

MILL VALLEY COACH'S RESOURCE GUIDE

2020

All the Answers to Your Questions in One Place: Key dates, rules, administrative information, how to manage your team, how to coach fundamentals, and much more

By

Chris Lee



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To Our Coaches

FIRST – THANK YOU!

MVGS appreciates you volunteering to be a coach. We hope you will someday look back at your coaching experience as something special you shared with your daughter, and proud that you contributed to our community by helping young girls realize their full potential as softball players, athletes, and competitors.

WHY THE RESOURCE GUIDE?

This manual is designed to have all the information you need to run a fun, organized, successful team. Inside you will find our MVGS contact, the MVGS calendar, information on Opening Day, descriptions of fundamentals and how to teach them, sample practice plans, and much more.

COACHING THE FUNDAMENTALS

We've included detailed descriptions of how to coach the fundamentals as achieving a basic level of competency is critical to enjoying some success and enjoying some success is the key to having fun!

While there is broad consensus on how to teach the very basic fundamentals, the longer you play and coach the more you will encounter competing viewpoints, different points to emphasize, and various methods and descriptions to teach the same body movement or technique. This is particularly true with the more advanced fundamentals of hitting and pitching some players may be ready for as they reach the older divisions of our league. If you have played softball or baseball the chances are pretty high that you will find an instruction or two that varies from what you have learned in the past. Check the Resources and References section – or reach out to me directly - if you would like more information on why instructions or way to teach the technique may differ from what you have learned.

For coaches of the younger players, keep in mind that while “advanced beginner” fundamentals might not be relevant for some of your players today, the fundamental techniques build upon themselves. What you're teaching them now sets them up for the harder fundamentals they learn when they are older. The more you use an incorrect technique the more difficult it is to learn the correct one.

ACE CERTIFICATION AND BACKGROUND CHECK

All coaches in Marin Girls Softball (“MGS”) must complete a background check and become ACE certified. The process usually takes about 2-3 hours. Please read ACE Certification section below.

THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE A POWERFUL IMPACT

As coaches, you determine the kind of experience our young girls have with softball and sports in general. Have it be your goal that every girl has fun, gains a new level of mastery, and benefits from their experience so that they return for the next season.

Team sports afford us an opportunity to teach life lessons through sports. While this aspect of coaching ought to increase in emphasis as girls get older and more competitive, there are still “age appropriate” life lessons to be had on the softball field at younger ages (e.g. teamwork, independence, growth mindset). Let’s always remember this when we step onto the field to coach.

Chris Lee
Mill Valley Girls Softball Board President

KEY DATES

Key Dates

DATE	TIME	EVENT	LOCATION
JANUARY 12 TH	4pm - 6pm	MVGS Coaches Meeting	Tellason
JANUARY 19 TH	1pm – 3pm	MGS Skills Clinics*	Red Hill Field in San Anselmo
JANUARY 19 TH	Mornings	MGS Pitching Clinics**	Bacich Elementary School
FEBRUARY 1 ST		MVGS Teams Announced***	
FEBRUARY 1 ST		Practice Schedule Finalized	
FEBRUARY 24 TH		Practices Begin ACE Certification Must be Complete!	Hauke, Tam Valley
MARCH 1 ST	4pm-7pm	Mandatory MGS Coaches Meeting	Future Prospects, San Rafael
MARCH 7 TH	11am – 2pm	MVGS-THS Clinic	Tam HS Softball Field
MARCH 21 ST	9am – 2pm	MVGS Opening Day	Mill Valley Middle School
APRIL 4 TH - 12 TH		Spring Break- No games or practices	
APRIL 26 TH	TBD	Tremors Gold Tryouts	TBD
MAY 1 ST - 3 RD	TBD	All-Star Weekend (for 10u, 12u, and 15u)	TBD
MID-MAY		Playoffs Begin for 10u/12u/15u soon after the last regular season game	

*MGS Skills clinics begin on January 19th and will run through March 1st. Clinics will be for players of all ages and skill levels. EVERYONE, ESPECIALLY 6U, 8U, AND PLAYERS NEW TO SOFTBALL, are encouraged to attend, including beginning pitchers.

**The MGS pitching clinics at Bacich Elementary school is for experienced pitchers; beginning pitcher clinics will be held at the MGS Sunday Skills Clinics at Red Hill Field. MVGS is planning to host weekday pitching clinics for beginners and experienced pitchers in the pre-season period. When plans are finalized, an announcement will be sent via email.

***Contact and Introduce Yourself to the Team

2020 MVGS Contacts

Board Member	Areas of Focus	Phone	Email
Chris Lee	Registration, Coach's Clinic, Roving Coaches, Tam HS Clinic, 10u, 15u Commissioner	415-202-4458	Cmlee7@gmail.com
Pete Searson	Fields, Individual Clinics, 12u Commissioner	415-686-5173	pete@tellason.com
Yasmine McGrane	Registration Marketing, 8u Commissioner		yasmine@maisonreve.com
Catherine Cheung	SportsEngine Registration, Sponsorships, Administration	415-246-5724	Catherine1cheung@gmail.com
Jeremy Graveline	Opening Day		jjraveline@gmail.com
Pat Terry	Special Projects		pat@counselfource.com
Glenn West	Sponsorships		Glenn.m.west@gmail.com
Dora Murphy	Equipment, 6u Commissioner		Dora.murphy@cbp.dhs.gov

NEXT STEPS

Next Steps

MGS COACH REGISTRATION

Please visit maringirlssoftball.org or follow this link to register as an official MGS coach:

https://maringirlssoftball.sportngin.com/register/form/971905204#_ga=2.186616362.2042255522.1578345172-992320892.1576531699

ACE CERTIFICATION

All coaches (head and assistants) must get ACE Certified (ACE = “Achieve, Certify, Educate”) through USA Softball (fka American Softball Association (“ASA”). The process usually takes about 2-3 hours. This certification includes a background check and provides training (and testing) to ensure that “our coaches achieve a certain level of understanding of what their duties are as coach of a youth softball team.”

Certification includes insurance coverage (liability and excess medical insurance) for coaches, and is good for one calendar year. If you were certified last year, you need to get recertified. Because of the insurance requirement, as well as wanting to ensure coaches have a certain level of understanding, coaches cannot begin practices until they have gotten ACE Certification.

Besides ACE, you must also complete SafeSport (you will see link from ACE Education page). You need to do this before ACE. It does not require background check to be completed, so you can do this while waiting for your background check to go through.

When you create an account on SafeSport, link to USA Softball member ID. See

<https://www.registerasa.com/Content/Files/Safe%20Sport%20How%20To.pdf> for details

It may take a few days to a week to hear back regarding your background check, and you cannot begin the ACE tutorials and get tested and certified until you pass the background check. The video tutorials and testing themselves generally take 2-3 hours to complete (you can stop and resume where you have left out), so it’s highly recommended to start the process at least 2 weeks before your first practice.

To begin, go to <https://www.registerasa.com/>

REGISTERING FOR FIRST TIME

If you are new (have never done this before), you’ll need to Create Profile first (this will be your RegisterASaprofile).

1. Click on "Create Profile" -Create your own Username and Password -For Association, choose "CA - Northern California"
2. For Group, choose "JO Youth Rec 2 – Marin/Sonoma/Mendocino/Lake"
3. For League, choose "Marin Girls Softball"

4. Input all of the required information (DO input your Middle Name --it could help expedite the background check)
5. Click the appropriate box under Membership Type (probably Head Coach or Assistant Coach)
6. Then click "Submit" (If you've done it before, just go ahead and login. If you've forgotten your login info, they'll email you a link to reset your password.)
7. Now use the profile you just created to log back into www.registerasa.com
8. When you login, you'll be taken to the "Home Plate" You should see three categories: 1) Personal steps 2) Registration Status 3) My Teams
 - a. The only thing you need to do anything with is "Personal Steps" If you are new, it should give you two options: 1) ACE Certification w/ Background Check" (and show Status as Last Cert: None --> ACE 1 Not Complete" 2) next to that should be an underlined active "Purchase" link
 - b. Click on "Purchase" and then follow the directions
9. USA Softball will send you an ACE certification card. Please carry the card with during all team practices and games. Umpires have been trained to ask coaches to present their cards prior to games. Coaches are not allowed to be on the field or in the dugout without their ACE certification card.

MANAGING YOUR TEAM

Managing your Team

SPORTS ENGINE

- **Download the SportsEngine app for your phone.**
- Player registration information, including emergency contact information, should be imported directly into SE once team have been formed.
- Once MGS creates the game schedule, your team's game will appear in SE.
- Coaches must create the practice schedule in SE.
 - Encourage families to designate their availability in SE so you can plan practices and set line-ups prior to games.
- For more help: <https://sportngin.desk.com/>
- The chat feature is particularly helpful for last minute posts about rainouts
- In prior years, and in other youth sports, coaches have used Team Snap for the same organizational tasks that Sports Engine performs. MVGS encourages the use of Sports Engine since the game schedule and emergency contact information will be loaded to Sports Engine. If you choose to use Team Snap instead of Sports Engine, MVGS will not be reimbursing you for any costs related to Team Snap.

MEDICAL AND EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

- Emergency and medical contact info is filled out during the online registration process and stored in Sports Engine ("SE") for each player.
 - Please double check that the information has been successfully imported into your player's profile so that you have all your player's emergency contact information with you for all games and practices.
- You will receive a basic first aid kit when you pick up your team's equipment at the beginning of the season.

SET PARENTAL EXPECTATIONS AT THE OUTSET

- We recommend scheduling a parents meeting before the first game, particularly for the older age teams, to set expectations, and convey priorities and administrative details.
- Explain when practices and games will be (and how early players must show up for games), get parents to sign up for snacks, tell them about the end of season party, and ask for volunteers to help the coaches
- Present the MGS Parents' Code of Conduct and convey to parents that they are expected to abide by the code of conduct. Failure to do so may result in parents being asked to leave games. The MGS Board will be taking a "zero tolerance" approach toward parental violations of the code of conduct.
- We suggest that you remind parents that (a) you are the coach and they should not distract the players by shouting out instructions from the stands; and (b) the goal of the Spring Rec season is to

have fun and improve as a player. If parents/players desire more competition, encourage them to play travel ball (more on this topic later).

EQUIPMENT

Equipment

Equipment MVGS Provides:

- 5-6 Helmets per team
- 1 Game ball per game
 - **Please use new softballs for games only. Each team is responsible to bring 1 game ball to each of their games**
- 1 bucket of practice balls
- 1 set of Catcher's gear (6u does not play with a catcher and therefore does not receive catcher's gear)
- Tee
- 3-4 Bats per team
- Thrown-down bases (6u, 8u only. Sets are available for older teams that request a set)
- Bownets (10u, 12u, 15u only)
- 1 bag of wiffle balls
- Line-up cards and Scorebooks (10u, 12u, 15u only)
- Basic First Aid Kit

All MVGS equipment must be returned at the end of the season

Essential Equipment Players are Responsible for On Their Own:

- Glove
- Defensive Face Mask
- Softball Pants
- Socks
- Undershirt/Base layer
- Cleats
- Water Bottle

Encourage players and parents to write their names on all of their personal equipment

Optional Equipment Players are Responsible for On Their Own:

- Batting Helmet
 - Look for a "NOCSAE-approved" and/or "ASA Approved" helmet. Helmets must have face masks. Chin straps are optional but if worn, must fit tightly and not dangle.
 - ***MVGS recommends players purchase their own helmet to reduce the chance of getting lice***
- Batting Gloves (usually not needed until girls reach 10u)
- Sliding Shorts (usually not needed until girls reach 10u)
- Personal bat, balls for practicing on their own
- Personal equipment bag designed to hold bats, gloves, etc.

Optional Equipment Coaches May Want To Consider Getting On Their Own:

- Clipboard
- Wagon

PLAYER SAFETY

Player Safety

Create a safe environment by discussing safety guidelines with the team at the outset of the season.

Common sense tips include:

- Set ground rules for when girls should swing bats (e.g. away from other players and not until coaches direct them to pick up bats)
 - Make sure helmets are on before they swing bats
 - Especially with younger girls, teach them to look around before they swing
- Having an organized practice plan helps keep players and coaches where they are supposed to be thereby decreasing the likelihood of players not paying attention and getting hurt
 - Always incorporate warm-up and stretching time into your practice plan
- Proper teaching of fundamentals and paying attention is an important aspect to minimizing the risk of injury
- Especially with younger girls when they are learning to play catch, teach them to make sure the player receiving the ball makes eye contact with them and is ready to receive the ball before she throws
- Players are not allowed to wear jewelry during games (and should not be allowed to wear jewelry during practice).
- Do NOT let the girls play hurt.
- Do NOT leave the girls alone at practice. Adults must remain with girls after practice and games until a responsible adult picks up the child following the game or practice.
- Scan the field during warmups to make sure there are not significant holes in the outfield or big rocks in the infield
- Catchers should always have catching gear and helmet - even in coach pitch.
- Helmets should have chinstraps and facemasks
- Make sure the girls are using proper balls, bats, etc.
- If girls are running the bases in a situation where balls are being thrown, they must wear helmets
- For the older girls, don't practice sliding if girls are not wearing proper "sliding pants" or if the infield appears not be properly groomed
 - MVGS keeps a sliding mat in the lockbox at Hauke Park that can be used for sliding practice. (Slip and Slides are also a popular way to practice sliding but MVGS doesn't provide those!)
- Always have water breaks and encourage all girls to bring water to every practice
- Players should not allowed to feed the pitching machine
- For younger or less experienced girls, throw/roll balls vs. hit balls to them during your practice drills
- Be sure you have a First Aid Kit in your equipment bag or with you at all practices and games

Scheduling

PRACTICE SCHEDULES

- Practice Schedules will be finalized by February 1st.
- Mill Valley Parks and Rec charges Mill Valley Girls Softball for entire afternoons on the weekdays and the entire day on Saturday. To make efficient use of the time we rent the field, we ask that everyone stick to their assigned practice slot.
 - Practice slots are chosen based on seniority.
 - MVGS shares 2 afternoons per week on Hauke with the Mill Valley Soccer Club. On these afternoons, we strongly prefer to have a 6u or 8u team in that practice slot. (The softball team would have entire use of the infield and the batting cage.)

Age	# Practices per week*	Duration of Practice
6u	1	45-60 min
8u	1	60-75 min
10u, 12u, 15u	2	90 min

*includes 1 batting cage practice for 10u, 12u, and 15u

GAME SCHEDULES

- Game schedules should be finalized by March 1st.
- MVGS Opening Day is March 21st.

Black-Out Dates

- Each district is responsible for submitting to MGS dates that MGS should avoid scheduling games for their district to due to anticipated scheduling conflicts that would make it difficult for multiple district teams to field 9 players for a game ("blackout dates").
 - Blackout dates are due to MGS by January 15th
- Please poll your team to see if there are specific dates with a specific events that would cause multiple absences if a game were to be scheduled on that day (e.g. Tam Valley's Cabaret, Girls Scouts' events).

DUGOUT ASSIGNMENTS FOR GAMES

The 3rd base dugout shall be assigned to the team that is playing on its home field, unless specified differently by signage or as noted below. On a neutral field, the team listed 2nd on the schedule (team 1 @ team 2) is the "home team" and shall take the 3rd base dugout.

SCHEDULING

RAIN

At the beginning of the season, once you've registered, be sure to opt-in for rain-out notifications. Here's how:

1. Send text to this number: 84483
2. Type in: MGSRainouts

You will be a member for all MGS fields. If a field is closed (even if it is not yours) it will be texted to you as a follower. You need to read carefully to make sure it is your field as you are a member of the whole of MGS! If you do not get text saying a field is closed-- assume it is open. MGS only texts closures.

MGS Rain-Out Reschedule Procedure

All Weekday Rain-Outs are made up and rescheduled by MGS.

Saturday Rain Outs

If a full or partial Saturday of games are canceled because of rain the responsibility of rescheduling will fall on the coaches. Coaches will follow the procedure listed below and make full effort to get their rained out game rescheduled in a timely manner. Coaches will be supplied with contact information of all coaches in their age group – if you are not able to find it, please contact the age division commissioner or a MVGS board member.

a) When a Saturday rain out occurs the Head Coach of the Home Team must reach out to the opposing Head Coach within 48 hours to try to work out a date to play the game that was rained out. To determine if you are the "Home" team look at your SportsEngine team page – in the Game Schedule area your Opponent will either be listed with an "@" symbol meaning "at" which means that you are the visiting team OR without an "@" meaning that your team is the Home Team. If it reads "Opponent" 12uSR ABCD – that means you are the "Home Team". If it reads "Opponent" @12uSR ABCD then you are the visiting team because you are "at" the other team. Please note that just because you are playing on your home field DOES NOT mean that you are the home team. You may be playing another district on your home field and be the visitor. This is to ensure that every team has the same amount of Home and Away games regardless of location.

b) If the Visiting Head Coach has not been contacted by the Home Head Coach within 48 hours they will then contact the Home Head Coach to work out a time to make up the game.

c) Coaches are encouraged to use a practice time as a game time if possible. The priority should be to get all players as many games as possible and forgo practices to get games in when needed.

d) If no practice times are able to work the coaches will contact their district president to see what open field times are available (if any) on their home fields. District presidents will have a field schedule of their home fields.

e) When an open time is agreed upon coaches will notify their district president who will then pass the information off to the Umpire Scheduler (TBD) and MGS Administrative Director Elizabeth Held (elizabethheld.mgs@gmail.com).

f) Games must be rescheduled and MGS must be contacted within 7 days of the original rain-out. If the game has not been rescheduled within this 7-day time period the game will be scored as a 1-1 tie. Please note that the game can be rescheduled out several weeks but the information needs to be passed on to MGS within the 7-day period in order to have everything put into the schedule. The game does not need to be played within 7 days – just have an agreed upon reschedule date which is passed on to MGS.

g) Once information is passed on to MGS, umpires will be contacted by Umpire Scheduler and new game times will be posted on Sports Engine & master game schedule by Admin Director.

PLAYOFFS

- Upon the conclusion of the regular season, MGS will hold playoffs for 10u, 12u, and 15u to determine age division champions.
- The format for Playoffs is a single elimination tournament held over a couple weeks.
 - MGS generally does not schedule playoff games during the Memorial Day weekend.
- Depending on the number of 10u and 12u teams, MGS may place teams in the upper part of the regular season standings into a “gold” bracket and lower placed teams into a “silver” bracket. Both brackets are single elimination.
- District rules may get modified for the playoffs.

MVGS OPENING DAY

- MVGS 2020 Opening Day will be March 21st at Mill Valley Middle School Gym.
- Opening Day festivities include team photos, a brief season kick-off speech, jumpy houses, and coffee for parents, and much more.
- Division commissioners will send out the team photo schedule.

GOVERNING BODIES, RULES, AND MGS FORMAT

Governing Bodies, Rules, and MGS Format

PARENT ORGANIZATIONS

Mill Valley Girls Softball is a local district of Marin Girls Softball (“MGS”). MGS belongs to the Northern California division of USA Softball. USA Softball (fka the Amateur Softball Association (“ASA”)) is the National Governing Body of softball in the United States, including regulating competition to insure fairness and equal opportunity to the millions of players who play the sport.

MVGS Board

The MVGS is a group of volunteers that primarily organizes the season, which includes:

- Registrations, team formation
- Marketing
- Practice Scheduling
- Clinics, roving coaches
- Opening Day Festivities
- Mill Valley Field preparation
- Managing team equipment and uniforms



MGS Board

Marin Girls Softball League is a volunteer-driven recreational league for youth fastpitch softball in Central and Southern Marin County. MGS’s responsibilities include:

- Game schedules, including umpire scheduling
- Rule-making (local rules)
- All-Star Tournament
- Umpire training



MVGS has 3 board representatives on the MGS Board.

<https://www.maringirlssoftball.org/>

Marin Girls Softball Mission Statement

Marin Girls Softball aspires to be an outstanding educational-athletic organization, providing and expanding opportunities for softball players across Marin, from beginner (recreational) through to competitive travel-ball programs.

Marin Girls Softball’s aim is to offer a high-quality experience for every player. A high-quality experience is one in which every player:

1. Is coached using the principles of positive coaching, developing confidence and self-esteem in every player

2. Has fun at practices and games
3. Feels like an essential part of the team regardless of performance
4. Learns to promote sportsmanship, integrity, and teamwork
5. Learns “life lessons” that have value beyond the playing field
6. Learns the skills, tactics, and strategies of the game and improves as a player
7. Has the opportunity to develop their game to their desired level: recreational player, competitive travel-ball, and preparation for high-school softball.

Marin Girls Softball recognizes that coaches, officials, and parents are the people who most directly make this all possible. It is our goal to provide every coach, official, and parent with a clear understanding of this mission, and the tools necessary to succeed.

We are committed to creating a positive culture, in which coaches, officials, parents, administrators, and players work together to achieve our mission.

USA SOFTBALL RULES

- **All MGS games are played under the official rules of USA Softball but are augmented by the local district rules which supersede USA rules in the event there is a conflict between the two.**
- **An official 2020 USA Softball Rulebook will be distributed to each 10u, 12u, and 15u team during equipment pick-up.**



Ball Sizes

The size of the ball is measured in inches and references the circumference of the ball. For comparison's sake, a baseball has a 9" circumference.

- 6U plays with a soft 10" compression ball
- 8U plays with an 11" low compression ball (which feels soft and rubbery)
- 10U plays with an 11" hard ball
- 12U, 15U plays with a regulation 12" hard ball

“Hard” ball means an official ball with a 0.47 coefficient of restitution, which measures the ratio of relative speed of two colliding objects before and after impact, and a maximum compression of 375 pounds, which means it takes 375 pounds of pressure per square inch to compress the ball ¼ inch. See:

<http://www.softballhitting.info/softballcorcompinfo.html>

LOCAL DISTRICT RULES (AKA “MGS RULES”)

Local District Rules (aka “MGS Rules”)

The 2020 MGS rules will be distributed when they are available. Often times, the season’s official local district rules are not ratified by the MGS Board until just prior to Opening Day. In these cases, local rules will be distributed via email to coaches. Below is a *summary* of the formats for different age groups:

Please keep a copy or have access to the MGS Local Rules document during your games!!

<https://www.maringirlssoftball.org/rules>

6U FORMAT

- Score is not kept. Outs are not recorded. No lineup cards. No books.
- Begins season on tee and transitions to coach pitch the second half of year
- 1 base per batted ball put into play
- Coaches are encouraged to be stationed behind fielders when their team is on defense to provide instruction.
- No umpires. No balls and strikes.

8U FORMAT AND RULES

- Score is not kept. No lineup cards. No books.
- Outs are recorded, and the side is retired when 3 outs are recorded.
- Kids throw 3 pitches.
 - If the ball is not put into play in the first 3 pitches, then the coach pitches, and has up to 4 pitches to allow the batter to put the ball into play.
 - If the batter is unable to put the ball into play, then the coach brings out the tee for the batter to hit.
 - The adult pitcher (usually a coach from the team hitting) calls balls and strikes.
- **Encourage girls to pitch. MGS has set a goal of eliminating coach-pitch from 10u as soon as league-wide pitching competency allows. This will only be possible by effective coaching and pitching experience at 8u.**
- No umpires.
- Pitcher’s rubber to home plate: 30 feet
 - Coach-pitcher should pitch from 30 feet.
- Coaches encouraged to coach from behind their defense to teach players during the game.

Special Considerations for 6U/8U

Rule issues and controversies rarely come up during 6u and 8u games. If there is any uncertainty over rules, please 1) Keep in mind what is best for the girls’ development and for them to have fun; and 2) discuss the issue with the other coach to resolve the issue amicably.

Please stick to the number of strikes and coach pitches specified in the MGS 8u rules so it can be kept consistent for both teams.

10U FORMAT AND RULES

- Score is kept. The home team is the book of record. Line-up cards are exchanged prior to the game.
- Umpires assigned to games.
- Pitcher's rubber to home plate: 35 feet
- 5-run rule: Going into a bottom or top half of an inning, a team that is tied or ahead may score no more than 5 runs before the half inning is complete, A team that is behind may score no more runs than what will give them a 5-run lead. In other words, if ahead or tied, a team can score 5 runs. If behind, the team can go ahead by 5.
- Pitching limits and special substitution rules as described in the local rules.
- No Walks. When a batter reaches 4 balls, an adult-pitcher enters the circle and has 5 pitches to finish the AB. *Please read the MGS rules carefully for all "coach-pitch" details.*
- Base runners may only advance 1 base per stolen base attempt. Base runners may only attempt steals of 2nd or 3rd base. Steals of home are not allowed.
- No dropped 3rd strike.
- "Defense" coaches stationed behind their defense may be appropriate for developmental teams. Please consult with the umpire and opposing coach to agree on what each team will do and what best benefits the girls.

12U/15U FORMAT AND RULES

- Score is kept. The home team is the book of record. Line-up cards are exchanged prior to the game.
- Umpires assigned to games.
- Pitcher's rubber to home plate: 40 feet
- No "coach-pitch." Batters walk after 4 balls.
- Base runners may advance by more than 1 base per stolen base attempt. Base runners may attempt to steal 2nd, 3rd, or home.
- Batters may advance to 1st on a dropped 3rd strike with 2 outs or with 1st base unoccupied and less than 2 outs.
- For 12u only, the game clock is stopped during time-outs (to preclude strategy of stalling by teams that are winning close games near the end of time limits).

ENTERING SCORES INTO SPORTSENGINE

For 10u, 12u, and 15u, the winner of each game is responsible for reporting the score of the game on SportsEngine. MGS does not record the scores. The umpire does not report the scores. Do not lose credit for a win by forgetting to report a score.

Fields

For All Mill Valley fields:

- Please drag the field after you practice for the next team. Drags are left near the dugouts.
- Lock boxes contain umpire's gear, which includes, shin guards, face mask, clicker, and brush.
- Please clean up dugouts after practices and games.
- Please make sure the team and the team's parents clean up any trash generated from snacks or during the course of the game.
- If the field is not prepped and field prep crew is not present 45 minutes before your game, please contact the Field Coordinator. If the field coordinator is unable to get a field prep crew to your field in time to prep the field, as hosts to visiting districts, you or one of your parents should prep the field.

HAUKE

- MVGS leases Hauke from Mill Valley Parks and Rec Department and Tam Valley from MV School District.
 - MV Parks and Rec allocates MVGS blocks of time on Hauke. MVGS must pay for all the allocated time whether we make use of the fields or not.
 - Due to both the increase in the number of off-season programs in other sports, and the growth of different youth sports organizations, there is increasing demand for the use of Hauke North, the field where our softball diamond is located.
- In order to ensure each team has access to a dirt infield for practice, the time MVGS pays for use is fully utilized, and MGS has an adequate number of fields for games, practice times at Hauke begin at 3:30PM and there are 2 practice slots per weekday.
- No Dogs Allowed. Please discourage parents from bringing dogs. MV Parks and Rec have warned us that they will issue citations.
- Lock Box behind backstop has a sliding mat, as well as umpire's gear. The combination is 2002.
- Field prep gear is kept in a storage closet next to the Hauke bathrooms. The key to the closet is kept in the lock box.
- Utilize the screen. The lock combo for the screen is BUNT.

HAUKE BATTING CAGE

- The cage is located just west of the Hauke North playground, beyond center field of the diamond.
- The batting machine is kept in the lock box next to the cage, and must be assembled.
 - The lock box combo is 7007.
- The power source is located toward the bay in the direction of Friends Field.
- Only adults are allowed to operate the batting machine.
- Use only the dimpled Jugs balls.

- Suggested Speeds
 - 10u: 32-38 mph @ 35 feet. The fastest pitchers may reach speeds into the mid-40s.
 - 12u: 35-45mph @ 40 feet. The fastest pitchers may reach speeds into the low-50s.
 - 15u: 40-50 @ 40 feet. The fastest pitchers may reach speeds into the mid-50s.

TAM VALLEY

- The field does not open to MVGS until 4:10.
- The TV shed contains all the necessary field prep gear. The lock combo is 5528.
- The umpire's Lock Box is kept in the 3B dugout. The combination is 2002.
- MVGS leases a portable toilet for use during the season. The school's bathroom is not opened for MVGS games and practices.

SPORTSMANSHIP AND MGS CODE OF CONDUCT

Sportsmanship and MGS Code of Conduct

The MVGS Board asks all MVGS coaches to set the standard for exemplary sportsmanship within MGS by promoting sportsmanship among the team and parents.

MARIN GIRLS SOFTBALL LEAGUE PARENT'S CODE OF CONDUCT

During the course of the season, coaches and parents are expected to continue to abide by the MGS Parents' Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct is intended to promote the belief that everyone has a responsibility to follow the principles of good sportsmanship. The emphasis is that respectful relationships between people send a clear message to everyone participating that what is important is not who wins or loses but how the game is played and watched. The purpose of the Code is to insure parents behave at all times in a positive and supportive manner.

It is expected that each parent will:

1. Exemplify good sportsmanship at all times.
2. Teach your child to always respect the manager, coaches, umpires, and other players.
3. Learn the local rules of the game and help your child to understand the rules.
4. Encourage your child to practice in order to improve her skill level; help her to understand the importance of good sportsmanship at all times.
5. Refrain from ridiculing or shouting at your child or other children.
6. Set a good example. Both players and coaches are looking to you as a role model for proper behavior during both practices and games.
7. Never consume alcohol in the stands or near the field during any game or practice.
8. Applaud good plays by your team and by members of the opposing team but refrain from coaching or directing players during the game.
9. Allow the players to play, the coaches to coach and the umpires to officiate.
10. Never question, complain or argue with an umpire's judgment call. Be a good example for your daughter.
11. Recognize the importance of and value of coaches who volunteer their time to teach and lead the team. Without them there would be no softball program.
12. Communicate directly with the coach in a positive manner with concerns about your child. This communication must not occur during a game and must be done privately. Playing time and position are addressed in the MGS Rules and are at the coach's discretion within these rules.

13. Never use inappropriate language at any time during a practice or game.

14. Help ensure players are on time to every game and practice.

15. Accept the results of each game. Encourage your child to be gracious in victory and turn defeat to positive experience for improvement.

16. Any parent who is ejected from a game must immediately leave the field and the venue itself. If a 1st offense, the parent will be suspended from the next game at a minimum. The situation will be reviewed by the MGS Behavior and Conduct Committee. Further action could be recommended to the MGS President if warranted. If a parent is ejected a 2nd time in a season, the parent will be banned from any participation in further MGS games.

MVGS ALL-STAR TOURNAMENT

MVGS All-Star Tournament

- MGS hosts an annual all-star tournament for the 10u, 12u, and 15u age divisions. The all-star tournament is designed to provide rec players an opportunity to compete in a travel-ball style tournament and to represent their district.
- By tradition, the coach with the best record among the Mill Valley teams at each division earns the all-star head coach role and invites other coaches to assist and score-keep.
- The MGS All-Star Tournament is played under more traditional travel-ball rules rather than local district rules. At the 10u level:
 - there are walks and no coach-pitch
 - dropped 3rd strike
 - stealing of home is allowed
 - no 5-run rule
 - no inning limits for pitchers
 - taking 2 bases on stolen base attempts is allowed
 - no requirement for each player to play in the IF during the first 3 innings
 - no requirement for each player to be in the batting order

Player and Coach Clinics

Both Mill Valley Girls Softball and Marin Girls Softball offer are several clinics MVGS players and coaches to facilitate player and coach development. Many clinics are free; some have nominal costs. When available, both MGS and MVGS hire professional coaches to conduct clinics. Players and coaches should take advantage of these clinics to learn new techniques and drills to perfect them,

MGS SUNDAY SKILLS CLINICS @ RED HILL FIELD

- **New this year**, MGS will be holding clinics for all skill levels and ages to on Red Hill's synthetic turf field from January 19th through early March.
- Details will be distributed via email from MGS.
- Some of these clinics will be run by professional coaches.
- Clinics for beginning pitchers will be held at this location.
 - MVGS encourages players of all ages – even 6u – to attend
- ***MVGS highly recommends all coaches to encourage player attendance and attend to learn techniques, drills, and ways to teach mechanics.***

MGS PITCHING CLINICS WITH COACH BILL GAITO

- MGS will host pitching clinics for experienced pitchers only with Bill Gaito at Bacich Elementary School on Sunday mornings.
- Details and sign-up instructions will be distributed via email from MGS.

MVGS INDIVIDUAL SKILLS CLINICS

- Clinics are included in the cost of registration.
- Pre-season Pitching Clinics began in early winter and will run through March.
 - During the pre-season period, pitching clinics will likely be scheduled on the ***weekdays***.
 - If fields and coaches are available, MVGS may offer Pitching Clinics on Sundays in March at Tam Valley
- Coaches should encourage their team's pitchers to ***regularly*** attend the pitching clinics.
- Parents are responsible for signing-up their daughters for individual clinics via an email link sent out by MVGS.
- Sign-ups are first-come, first-serve basis.
- Clinics are open to all players.
- Coaches are encouraged to attend to learn how to teach the fundamentals.
- Clinic locations will be announced on emails.

PLAYER AND COACH CLINICS

TAM HS PLAYER AND COACH CLINIC

- Mar 7th
 - Tam vs Eureka game precedes the clinic. Please arrive early to support our Tam Hawks and MVGS alumni!!!
 - 6u/8u Format
 - Hitting, throwing and catching, fielding ground balls, pitching stations – 10-12 min each
 - Coaches should take their team station to station
 - Parents can participate
 - 10u/12u/15u Format:
 - “Everydays:” long toss, quick toss, short hops
 - Specialized Stations: Catching, Pitching
 - Catching: Stances, footwork, blocking
 - Pitching: tailored to where individual is
 - General Stations: IF fundamentals, OF fundamentals, Hitting, bunting,

ROVING COACHES

- If coaches are available, we will schedule 2-4 sessions per team.
 - Early spring is the busiest time of year for professional softball coaches, who are usually have commitments every day of the week with high school, travel, or college teams they coach.
 - MVGS may have older, experienced MVGS players help the youngest during these clinics.
- Roving coach will be paid by MVGS
- Designed to teach the coach how/what to coach and players what to work on
- Coaches can decide whether to do group session or 1x1 if time allows. Group instruction followed by drills suggested.
- ***Please have practice plan that incorporates roving coaches ready on designated weeks. Know beforehand which players will be assigned to work with the pitching and catching instructors.***

Tentative Schedule for Roving Pitching Coaches

- Weeks of Mar 2nd and Mar 16th for teams practicing at Hauke
- Weeks of Mar 9th and 23rd for teams practicing at Tam Valley
- Coaches need to arrange for parent/coach/competent catcher to catch for pitchers during their week with roving pitching coach
- Pitching instruction tailored to individual

Tentative Schedule for Roving Catching Coaches

- Weeks of Mar 2nd and Mar 16th for teams practicing at Hauke
- Weeks of Mar 9th and 23rd for teams practicing at Tam Valley

- Topics include: Stance (signal, receiving, action stances), receiving the ball, footwork on throws, fielding balls in front of the plate, blocking balls, defending against the dropped 3rd strike

Tentative Schedule for Roving Hitting Coaches

- Weeks of Mar 9th and 23rd for teams practicing at Hauke
- Weeks of Mar 2nd and 16th for teams practicing at Tam Valley
- The goals for the roving hitting coach will be to teach the following concepts and provide coaches cues of what to look for and drills to help instill the proper movements:
 - 6u/8u – Proper grip, proper stance, introduce phases of the swing and bat path. Make sure the girls swing hard.
 - 10u/12u/15u - Grip, stance, load, stride and separation, hips before hands/using lower half to turn barrel, bat path, finish,

TRAVEL SOFTBALL AND SUMMER PROGRAMS

Travel Softball and Summer Programs

Marin Girls Softball, and Mill Valley Girls Softball being a district within MGS, offer recreational leagues. Having fun, playing with friends, promoting a healthy lifestyle and broad participation are key goals.

Players who enjoy pursuing mastery of the game and the competitive aspect of sports should strongly consider playing travel softball.

Travel softball begins at 8u and runs all the way through high school to 18u. There are 3 levels of travel softball: A, B and C. “A” teams seek the highest levels of competition, draw from a wide geographic areas, generally travel greater distances for games, and are not affiliated with a local recreation league and may therefore draw players from any geographic area. “B” and “C” teams are affiliated with USA Softball districts, such as MGS. USA Softball allows B teams to form, practice, and play in tournaments during the winter and early spring, whereas C teams form and compete once the local district rec season is complete.

MARIN TREMORS

- Marin Tremors is the travel ball program affiliated with MGS.
- The **Tremors Black** program hosts tryouts in November and plays from January through July. The teams primarily B-level tournaments but also plays some A-level tournaments. Players play in the Black program and on their rec team simultaneously.
 - Marin Tremors Black is for players, and their families, who love softball and are committed to the extra effort to compete at the highest levels in the state.
- Marin **Tremors Gold** is the core of the Marin Tremors travel ball program. The Tremors Gold program hosts tryouts at the end of April. The team generally begins practicing after the rec season is complete. The season runs through the end of July.
 - This is travel ball for athletes that like to play multiple sports during the year, but in June and July, it’s all about softball.
- <https://www.maringirlssoftball.org/page/show/4192095-about-marin-tremors>



MARIN TREMORS CLUB

- Marin Tremors Club is the development program for players who love softball, but are not quite ready for travel ball, or whose commitments through the summer don’t allow them to participate in a full travel ball program.
- Marin Tremors Club play Saturday games in June and July around Marin, against other Marin Tremors and local softball program teams.

- Teams will continue to practice one day per week, under the guidance of experienced coaches, with specialist clinics available on non-practice days, as part of the program.
- Registration for the Marin Tremors Club program will open in April, with teams formed based on age group.

TEACHING PLAYERS HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

Teaching Players How to Play the Game

6U/8U

- Take time to introduce the different positions on the field and where they play.
- Be sure to set aside time every practice to explain the rules of the game and how it affects what to do. Start with the very basics.
 - Even if all batters are allowed to run the bases regardless of outcome, be sure your team understands what an out is.
- Another example might be to make sure base runners know that if fielders catch a batted ball in the air they must get back to the base before the fielders tag her or the base or else they will be out too.
 - Other examples include:
 - Force-outs vs tag plays
 - Running through 1st Base and knowing to turn toward the 1B line
- Emphasize dropping the bat after hitting the ball (so throwing the bat does not become a habit and everyone is safe)!
- Teach players to **prepare before every pitch**.
 - Defensively, teach players to know the situation and what that dictates before every pitch (i.e. where is the play?) – where to throw the ball, force or tag play
 - Offensively, ensure base runners know when they must run, the difference between a force out and tag out, what to do when the ball is hit in the air with less than 2 outs, and to run on contact with 2 outs
- Teach the 3 “B’s”
 - **BALL** First
 - if the ball is hit to you, the fielder should immediately field it and throw to proper target
 - Cover your **BASE**
 - If the Ball is not hit to you, the infielder should cover the appropriate base. Infielders should be taught under what scenarios they cover which base and have that understanding before the new batter is up to the plate
 - **BACK-UP** the play
 - If the Ball is not hit to you, and you don’t cover a Base, then you should be backing up. This is clearly applicable to an outfielder (e.g. RF backing up the throw to 1st Base or LF backing up 3rd base for a play there), but could also apply to the infield (e.g. SS backing up the 2B if a throw is coming from RF into 2nd Base)
- And the 3 “C’s”
 - **CREEP** into ready position every play.
 - **CHARGE** the ball.
 - **COMMUNICATE**. Call for the ball. Communicate to teammates where the play is.

Defensive Fundamentals

THROWING

Points to Emphasize

- Across the seams (4-seam) grip
- Athletic Position throwing and receiving; knees flexed
- Thumb pointed back, elbow at shoulder level
- Front Shoulder, glove hand pointed to target
- Push off back foot
- Follow-thru: letters of the jersey pointed at ground, throwing hand in hip pocket of non-throwing side
- Over the top arm slot
- FOCUS your eyes on the exact spot you want to throw the ball
 - On force-outs, eyes focused on the letters of the jersey of the player you are throwing to
 - On tag plays, throws should be knee height
- To catch and get your body in throwing position, "replace your feet." (For a right-handed thrower) move right foot toward left and left foot toward throwing target.



Considerations for 6u/8u

- **“Thumb by your thigh; Elbow high”**
 - In a circular motion, begin by pointing thumb of throwing hand toward ground at her thigh. Continue in circular motion until arm is in an “L-shape” with thumb pointed back and the knuckles of the throwing hand are visible to the person catching the ball.
- 3 Critical points:
 1. **Elbow at shoulder height**
 2. **Thumb pointed back**
 3. **Turn body sideways** – body perpendicular to target; shoulder and elbow or glove pointed toward target
- Teach girls to start “sideways” with their non-throwing shoulder pointed toward target *before* teaching them to start with their shoulders square to the target and using a jab step to turn the body sideways.
- Consider having the girls walk through the throwing motion with no ball before they start throwing so they can see and feel how high the elbow needs to be, turning the body sideways, and pointing the thumb backward
- As compared to teaching kids to throw a baseball, the larger size of a softball – even the 10” and 11” balls – combined with small hands make it more difficult for the girls to throw with backspin

DEFENSIVE FUNDAMENTALS

- To practice getting backspin, softball players practice overhand wrist snaps every time they throw.

Benchmarks by Age

8u: Be able to throw and catch at 30 feet cleanly more than half of the time.

10u: Be able to throw and catch at 45 feet cleanly more than three-quarters of the time.

12u: Be able to throw and catch at 60 feet cleanly more than three-quarters of the time.

CATCHING

- Be in athletic position facing the thrower (i.e. stand square to thrower)
- Hips, toes and shoulders pointing to target
- Have knees slightly bent
- Thumbs on both hands pointing up
- Place glove out front and show it open and make it as big as possible (i.e. fingers out wide)
- Arms should be slightly extended at chest level with thumbs pointing up and elbows down
- Keep eyes on ball. Watch it into the glove.
- Move to the Ball!

Use 2 Hands

- Throwing hand should be poised next to the glove so you can use it to help catch the ball and to more quickly get ball out of glove to throw

Glove Positioning

- Be sure to show and emphasize the correct way the fingers of the glove hand should be pointing depending on location of the thrown ball:
 - Fingers pointed up on balls at mid-section level or above
 - Fingers pointed down on balls the waist
 - (For right handed throwers), fingers pointed right on backhands.
 - (For right handed throwers), fingers pointed left on forehands
- Consider glove positioning drills where as a coach you point to the direction the ball is thrown and the girls show you how to position their glove

Considerations for 6u/8u

- Make sure gloves are broken in and lose strings on gloves are tied tight.
- Encourage kids and parents to play catch outside of organized team activities.
- Emphasize watching the ball into the glove and squeezing the ball to secure it once it's in the glove.
- Emphasize glove positioning for safety. (A basket catch (fingers pointed toward the ball) on a ball above the mid-section is dangerous).

Helping Overcome Fear of the ball

- Start close – as little as a few feet to build confidence
- Use squishy balls, tennis balls or wiffle balls

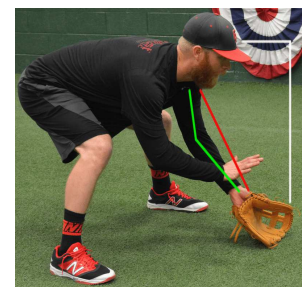
THROWING AND CATCHING DRILLS FOR 6U/8U

- Throwing and catching contests – start playing catch 1 step away and after every catch move back 1 step until the girls get to 30 feet apart.
- 2-girl Consecutive throw and catch challenge – at an appropriate distance for the age and skill level, see how many times in a row a pair of girls can throw and catch without dropping a ball (or keeping the ball in front of them). Synchronize the throws so you can see who is completing the throw and catch and who is not. Note this might be 10 feet apart for 6u
- Team Consecutive throw and catch challenge – at an appropriate distance for the age and skill level, see how many times the team can throw and catch without missing a ball
- 4 Corners – Organize girls into a square with each side 10-45 feet apart (depending on age and skill level). At older age levels, the girls would be at each base. Have the girls throw clockwise around the square. (Clockwise – Home to 3rd to 2nd to 1st to Home is easier so the girls do not have to reposition their bodies to get sideways to the target they are throwing to).
- Star Drill – Players stand ready to receive the ball at each base. A player starts with the ball (it could be from any base) and runs to the pitcher's circle while holding the ball in throwing position (i.e. with throwing arm in L-shape). A coach calls out a base and the player sets her feet, turns her body sideways, and throws to the player at that base. After making the throw, the thrower follows the throw to the base she threw to. The player who receives the ball, then runs to the pitcher's circle in throwing ready position waiting for the coach to call out the next base to throw to.
- Throwing relays – Line up 3-4 girls in a straight line anywhere from 10-60 feet apart (depending on age and skill level), start with the ball on 1 end and race to see which "team" of girls can throw the ball from one girl to the next the quickest.
- Long Toss – 8u is not too early to introduce long toss, particularly for the more advanced kids. Show the girls how to create throwing momentum by using a crow hop or shuffling their feet

FIELDING GROUND BALLS

Points of Emphasis for 15u, 12u, advanced 10u

- Creep into Ready Position. Be on the balls of your feet ready to move in any direction
- Use feet to get the right hop and right fielding position. Try to beat the ball to a spot.
- CHARGE! Charge any ball you can
- "Get around the ball" - Moving toward target when fielding ball (see diagram)



DEFENSIVE FUNDAMENTALS

- Stay low when charging, moving toward ball
- Strong top hand on balls fielded between the feet for proper glove-ball exchange
- Catch ball in pocket of the glove
- Knees bent, nose over the ball when fielding the ball
- Eyes on the ball until it's in the glove; then on the letters of 1B
- "Funnel" or "give with your glove" by moving glove toward belly on long hops
- Glove moving forward slightly through the ball on short hops
- Right foot shuffles toward left; left foot shuffle toward target with our momentum moving toward our throwing target

Backhands

- 1st Step: Open hips using elbow in same way that you do on a drop step
- Knees bent
- Turn glove thumb side
- Fingers pointed at the ground
- Field ball slightly in front of foot
- Plant and push off your throwing arm-side foot
- For younger players, backhands are only used when there is not enough time to field the ball in front

Forehands

- 1st Step: Open hips using elbow in same way that you do on a drop step
- After fielding ball, take 1 step back with your right foot to stop your momentum away from 1B and to make it easier to set-up your feet to throw to 1B
- For younger players, forehands are only used when there is not enough time to field the ball in front



Fielding Short Hops and Receiving Throws on Tag Plays

- Stay low: Knees bent, same position as fielding a ground ball
- Move glove low to high
- Forward, through ball with glove (but do not "swipe")
- Use top hand on balls between feet
- Fingers pointed down on backhand



Points of Emphasis for 6u/8u

- Start in a good ready position, on the balls of feet and with gloves in front of the body, low to the ground
 - Stay low. Bend from the knees; not from the waist.
 - Shoulders and hips square to the plate
- Emphasize the 3 "C's"
 - Creep into ready position
 - Charge the ball
 - Communicate where they play is before the ball is hit and while teammates are fielding the ball
- Think of fielding a ground ball as if there is a triangle in front of you where the tip/apex of the triangle is your glove
- Secure the ball with your glove out front and throwing hand on top
 - The fielder's forearms and hands form the shape of an alligator's mouth.
- Watch the ball into the glove!



OUTFIELD FUNDAMENTALS FOR 10U, 12U, 15U

- Creep into ready position
- 1st step on ball hit high in the air is a drop step
- Tuck glove when running to the spot ball will fall to
- Be **AGGRESSIVE** going for ball!
- **COMMUNICATE!** Call for the ball!
- Catch ball slightly above head off to one side with the ball in front of your eyes with knees flexed and one foot in front of other
- Run to spot where ball will come down in. Do not casually jog and catch on run.
- Tuck glove when running to the spot fly ball will land
- Stay Behind Ball (1-2 steps); come forward to catch ball (as opposed to back pedaling)
- Get Around ball, with momentum coming forward on throwing hand side to facilitate crow hop and throw
- Throw quickly to the cut-off. Do NOT hold the ball in the OF.

DEFENSIVE FUNDAMENTALS

- For plays on base runners to bases, throws should be thrown at head-level to the cut-off player, or on one bounce to the base
- RF should be prepared to make throw to 1B to throw batter.

Drop-Step Fundamentals

- Turn hips not just foot.
- Swing elbow to lead hips
- The harder hit the ball is, the deeper the angle you take on your drop step
- Tuck glove as you run to the spot ball is going to

OF Do-or-Die (aka OF rake and crow-hop)

- Accelerate through ball
- Keep glove below the ball
- Field ball off to the glove-hand side.
- Using glove hand-side foot (left foot if you throw with your right hand), take a small jump forward, landing on your throwing side-hand foot (right), turn shoulders with glove-side throwing shoulder toward target and throw.

Fielding Priorities

- If the ball is hit between 2 players, the players should be taught to call "Ball! Ball! Ball!" for whomever has the best chance to field it
- In terms of priorities:
 - SS has priority over entire infield should she call ball
 - Middle infielders have priority over corner infielders
 - Pitcher yields to all infielders
 - Catcher yields to infielders and pitcher
 - All infielders yield to outfielders
 - CF has priority over LF and RF

RUN-DOWNS

When starting the run-down as the defender with the ball chasing the runner:

1. Make the runner **COMMIT** to running back to the base she was coming from
2. Try to **TAG** the runner first before making a throw
3. Hold ball by ear so you are ready to make a quick flip-throw to your teammate covering the base the runner is heading back to
4. Choose a side. Chase the runner back to the base 1 step to the right (left is ok if you have to) of the runner so you have room to throw the ball past the runner to your teammate.

5. After the runner has **COMMITTED** to running back to the base she was coming from, as you are chasing the runner back to the base, wait until the runner is 2/3 of the way back to the base (or about 4 steps away from the base) to throw the ball your teammate who is covering the base
6. After making the throw, move to the side and cover the base that you just chased the runner back to

As the defender covering the base that the runner is being chased back to:

1. Be in a good receiving position with glove up near your chest 1 step in front of the base
2. **CLOSE THE GAP.** Move forward toward the runner to receive the ball from your teammate chasing the base runner toward you. Try to shrink the space between you and your teammate chasing the runner.
3. After receiving the ball, tag the runner
4. If the runner stops and heads back to the other base, you become the player chasing the runner back to the base and follow the fundamentals listed above

CATCHER FUNDAMENTALS

1. Stances
 - **SIGNAL STANCE**
 - Feet, knees closer together to hide signs from batter, opposing base coaches (point your knees to the middle infielders)
 - Balance on your toes
 - Use your glove to block the batter and 3B Coach from seeing signs
 - Give signs as close to the body as possible so your legs hide the signals
 - “Nobody on base” **RECEIVING STANCE**
 - “Walk” or shift into receiving stance with wide base, knees aligned with outside edges of home plate.
 - Weight on the balls of your feet
 - Turn toes out: This will open up your hips comfortably and will allow you to get lower in your stance.
 - Chest up: Having your chest up gives a great target to the pitcher
 - Throwing hand behind your right ankle
 - Position your glove just out in front of your knees
 - **“ACTION” STANCE (runners on base or 2 strikes on a batter)**
 - Widen your feet to make a more athletic base
 - Feel your weight on the inside part of your feet
 - Keep your rear end up high enough to create just under a 90 degree angle with your legs. If you are sitting too deep you will not be as quick as you could be
 - In anticipation of steal, feet can be slightly staggered with your left foot being slightly in front of your right foot in receiving stance to help position feet more quickly for throw
2. Receiving
 - Sway body slightly to allow eyes, head, and glove to remain behind ball when receiving

DEFENSIVE FUNDAMENTALS

- Come “around the ball” with glove from all 4 points (e.g. low to high on a low pitch, outside to in on an outside pitch)
 - On balls caught between the shoulders and above knees, keep fingers pointed upward
 - Try to “stick the catch;” try not to let the ball and glove “travel” after catching the ball (i.e. do not let the momentum of the pitch take your glove out of strike zone after catching the ball)
3. Blocking Balls
- Turn glove over, fingers pointed down
 - Hips in front ball
 - Try to smother ball by allowing ball to bounce into the middle of the chest protector
4. Glove-Ball Exchange on throws
- Bring glove directly to shoulder
 - Short arm circle to facilitate quick release.
5. Footwork on Throws:
- Weight goes on left foot to allow yourself to plant right foot aligned with the middle of home plate with right foot perpendicular to 2B
 - Point shoulder to 2B, push off hard with right foot.
6. Communication on Relays
- **COMMUNICATE** with infielders on relays!
 - Align relay man with the proper depth to the ball
 - Instruct relay man to “cut,” “cut 4,” or cut to another base if there is a play on a trail runner
7. Dropped 3rd Strikes
- Attempt to tag runner before making throw to 1st
 - Create a clear throwing lane by taking 1-2 steps in front of home plate and throw toward the infield side of the base line
8. Pop-Ups behind the plate
- Turn (180 degrees) and face toward home plate. If time, take off mask
9. Receiving Balls on Tag Plays
- Position left foot toward front, 3rd base corner of home plate and right foot toward where the ball is being thrown from
 - Stay low, provide player throwing the ball to you a low target by your knees
 - Apply tag with the back of your glove (knuckles down)
10. Receiving Balls on Force Out
- Position right foot on the front of home plate as though you are playing 1B.
 - Step toward throw and stretch (if necessary) as though playing 1B
 - Be prepared to throw to 1B for DP if you have enough time
11. Fielding bunts/balls in front of home plate
- Be **AGGRESSIVE** in fielding balls in front of home plate
 - For balls hit on 1B side, get around ball and field ball with momentum moving toward 1B and left shoulder pointed toward 1B
 - For balls hit on 3B side, use a “reverse pivot” to field ball with back toward pitcher, plant your right foot and pivot your left foot toward 1B to make throw

Fun Drills that Develop Skills

PROTECT THE FENCE

Have players form a single file line in front of a fence. 3 Coaches, standing about 10 feet apart and one at a time, roll ground balls toward the fence. Each player fields the ground ball. The goal is to keep the ball in front, preventing the ball from reaching the fence. Each player progresses from one coach to the next. If the ball hits the fence, the player is out. If a player makes it through each of the 3 coaches she goes back to the beginning of the line and goes through again. The game ends when there is just one player left. This drill is ideal for 6u, 8u. To keep the drill interesting for more experienced players, coaches can throw short hops instead of rolling grounders.

TARGET PRACTICE

Using a bownet, a bucket on its side, or targets (like a hula hoop) hung on a fence, devise throwing accuracy contests between players. This is another ideal 6u, 8u drill.

GOALIE DRILL

Set-up a goal that a defensive player must protect. This could be done with 2 cones. The object of the game is to keep ground balls from getting through the goal. Coaches can set up contests in a variety of different ways – between players, groups of players, etc.

T-BALL RACES

Divide the team in two. Place a tee at home plate. One team hits; the other “plays” defense. The team playing defense starts with one player at the entrance of each dugout. Players take turns batting for the offensive team. Hitting from the tee, the batter tries to hit the ball as hard and as far as she can, and then tries to run around the bases before each defensive player races from the entrance of the dugout and touches the ball. Once each player touches the ball, the batter stops running and is awarded a point for each base she was able to get to before the defenders touch the ball. For instance, if the defensive players both touch the ball while the batter is between 2nd and 3rd, the batter is awarded 2 points for her team. The game is complete once each player has had a turn hitting and pointed are added up for each team.

The format of this drill can be adjusted to suit any age group. Base or running distances can be shortened for younger players.

PICKLE DRILL

This drill is designed for experienced players. The players must be able to throw and catch competently to learn run-down skills from this drill so it is probably best for advanced 10u and up. The drill requires 3 fielders and 1 runner. 1 fielder begins with the ball at the pitcher’s rubber, 2 fielder begin at consecutive bases (e.g. 1st and 2nd), and a runner begins in the middle between the 2 bases where there are fielders.

FUN DRILLS THAT DEVELOP SKILLS

The fielder holding the ball at the pitcher's rubber begins the drill by chasing the runner back to the base that the runner would have just come from (e.g. if the fielders are stationed at 1B and 2B then the fielder beginning the drill with the ball at the pitcher's rubber should *try* to chase the runner back to 1B). The object of the runner is to try to make it to either base safely and is highly likely to try to get into a pickle to do so. The object of the defense is to get the runner out. Use the drill to teach run-down fundamentals.

OVER THE LINE

This is a fun drill older players can do on their own while they wait their turn for the batting cage. A team consists of 2 players. The game is played with a wiffle ball (but with regular bats to help players work on their swings). Set-up a rectangular playing area using cones or anything to mark boundaries. The width of the rectangle should be about 20-30 feet wide, and the "single" line should be marked at about 30 feet. One defensive player stands just in front of the single line while the 2nd defender stands behind the single line. The team on offense soft tosses to each other. A batter gets 3 tosses to hit the wiffle ball between the cones (fair ball). If the defense fields the ball in front of the single line or catches the ball on the fly the batter is out. If the ball makes it past the single line but in front of the 2nd defender, the offensive teams gets a single. If the ball lands over the head of the 2nd defender, the batter is awarded a home run.

Distances and the number of tosses can be adjusted to account for differences in age. Defenders can wear gloves or field the wiffle balls bare-handed to make it slightly more difficult.

5-ON-5 INFIELD SCRIMMAGE

One way to keep practices moving and spirited, and create game-speed situations for the defense, is to hold 5-on-5 scrimmages using the tee, or coach-pitch front toss at a very close distance (Hauke has a protective screen teams can use for this drill). The rules should be setup to encourage to batter to put the ball in play on one swing. (For more experienced players, allow only one swing to put the ball in play). Balls are live once the batter hits it off the tee, and any ball that makes it past the infield onto the OF grass is a ground rule double. Bunting and half-swings are not allowed. (If using a protective screen for front toss, any ball hit into the screen is foul.) The 5 defensive positions are C, 1B, 2B, SS, and 3B. The depth of the position players can be adjusted for age division to create more ground rule doubles for younger players.

Basic Pitching Mechanics

THE POWER LINE



The Power Line is a straight line that runs from the pitcher to the pitcher's target. For instance, if a pitcher wants to throw a pitch down the middle of the plate, imagine a straight line running from the pitcher to the dead center of the strike zone. The power line shifts left and right for outside and inside targets (to a right handed batter). If a pitcher is able to keep her arm circle on the power line throughout her delivery including her release (and has the correct release) her pitch will always be centered. That is, she will never miss left or right, only up or down. Thus, the challenge with pitching mechanics to keep the arm circle on

the power line and to get the correct release that achieves the spin or desired rotation on the ball such the ball follows the power line.

Table 1 Windmill Pitching Terms

Drive Leg	Same side as throwing arm. Right foot for right-handed pitchers and vice-versa
Stride Leg	Opposite side leg as throwing arm. Left foot for right-handed pitchers and vice-versa
Power Line	Straight line that runs from the pitcher to the pitcher's target
Open Position	Hips perpendicular to home; body sideways toward home
Closed Position	Hips square to home

GRIP, TYPES OF PITCHES

The red seams of the ball form the letter 'C', or the shape of a horseshoe (see picture at right). These seams are used in a pitcher's primary grip of the ball. Fastpitch pitchers throw fastballs, drop balls, change ups, screw balls, rise balls, and curve balls. They are able to make the ball break both left and right, and up and down, and in many cases, a degree of both (e.g. down and right, or up and left).



For beginning pitchers, we start with the fastball. As pitchers get comfortable with the basic mechanics, the second pitch they learn is most often the change-up. Strong travel ball pitchers – as young as 8u - will be able to throw change-ups.

Fastball grip

- The fingertips are placed across the seams of the 'C', with your thumb around the back of the ball.
- Your thumb should be in line with your middle or index finger on the opposite side of the ball.



BASIC PITCHING MECHANICS

- As the girls get older and their hands get bigger, they should place fingertip pressure on the seams and create space between the palm and the ball when the ball is at release point.
- For fastballs, the pitcher wants her pitch to travel along the power line.



BASIC WINDMILL PITCH MECHANICS

Presentation

- Step onto the rubber from behind with hands apart, and the ball in your bare hand (to show the batter you are ready to pitch). A pitcher can “present” the ball to the batter with the ball in her glove hand as long as she pauses when she brings her hands together but it is generally more natural to young, beginning pitchers to present with the ball in her pitching hand.
- Once a pitcher’s hands come together, she must pause 1 second before she begins her delivery.

Stance

- Start with your drive leg (throwing arm) foot on the front of the rubber with the stride leg foot behind your drive leg.
- Your feet should be about shoulder length apart.
- In previous years, both feet had to be in contact with the pitching rubber. New this year to USA Softball rules, only the drive leg foot needs to be on the rubber when the pitcher presents the ball and starts her wind-up.
- Arms should be relaxed and hanging down by your sides.

Wind-up

- Shift weight from back foot to front foot.
- ***New to the USA Softball rules this year, the pitcher is allowed to step back with her stride foot (behind the pitcher’s rubber) to gather momentum for her drive forward in the wind-up. A pitcher may also begin her wind-up with her stride foot behind the pitching rubber. (Previously, the pitcher had to have both feet touching the rubber).***
 - (Note there are rule differences between USA Softball and PGF and NCAA so if you happen to be coaching a Tremors Black pitcher she will have to be familiar with both sets of rules. Neither PGF nor the NCAA allows the pitcher to step back with her stride foot to begin her wind-up.)
- The motion of the arms in this part of a pitch is simply to get the pitcher’s momentum started and styles will vary.
 - Keep the motion of the arms simple when first learning. A backswing with the throwing arm that is straight back and stays on the power line is the simplest and facilitates good mechanics.
 - Another common wind-up used by beginning pitchers is the “small circle.”
 - SMALL ARM CIRCLE:

- both arms should come together in front of the stomach area - about 10 inches from the body - and continue around in a small circle, up toward the chest, and then closer to the stomach - about 3 inches now - and down. You are now ready to enter into the large or big "Windmill Circle"

Stride and Arm Circle

- The stride and (Windmill) arm circle begin simultaneously.
- Drive forward off the rubber, pushing the stride leg out front, allowing the heel of the push off foot to come up off the ground, and propelling your body into the open position.
 - The open position, occurring in the middle of the pitch creates a clear path for the arm to pass by the hip while staying on the power line.
- Your drive leg foot should land at about a 45-degree angle on that power line
- Your heel should make contact before your toe to help with balance and power.
- Like hitting, land on a firm front side. As your stride leg lands, you want to 'build a wall' with the front side of your body.
- As you are striding forward, both the pitching arm and the glove arm move forward (often after the backswing that occurs during the wind-up).
 - Both your pitching arm and glove arm should be pointed forward toward the target.
 - Keep glove hand in a "palm-down" position (as this helps keep the front shoulder in the open position).
 - During the stride phase, both of the pitcher's arms and stride foot are pointed toward the target.
- Your throwing arm should be fully extended all the way around.
- It is important that your arm circle be on a straight plane directly off your body.
- While it is normal for a slight bend to occur in the elbow as the arm enters into the downswing, make certain your arm circle remains on a straight plane all the way through release.
 - For a fastball or peel drop, the pitcher's thumb should be pointed toward the centerfielder as the pitcher enters the downswing to ensure the correct release and spin.
- The hips should be in the open position at release (at approximately the same angle that the stride foot lands - 45 degrees).
 - Many pitchers are incorrectly taught to snap their hips forward or 'closed' at release. The hips need to stay open and the back leg should drive or "pinch" into the front leg. This pinching action will put your legs into a "figure 4" position at release and insure that your hips remain at the ever important 45 degree angle.
 - Along with your hips, your belly button will also be at 45 degrees. If your belly button is facing the catcher at release, your hips are over-rotated and this will cause a loss of power.

BASIC PITCHING MECHANICS

- Keeping your shoulders open or at about the same angle as your hips to let your arm enter into the release zone in a whipping movement. It is that whipping snap that creates a great deal of velocity.
- The arm should pass in front of the hips as the ball is released with a snap of the wrist.
 - For a fastball or peel drop, the pitcher's pinky should come very close to brushing her back hip as she enters the release zone.
 - You should feel the ball come off your fingertips, particularly your middle finger, upon release.
- Your glove arm needs to extend out toward home plate and then pull (down) into your body
 - Think of using your glove arm to pull your body toward home. Just as a swimmer uses both arms to pull her body through the water, a pitcher can use her glove arm to pull her body through the air.
- Keep your head over your center of gravity (around your mid-section)
- The elbow then bends up as the arm follows through. On the follow-through the throwing arm:
 - Remains very relaxed and loose.
- Note:
 - A pitcher is only allowed one full rotation of their arm, prior to delivery.
 - Only one forward step is allowed

Basic Pitching Drills

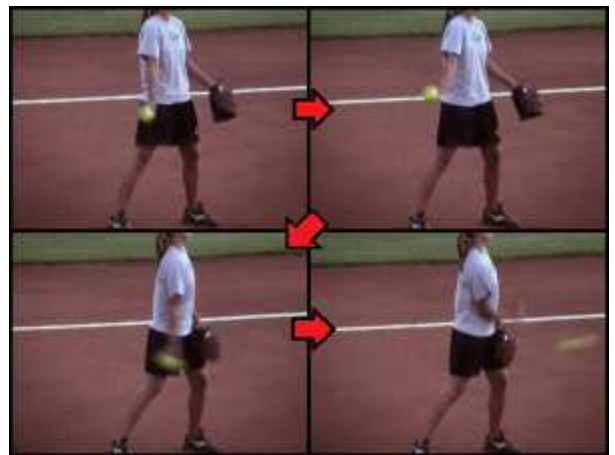
The most common way to teach pitching is to break down the full wind-up and pitch into different phases, working backward and beginning with the snap of the wrist that occurs as the ball leaves the pitcher's hand. We then slowly work backward in sequence until the pitcher is ready to pitch in her "full motion." This is also the sequence we encourage pitchers to both warm up and to practice.

THE WRIST SNAP

The first thing to learn when beginning pitching is the wrist snap. The wrist snap practices the very end of the release of the pitch – the snap of the wrist as the pitcher releases the ball.

Stance

- With non-throwing shoulder pointed toward home, position your feet in a straight along the power line, with the pitcher's toe on the power line.
- For right handed pitchers, the pitcher's front foot should be at a 45 degree angle to home plate. To use the image of a clock, if home is 12 o'clock and 2B is 6 o'clock, the pitcher's front foot should be pointed somewhere between 1 and 2 o'clock.



TOP SPIN or OVER SPIN

- The goal of the wrist snap is to make sure the pitcher releases the ball with the correct spin.
- TOP SPIN or OVER SPIN with the "C" of the ball traveling end over end is the rotation the catcher should see.



Practice the Release

- With the catcher just a few feet away, the pitcher cocks her wrist back such that her knuckles are facing upward and her thumb is facing toward the ground, and release the ball.
- The pitcher uses just her wrist and fingers to propel the ball to the catcher, focusing on getting over spin.

BASIC PITCHING DRILLS

Follow-Through

- Once she releases the ball, the pitcher follows through allowing her elbow to bend and fingers pointed toward the sky.

K POSITION

- After wrist snaps, pitchers should practice pitching from the K-position.
- K-position is the phase before the wrist snap. A pitcher reaches the K-position as her pitching hand comes around the top of her arm circle and her pitching hand is at the 12 o'clock position.
- While in full motion, the K-position is also the point before the pitcher's front foot lands and after she has rotated her hips from the closed to open position.
 - Again, using the analogy of a clock, if home plate is at 12 o'clock (and 2nd base at 6 o'clock), a right handed pitcher should land her front foot in about the 1 or 2 o'clock position. (A left-handed pitcher should land their right foot in the 10 to 11 o'clock position) so this is where her foot should be when doing her K-position drills.
 - The toes of her front foot should be on the power line.
- In the K-position, the pitcher's rear foot is staggered slightly, such that the toes of the rear foot align with the in-step of the front foot, creating space for the arm to pass by the rear hip.
- The pitcher holds the ball directly above her rear foot (if she drop the ball from the top of the K-position, the ball should land on her toes).
 - Shoulders should be level.
 - The front shoulder and glove should be pointed toward the target/catcher.
 - The palm of the pitcher's glove hand should be facing toward the ground with the back of the glove (knuckle side) facing up toward the sky.
 - Her non-throwing arm should be fully extended and pointed toward the target/catcher.
- From the K-position, the pitcher makes her pitch by bring the ball down from the top of her arm circle to release point (12 o'clock position to the 6 o'clock position assuming one is facing the front of pitcher as in the top picture).
 - Her elbow should have a very slight amount bend as she comes around in her circle. The elbow should never be "locked out" or fully extended.



- As the arm comes down past the hip, keep the wrist back, then allow it to whip forward as the ball is released
- As with wrist snaps, the catcher should look for over spin to indicate a correct release, and the pitcher should follow through allowing her elbow to bend and fingers pointed toward the sky (arm bent upward in an L-shape).
- Once the stride leg lands, the leg stays flexed but firm, while the push-off foot drags across the dirt

FULL CIRCLE, HIPS OPEN

- Once a pitcher feels comfortable with her release from the K-position, the next pitching movement to introduce is the full arm circle.
- The lower body begins in the same position as the K-drill - front foot at a 45 degree angle on the power line; hips open at a 45 degree angle.
- Mimicking the beginning portion of the stride phase of full motion, both glove hand and pitching arm should be extended and pointed toward the target with the pitcher's weight on her rear foot.
- Begin the full windmill from this position, transferring weight from rear foot to front foot as the pitching arm passes the 12 o'clock position in the windmill.
- From this point, the positioning of the lower body and hips, and the release and follow-through are identical to full motion,

The reason we have pitchers work through this progression of the pitching mechanics in this sequence is to identify which phase of the full delivery or which aspect of her mechanics is posing the greatest challenge to maintaining consistency.

BUILDING A FOUNDATION

- Isolating the mechanics of the lower body and mid-section by having the pitcher focus solely on her footwork first with no arm circle and then with her arm circle after she is able to get her body consistently in the correct release position.
- Isolate the mechanics of the lower body and mid-section by doing full-speed deliveries on a marked power line with no ball.
- Emphasize:
 - Landing the stride foot at a 45 degree angle (2 o'clock).
 - Push off the rubber with drive leg foot straight without pivoting the throwing arm foot.
 - Drag the toes drive leg foot to the in-step of the stride leg foot so that your legs finish in a "figure 4" position at release and hips are at a 45 degree angle on release.



HITTING

Hitting

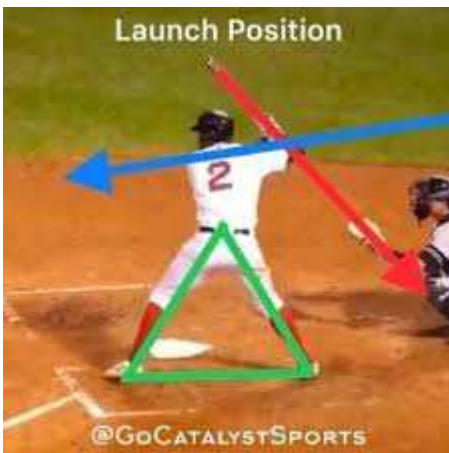
GRIP AND STANCE

- Hold bat in your fingers. You may either “line-up your door-knocking knuckles” or, if you imagine wearing a ring on each finger of both hands, line-up the rings on both hands.
- Your weight should be evenly distributed between your feet to allow batter to load and keep batter relaxed and able to react quickly.
- Toes pointed forward (avoid “duck feet”).
- Keep both eyes on the ball and the head still (and on an even plane) throughout the swing.
- Make sure you can reach the outside pitch. Touch the outside of the plate with your bat using your bottom hand.
- Focus eyes on the pitcher’s chest or shoulders with a soft focus, and then when pitcher begins pitching motion, shift focus with a hard focus to where pitcher releases the ball (near pitcher’s hip aka release point)



LAUNCH POSITION

- As the pitcher begins her wind-up, “load” your weight onto her back leg. Try to make sure your knee stays on the inside of your foot. Don’t let your back knee get outside of your back foot.
- When in LAUNCH POSITION:
 - Your feet should be in a straight line toward the pitcher
 - Your legs and the ground should form the shape of a triangle if someone is looking at you from the dugout



Bat at 45 degree angle. Avoid too upright or flat bat

Get 2 eyes on the ball

Lead arm at 90 degree angle or V

Good balance weight slightly back

-Feet-shoulder width apart
-Avoid closed stance, either square or open but when you take step make step sure feet are square

Distance to plate – outside of plate should be reachable with tip of bat to be able to hit inside and outside pitches

- Your feet should be at the top of strike zone, near your back shoulder and directly above her rear foot.

- Your bat should be at @ 45 degree angle and the knob of the bat is pointed toward the catcher. There should be space between the back elbow and the body (this will happen naturally if bat is at a 45 degree angle)

- Your front shoulder should be *slightly* lower than your back shoulder and your back elbow naturally be raised *slightly* higher as this occurs. The pitcher should be able to see the numbers on the back of your jersey.

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ground, your front leg is firm, not allowing the weight shift to get over your front foot.

SWING AND BAT PATH

- **HIPS BEFORE HANDS!** Hips, shoulders – and then hands. That’s the proper sequence to the swing. Rotate your back knee toward the ball once your front foot hits the ground. Note that your hands still have not come forward! ***You are using your “core” or hips to turn the barrel from launch position toward the contact point.***
- Next, take your back elbow and drive it into your body (“slotting the elbow”).
- At the same time your bottom hand will drive the knob of the bat toward the ball or point of contact. The barrel of bat should be close to back shoulder when your hands are being brought down toward the contact point. Coaches often refer to this movement by saying “hands to the ball” or “leading with knob.”
 - Beware of the knob pointing up toward the sky and/or your elbows getting ahead of your hands, as this slows the barrel to contact point and decreases your power (a.k.a. “bat drag,” or “hands dropping,” or “barrel dropping”).
 - Beware of your hands moving out and away from your body (instead of toward ball) as this slows down and weakens the swing (a.k.a “casting”).
- Your hands, back elbow, knee, and hip aligned (in a straight line) as barrel moves toward contact point
 - this position makes you as strong as possible at contact point, ensures the barrel does not dip, and proper weight transfer
- Keep head still.
- Think “**short-to, long-through.**”



CONTACT POINT

- Your hands are in palm-up, palm-down position
- Your elbows are behind your hands, close to the body and remain apart – not close together – so that batter is in her strongest position possible.

- The space between your elbows remains constant from the time the batter loads all the way to contact point (most effectively seen in slow motion video) so that you will be as strong as possible.
- Beware of your wrists rolling over. If this happens, check your grip and remember, hips before hands.
- Extension occurs after contact and the end of the bat should be pointed at the pitcher at full extension.
- Keep the top hand on the bat through full extension with slightly more weight now on forward foot, on a firm front side (front knee locked)



FINISH

- Swing through the ball.
- The rotation of your body which started when you turned your back knee toward the ball and your front knee finishes such that the hip pocket of your back leg makes nearly a full 180-degree rotation. So if you are right handed, begins the swing facing the 3B dugout and ends the swing facing the 1B dugout.

REMEMBER

- **IF YOU DECIDE TO SWING, SWING HARD**
 - Do not guide the bat to the ball
- A Fundamentally Sound Baseball Swing = A Fundamentally Sound Softball Swing
 - There is no difference between a softball and baseball swing.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR 6U/8U AND ALL BEGINNING HITTERS

FOCUS ON THE VERY BASICS

- Our hitting guide aims to show where our hitters' fundamentals will be toward the end of their MVGS playing days and as they transition to high school.
- With 6s and 8s, focus on having the girls in a correct stance with a correct grip. Having a stance that resembles a good launch position makes it easier for the girls to transition to the more difficult swing mechanics as they get older.
 - Show the girls what position they should be in at contact point (e.g. balanced, palm-up, palm-down, back knee pointed toward front knee, head, eyes down on the contact point, elbows behind the hands).
 - Have the girls show you their swings in slow motion to see if they understand the mechanics or the position their body should be in at various points of the swing.
 - For 6u and 8u, breaking the phases of the swing down into just 3 components may be easier: 1) Grip and stance (that closely resembles launch position); 2) contact point; and 3) finish.

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- Try to get the girls in a good launch positions while in their stances. Pay particular attention to the position of their hands and weight distribution (look for the “triangle” formed by the legs and ground).
- As they get more comfortable and fluid, introduce weight shift and launch position.
- Stride and separation is a more advanced fundamental technique that generally works better for advanced 10u or older ages.
- Use lighter bats.
 - Common bat path problems that coaches face often occur because young players are not quite strong enough to get the bat from launch position to contact point with the proper mechanics.
- Introduce the concept of the strike zone. It’s never too early to teach batters not to swing at pitches above their hands, in the dirt, or beyond the reach of the bat.

Choosing the Right Bat

- “Drop” refers to the difference between the bat’s length (in inches) and weight (in ounces).

Table 2 Bat Sizing Guidelines

Age Division	Length (inches)	Weight (oz.)	Drop
6u	25-26	11-14	-12 to -14
8u	27-28	15-18	-12 to -10
10u	28-30	16-20	-12 to -10
12u	30-33	18-23	-12 to -10
15u	31-34	20-26	-11 to -8

- As a rule of thumb, 1) the knob of the bat should come to the player’s wrist when bat is stood upright on its endcap on the ground and the player’s arms are hanging by her side. 2) The player should be able to hold the bat by the handle with one arm outstretched for 5-10 seconds.
- Bats should have an “ASA-approved” fastpitch demarcation.
- Composite bats are expensive. Because of the higher density of the pitching machine balls, ***composite bats should never be used when hitting off the pitching machine.***

CONSIDERATIONS FOR 10U/12U/15U

Players transitioning from Basic to Advanced Fundamentals

- Consider using video, especially slow motion video. Coaches Eye is a great app.
- Initiating the movement of the bat with the hips or core is challenging and not intuitive but one of the most crucial fundamental movement to master if the player will successfully transition to a faster game that’s played at older ages or in travel ball.
 - Have players focus on turning their back knee and engaging their core to rotate the barrel from launch position to contact point.

Composite Bats

- Composite bats are made from woven fibers, which are extremely durable materials. Manufacturers use a variety of tight weaves to create pop and durability with composite baseball bats.
- Breaking in a composite bat takes 100-200 hits with the bat either with tee work or soft toss. Make sure to rotate the bat 1/4 inch after each swing.
- Composite fibers are often lighter in construction, which benefits hitters.
- Composite bats help create more bat speed through a lighter swing weight and provide more bat control by having a more balanced feel.
- Composite bats also absorb more vibration, so you'll feel less sting in your hands as a hitter.

BASIC FLAWS AND FIXES

1. "Eyes off the Ball"
 - Make sure head is still starting while in her stance and throughout her swing.
 - While working on tee, have batter focus eyes on the ball before and during the swing, and on the spot of the tee where the ball was after the swing
 - 2-ball soft toss: Throw two balls and instruct the batter to hit either the top or bottom, further improving concentration and reaction time. (Different color balls work well for this drill too).
 - Have the pitchers throw pitches and the batters just watch the ball into the glove and call balls and strikes so batters get accustomed to watching the ball all the way to the catcher's glove.
 - Invest in golf wiffle balls, and have hitters practice hitting the golf wiffle balls in soft or front toss.
 - When the player is hitting off the tee, have a coach stand off to the side and flash a number down with her or his fingers immediately after contact. Have the hitter read the number before looking for the ball she just hit to train the hitter to keep her eyes at the contact point.
 - Track and Catch (or Barry Bonds) Drill: The idea behind this drill is that players must track the ball with their eyes when they hit the same way they must track the ball with their when catching it.
 - Have hitters wear a glove on their top hand. (Right handed hitters wear a glove on their right hand and vice-versa.) You may also use wiffle balls or a soft squishy ball so players do not have to wear gloves.
 - Have players load or get into their launch positions and stride and then catch the ball with the glove with their heads down as they catch it, tracking the ball into the glove.
 - For older players, you can have them start at the back of the batter's box move forward one step after each catch until she is about 15 feet from the pitcher and then reverse direction and step backward one step at a time.
 - Back toss: Instead of soft-tossing balls from beside the hitter, toss them from behind. This way, the hitter is forced to use peripheral vision to locate the ball and also has less time to react.
2. "Not Stepping to Pitcher" or "Pulling Shoulder"
 - Have batters practice taking strides and landing on the ball of your front foot, heel slightly off the ground, with front foot pointing in opposite batter's box right back toward the pitcher (you can

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also incorporate a slight rock backwards or knee cock shifting your weight into your back leg). Have batters feel the weight go into the inside portion of your back foot as they stride forward.

- During batting practice or tee work, place an object behind the batter's front foot and in line with the pitcher (e.g. a cone). You can also draw a line in the dirt or put a piece of tape down in line with the pitcher. This will give the hitter instant feedback about the direction of her stride.
 - For older kids or players with some experience, focus on getting players into a good launch position. Slight inward turn of front shoulders such that player's numbers are visible to the pitcher and belly button pointed toward catcher. Be very careful that the batter does NOT twist her entire torso as this slow down the swing! This is why emphasizing this aspect of the launch position works better with batters who some experience in comparison to a player who is picking up the bat for the first time. The batter's front should be slightly lower than her back should and the knob of the bat should be pointed toward the catcher when she is in launch position.
 - If "stepping out" is caused by fear of the ball, particularly at 6u/8u, try practicing with wiffle balls to start. (See also #4 below).
 - Lift only heel during stride phase of swing until habit is broken
3. "Swinging Too Early or Too Late"
- For younger, less experienced players, lack of aggressiveness, getting into launch position too late or too heavy a bat can lead to late swings.
 - Try helpful cues: "Attack the ball," "Hit the ball out front of your front foot" or for players swinging too early "let the ball get to you."
 - For players with some experience, timing issues, particularly swinging too late, may indicate a mechanical issue (bat drag being common one, see more below).
 - Improve mechanics. Bat path, improper lower body mechanics, and improper launch position are common culprits. In fact, as players learn to lead the swing with their lower half, timing issues are very common.
 - Face faster pitching during batting practice. Many times, players just aren't used to seeing fast pitching. Many batting practice sessions are comprised of pitching that is much slower than game speed. Simply increase the speed and allow the hitter to adjust their timing accordingly.
 - During cage/pitching machines practices, batters can practice adjusting their timing for different speed pitchers by adjusting the distance they hit from the pitching machine. Start at 35 feet, move up to 30 feet or even 25 feet to simulate faster pitching without having to adjust the machine.
 - The Barry Bonds drill (described above) also helps with timing for experienced players.
4. Overcoming Fear of the Ball
- Explain to the player that "stepping out" exposes the entire body to an errant pitch whereas a good launch position puts the batter in a position where she can protect herself by turning her front shoulder toward home plate in the event of an errant pitch.
 - Drill to help: start out about 10 to 15 feet from a player, and softly toss a tennis ball, wiffle ball, or soft Incrediball over the plate, without having the hitter swing. Move the ball inside gradually, and when the hitter believes she's about to be hit, she should turn his body away from the pitch (toward the home plate). Coaches should teach hitters to turn and place the end

of the bat or cone directly on the ground behind them, forcing them to turn away and duck down.

MORE DIFFICULT (BUT VERY COMMON) FLAWS TO FIX

1. “Bat Drag” or “Barrel Dropping” or “Hands Dropping”

- Bat Drag is, fundamentally, a problem with swing length; the swing takes too long to develop, and unfolds too far out front, for the hitter to be able to catch up to a good fastball. If you see hitters where their elbows are close together and forearms are almost parallel, the elbows lead the hands, and/or the knob of her bat is pointed upward then bat drag is an issue.
- Emphasize knob pointed at catcher’s feet at launch point and knob pointed at contact point to start the swing (bat path)
- Emphasize engaging core/hip rotation to turn barrel toward ball as the rotation of the hips naturally brings the hands to toward the contact point.
 - Emphasize keeping barrel close to back shoulder as hips begin to rotate
- Slow motion, step by step swing: Have players walk through their swing in slow motion so you can tell whether the player understands proper stance and launch position, and what position she should be in at contact point. If she is unable to demonstrate the right movements in slow motion, she will have even more trouble doing it at game speed.
 - In a variation of this drill, have the batter work each phase of the swing at full speed and pause after each phase. The coach provides a verbal cue. For instance, when the coach says “stance,” the batter gets into her stance. Then the coach says “load,” and the batter gets into launch position and freezes while the coach checks her launch position. Next, the coach says “stride,” followed by “contact point,” and “finish.” Each time along the way the coach checks for proper movement and positioning.
- 1-handed swings: Using a lighter bat, practice swings with both top and bottom hand paying close attention to bat path.
 - Bottom hand: Have batter begin in her normal stance, but use only her bottom hand. Her stride in this drill should not go past the tee, but to the tee. She should load as if both her hands were on the bat. The knob is still pointed towards the catcher’s feet. Instead of dragging the bat through the zone, she needs to use her hips and shoulders to drive his hands through the contact point and finish her swing.



HITTING

- Top Hand: start in your stance, and begin your load towards the catchers' feet, and load against your back hip and leg. Then drive your hand through the baseball and finish the swing extended.
 - High tee drill: Set tee to the very top of the strike zone or about "letter" height. Focus on bat path by focusing on where the knob of the bat pointed at launch and as hips begin rotation and hands begin swing. Make sure hands are in the palm-up, palm-down position contact point.
2. "Not Incorporating Lower Body"
- Try having the batter focus on her belly button, using a similar movement to start her swing as she would to begin the twirling of a hula hoop.
 - Half turns and Full Turns: Have batters work on half and full turns to isolate and work on the lower body mechanics of the swing. Each begins with the batter's stride and the bat held against the upper body. In the half turn, have the batter hold the bat vertically against the rear shoulder, stride and rotate the back hip so that her belly button is facing the pitcher. With full turns, have the batter hold the handle and taper of the bat horizontally across her chest with the barrel off to her right side for a right handed hitter (and vice versa for a left handed hitter). The batter strides and rotates her back hip. Emphasize having the numbers on the back of the batter's jersey being visible to the pitcher while starting in launch position and ending being visible to the on deck hitter by the 1B dugout. Using wiffle balls, you can help a batter get her timing with full turns too. The batter should time her rotations so that barrel hits the wiffle ball. Another version of this drill has a batter holding a long broom stick or PVC pipe, with the emphasis of starting with one end of the stick pointed toward the 2B position while in launch position and finishing with the other end of the stick pointed toward 1B when she has completed her "swing."
3. "Casting"
- CASTING is when the hands and bat move out and away from the body during the initial part of the swing. As a result, the front arm will bar or straighten out. The rear elbow also tends to get in front of the hands and knob causing the same problems discussed above. Because barrel of the bat extends away from the hitter's body on the initial approach it prevents the hitter from staying inside on the ball. This causes the barrel to wrap around the ball, eliminating any chance of an opposite field hit.
 - *Emphasize engaging core/hip rotation to turn barrel toward ball or bring hands to the contact point.* This is the key to a proper bat path so many of the drill to fix casting and bat lag are designed to help batters feel the proper sequence to their swing.
 - Fence drill: With her rear foot flush against a fence, have the batter practice her swing. If her hands come away from her body, she will hit the fence with her bat. Try this drill in slow motion or step by step first, then as the batter becomes more comfortable with a bat path that brings the barrel directly to contact point, the batter can start working toward game speed.

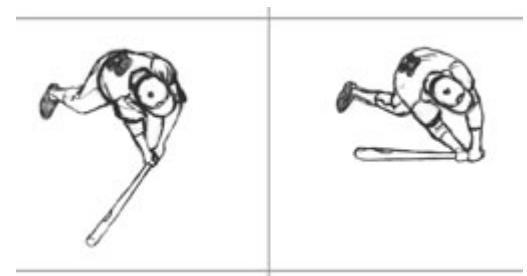


Figure 1: Casting on the left; correct bat path on the right

- See-saw drill: The See-saw drill is designed to teach hitters the movement in scapula or back of the shoulders that occurs in the swing immediately after the back hip begins to rotate and precedes the movement of bringing the back elbow to the body to initiate the bat path. The drill itself is nothing more than contracting the muscles in the back of the shoulder to mimic the initiation of that movement that brings the back elbow to the body as the back hip is rotating. Have batter get in her regular stance with her hands in the position she normally is in during her stance. The bat will need to be fairly upright in order for the batter to feel movement with her scapula. Make sure the batter keeps her elbows still and the distance between the elbows the same. In a gentle motion, have the batter rock her shoulders and forth such that the knob of the bat points toward the catcher's feet and then toward the contact point. Emphasize the movement in the back of the shoulders to get the knob of the bat to point alternatively between the catcher's feet and the contact point. This movement triggers the back elbow being pulled toward the body to start the swing. Once the batter feels comfortable with the movement, have the batter "see-saw" into a swing with a ball off the tee. (See the Hitting Vault.com for a video and thorough description of how the drill works).
 - Knob to the wiffle by turning hips: This drill emphasizes lower body mechanics and the movement of rotating the back hip to bring the hands or knob of the bat to the contact point. It's a good drill to use after working on half-turns and full turns. The batter assumes her regular stance and initiates her swing (normally) with the rotation of her back hip. As she brings her back elbow to the body and rotates her core, the knob of the bat goes from being pointed at the catcher's feet to the contact point. The coach tosses the wiffle to the knob of the bat – at the batter's hands. The batter taps the wiffle ball with the knob of the bat back to the coach. The batter should look like she is checking her swing.
 - 2-tee drill: This drill is meant to give instant feedback to the hitter if her hands come away from her body or dip in her bat path. Setup the tee the batter hits off of as you normally would. Add a second tee behind the hitting tee in front of the batter's rear foot slightly higher (maybe an inch) than the hitting tee. The hitter swings as she normally would hitting the ball off the front tee. Casting or dropping her hands will cause her to hit the back tee. Again, emphasize using your lower half to initiate the swing and to bring the hands to the contact point. Focus on where the knob of the bat is pointed toward during the launch phase and at the beginning of the swing.
4. "Bat Wrap" or Torso twisting during load or in launch position
- When we load, we want the knob of the bat pointed towards the catcher's feet, but we do not want to wrap the bat around our heads, as that will create a long and flat swing. While the numbers on the back of the batter's jersey should be visible to the pitcher, younger players often twist their torso too far. A hitter that twists her torso too far will have difficulty with fast pitching.
 - To fix to "bat wrap" or "torso twisting" first make sure the batter understands and knows what a good launch position feels like.

BASE RUNNING

Base Running

CONCEPTS TO INTRODUCE AT 6U, 8U

Running out a ball fielded by an Infielder

- **DROP** the bat!
- Run as fast as you can out of the batter's box.
- Run THROUGH 1st base.
- Break down after you have run through the base.
- Turn toward foul territory.

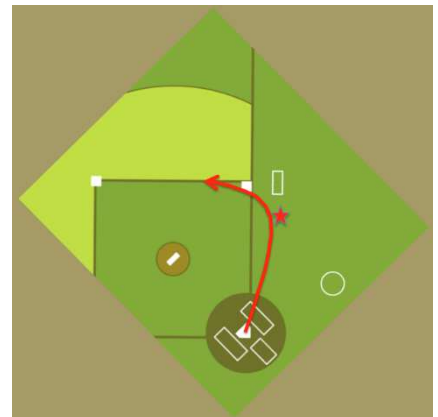
Dropping (not throwing) the bat

BASE RUNNING CONCEPTS FOR 10U, 12U, 15U

Smart, aggressive base running is often the difference between scoring a run and being stranded on base after the 3rd out of an inning. We employ these base running strategies to maximize our chances of scoring when we reach base.

As a batter on a single to the OF

- **DROP** the bat!
- Run as fast as you can out of the batter's box.
- Make a good turn. Your path around 1st should be in the shape of backward "C" (see diagram).
- Make an aggressive turn around 1st to try to draw an errant throw from an outfielder throwing to 2nd base.
 - The further the ball is hit from 1st, the more aggressive the turn. Singles to LF have the most aggressive turns, followed by singles to CF and then RF.



As a batter on an extra-base hit to the OF

- **DROP** the bat!
- Run as fast as you can out of the batter's box.
- Pick-up the 1B Coach.
- Make a good turn. Your path around 1st should be in the shape of backward "C" (see diagram).
- After you have made your turn, if you see the numbers on the back of the OF's jersey, run hard for 2nd.
- Between 1st and 2nd look at the 3B Coach who will signal whether to continue for 3rd or stop at 2nd.
- If the 3B Coach signals for you to go to 3rd make a good turn.

- Watch the 3B Coach for whether you should make a turn at 3rd and look for the ball, stop on the base, or slide. The 3B Coach may also tell you to slide to one side of the base or the other depending on where the throw is coming from.

Lead-Offs

- Utilize a “Track Start.” Push off base. If you like, rock your body in sync with the pitcher to time your start from the base. It is important to get a good jump from the base on every pitch.

As a Runner on 1st

- **Pre-pitch preparation:** # of outs, get sign from 3B Coach, know where other runners are on base
- Take a peek after 2-3 steps and see if the batter hit the ball, and react accordingly. You must get back to 1B quickly if batter hits a ball in the air that is caught, especially on a line drive.
- On balls hit high into the air, be close enough to the base to get back to the base before the fielder has time to catch and throw the ball back to base but be off the base in case the ball falls for a hit. The further the ball is hit away from base the further off the base you can get.
- Track the ball as it’s pitched. The instant a ball hits the dirt, break for 2B even if you are not stealing on the pitch

As a Runner on 2nd

- **Pre-pitch preparation:** # of outs, get sign from 3B Coach, know where other runners are on base
- Your lead from 2B is big – bigger than your lead from 1B or 3B because the throw from the catcher is the furthest.
- Track the ball as it’s pitched. The instant a ball hits the dirt, break for 2B even if you are not stealing on the pitch
- Remember you are trying to score on any hit from 2B. If there is no play as you approach 3B, remember to make a good turn so you don’t slow down coming around the base.
- With less than 2 outs, remember to freeze on a line drive and make sure it hits the ground before running.
- On balls hit high into the air, be close enough to the base to get back to the base before the fielder has time to catch and throw the ball back to 2nd but be off the base in case the ball falls for a hit. The further the ball is hit away from base the further off the base you can get.
- With less than 2 outs, if a ground ball is hit to YOUR LEFT (1st base side of the field or up the middle) run hard to 3B. If a ground ball is hit to YOUR RIGHT wait for the fielder to make a throw to first before attempting to go to 3B.
- With less than 2 outs, if a ball hit high into the air into the OF, you can tag up and advance to 3rd if the outfielder catches the ball and you think you can make it. Watch your base coach.
- If there is a runner on 3rd, make sure you watch the runner ahead of you and make sure she advances before trying to advance on a passed ball, ground ball, or tag attempt.

As a Runner on 3rd

BASE RUNNING

- **Pre-pitch preparation:** # of outs, get sign from 3B Coach, know where other runners are on base
- Track the ball as it's pitched. The instant a ball hits the dirt, start advancing toward home. If the ball gets past the catcher and bounces away from the catcher, sprint home. If the catcher blocks the ball or it ricochets back to the catcher retreat back to 3B.
- Always take your lead in foul territory.
- Keep your eyes on the ball as the catcher catches the ball, throws it back to the pitcher, and you re-treat back to 3rd.
 - Sometimes you may want to go back to 3rd in foul territory to cut off the throwing lane for the catcher. Other times, you may want to retreat back to 3B in foul territory to stay furthest away from the 3B.
- With less than 2 outs, tag up on any ball hit the air.
- With less than 2 outs and no runner on 1st base, the 3B Coach will tell you whether to run **on contact** on a ground ball or whether to **read** the ball off the bat.
 - If you are **reading** the ball off the bat, know whether the IF is playing back or in. If back, and the batter hits the ball on the ground, make sure the ball is hit past the pitcher then sprint home.

Positive Coaching Principles

- Use encouragement and positive reinforcement as your primary method of motivating.
- Reward effort, not just good outcomes.
 - Make effort goals a part of your team culture.
 - Maximize effort by rewarding unsuccessful effort. To maximize team effort, reward players who try hard but fail to make the play.
 - Encourage players to set “Effort Goals” tied to how hard they try.
- Achieve the “Magic Ratio” of five positive reinforcements to each criticism or correction

ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT FOR THE OLDER KIDS

- Develop great kids, not just good players.
- Help players pursue mastery of their sport, not just scoreboard wins.
- Resiliency is a key success factor for life, not just for sports. Help kids develop resiliency by teaching them to “move on” from mistakes.
 - Consider using a “mistake ritual,” which is a gesture or statement that coaches and players use to transform the fear of mistakes so they don’t play timidly and lose confidence. A mistake ritual allows athletes to quickly “reset” for the next play without beating themselves up for having made a mistake.

RUNNING PRACTICES

Running Practices

- Prepare. Have practice plans.
- Keep practices moving at a steady pace.
- Consider using “stations” where players rotate between different stations, practicing a particular drill or skill at each station where each station is run by a coach.
 - The smaller groups, as well as the focus of one drill or skill, facilitates teaching, demonstration, and correcting of mechanics.
- Use drills to reinforce mechanics.
 - Teach “perfect practice makes perfect” rather than “practice makes perfect.” Players must practice fundamentals correctly to gain the benefits of practice.
- Remember that while scrimmages may create game-like situations, they also have a tendency to slow the pace of practice down as fewer players are active at the same time thereby limiting the number of repetitions players get.
 - Having players work on a particular skill the side during a scrimmage is one way to avoid this.

6U, 8U CONSIDERATIONS

- Utilize parent help to get kids more reps.
- Keep stations and the time spent working on one drill or skill short.
- Practice game scenarios (e.g. force-outs at 2B or 3B).
- Play games or have contests to keep kids engaged.
- Introduce pitching (“kid-pitch”) early.
 - MGS has set a goal of eliminating coach-pitch in 10u. The earlier kids learn to pitch the quicker they will make the adjustment. This will benefit both pitchers and hitters.

10U, 12U, 15U CONSIDERATIONS

- Incorporate a regular warm-up routine for injury prevention.
- Promote independence. Set the expectation that players should work on fundamentals independently.

Batting Cage Practices

Beginning in 10u, teams receive a Hauke batting cage practice slot that is separate from their field practice time. To make the most of the batting cage, consider:

- Arriving early to account for the 5-10 minutes required to set-up the machine
- Organizing different hitting stations that players can rotate through so the cage is not the only place players are active and practicing

- Activities and drills that best utilize batting cage time include: Bownets, wiffles, pitchers throwing on the side,
- Use repetitions on the tee and soft toss to work on changes/modifications to hitting mechanics.
 - It's more difficult for hitters to make those adjustments against live speed pitching
- Recommend players use aluminum bats when hitting off the pitching machine. The dimple balls are denser than normal softballs and may damage composite bats.

SAMPLE 10U PRACTICE PLAN

<u>Drill</u>	<u>Duration</u>					
Dynamic Warm-Ups	5 min					
Throwing and Catching Warm-Ups	5 min - 10 min					
Wrist Snaps 5-6 reps each						
Throws between Players 30 feet						
Tremors: 30 feet, 45 feet, 60 feet						
Rapid Fire Drill	5 min					
Catching - 1 rep each coach/station						
Catching and Throwing - 1 rep each coach/station						
Four Corners	5 min					
Defense Stations	3 x 5 min					
Station #1:						
Drill #1: Form Fielding - Creep into ready position, Charge, Field ball in "triangle" -- run ball back to bucket						
Drill #2: Form Fielding - same as above plus cross, step & throw						
Drill #3: Form Fielding - same as above with ball hit in different directions						
Drill #4: Catch and tag - at 2B (ball thrown by coach)						
Station #2: OF Work						
Drill #1: Flyball "Form" Catching - emphasize ball above head off to the side, 1 foot in front of the other, knees bent; 2 hands						
Drill #2: "Crossover" calling for the ball drill						
Drill #3: Same as drill #2 but with balls hit on ground (emphasize getting front of the ball, correct angle to ball, backing up play)						
Drill #4: Drop Step, Run and Catch drill (emphasize running w/ glove tucked, glove in catching position at "last second")						
Station #3: Footwork, Glovework Drills						
Drill #1: Grounders, short hops on knees (Emphasize catching ball in pocket, glove "through" the ball)						
Drill #2: Backhand Warm-Up: Fielding on 1 knee - glove side knee and throwing side knee; focus on glove positioning						
Skill #1: Backhand Footwork: glove side and throwing hand side footwork						
Skill #2: Raking: Forehand and Backhand						
Skill #3: Reverse Pivot						
Skill #4: Rounding Ground balls (momentum toward target)						
BP and Sidework	45 min					
Group 1						Catcher Throws to 2nd, 3rd
Group 2						Tee Work

HOW TO STAY ORGANIZED DURING GAMES

How to Stay Organized During Games

- Prepare substitutions and batting order before the game.
- Before the season starts, set-up a pre-determined warm-up period and post on SportsEngine how early players must arrive before each game.
 - 60 minutes is typical for 10u, 12u, 15u, particularly if you would like your team to have a “warm-up” batting practice and to leave enough time for your pitchers to warm up.
 - 15-30 minutes may be more appropriate for 6u, 8u.
- Have a pre-set warm-up routine.
- Make sure you have an adequate number of ACE-certified assistant coaches among the parents so they can help organize team, particularly for younger ages.
- Line-up cards are typically exchanged at 10u, 12u, 15u though everyone bats and MGS encourages free (and frequent) substitutions.

LINEUP SHEETS

- Use the lineup sheet or diagram below to list players’ positions for each inning, as well as the batting order; and hang the lineup sheet on a clipboard so players can check which position they are playing before each inning.
- Line-up sheets will be posted to the MVGS page on the MGS website.

KEEP DUGOUTS ORGANIZED DURING GAMES

- Each player should have a designated spot for her glove, defensive face mask, visor (if she wears one), (and personal batting helmet if she has one).
- Bats should be kept on the bat rack.
- Balls kept in buckets.
- Players who need balls for warm-ups between innings should have balls in their gloves before the 3rd out of the inning when their team is hitting. Designate a substitute who hands balls out to the 1B, CF (or LCF and RCF) after each half inning when the team comes up to hit.
- **Designate a dugout coach to ensure players are organized during the games.**

6U, 8U CONSIDERATIONS

- Do your best to rotate players evenly between positions in the field and in the batting order.
 - Some coaches carry over rotations from one game to the next to maintain consistency and ensure even rotations.
- Consider having your team lineup in the dugout in their batting order so there’s no confusion about who goes on the on-deck circle next.
- **A dugout coach whose main focus is to prepare kids for what comes next and keeps the dugout organized is essential 6u, 8u.**

RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

Resources and References

- Positive Coaching Alliance: <https://positivecoach.org/coaches/>
- <https://howtocoachgirls.com/>
- <http://balswickfastpitch.com/videos/>
- http://www.michelesmith.com/template/PDF/Smith-Mechanics_Fastpitch-color.pdf
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