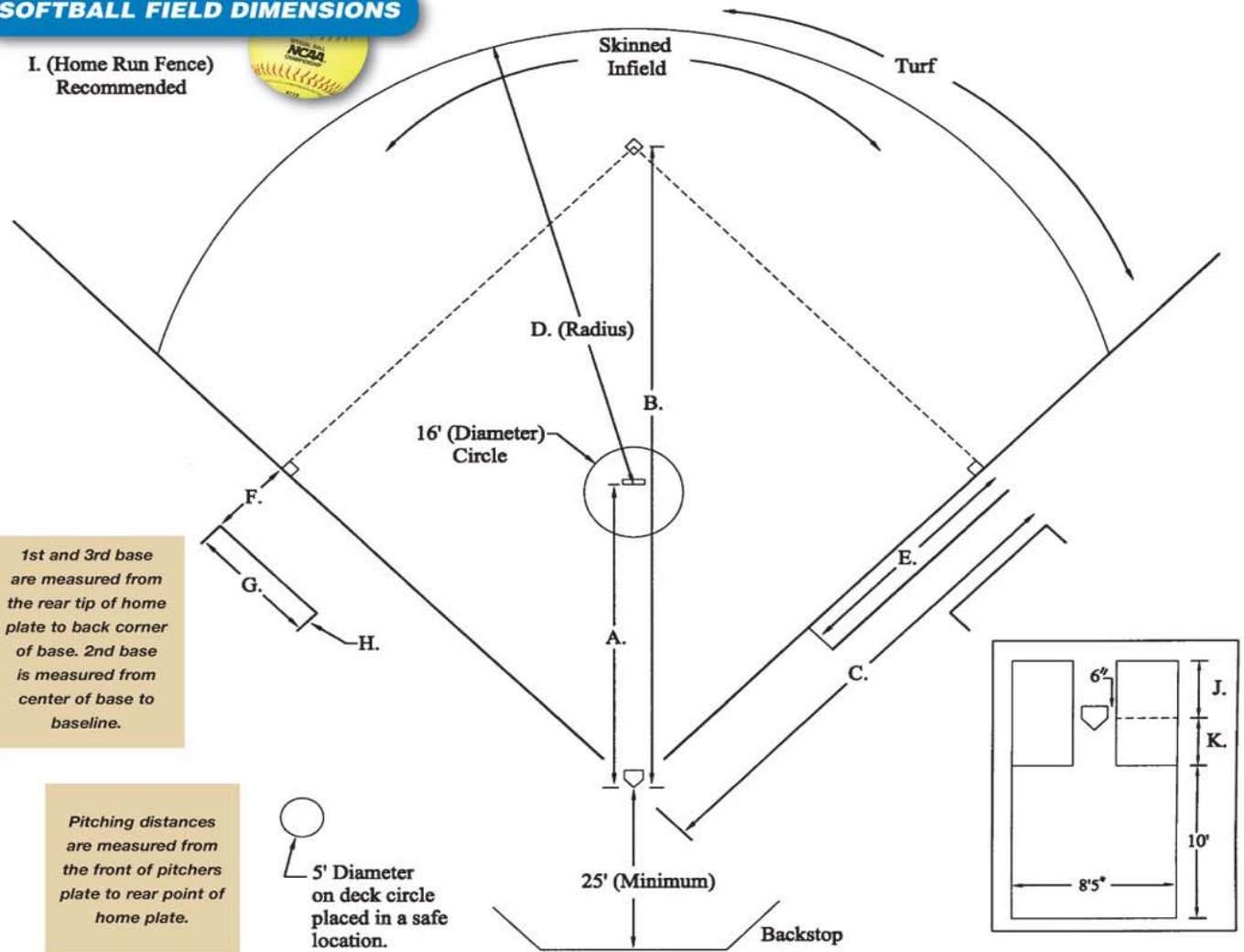
Facilitate a "team" attitude

Softball is a **team** sport - leave personal agendas at home

**It's about the kids**

## SOFTBALL FIELD DIMENSIONS

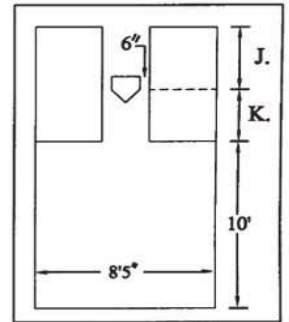
I. (Home Run Fence)  
Recommended



1st and 3rd base are measured from the rear tip of home plate to back corner of base. 2nd base is measured from center of base to baseline.

Pitching distances are measured from the front of pitcher's plate to rear point of home plate.

5' Diameter on deck circle placed in a safe location.



### Softball Field Measurements by Group

GROUP	TYPE/AGE	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
COLLEGE	FASTPITCH / FEMALE	43'	84'-10"	60'	60'	30'	8'	15'	3'	190'-220'	4'	3'
HIGH SCHOOL	FASTPITCH / FEMALE	40'	84'-10"	60'	60'	30'	8'	15'	3'	200'-225'	4'	3'
A.S.A ADULT	FASTPITCH / WOMEN	40'	84'-10"	60'	60'	30'	8'	15'	3'	200'-250'	4'	3'
	FASTPITCH / MENS	46'	84'-10"	60'	60'	30'	8'	15'	3'	225'-250'	4'	3'
	SLOWPITCH / WOMEN / MEN	50'	91'-9"	65'	65'	32'	8'	15'	3'	265'-315'	4'	3'
A.S.A YOUTH	FASTPITCH / GIRLS / 10U	35'	77'-9"	60'	55'	27'	8'	15'	3'	150'-175'	4'	3'
	FASTPITCH / GIRLS/ 12U	40'	84'-10"	60'	60'	30'	8'	15'	3'	175'-200'	4'	3'
	FASTPITCH / GIRLS/ 14U	40'	84'-10"	60'	60'	30'	8'	15'	3'	175'-200'	4'	3'
	FASTPITCH / GIRLS / 16U/ 18U	40'	84'-10"	60'	60'	30'	8'	15'	3'	200'-225'	4'	3'
A.F.A YOUTH	FASTPITCH / GIRLS / 12U	38'	84'-10"	60'	60'	30'	8'	15'	3'		4'	3'
	FASTPITCH / 14U / 16U / 18U	40'	84'-10"	60'	60'	30'	8'	15'	3'		4'	3'
USSSA ADULT	SLOWPITCH / MENS 12"	46'	91'-9"	65'	65'	32'	10'	10'	5'	300'-315'	3'	2.5'
	SLOWPITCH / WOMENS 11"	46'	91'-9"	65'	65'	32'	10'	10'	5'	250'+	3'	2.5'
SCMAF ADULT	SLOWPITCH / MENS / WMNS	50'	84'-10"	60'	60'	30'	6'	15'	3'	250'+	4'	3'
	FASTPITCH / MENS	46'	84'-10"	60'	60'	30'	6'	15'	3'	250'+	4'	3'
	FASTPITCH / WOMENS	40'	84'-10"	60'	60'	30'	6'	15'	3'	250'+	4'	3'



# 2010 SRVGAL Rules Matrix

## All Divisions

	Pre K / K	1st / 2nd Grade	3rd / 4th Grade			5th / 6th Grade			7th / 8th Grade			High School Division
			White	Blue	Red	White	Blue	Red	White	Blue	Red	
Regulation Game in minutes	75	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120
Regulation Game in innings	5	6	6	6	6	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
Extra Innings?	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Game Ball	9" incrd	11" incrd	11" incrd	11" incrd	11" incrd	12" Leather	12" Leather	12" Leather	12" Leather	12" Leather	12" Leather	12" Leather
Baseline Distance (ft)	50'	55'	55'	55'	60	60'	60'	60'	60'	60'	60'	60'
Pitch Distance (ft)	35'	35'	35'	35'	35	35'	35'	40'	40'	40'	40'	40'
15 ft. 'Fair but Foul' arc	yes	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no
15 Foot Commit Line	no	yes	yes	no	no	yes	no	no	yes	no	no	no
Defensive Players	10	10	10	9	9	10	9	9	9	9	9	9
Pitcher	T-Ball	adult	player/adult	player/adult	player	player/adult	player	player	player	player	player	player
Pitcher's limit	N/A	N/A	3 Innings	3 Innings	3 Innings	4 innings	4 innings	4 innings	4 innings	4 innings	21 outs/week	4 innings
Five (5) run/inn rule	no	no	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	no	no
Ten (10) batter/inn rule	yes	yes	yes	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no
Batting limits (excl. fouls)	7 swings	5 pitch/3 strike	normal	normal	normal	normal	normal	normal	normal	normal	normal	normal
Stike Zone	N/A	N/A	TOS:BOK	TOS:BOK	TOS:BOK	TOS:BOK	TOS:BOK	TOS:BOK	TOS:BOK	AP:TOK	AP:TOK	AP:TOK
Bunting	no	no	no	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Dropped Third Strike	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	yes	no	yes	yes	yes
Lead Off Base after ball...	..is hit	..X's plate	..X's plate	..X's plate	..leaves hand	..X's plate	..X's plate	..leaves hand	..X's plate	..X's plate	..leaves hand	..leaves hand
Base Stealing	no	no	no	no	yes	no	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes
Stealing Home Allowed	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	no	N/A	no	yes	N/A	no	yes	yes
Ball-on-Infield Limits Runner	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no
Infield play:innings/game	Rotate **	1	1	1	1	1	N/A	N/A	1	N/A	N/A	1
Minimum def. dist. to plate	35'	35'	35'	35'	35'	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Minimum outfielder rule	no	yes	yes	no	no	yes	no	no	no	no	no	no
Infield Fly Rule	no	no	no	no	yes	no	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes

\*\* in Pre K/K- players must be moved every inning and an individual player may only play any position 1 inning a game

## **COACHING YOUR OWN CHILD**

- Know what your sports goals are for your daughter.
  - Make a list of your sports dreams for you child.
  - Think about how your persistence as a coach will impact these dreams.
  - If you remain convinced you are the best coach for your child, go ahead. If not, coach another team.
  
- Examine and understand your motives for coaching your child.
  - Be sensitive to your child's level of sport ambition as compared to your own.
  - If you want sport success more than your child, your relationship is at risk.
  - Be aware of how hard you press your daughter; your relationship may suffer if you press too hard.
  
- Encourage your daughter to communicate openly with you.
  - When you coach your child in team sports, other players may become jealous.
  - They may express jealousy by rejecting or ignoring your child socially.
  - Teammates may criticize you to your child so she needs to know she can talk to you and that you will listen.
  
- Treat your child equal to the other players.
  - Never be harder on your own child than you are on the other players.
  - Some coaches try too hard to prove their objectivity by pushing their child more than their teammates.
  - This is bad for your child's self-esteem and destructive to the parent child relationship.
  
- Use assistant coaches.
  - Your child may be more open to feedback from assistants, especially once puberty hits.
  - At puberty and sometimes before, children have a strong drive to assert their independence so advice may be easier to take when it comes from outside the family.
  
- Catch your daughter being good and playing well.
  - Reinforce behavior you want to see repeated.
  - She will react and continue to act in response to your praise.
  - Notice and compliment when she does a skill correctly as well as when she makes an error.

# Considerations in Building your Line-up

## Batting Order Considerations

- 1) LEADOFF
  - a. Someone you want up to bat more than anyone else.
  - b. Has good speed and base-running skills.
  - c. Should have a high on-base percentage, which includes a good eye and bat control.
- 2) SECOND BATTER
  - a. Considered another leadoff.
  - b. Your best bunter in pressure situations for advancing runners.
- 3) THIRD BATTER
  - a. Your most consistent hitter with the highest batting average.
  - b. Does well with runners in scoring position.
  - c. Should be the team leader in RBI's (Runs Batted In)
  - d. Should have one of the highest batting averages.
- 4) FOURTH BATTER or "CLEAN-UP"
  - a. Not necessarily a long ball hitter but can supply power when needed.
  - b. Considered a "clutch" hitter with runners in scoring position.
  - c. Third and fourth batter should lead the team in RBI's.
  - d. Should have one of the highest batting averages.
- 5) FIFTH BATTER
  - a. Another "clean-up" hitter.
  - b. Should be consistent in the run production category.
  - c. Often times the 4<sup>th</sup> batter is walked, this hitter needs to be able to produce in this pressure situation.
- 6) SIXTH BATTER
  - a. Should have good running speed.
  - b. A consistent hitter with a decent batting average.
  - c. Can be considered another leadoff hitter.
- 7) SEVENTH BATTER
  - a. Similar to 6<sup>th</sup> batter, however, not as consistent.
  - b. Should have the ability to lay the bunt down.
- 8) EIGHTH BATTER
  - a. Your most developmental hitter in the lineup.
  - b. May be considered a "scrapper". Someone who does whatever it takes to get on base (bunt, slap or walk).
- 9) NINTH BATTER
  - a. Do not put your weakest hitter here.
  - b. This hitter has the characteristics of a leadoff batter.
  - c. The advantage of having the 9<sup>th</sup> batter on base is that it brings up to bat the top of the line-up, which is considered the strongest or most consistent part of the batting order.

## **Defensive Line-up Considerations**

- 1) PITCHER
  - a) Pitchers should be athletes who love the game and are committed to work above and beyond normal practice.
  - b) Every young athlete should be given the opportunity to pitch and see if it is a part of the game they enjoy.
- 2) CATCHER or “General” (leader on the field)
  - a) Someone who loves the position and wants to be on the field.
  - b) Should have a strong arm as they throw often.
  - c) Has a good understanding of the game.
- 3) FIRST BASE
  - a) Has the capability of catching the ball.
  - b) Glove control and footwork will help with her success.
- 4) SECOND BASE
  - a) Has good understanding of the game.
  - b) Must be able to cover 1<sup>st</sup> on a bunt, turn a double play and handle 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> situations. (As a player gets older)
  - c) Can be the position where you “hide” or “mask” a weaker player.
- 5) THIRD BASE
  - a) Has the “reflexes of a cat”. Quick and instinctive reactions.
  - b) Moves quickly in all directions.
  - c) Has a strong arm and steady glove.
- 6) SHORTSTOP
  - a) Another leadership position.
  - b) Usually your best athlete.
  - c) Has a strong arm and good fielding mechanics and instincts.
  - d) Provides vocal communication and direction to teammates on the field.
- 7) LEFTFIELDER
  - a) Has a good glove and gets good reads on the ball off the bat.
  - b) Usually has the weakest arm.
- 8) CENTERFIELDER
  - a) Leader of the outfield. Has good vocal communication.
  - b) Usually your fastest outfielder with the best glove.
- 9) RIGHTFIELDER
  - a) Usually the outfielder with the strongest arm.
  - b) Handles ground balls well and can throw to 1<sup>st</sup> base well.

# Defensive Skills

## Throwing Mechanics

### Lower Body Mechanics

- The throwing motion is initiated by taking a small step (Jab Step) with the throwing side foot. Foot points slightly outward to allow the hips to begin to rotate and should land on or very close to the power line.
- Glove hand foot strides forward, landing on/or just short of the power line, but not across the power line. Stride foot should land on a 45 degree angle to target
- As the stride occurs, the body rotates. Hips and shoulders are now in line with the target and the belly button is pointed at 90 degrees.  
Note: If you concentrate on the proper placement of the stride foot, the proper body rotation will follow.
- As the throwing arm comes forward, the hips and shoulders rotate back to their original position.

Drill: Hands on Hips (to isolate the lower body)

- 1-2 back to square • 1-2 back to square

Do this all the way across the diamond, making sure the jab step and stride step are at a proper 45 degree angle and are landing on or close to power line.

### Upper Body Mechanics

*Throwing the ball is as much a two handed activity as catching the ball*

### The Throwing Hand

#### Grip

- two or three finger grip
- Pads of fingers on seams
- Thumb is directly below index' finger (if possible with their hand size)
- Small space between thumb web and ball "sneak a peek"
- You should be able to see the palm of the hand at release

#### Release

- at release, wrist snaps straight down. Fingers should point down and dangle the little finger. Try to achieve a ball rotation of 1 O'Clock to 7 O'Clock

Drills: Encourage Proper Release

- Ball in Throwing Hand
- Feet at 45 degree angle to target
- Hips and shoulders square to target
- Ball held in throwing hand at approximate release point
- Opposite hand supports elbow of throwing hand
- Flip the ball to a partner using only the wrist. Feel the ball "peel" off the fingers at release
- Look for the 1-7 rotation

## **The Arm Swing**

Once you have caught the ball with two hands, you can begin the arm swing with two hands.

- Gather position: Ball in throwing hand, inside glove, in front of chest
- From gather position, the throwing motion is initiated by dropping both hands straight down.
- The bare hand swings down taking your “thumb past your thigh” as you begin your lower body stride.
- The glove hand also swings down showing your glove palm to the target with the thumb on the bottom.
- As the glove arm swings up into the throwing position, the glove elbow is bent and the glove arm is horizontal to the ground.
- At the same time the throwing arm swings up into the throwing position. The throwing elbow is bent forming an "L", the throwing elbow is above the shoulder and we are showing the ball to the side (The thumb of the throwing hand should be pointing away from the body).
- Pull the throwing arm through with the elbow leading the throwing hand.
- At the same time, we aggressively draw the glove back to the body with a twisting motion with the glove finishing in a palm up position.
- It is Important to maintain a non-stop circular motion when throwing. Injuries can occur by pulling the arm back, stopping the motion and pulling through to throw. - Think swing-pull, not push pull.

## **Summary -Checkpoints**

- Footwork - Right hander, R-L throw Left hander, L-R throw
- Stride must stay on power line
- Both hands break down at separation
- Throwing hand passes the thigh into throwing position while glove hand presses the palm to the target
- Throwing elbow is bent and above the shoulder at the top with the thumb away from the body
- The glove arm is horizontal with the palm to the target and thumb on the bottom
- Shoulders remain level throughout throwing motion and the throwing arm maintains a continuous circular motion.
- Wrist snaps downward at release with the pinky dangle to create 1-7 rotation
- At release, back leg is slightly bent, front leg is straight

## Drills:

- Flip Away Drill. Promotes proper throwing arm motion -Do with and without footwork
- Gather Position Separate Drill
  - Promotes proper throwing arm rotation and proper glove hand position
- Rotate and Release. From Power Position.
  - Promotes proper rotation to release (Belly button to target) Flip and Throw
- Four Corners
  - Promotes total body mechanics and movement to ball catching skills
  - Variations: Short - Reverse Direction – Bounce – Two Ball - Follow
  - Emphasize Two Hand Mechanics - Catchable Throws – Form Transitions

## Catching (receiving) Mechanics

If you can't play catch, you can't play softball. After you catch the ball, you will have to do one of two things:

1. Make a throw
2. Execute an out by stepping on a base or tagging a runner.

If you don't catch the ball, 1 and 2 become irrelevant

## Catching Mechanics

### Lower Body

- Move to the ball. Move your feet to get your body into position. Use a two step attack on routine grounder. Step first with your throwing side.
- Try to move your body to enable you to receive the ball in the center or slightly to the throwing side of your body.

### Upper Body

- Play with two hands (Catch and cover)
  - Protects the ball
  - Promotes quicker transfer from glove to throwing hand
  - Initiates the throwing process
- On balls above the waist, position your hands thumb to thumb
- On balls below the waist, position your hands pinky to pinky

### Drills:

- Wiffle Catch: Without gloves, play catch with a waffle ball. Players will automatically use two hands with proper orientation (thumb to thumb, pinky to pinky).
- Just Play Catch: Thrower aims for receiver's nose. Receiver moves body to receive the ball of the throwing side whenever possible while adjusting hand position based on the height of the ball.
- Team Catch Competition (Weakest Link): Each girl has a partner. Start all balls on the ground at one end. On command, each girl throws to a partner. Partner throws back. Set pre-determined number of times each girl must throw. When done team takes a knee. First team finished wins. Switch partner and repeat.
- Four Corners and Variations (discussed previously)

## Infield Skills

### Mental Preparation

Softball games are a series of alternating concentration and relaxation intervals. Player must be mentally prepared and alert on every pitch. Often times, the time between pitches provides an opportunity for younger players to become distracted. To keep players focused during each pitch, we can suggest techniques to assist the player in maintaining their concentrating when they have to and relaxing when they can.

- Hula Hoop Concentration Technique
  - Imagine a Hula Hoop is on the ground where you are supposed to stand when the ball is pitched. The Hula Hoop is your "Focus Zone".
  - Between pitches you can walk outside the Hula Hoop, waive to Mom and friends, and look at the butterflies.

- When the pitcher gets on the pitching plate, you must step back inside your Hula Hoop and regain your 100% focus on the ball.
- Expect that every pitch will be hit to you.

## **Ready Position to Field the Ball**

- First and Third Base (Corners)
  - Set up low. Glove is out in front of you. The closer you are to the batter, the lower you get in your stance.
  - Weight on the balls of the feet
  - Elbows are slightly outside knees
  - Hand and glove tilted slightly inward
- Second Base and Short Stop
  - Set up a little taller, similar to tennis player receiving a serve. Elbows slightly outside hips, weight slightly on balls of feet. Hands held at about thigh height so you don't have to pick your hands up to move laterally.

## **Fielding Ground Balls**

- Move to the ball. Get your body in front of the ball and get your hips and shoulders square to the ball whenever possible. Use a two step attack on routine grounder. Step first with your throwing side.
- Be on balance and under control whenever possible or as you field the ball. Don't leave your feet unless you have too, but if you have to leave your feet, be aggressive about it.
- Fielding position
  - Establish a triangle with your glove and your feet. Have your glove side foot slightly ahead of the other foot as you receive the ball.
  - Bend the knees
  - Back at about 45 degrees
  - Hips lower than shoulders
- Play the ball out in front with your hands at point of triangle
- Eliminate extra glove movements as you approach the ball
- Keep glove fingers down, knuckles get dirty on last hop
- Throwing hand on top or at the side of the glove
- Move throwing hand to ball not the glove to the throwing hand
- For your footwork think: 1-2 field 1-2 throw
- Maintain soft hands as you funnel or cushion the ball into the "gather" position.
  - Use BOTH hands. The glove is an extension of the hand. The glove simply re-directs the ball into the throwing hand.

## Drills :

### Progressive Fielding

- Without ball and glove
  - 1-2 reach, clap and hold (hands are out in front) Without ball and glove
  - 1-2 reach, clap, 1-2 throw
- Same drill with incrediball or wiffle ball (no glove)
  - Coach rolls ball slowly from about 20 feet
  - Demand the use of two hands
- Same drill with ball and glove

### Total throwing motion drill

- Coach rolls ball to player then progress to hitting ground balls

### Side to Side Movement Drill

- Coach is about 40 feet away. Roll ball to one side or the other. -Player tries to get in front and "square up" wherever possible.

### Side to Side Movement with the Opposite Direction Throw

- Coach about 40 feet away. Player at Shortstop, one player on 3<sup>rd</sup>, one player on 2<sup>nd</sup>
- Roll ball to force movement. If ball is rolled toward 3<sup>rd</sup>, player throws to 2<sup>nd</sup>, if ball is rolled toward 2<sup>nd</sup>, player goes to third.

## **Outfield Skills**

### **General Outfield Strategies**

- On balls hit that force you to turn your back on the infield you should always throw the ball to your relay: SS - 2B
- On ground balls hit in front of you, throw the ball to the base ahead of the lead runner. All throws to home should be thrown through the cutoff: 1<sup>st</sup> baseman or 3<sup>rd</sup> baseman.
- On fly balls hit within the outfielder's throwing range:
  - Throw to the base ahead of where the lead runner is tagging
  - If there are runners on 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> or 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> and the lead runner is not in your throwing range, immediately throw the ball to 2<sup>nd</sup> base to keep the back runner from advancing into scoring position. Do not throw wildly to the next base and allow the back runner to advance as well.

### **Fielding Fly Balls**

#### **Lower Body**

- Square shoulders and hips to the ball if possible
- Knees are slightly bent
- Glove hand foot slightly ahead
- Try to move your feet to enable you to catch the ball on the throwing side of your body
  - Improves concentration
  - Promotes two handed catch

#### **Upper body**

- Fingers of glove and hand pointing up
- Elbows slightly flexed
- Hands and arms do not extend upward until catch is about to be made.
- When running toward the ball, do not have glove hand extended, use your arms to run.

### Drills:

#### Hands and Body Positioning Drill

- Coach throws short distance fly balls. Player keeps hands to side and moves into position so that the ball is coming down on her throwing side ear. When the ball gets near, both hands raise to catch the ball. This drill can be done with greater degrees of movement as the player gets more proficient.
- Spin Drill
- Player faces coach. Balls are thrown or hit. Player spins 360 degrees and finds ball again to make catch.

### Blind Catch Drill

- Player stands back to coach. Coach throws ball and yells "ball". Player turns, finds ball, makes the catch

### Two Player Blind

- Both players stand back to coach. Coach throws balls in direction of one or the other and yells "ball". Players find the ball. One of the players must take charge and call the ball. The player who calls the ball moves into position and makes the catch. The other player moves into a backup position to the player who is making the catch.

### Hit Ground Balls to Outfielders

- Have outfielders drop to one knee to protect ball from getting past them.

### Angle of Pursuit Drills

- Throw or hit balls to right or left of player. Player must take the correct angle to cut the ball off.

### Line Relay Drill and Race.

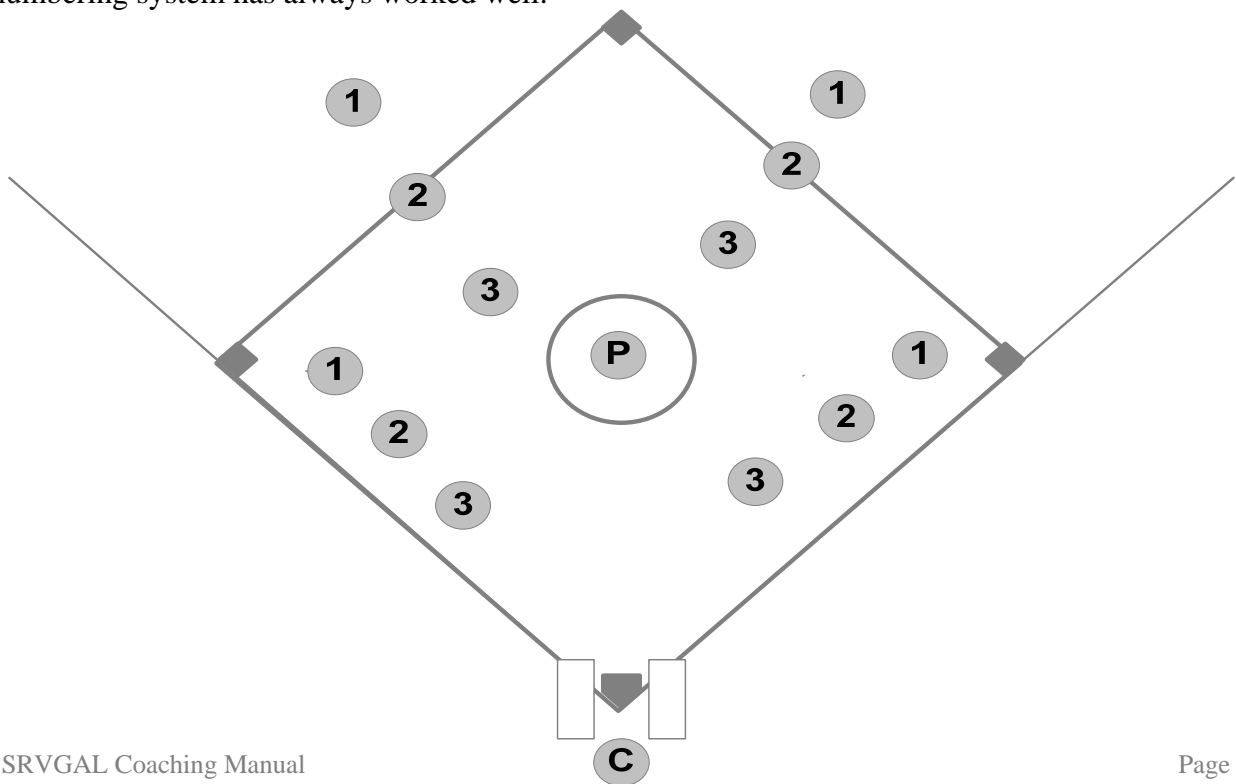
- Three teams of four players each. Players line up about 30 yards apart. Balls start at one end and go to the other. Last player runs the ball to front of the line. Other players move to next station.
- As #4 sprints to #1 position, 1 goes to position 2, 2 goes to position 3, 3 goes to position 4.
- Continue until #1 is back in her original position. 1<sup>st</sup> team to their original position wins.

## **Defense Skills - General**

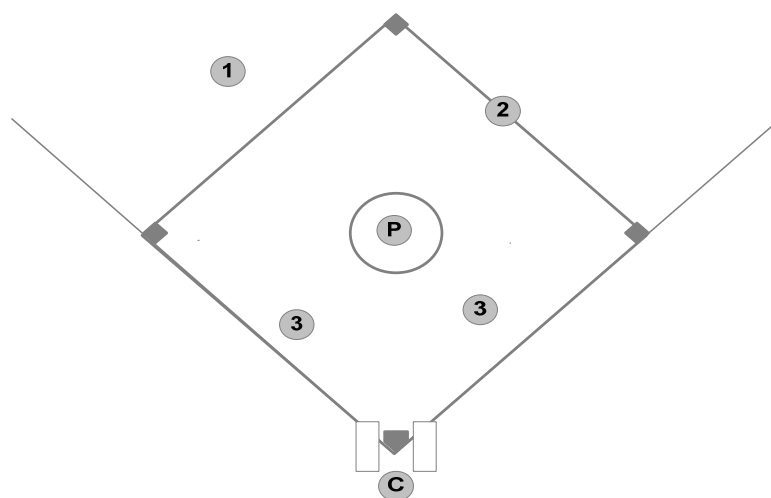
It is usually the inability to make a routine play that will determine the outcome of a game. Most games are "lost" rather than won because the defensive players have not had enough repetitions to be able to execute a certain skill or combination of skills with confidence. Teach your players the 3 B's of defense ... **Ball / Base / Back-up**. They should do one of the "B's" every time the ball is put into play.

### **Player Positioning:**

- Throughout the game you may want to position your player to respond to a given situation or a given hitter. Try to make communicating these adjustments easy as possible. For me, a simple numbering system has always worked well.



For instance, in a bunt situation you may want this configuration.



## Bunt Coverages

In sacrifice, bunt situations there are two basic coverages which can be used depending on the ability of your players. 3<sup>rd</sup> Baseman calls who plays the ball and the catcher calls where the ball is thrown.

- Traditional squeeze from both corners
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Baseman and 3<sup>rd</sup> Baseman both squeeze the batter (position #3)
  - Shortstop stays deep to cover left side grounder and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Base bag
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Baseman plays normal depth to cover right side grounder and has 1<sup>st</sup> base responsibility if ball is bunted.
- Left side rotation
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> Baseman squeezes the batter
  - Shortstop and 2<sup>nd</sup> Baseman stays deep to cover ground balls
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Baseman plays normal
  - Pitcher has responsibility for bunts directed toward 1st base side.

## Runners on 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Base

With runners on 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, the runner on 1st will often steal. There are several defensive plays which can be utilized depending upon your defensive objective. Unless you are a very skilled team, your goal should always be to prevent the runner at 3<sup>rd</sup> from scoring and hopefully, pick the runner off of 3<sup>rd</sup> base.

- Pump fake to 2<sup>nd</sup> base and a pickoff at 3<sup>rd</sup> base.
  - Fake a throw to 2nd to "draw" runner down the line at third. The 3<sup>rd</sup> baseman is playing up in position #3 and takes a few steps in on the pitch to take away the bunt. The Catcher pump fakes to 2<sup>nd</sup> base and then throws the ball to the Shortstop who is coming in the back door at 3<sup>rd</sup> base. The leftfielder backs up the throw to 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 1<sup>st</sup> Baseman crashes down to cover home behind the Catcher in a run down.
- Hard throw back to pitcher
  - The 3<sup>rd</sup> baseman is playing up in position #3 and takes a few steps in on the pitch to take away the bunt. The pitcher will squat down to clear the way for a throw to 2<sup>nd</sup> base. The Catcher comes up with a hard throw toward 2<sup>nd</sup> base. At the last instance, the Pitcher reaches up and takes the ball and throws the ball to the Shortstop who is coming in the back door at 3<sup>rd</sup> base. The leftfielder backs up the throw to 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 1<sup>st</sup> Baseman crashes down to cover home behind the Catcher in a run down.

- 2<sup>nd</sup> Across
  - The 2<sup>nd</sup> Baseman will cheat in a little. The 3<sup>rd</sup> baseman is playing up in position #3 and takes a few steps in on the pitch to take away the bunt. The Catcher throws hard back up the middle. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Baseman is cutting across the diamond between the Pitcher and 2<sup>nd</sup> base. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Baseman immediately cuts off the throw and feeds the ball to the Shortstop who is coming in the back door at 3<sup>rd</sup> base. The leftfielder backs up the throw to 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 1<sup>st</sup> Baseman crashes down to cover home behind the Catcher in a run down.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Read
  - This is an advanced play that requires very proficient players. This is very similar to the 2<sup>nd</sup> across play except it requires the 2<sup>nd</sup> Baseman to make a read on the runner at 3<sup>rd</sup>. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Baseman will cheat in a little. The 3<sup>rd</sup> baseman is playing middle or back position #2 or 1. The Catcher throws hard to the Shortstop covering the bag at 2<sup>nd</sup> base. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Baseman is cutting across the diamond between the Pitcher and 2<sup>nd</sup> base and makes a read on the runner at third. If the runner on 3<sup>rd</sup> is off the bag or going, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Baseman immediately cuts off the throw and plays the lead runner. If the runner at 3<sup>rd</sup> is not going, the 2<sup>nd</sup> baseman will let the ball go through to the Shortstop covering 2<sup>nd</sup> base. Again, the 1<sup>st</sup> Baseman crashes down to cover home behind the Catcher in the event of a run down.

## Rundowns

- The ideal number of throws to execute a successful rundown is zero.
  - Next best is 1, next best is 2, etc.
  - The more throws made, the greater chance of mistakes.
- Player with the ball runs at the base runner as fast as player can.
  - The primary objective is to tag out the base runner. (Run the player down)
- After the base-runner commits to a base, the ball can be thrown in front of her.
- That player either tags out the base runner or runs her down.
  - The ball is held like a dart above the shoulder and is visible to the catching fielder.
  - Do not fake throws.
  - The receiving player calls for the ball.
  - Follow your throw.
- Try to push the runner back to the previous base (farthest base from home).
- Common mistakes in executing rundowns
  - Calling for the ball too soon or too late
  - Player with the ball does not sprint at runner
  - Player with the ball does not show ball to receiver
  - Player with the ball fakes throw to the receiver

## Relays and Cut-Offs

### Relays

- Relays should occur whenever outfielders have to turn their back to the infielder to retrieve a batted ball.
  - The infield relay player will be the Shortstop or 2<sup>nd</sup> Baseman depending upon where the ball is hit.
  - Relays are used to assist outfielders in making throws to the infield, including home, and in preventing trailing runners from taking extra bases.
  - After receiving a throw from the outfielder, the relay player will either throw to a specific base, or run the ball into the infield to stop base-runners from advancing.
  - The relay player should line herself up on an imaginary straight line between the throwing outfielder and the base to which the relay throw should be made.
  - To assist the outfielder, the relay person should have both hands in the air and call "ball!" to the outfielder, giving her both visual and verbal signals.

## **Cut-Offs**

Cut-offs should occur when balls are thrown toward home from either outfielders or relay players in an attempt to keep a runner from scoring.

The cut-off player listens to the Catcher to get directions about where to line up. The Catcher will say Right-Left or Hand-Glove to get the cut-off player properly aligned.

The cut-off player also listens to verbal signals from the catcher as to whether or not to CUT the ball and what to do with the ball once it is cut-off.

If the catcher determines that there is an out possibility at home and the throw is on-line, she will not tell the relay player to Cut the ball off. If the catcher determines that there is no chance of an out at home, or if the throw is off-line, she will direct the cut off player to CUT the ball and hold it (CUT - HOLD) or cut the ball and throw to a specific base like CUT 2 (cut the ball and throw it to second.) The Catcher will always refer to a base by number (home would be "4" because "Cut Home" and "Cut Hold" sound too much alike).

The cut off player should be the 1<sup>st</sup> Baseman, with the pitcher backing up home, on all throws from the outfield to home.

For younger recreational league players it may be easier to have the pitcher serve as the cut off player and have the 1<sup>st</sup> Baseman back up home.

# Hitting

## The Mindset of a Successful Hitter

There are two phases of an At-Bat, before you are up, and then “Showtime”  
There are two phases of a swing, getting ready, and “Showtime”.

- Phases of the At-Bat
  - Before you are up
    - Know her 3 pitches
      - First pitch
      - Go to pitch (2-0 or 3-1)
      - Strike Out pitch (1-2 or 2-2)
    - Gloves, Helmet and Bat – get ready early
    - Time your toe touch (in the on deck circle)
    - Know your situation (runners on base)
    - Know your job (the signal)
  - Showtime – once your turn to hit is here
- Phases of the swing
  - Getting Ready to Hit
    - Some personal style is OK
    - Have a ritual – Control the tempo of the at-bat
    - Get your grip
    - Box position
  - Showtime – Getting ready and “Showtime” are separated at the Toe Touch of your stride
    - Toe Touch – every thing after toe touch should be the same for every hitter
    - 5 things you must have at Toe Touch
      - Front shoulder down and in
      - Hands are back to, or behind the rear foot and up at the top of the strike zone. Elbows comfortable.
      - Knees are bent with weight equally balanced, do not keep you weight back
      - Head is in the center of the body.
      - Upper body is separated from the lower body.

## Grip

- Line up the middle knuckles (your “door knocking” knuckles).
- Grip the bat in your fingers, not with your palms. Hold the bat where your fingers and palms meet.

## Stance

- Have your weight on the balls of your feet in a balanced position.
- Point your feet straight ahead.
  - Position your knees between your feet and bend them slightly.
- Keep your hips level.
- Hold your head and eyes level and still.
- Position the front shoulder slightly down with your front arm bent at 90 degrees.
- Let your elbows hang, pointed slightly out with your back arm at 45 degrees.
- Cock the front shoulder and hip slightly inward.
- Hold your hands even with your back shoulder about 4-6 inches from your body.
- Your bottom hand should be at the top of the strike zone.





Good Bat Angle



Bat Angle too Flat



Bat Angle too Steep

## Stride and Toe Touch

- Use a short, soft glide and land on the inside ball of your foot (your big toe)
- The front toe opens slightly and the hip stays closed.
- Do not move your head.
- Cock the front shoulder, hip, and knee slightly in toward the catcher.
- Keep your weight on the inside of the back foot.
- Move your hands back slightly to the launch position at your back foot.
- Cock your wrists.
- Focus your eyes on the pitcher's release point
- 5 things you must have at Toe Touch
  - Front shoulder down and in
  - Hands are back to, or behind the rear foot and up at the top of the strike zone. Elbows comfortable.
  - Knees are bent with weight equally balanced, do not keep your weight back
  - Head is in the center of the body.
  - Upper body is separated from the lower body.



Good – Elbows Relaxed



Bad – Back Elbow up



Bad – Front Elbow up



Bad – Barred Arm

## Swing

- Your lower body rotation will initiate the swing.
- As you hip rotate toward the pitcher, the back foot rotates allowing your hips to rotate fully.
- Keep both elbows bent and pointed downward.
- Drive the knob of the bat directly to the ball.
- Keep your hands inside the ball.
- The barrel lags behind, always above your hands.
- Keep the top of the bat close to your neck as long as possible to avoid casting out.
- Keep the front shoulder down, closed, and pointed at the ball.
- Keep your eyes focused very tightly on the ball, hit with your eyes.
- As your arms extend forward toward to contact the ball, drive your top thumb through the top half of the ball.



## Contact

- Keep your head and eyes down and very focused on the ball.
- Drive the barrelhead through the ball with the top hand.
- Keep your front side rigid and Strong.
- Swing hard, just in case you hit the ball.
- Transfer your weight to the inside of the front foot and leg.
- Your belly button will rotate and point to the contact spot.
- Point the back foot and toe at the front knee in an L position.
- Imagine a straight vertical line passing from your back ear through the shoulder, hip, and back knee.
- Watch the ball hit your bat.



## Follow-Through

- Your back shoulder rotates so that it will almost touch your chin.
- Your front foot will opens to 45 degrees and your front leg should be straight and firm.
- The bat carries around behind your body.
- Maintain balanced position.
- Finish balanced with you back ear, back shoulder, and back knee lined up in a straight vertical line with a straight, strong, firm front leg.



## Bunting

### Types of bunts

- Sacrifice Bunt
- Squeeze Bunt
- Fake Bunt
- Sneak Bunt
- Drag Bunt (left handed)



### Sacrifice Bunt

The purpose of a sacrifice bunt is to advance the runner or runners to the next base with the expectation that the bunter will be out. Basically, the coach is making a decision that they are willing to take an out in order to move a runner into scoring position.

The sacrifice bunt is usually used with runners on first or second or both with less than two outs. When given the bunt sign, the batter should bunt the next strike. Do not attempt to sacrifice bunt a pitch that is not a strike.

The sacrifice bunt requires the least movement of any bunt. The basic position of the bunter is at the front of the box so that the possibility of bunting the ball into fair territory is maximized and so that the ball will not bounce off the plate. Because the defense is anticipating most sacrifice bunts, the batter does not need to worry about turning early and giving it away. The bunter turns as the pitcher separates her hands so that as she is not moving when she is actually attempting to bunt the ball. Generally speaking, the bunter should attempt to bunt the ball into the soft spot between the pitcher and first baseman. This placement will minimize the possibility that the defense will be able to make a play on the lead runner.

Sometimes the sacrifice bunt can be used in combination with the base runner(s) stealing. When used in the bunt-steal manner, the runner will be going on the pitch and the batter bunts the ball. The batter's goal is still just to advance the runner. The advantage is that the batter does not have to worry as much about where the bunt goes because the runner has a head start on the defense. The disadvantage is that the batter must protect the runner even if the pitch is bad. The bunt-steal combination should only be used when the batter is ahead in the count and there is a reasonable expectation that the batter will be thrown a good pitch to bunt.

## Stance

The batter must be sure to keep her feet in the batter's box when she pivots to bunt. The bunter should have her weight is on the balls of the feet with the knees slightly bent and a slight bend at the waist. A good balanced position with her weight forward will give the bunter the ability adjust to the pitch and even to get out of the way of a wild pitch.



When the pitcher breaks her hands, the batter pivots on the balls of both feet turning her belly button toward the pitcher. The bunter's shoulders and hips are open to the pitcher. The feet stay in basic open hitting position (forward-back) with the back foot moving a couple of inches closer to the plate for better balance so that she can cover a strike over the outside part of the plate.

## Hand Position and Grip

As the bunter pivots, she has two options for holding the bat. Some players prefer to use the “**Hand's Apart**” grip and some players believe they have more control with a “**Hands Together**” grip. Players should try both hand position methods and decide which is more comfortable for them. The more skilled players should be encouraged to become proficient with the “Hands Together” grip.

As players become more skilled, they should move their hands together and try the pivot stance. The most important thing is for players to be comfortable and find out what works best for them.

In the “**Hands Together**” grip, the hands are together at the top of the bat grip with the top hand holding the bat loosely. This is the preferred grip for more capable players because it will allow the bunt to adjust to a slug, slap, or push bunt.



In the “**Hands Apart**” grip, the bottom hand grips the bat mid way up the bat tape with the knuckles up and the palm toward the ground. The top hand moves up the barrel to grip the bat above the tape as if to be shaking hands with the bat. The top hand grips the bat in the fingertips, away from the palm of the hand. This should leave a V-shaped space between the thumb and forefinger. The top hand serves to deaden the impact as the ball hits the bat and the hand acts as a cushion. The bottom hand acts as the directional control for the bunter.



## Bat Angle

The most important thing about bunting is to keep the bat at an angle and to strike the top half of the ball with the bottom half of the bat. If the bat is kept at an angle, it is almost impossible to pop-up a bunt as balls miss-hit to the top part of the bat will foul off to the side and not up where a fielder or catcher can make the catch. The bat head is angled upward at about a 45-degree angle, and the bat head is pointed slightly toward the pitcher.



## Body Position at Contact

The bat is held in front of the bunter's chest and out in front of home plate. The elbows are bent, pointed downward at an angle, and slightly outside the body. The arms and shoulders are relaxed and free of tension. The batter must be careful not to reach and strike at the ball. Her chest and head are directly facing the pitcher with her eyes level at the top of the strike zone. When sacrifice bunting, the batter must never try to attempt to bunt a ball that is above her eyes which are at the top of the strike zone. At contact, visualize catching the ball with the bat, giving slightly with the bat and arms to soften the impact. Make contact with the ball in a manner that will help to deaden the ball.

To bunt a low pitch (that is still in the strike zone), the batter sinks at the knees to lower the entire body while maintaining the same bat angle as much as possible. She uses her knees to move the bat, and her body, up and down. As she lowers her hands and the bat, she makes sure that the bat head never drops below the hands.

## Control the Bunt Direction

The position of the bat when the ball contacts the bat will determine where the ball goes. Generally speaking, we would prefer that the ball be put into play on the ground to the first base side of the pitcher. This bunt positioning helps to minimize the possibility that the defense will be able to make a play on the lead runner.

If the bat is square to the pitcher, the ball will rebound directly back to her. The bottom hand is the control hand. By pushing the bottom hand forward (right handed bunts) slightly the bunter can direct the ball to the soft spot between the pitcher and the first baseman. When a right-handed batter pulls the bottom hand back, the bunt will go to the third base side. When the bottom hand is pushed forward, the ball will go to first base side.

The adjustment of bat angle is not really that critical at the younger levels. Right-handed batters who are just learning to bunt will find it much easier to bunt an outside pitch toward first and an inside pitch toward third base. For the best chance of success, younger players who are just learning to bunt should bunt the ball where it is pitched.

## Key Points for successful Sacrifice Bunting

- The bunter should set up in the front of the batter's box
- Pivot on the balls of your feet pointing your belly button toward the pitcher while moving your back foot slightly toward the plate.
- Keep your shoulders and hips open to the pitcher.
- Bend your knees slightly so that your eyes are at the top of the strike zone.
- Stay relaxed with your elbows outside the body with the elbows bent and pointed slightly downward.
- Keep the bat at an angle lowering your body to get to low pitches.
- Never let the bat head drop below your hands.
- Only bunt strikes.
- Try to get the Sacrifice bunt down in the area between the pitcher and the first baseman.
- When you see that the bunt is down and that ball is out of your running path, then run!
- Don't drop your bat on the ball. Make sure your bat ends up well clear of the ball.
- If the first baseman fields the bunt in front of you and is waiting to tag you, stop and force her to come to you to apply the tag, giving the base runner more time to advance. **Do not back up!** If you back up, the umpire will call the ball dead, will call an automatic out, and the runner(s) have to return to the bases they occupied before the bunt.
- Focus on running in the running lane in foul territory to avoid an interference call.

## Base Running

There are a number of different ways that any softball team can get better on game day. One of the quickest improvements you can make is in your offensive philosophy of base running. Good teams make a point of emphasizing an aggressive base running philosophy. A major factor in any team's success is the way they take advantage of base running situations.

Work hard to develop an aggressive, yet smart, mentality on the bases. Some teams are aggressive, but do not think well on the bases and take themselves out of scoring positions, rather than creating them.

You want to take advantage of every scoring opportunity during a game. Some scoring opportunities are conservative and you have to wait for those scoring opportunities to present themselves. A good base running philosophy is to create as many scoring opportunities as you can during a game. Your base running philosophy is a major factor in our overall offensive philosophy.

### Base Running Guidelines

Alertness and quick response are the keys to success on the bases. We have developed the following guidelines for our Valley Stompers team, which we have implemented into our offensive philosophy.

1. We will always look to take the extra base. We have to come out of the batter's box aggressively and look for the extra base on every at-bat.
2. When the base runner has visual sight of the ball, she is on her own and must look to be aggressive. Base coaches will bring runners back with a verbal call, if needed.
3. If the base runner cannot maintain visual contact with the ball, she must make early visual contact with the base coach to pick up visual signals.
4. Whenever a base runner hears a verbal (BACK) call, she must immediately return to the nearest base.
5. Base runners must always use an aggressive primary or secondary lead. Their lead must appear the same in both base stealing and holding situations. We use 3-5-3 step lead philosophy.
6. Base runners must always be aware of the situation. Score, inning and outs are their responsibility. They must also be aware of the speed of other runners on base, if they are present.
7. Base runners are responsible for seeing bunts down, line drives through and fly balls down or caught, before advancing.
8. Base runners are responsible for the tag and their jump in tagging situations at second base. When they are on second base, they do not wait for a coach to tell them what to do. They will return to the bag immediately and see the ball caught before making their break. They must break aggressively in all situations. The third base coach will use a verbal call ("Back") to stop them if necessary.
9. Base runners are responsible for the tag in tagging situations at third base. When they are on third base with less than two outs, and the ball is put in the air to the outfield, they must return to the bag immediately and assume the sprinter's start position. The coach and runner will both watch the fielder. When the ball is caught, the coach will yell "Go" and the runner will break for home plate without looking back to see if she is going to throw the ball. The runner is responsible for her break to home and the coach is responsible for making a "back" call if necessary. If the coach makes the "Back" call, the runner will return to third, otherwise the runner will rocket home getting her hand on home plate.
10. Base runners must slide (head first or foot first) in every situation that it is warranted. Breaking up a double play is vital, when possible. They must also expect to slide on any multiple base hit or advancement.
11. And most importantly, our base runners must remember the golden rule of base running:

***RUN HARD & TURN LEFT***

No situation allows them to jog or let up. They must implement good corner turn techniques and drop the inside shoulder and touch the inside corner of the base to minimize distance covered.

## **Communication Tools**

Communication between coaches and base runners is vital. All communications must be relayed early and clearly. You should implement both verbal and visual communication tools. Your verbal communication tools must be clear and consistent. We use the same commands for the same situations. Your visual communication tools must be obvious enough to allow your base runners to see them early and throughout the entire play. Coaches must put themselves in positions to be seen.

## **Base Running Keys**

Ask your players to be very observant and look for a number of keys that can assist you on your base running philosophy. These are the same keys that the coaches are watching. Some of the keys you can look for are:

- A. Outfielder arm strength. This is vital. You have to identify which outfielders we can attempt to take extra bases on when the situation presents itself. Pre-game warm-ups are a good time to look for this.
- B. Catcher's arm strength and throwing techniques. Look at this early in the game. Does she throw the ball back to the pitcher from her knees? Does she lob the ball back to the pitcher? What type of throw does she use in steal situations? What is her demeanor after a passed ball or wild pitch? Can you pick up the pitch signals?
- C. The pitcher's motion. You want all runners to use the rocker step, so it is very important to get the timing with the pitcher's motion. Everybody has to work on this early in the game and be consistent throughout the game.
- D. Defensive aggressiveness to the ball. Do the outfielders attack the ball or are they conservative? This is key to your ability to take extra bases on base hits to the outfield.
- E. Defensive positioning and coverages. How deep are the outfielders playing? Who covers bases in steal situations? What does the defense do when we show bunt? These are key questions we look to answer very early in a game.
- F. Field and weather conditions. How long is the outfield grass? How deep are the fences? What direction is the wind blowing from? Is the ground hard or soft? Is it raining or is the grass moist? These questions give us a lot of insight into how aggressive we are on the bases.

## **Taking A Lead**

All of your players should use the rocker-step to take our leads at every base. This start gives the base runner the best timing and jump. Everybody on your team should use the same lead and be aggressive. Use non-base-stealers to help your base-stealers get better jumps. Understand that you will occasionally have a base runner called out for leaving early. Do not criticize your players for being aggressive.

Another key to taking a lead is your use of a secondary lead in scoring situations. You should use your secondary lead in most situations with a runner on second base. Your secondary lead is an extension of our regular lead. In a regular lead situation, we take three aggressive steps. In our secondary lead, we look to take five aggressive steps and we back our lead off of the baseline approximately two-to-three feet. By deepening out your lead, it allows you to get a good angle to third base on balls hit to the outfield. By taking this better angle, you will be able to make a better turn at third and have a better opportunity to score on a base hit.

All parts of your base running philosophy begin with an aggressive lead. Your players should know that if they do not get a good lead, they are in control of the decision-making process and you do not want them to make poor decisions on the bases. You do not want to discipline our base runners for being over or under aggressive depending on the situation. You want to encourage and promote aggressiveness.

## **Base-Stealing Situations**

Base-stealing is not as much a matter of speed as it is taking advantage of a situation and catching the defense off-guard. Base runners with average speed can be successful base-stealers, if they pay attention to the game and are

opportunistic. The key to being a successful base-stealer is getting a good jump and accelerating quickly. The first step after the normal three step lead in a base-stealing situation is an aggressive crossover step, in which we pull the upper body through with the left arm and drive the left leg across our body.

You also try to identify the best situation to steal a base. We try to read the pitcher's tendencies and identify the best pitch in each at-bat to run on. Don't be afraid to try the bunt-steal on the first pitch of an at-bat, it may be the best pitch the batter will see. You may want to wait until later in an at-bat to attempt a straight steal. Pitchers are more likely to throw off-speed pitches or pitches that are tough for the catcher to handle if they are ahead of the batter.

### **Stealing Third Base**

A good team will be able to take advantage of steal opportunities to third base. There are a couple of reasons you want to be able to do this. The first is the fact that people expect you to steal second base more than third base. The defense is more alert to that situation. The second is the fact that it is easier to beat defensive coverages when you steal third base. You want to put base runner in a foot race with the shortstop covering third base. It is very difficult to catch a ball on the move and apply the tag. If the third baseman is playing back, you can use a fake bunt to draw them in closer to the plate. If the defense thinks you are in a bunt situation, your ability to steal third increases dramatically.

You also want to try stealing third base in a double steal situation (when we have runners on first and second base.) Even if your runner does get thrown out at third, you still advance a runner into scoring position at second base. Delayed steals can also be successful in this situation. Watch the shortstop and see if the shortstop and third baseman rotate all the way to third base on every pitch. If they do not, you can extend your lead and try a delay steal on the throw back to the pitcher. Delay steals are more effective at third base than any other base.

## Practice Organization

Always have a plan for your practices. Use one practice or one session of practice to lay the foundation for the next practice or next session of practice. Remember that when you are coaching a younger team or a recreational team you should develop all the skills in all the players (catchers should take grounders too).

In developing a practice plan, you should always include:

- A warm-up period (run and stretch)
- Individual Fundamental Skills for Offense
  - Hitting
  - Bunting
  - Base Running
- Individual Fundamental Skills for Defense
  - Throwing Mechanics
  - Catching Mechanics
  - Fielding Mechanics
- Team Defensive Skills
  - Coverages
  - Plays
- Team Offensive Skills
  - Play Execution
- Conditioning Session
- Practice Close-out

Many times your Team offense and Team defense can be combined into one team session.

The following pages contain several examples of practice plans. The first one is a recent plan from a High School level practice. The others are all plans that were actually used at the 14U level.



# Valley Stomper 12U

## Practice Schedule

1/10/2010

Normal Session				
Begin	Duration	End	Segment	Assignments
1:00	0:10	1:10	Jog and Stretch	
1:10	0:20	1:30	Throwing	Every Day Drills
1:30	0:05	1:35	Water Break	
1:35	0:40	2:15	Individual Defense	Separate Infield and Outfield 5-3 / 6-4 & 4-6 6 / 4-3 5-4 / 6-3 / Doubles
2:15	0:05	2:20	Water Break	
2:20	0:30	2:50	Group Defense	Between innings / after an out / Cut-offs - 1st & 3rd - Pick Offs - Bunt Coverage
2:50	0:05	2:55	Water Break	
2:55	0:45	3:40	Hitting Circuit	6 Stations - 7 mins rotation 3 min each player Shag - Bunt-Cage 1 - Cage 2 - Tee - Soft Toss - Bouncey
3:40	0:05	3:45	Water Break	
3:45	0:30	4:15	Team Session	Situations
4:15	0:10	4:25	Conditioning	Dive Back Drill - Relay
4:25	3:25	<=Duration	End Practice	
Practice Notes:				

# Practice Topics

## Things You Could, Should, and Must Cover at Practice

### Defensive Position Skills

Shortstop	Third Base
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· Ground balls and throws</li><li>· Double plays (footwork, feeds)</li><li>· Pop flies - over head</li><li>· Covering second and third base</li><li>· Bunt situations</li><li>· Relay technique and responsibility</li><li>· DP from pitcher</li><li>· Tag plays</li><li>· Pick offs</li><li>· Steals</li><li>· Diving knock downs and catches</li><li>· Signals to OF</li><li>· Slap defense</li><li>· Holding runners – make throw</li><li>· Covering second base after a base hit</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· Ground balls and throws</li><li>· Fielding bunts</li><li>· Covering 3<sup>rd</sup> base</li><li>· Receiving throws</li><li>· Pop-ups – over head, against fence</li><li>· Bunt situations</li><li>· Cut-off responsibilities</li><li>· Pick offs</li><li>· 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> situation</li><li>· Tag plays</li><li>· Diving catches</li><li>· Slapper defense</li><li>· Squeeze bunts</li><li>· Steals to 3</li><li>· Holding runner – throw to 1</li><li>· Holding runner – bluff throw</li></ul>
Outfield	Team Drills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· Fly balls</li><li>· Rainbow throws (strengthen arm)</li><li>· Throwing technique</li><li>· Ground balls</li><li>· Angle to ball</li><li>· Communication</li><li>· Footwork</li><li>· Drop step</li><li>· Throws to bases</li><li>· Fence plays</li><li>· Playing the sun</li><li>· Diving and sliding catches</li><li>· Backing up responsibilities</li><li>· Defensive positioning</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· Various Situations</li><li>· Double plays</li><li>· Relays and Cut-offs</li><li>· Slap defense</li><li>· Backing up</li><li>· Rundowns</li><li>· Squeeze</li><li>· Bunt defense</li><li>· Bloopers</li><li>· Communication</li><li>· 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> situation</li><li>· Steals</li><li>· Appeals</li><li>· Rules</li><li>· Pick-offs</li><li>· Signals</li><li>· Intentional Walks</li><li>· Tie breaker defense</li></ul>

# Practice Topics

## Things You Could, Should, and Must Cover at Practice

### Offensive Skills

#### • Runner at 1st

- o Sac bunts
- o Push bunts
- o Slap hits
- o Hit and run
- o Bunt and run
- o Slap and run
- o Steals
- o Drop bunts (sneak)
- o Hit behind the runner

#### • Runner at 2nd

- o Sac bunts
- o Drop bunts (sneak)
- o Bunt and run
- o Hit and run
- o Slap to 2<sup>nd</sup>
- o Steal
- o Hit behind the runner

#### • Runner at 3rd

- o Squeeze
- o Safety squeeze
- o Fly ball
- o Slap and run

#### • Runner on 1st and 3rd

- o Steal
- o Slowed steal
- o Squeeze (Runner on 1 go to 3)
- o Hit & run
- o Slap and run
- o Hit to right side

#### • Base Running

- o Breaking up double plays
- o Sliding & dives
- o Steals – delay steals
- o Base-running (singles, doubles, etc...)
- o Signals
- o Lead offs
- o Tagging up
- o Picking up base coaches
- o Special plays
- o 1st and 3rd situation base-running
- o Double steals
- o Protecting a steal

## Softball Cheers

Softball should be fun. Players have fun cheering as long as the cheers are positive and supportive. Here are some standard softball cheers. More Cheers can be found on [eteamz.com](http://eteamz.com)

### ABCDEFGG

ABCDEFGG,  
ABCDEFGG.

Cheer us on to victory.

Cheer us on to victory.

HIJKLMN.

HIJKLMN.

We will hit the ball again.

We will hit the ball again.

OPQRSTU.

OPQRSTU.

We will hit some homers too.

We will hit some homers too.

WXY and Z.

WXY and Z.

We will make it look easy.

We will make it look easy.

### I Said Yo Baby

I said yo baby yo baby yo baby yo

I said yo baby yo baby yo baby yo

I said you gots to be for *Team Name* or you gots to go

I said you gots to be for *Team Name* or you gots to go

I said yo baby yo baby yo baby yo

I said yo baby yo baby yo baby yo

### My Name Is . . .

My name is *Name* and you know what I got?

What do you got?

I got a team that's hotter than hot.

How hot is hot?

Grand slams and homeruns, too.

Uh-huh, uh-huh.

We're gonna beat the whoopsies out of you.

Okay, okay.

### **One, We Are The *Team Name***

One, we are the *Team Name*,  
Two, a little bit louder,  
Three, I still can't hear you,  
Four, more, more, more, more.  
(keep on repeating and getting louder)

### **There was A Little Green Man**

There was a little green man,  
A green man who lived in the water.  
He jumped out to say:  
Go. Go, go. Go, you mighty *Team Name*  
Fight. Fight, fight. Fight, you mighty *Team Name*.  
Win. Win, win. Win, you mighty *Team Name*.  
Go! Fight! Win!  
And then he fell back in.

### **We're Not Number 5**

We're not number 5,  
Not number 4,  
Number 3,  
Number 2,  
We're number 1!  
Let's go *Team Name*.

### **We're Fierce And Mean**

We're fierce and mean when we play this game,  
We take our few defeats with no shame,  
We're in it to win it and nothing less,  
We're cute and mighty I bet you'd guess,  
We're the best around you know that's right,  
We run we hit we bunt we fight.

(sound off verses)

## **I See A Hole Out There**

I see a hole out there.  
I see a hole out there.  
I see a H-O-L-E hole out there.  
So hit the ball out there.  
So hit the ball out there.  
So hit the B-A-L-L ball out there.  
So we can score some runs.  
So we can score some runs.  
So we can S-C-O-R-E score some runs.  
So we can win this game.  
So we can win this game.  
So we can W-I-N win this game.

## **Pitcher's In A Hole**

Pitcher's in a hole, 10 feet deep.  
Can't get out cuz she's got big feet!  
Hubba hubba, ding, ding, ding.  
Pitcher's got an arm like a washing machine.  
Put in a nickle, put in a quarter.  
Pitcher's arm is out of order!

## **What Are We Going To Do Tonight?**

What are we going to do tonight?  
Rock the pitcher.  
How are we going to do it?  
Hit the ball.  
How far?  
Over the wall.  
How Tall?  
10 feet tall.  
How Tall?  
10 feet tall.  
Thats all.  
Thats all.

### **Name Is A Friend Of Mine**

Name is a friend of mine,  
She can hit it anytime.  
Put a bat in her hand,  
She can do it, yes she can.  
Hit, na na na na  
Rip, na na na na  
Hit it hard,  
Hit it fast,  
Knock that pitcher on her...  
na na na na, na na na na

### **Extra! Extra!**

Extra! Extra! Read all about it,  
Name gotta hit and we're gonna shout it.  
Name gotta hit.  
Told you we would shout it.  
Name gotta hit.

### **Good Connection**

Good connection,  
Wrong direction,  
Make the correction.  
Not to the left, not to the right,  
Just hit the ball right out of sight.

### **Hey, Hey, Hey, Number**

Hey Hey Hey *Number*,  
Hey Hey Hey *Number*.  
We got our eyes on you,  
We got our eyes on you.  
And what we like most of all,  
And what we like most of all .  
Is the way you beat on the ball,  
Is the way you beat on the ball.  
So swing that bat and bust that ball,  
So swing that bat and bust that ball.  
Swing that bat and move that ball,  
Swing that bat and move that ball.  
And don't forget the last of all,  
And don't forget the last of all.  
Round the bases tag em all,  
Round the bases tag em all.  
Yee haw!

### **Hit It, Rip it, Knock It Out**

Hit it, rip it, knock it out.  
Drive it, drive it.  
Drive it, drive it.  
Hit it, rip it, knock it out.  
(repeat several times)

### **Homerun Hitter Is Up To Bat**

Homerun hitter is up to bat.  
If I were you I'd scoot your booty back,  
Scoot your booty back.

### **Not Your Pitch**

Not your pitch,  
Not, not your pitch, no way,  
Not your pitch,  
Not, not your pitch, no way.