

2019 HFLM Youth Baseball Coach Clinic

Coaching Youth Baseball Players - Ages 4-12

(Background: In the past we hosted a league-wide coach's clinic. For the past 4 years we decided to mix it up a bit and recommend other area clinics instead. For 2019 we are offering 1) a coaches clinic together with the Pre-Season player skills clinic 2) Online Positive Coaching Alliance Training (PCA) 3) A mini-clinic during the T-Ball coaches meeting 4) An updated version of this document on our website to serve as a reference for our coaches) 5) Recommendations for other local coach training as we learn up them

Skills Clinic – March 23, 2019 – Elim College

1) Today's Drills (and other basic drills)

Majors (Ages 11-13) and Minors (Ages 9,10)

- Warm Up
 - Run before stretch, stretch before throwing
 - If you only have 2 minutes...running is the best warmup
- Hitting
 - Tee: Inside, outside, front, back
 - Front Flips: underhand, behind screen...better than soft toss
 - Overhand wiffles: great if you can't get in the batting cage
 - Heavy balls: balance, batter's weight back, power-V
- Throwing
 - Two-step throw: Hips and feet
 - Long toss: Use your body, focus on feet and weight transfer, throw with an arc
 - Wheel-drill (man in the middle): quick hands, move to the ball
- Fielding
 - Ground balls: Butt down, fingers down, Alligator hands, Glove pops out (not scoop up)
 - Pick-ups: No Glove, side to side, butt down, hands out front
 - Wide-Receiver: Run on toes (so eyes don't shake), catch ball above head, don't run with glove outstretched
- Baserunning
 - Run through first ; round first base
 - Leading off and reading pitcher (good warmup – together with running)
 - Sliding: Hands up, wet grass in the outfield is good practice (also blankets on gym floor)

Intermediate (Ages 7,8) and T-Ball (Ages 5,6)

- Warm Up
 - Run before stretch, stretch before throwing
 - If you only have 2 minutes...running is the best warmup
- Hitting
 - Tee: Inside, outside, front, back
 - Front Flips: underhand, behind screen...better than soft toss
 - Overhand wiffles: great if you can't get in the batting cage
- Throwing
 - Throw 10 to Coach: Best to **separate throwing and catching drills** (we don't want to hamper throwing skills just because the kids can't catch)
 - Space Invaders: Tennis balls, have kids throw at coach who moves back and forth (protect yourself with bucket?), the more balls the better...let the kids go crazy
- Fielding
 - Knock it down: Fingers up, attack ball, knock ball away (confidence builder), tennis ball?
 - 3 Players and a Coach: Mix it up (Fingers up; fingers down; knock it down) to build confidence; Get parents to help...maximize reps per kid
- Baserunning
 - Run through first base; Round first base
 - Sliding: Hands up, wet grass in the outfield is good for practice (also blankets on gym floor)
 - Home-Second Relay Race: Use ball as a baton, two teams race each other, one team starts at home...the other at second

2) Other Drills & Ideas

See coaches reference (on website) for full description of all drills (and more coaching points).

| Area | T-Ball | Intermediate | Minors/Majors |
|----------------------|--|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Hit | Hands together - Feet apart - Swing hard | Tee – Up the Middle | Triangle-wiffle Balls |
| | Tee – Up the Middle | Dart pitch (wiffle/L-screen) | Dart pitch (wiffle/L-screen) |
| | Hit 3 and run | Hit off machine | Hitting Knock-Out |
| Throw | Throw 10 to coach | Throw 10 to coach | 10 Toes |
| | Clean out the garage | Long toss | Long Toss |
| | Space Invaders | Wheel drill | Wheel drill |
| Field / Catch | 3 Players & Coach | 3 Players & Coach | 3 Players & Coach |
| | Knock it Down | Knock it Down | Wide Receiver |
| | Ball Handling | Wide Receiver | Pepper or Grounders |
| Baserunning | Run Bases | Run through 1 st base | Home-Second Relay |
| | Run through 1 st base | Home-Second Relay | Roll the Ball Game |
| | Home-Second Relay | Roll the Ball Game | Hot Box |
| Team | T-ball game | Everybody Touch It | Corners & Middles |
| | Everybody Touch It | Corners & Middles | Fungo Scrimmage |
| | - | Scrimmage with pitching machine | Coach Pitch Scrimmage |

3) Key Coaching Points

- Pre-game drills for T-Ball and Intermediate is expected...**DO NOT** just start games
- Make games quicker...eliminate dead time! (#1 way to make it more fun)
- Hitting
 - Make use of wiffle balls if you can't get in the batting cage
 - Batting practice from shorter distances (just like the pros)...easier to throw strikes (and place the ball)...reaction time is the same (slower pitch but shorter distance)
 - Grip bat in fingers, wide stance, small stride (or no stride), weight stays between feet with firm front leg, Palm Up/Palm Down
 - Hit the ball in front of the plate
 - Batting Cage Etiquette
- Throwing
 - Separate Throwing and Catching drills for younger kids (T-Ball, Intermediate, Minors). **DO NOT PAIR THEM UP TO PLAY CATCH.** We don't want to hamper throwing development just because they cannot catch. (Plus it's boring to watch your partner chase the ball every time)
 - Two-step throw...gets body and torso activated. New thinking on throwing. We are no longer teaching the sideways starting position.
 - Reach back with throwing arm...fingers on TOP (not bottom)...arm at 85-90 degrees
 - Throw with body...arm is pulled by the body (not a push)
 - Hip and trunk rotates AFTER stride foot hits ground (otherwise you lose your body and it's a push)
 - Release is out in FRONT of body
 - Distance before accuracy for young players (i.e. don't get on a kid for missing a target)
- Catching/Fielding
 - Fingers Up (Thumb to Thumb) – Important to practice this and not just the “basket” catch (especially for girls). “Knock it down” drill is a good one to build confidence (and the kids like it)
 - Grounders: Charge (“go get it”), feet wide, butt down, alligator hands, pop hands out on catch (not a scoop up)

4) League Info and Questions

- District 4 Little League Coaching Clinic – TBD
- Field Clean Up Day – April 6, 9AM-Noon
- All coaches meeting – April 10 (uniform handout, safety, logistics, questions)
- Opening Day / Picture Day – April 27
- HFLMYB Red Wings Day – June 2
- Championship Day / League Picnic / Trophies – June 15

See website for HFL Travel/Summer and “After 13 years old” Baseball Opportunities (we have teams all the way up to age 18).

Coaches Clinic Reference Material

(The following was created for several league-wide coaches' clinics that we hosted in the past. The info below has been updated/refreshed yearly)

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Agenda

1. Skill development for T-ball and Intermediate (Pre-game format)
2. Cast of Characters (Players and Coaches)
3. Philosophy
4. Drills and Demonstrations

Today's Clinic in 6 Bullets

1. More skill development for T-ball and Intermediate through pre-game drills
 2. Make games quicker...eliminate dead time
 3. Coach the kids...not the team
 4. Separate throwing and catching drills for the young kids (T-ball and Intermediate)
 5. Hitting...stations and drills...not just Batting Practice (BP) with everyone shagging
 6. Energy
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For T-Ball and Intermediate - Focus on Fun & Skill Development

T-Ball for 2019

- We strive for few players per team...7-8 instead of 10
- This does three things...
 - Shortens the games
 - Allow for more "touches" (i.e. reduce standing around time)
 - More 1on1 time with each player
- Greater emphasis on skill development through pre-game warm-ups and drills
 - 30 minutes of drills
 - 30 minutes of game (3 inning game)
 - Still done in 1 hour...if you **keep the game moving**
- We **do not** want you to "just start the game"
 - With 7 or 8 players, the 3 inning game goes quickly...no need to start it early
 - We will provide drills and ideas (today and through the season)
 - We will provide pre-game practice plans and things to focus on (throughout the season)
- Do not cancel your game if you will only have 3 players
 - I once had a T-ball game with 3 players and it was our **best session of the year** (by far)...so much action for the kids...they loved it

Intermediate (8U) for 2019

- Like T-ball...we want a greater emphasis on skill development through pre-game warm-ups and drills
- Use this guide for drills and practice ideas
- Less formal pre-game, but we still want the coaches to spend significant time on drills
- Get the kids hitting off the machine as early in the season as possible. That thing is intimidating to start. They get the hang of it eventually, but it takes reps.

The Cast of Characters

- **4 year olds (Drills and Skills)**
 - Most...not physically ready to catch
 - Like to throw and hit and run...simple as that
 - Not ready for team concepts...focus on basic athletic skills (running, throwing, catching, hitting)
- **5 & 6 year olds (T-Ball)**
 - Looking for fun
 - Some...not physically ready to catch
 - Mix of “into it” and “will get into it if someone brings the energy”
 - Emerging team players...but they do not possess the skills to pull it off...so focus on **skills**
 - Teach basic game rules (running bases, how to make outs, etc.)
- **7 & 8 year olds (Intermediate)**
 - Do they get better skills because they are having fun or do they have fun because they get better skills? (For most, I say the **fun** comes first)
 - Need more skill development before we can expect right strategy decisions (teach some strategy but don't get too upset if they don't do it...it's probably because they can't do it)
 - Slow moving games are a major turn-off...**keep games moving!**
- **9 & 10 year olds (Minors)**
 - They get into games and competition (but they forget losses 10 minutes after game)
 - Have enough skills to start stressing strategy and team play
 - Not sure about this whole hitting off a real live human thing...need **confidence** first
- **21 to 80 year olds (Coaches)**
 - Like to talk (We like to say “Listen up!”; “just want to make a point”)
 - We think players will listen to every word (they don't)
 - We need to bring the energy. This is not hard...we are playing a game! Outside! Spring-time! Chow Hut Chicken sandwiches!

Philosophy and Game-time

- Supply the energy!
- Promote the FUN...all of it is fun...before game, in the field, on the bench, while hitting, on the base paths.

Some comments on Games...

- Games need to be FASTER...better for kids, coaches, parents, siblings
 - Pitching to T-ball hitters
 - Single biggest time-waster!
 - 3 underhand pitches and then Tee (That's it...don't give them 10!)
 - For first couple games (or more)...**everyone hits off the Tee**
 - Minimize time between pitches
 - T-Ball and Intermediate: Bucket of balls to mound...gather baseballs between hitters...better yet...gather after 3 hitters
 - Try to speak to kids 1on1...not to entire group. **Walk around and say the same thing to every player if you have to** (That way the game doesn't have to stop for you...and they hear more when its 1on1 anyway)
 - Minimize time between innings...run on-run / run-off...catcher get gear on early...limit warm-ups (Intermediate...start without a catcher if he/she is not ready)
- Catchers
 - T-ball
 - DO NOT use one...1) Safety concern (bats and runners) 2) Speed up the game...adults are faster
 - Intermediate
 - All players should try it ("everyone gets to play catcher")...surprising how many like it
 - Great way to overcome fear of ball
 - **No throws back to pitcher**...slows game **WAY** down
 - Minors
 - Encourage all to play catcher...but reality is that only a few want to do it
- Positions and "sharing" hit balls (T-ball and Intermediate)
 - Put them in position and then don't crush their competitiveness...let them get anything (within reason)
 - We want a team full of "hit-the-ball-to-me" players
 - Move positions or adjust where they stand **before** the pitch to give others a chance. But don't reprimand a kid for running across the field to make a play.
- Don't forget to coach the kids who are on the bench too...keeps them into the game...good time to explain finer strategy points (they have less to think about when they are on the bench)

My Top 3 Drills for each Discipline

| Area | T-Ball | Intermediate | Minors/Majors |
|----------------------|--|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Hit | Hands together - Feet apart - Swing hard | Tee – Up the Middle | Triangle-wiffle Balls |
| | Tee – Up the Middle | Dart pitch (wiffle/L-screen) | Dart pitch (wiffle/L-screen) |
| | Hit 3 and run | Hit off machine | Hitting Knock-Out |
| Throw | Throw 10 to coach | Throw 10 to coach | 10 Toes |
| | Clean out the garage | Long toss | Long Toss |
| | Space Invaders | Wheel drill | Wheel drill |
| Field / Catch | 3 Players & Coach | 3 Players & Coach | 3 Players & Coach |
| | Knock it Down | Knock it Down | Wide Receiver |
| | Ball Handling | Wide Receiver | Pepper or Grounders |
| Baserunning | Run Bases | Run through 1 st base | Home-Second Relay |
| | Run through 1 st base | Home-Second Relay | Roll the Ball Game |
| | Home-Second Relay | Roll the Ball Game | Hot Box |
| Team | T-ball game | Everybody Touch It | Corners & Middles |
| | Everybody Touch It | Corners & Middles | Fungo Scrimmage |
| | - | Scrimmage with pitching machine | Coach Pitch Scrimmage |

Technique and Drills

Hitting

Hitting Technique...READY, LOAD, FIRE

READY

- Grip
 - Most non-level swings are caused by grip issues
 - Hold bat in FINGERS, not palms. (don't "gorilla grip" bat)
 - Difference of opinion on knuckle alignment ("knocking knuckles"). Debate is when to have the classic knuckle alignment shown below...before swing or during swing. For players aged 4-10, I think the most important thing is that the bat is in their fingers...let them grip it their way unless grip causes a non-level swing.
 - Classic, "knocking knuckles" grip shown below...



- Wide stance (I tell them “hands together, feet apart”). Older kids...Tell them “Pyramid” (feet, knees, hips)
- Balance: knees slightly bent...on toes...ready to fire...probably not completely still (that whole physics thing about bodies in motion...)
- If you can jump, then you are balanced and ready (statues can't hit). Best advice for twisted up T-baller...tell them to “jump” to get ready.

LOAD

- Load (cock): hands up and BACK. Pull with top hand...do not push with bottom hand (avoid wrapping). (“It’s a LOAD, not a PUSH back”)
- Back elbow should NOT be way up. (No chicken wings)
- Chin down and in (touch to shoulder), eyes follow all the way to bat (2 eyes). Eyes flat...not head cocked sideways (have you ever tried to watch TV that way...how can you hit a baseball?)

FIRE

- Small stride (or no stride) – head and eyes move too much with big stride (we want head and eyes still and level)
- Weight should stay between your feet...land on inside of stride foot. Firm front leg...100% of weight on front leg at end of swing. But...not the front-foot-hitting some of us learned back in the day (keep weight between feet, not over front foot)
- Hip and knee turn...squish the bug with back foot. But back heel should come up to get proper hip turn and drive. (back shoe laces face the pitcher during the drive)
- Palm up/Palm down (bottom palm down, top palm up). Can practice with top hand flat (no grip) to get the feel. (Another visual...both fingers point the same direction.)
- Hit the ball in front of the plate

- Do not roll wrists (old school coaches used to teach this)...causes a bump in the swing
- Eyes follow ball all the way in (head still)
- Power L and Shoulder V...keeps the bat flat through the hitting zone.

What do you tell the kids during a game? (**Answer...not too much**)

- Balance (Jump), grip, swing hard, eyes all the way in
- Work on technique nuances during practice or home...NOT in-game...too much to process (and it slows down the game for everyone)

Flaws I see most often

- Grip not in fingers (which causes non-level swings)
- Head (and eyes) moving vertically or tilting...we all see the head out...need to look for head moving vertically too
- CONFIDENCE (stress the positives...easy for coach to fall into..."don't do this, don't do that")

For T-ball...

Don't give too much information...I tell each player the same thing almost every time...

- Let me see you Jump (a trick to get them balanced and untwisted)
- Watch the ball
- Swing hard (and for added motivation..."get a little mad...it's called hitting for a reason")
- Don't worry about correcting hands and arm issues too much...if they are balanced and can swing hard, then their hands will be OK
- For underhand pitch...too much arc on pitch is harder to hit than flatter and faster.

Hitting Drills

(T=Tball, I=Intermediate, M=Minors)

Triangle Wiffle Ball Hitting [I, M]

- Good for eye-hand, balance, and smooth swing
- Arrange two batters about 15-20 feet away from coach-pitcher and 15-20 feet from each other
- Alternate pitching them a wiffle ball overhand
- Get other players to pick up balls that are hit (don't put someone behind batter...safety)

Dart pitch (wiffle balls or L-screen) [I,M]

- Coach sits on bucket behind L-screen (real baseballs) or on knee with wiffle balls...15-20 feet away from batter
- Try to hit it up the middle (hit the screen)
- Hands back until they fire to the ball
- Give them time to reset between every pitch
- For advanced hitters, vary the location and speed (especially those crushing everything). We want them to time the ball...not time the pitcher.
- Modern MLB batting practice is now 30ft from plate (half way to mound)...half-speed pitches at half-the distance is the same reaction time. So...for little leaguers...half the distance and from sitting position (so you are not towering over them).

Tee – Up the Middle [T, I,M]

- 10 swings...Most up the middle hits wins (good batting cage drill for older kids...hit back of the batting cage)
- Kids don't like hitting off the tee...need to make it a game

Pepper [I,M]

- 1, 2, or 3 players and a coach
- Use incredi-balls (squishy) or RIF balls (for safety)
- Half-speed swings, bat loose in fingers (not check swings)
- Great for bat contact, grip, hitting out front, fielding grounders
- Lots of reps for hitters and fielders
- Make it fast and fun and SAFE (talk the entire time)
- Hitters...Swing at everything, hit until swing and miss (2 misses for beginners), object is to keep ball on the ground and hit to everyone
- Fielders...ready, hands out, catch a line drive and you get to hit right now, commit an error and you go to the end of the line (bad pitches are errors too)

Hit off the spring-machine [I]

- Spring pitching-machine intimidates first-year players...they need to practice with it
- Players need to adjust to the timing and speed of the machine...this gives them lots of reps
- Hitter focus on ready, load, fire basics (above)
- Builds confidence

Hitting Knock-out [M]

- Coach pitches to batter
- If batter gets a hit he/she is alive (go to end of the line), if he/she gets a strike or hits a ball that you judge to be an out, then they are eliminated
- Good for aggressiveness but still good pitch selection
- Can play with fielders who must make the out, or coach judgment on hit-or-out
- Best to get 3 or 4 batters ready and have them cycle through 4-5 times before switching
- Good for batting cage or on the field

Note: *No soft toss (sideways toss drill). This drill has fallen out of favor because current thinking is that everything in hitting should be from the front (not side). Plus...it saves fences 😊*

Throwing

Throwing Technique

Basics

- Warm up...arm circles, arm pendulums, torso twists, hugs, milk cans
- Grip – Across seams. 3 fingers for little hands. Thumb underneath ball.
- Arm angle – 1 o'clock. (Not 12 o'clock...overhead is NOT straight over the top)
- Push Glove, Pull Elbow – creates trunk tension
- Reach back with throwing arm – fingers on TOP (not bottom...important)
- When reaching back, throwing elbow should be at 85-90 degrees (slight downward at shoulder is OK...keeps the arm relaxed)
- Use your BODY to throw
- Release ball out in front
- Pull glove in toward body (do not swing it to the side)...keeps body on target
- Arm is pulled...throw with body...not a push (so focus on body)
- Hip rotation/trunk open should be late...that is, AFTER stride foot hits (otherwise it is a push and not a throw)
 - Saying it another way: angular momentum moves up the body in sequence...legs, hips, shoulders, arm. If out of sequence...lack of power and stress on the shoulder.
 - Don't crumple back leg...leads to early hip rotation
- For player with the push-throw (noodle-throw), stand next to them and have them throw over your horizontal arm.
- Throw...don't aim...distance before accuracy

Flip vs. throw

- Underhand flip when within 15-20 feet
- Get glove out of the way (behind back)...distracting to receiver otherwise
- Yell FLIP!...both thrower and receiver
- Move toward target...use your momentum
- Release ball like shaking someone's hand (straight out...not hand to the sky)

Two-step Throw

- Relatively new philosophy on body position and approach
- No longer teaching the sideways starting position
- Brings all of the basics together
- Start facing target, small step forward with throwing foot, step with glove hand while rotating body, arm up, legs and torso rotate, arm follows through with throw

Pitching (for righty...reverse for lefties) – For Ages 4-10

- Left foot point toward plate...on center line...check starting location on rubber
- Push off the rubber
- Follow through with body...not just arm (body pulls arm)
- Release point should be in front
- Stretch vs. wind-up: for beginners...stretch only (simpler...master this first)
- Shoulders should NOT be square to target when front foot hits (throwing...not pushing)

Pitches and Grip

- Four seam fastball
- Two seam fastball
- Two seam fastball with more pressure on one finger...Cut fastball (“cutter”)
- Change-up – circle grip or 4 finger palm ball
- Teach strikes and speeds...more important than pitch-types
- Curve-balls
 - Ages 4-10: If they ask me how to throw a curve ball, I show them the cutter (I LIE)
 - Properly thrown Curve-balls don’t hurt arms...kids and coaches who over-use curve-balls hurt arms
 - Because kids tend to fall in love with them before they know how to pitch
 - And coaches over-use pitchers who get batters out
 - Arm should be pulled down...NOT OPENING THE DOOR TWIST (this will hurt your elbow)

Throwing Drills

(T=Tball, I=Intermediate, M=Minors)

For ages 4-10, the best throwing practice does NOT come by throwing to a teammate. Problems catching will inhibit throwing progress. (Also...all the missed catches is not fun and takes too long)

Throw 10 to coach [T,I]

- 1 coach, 1 player, 10 balls
- 10-15 yards separation
- Player throws 10 in a row to coach (coach does not throw balls back)
- Count number player gets to coach in the air...strive for improvement from set to set

Clean out the garage (T)

- Use squishy balls or tennis balls (safety)
- Half the group on one side of a line, half on the other
- 10-15 balls on one side of the line (spread out) and 10-15 balls on the other
- On “GO” both teams pick up balls and throw them to other side...winner if one team can get all balls to other side
- Police the middle...don’t let kids get too close...maybe enforce a “no-man’s-land” area
- Kids figure out they should be quick and throw it long...good...let them compete

Space Invaders (T)

- Use tennis balls...need a bunch
- Line up the players
- Coach with barrel or garage can lid 10-15 yards away
- Coach moves back and forth...players try to hit barrel or lid with thrown balls. (They love hitting you)

10 Toes [M]

- 2 players, 1 ball, 10-20 yards apart (kind of close)
- Face target, feet parallel to target
- Without moving feet, twist torso, reach back and throw overhand
- Stress throwing “over your 10 toes”

- Make sure they are not flinging side-arm
- Emphasizes shoulder turn, release, and follow through...quarterback drill
- Watch technique...not for distance. Proper form important

Throw from Knee [I,M]

- Make sure warmed up first
- 2 players, 1 ball, 10-20 yards apart
- Throwing side knee down, opposite knee up and pointed toward target
- Break, reach, throw, follow through
- Emphasizes shoulder turn and follow through...quarterback drill
- Watch technique...not for distance. Proper form important

Wheel Drill (Man in the Middle) [I,M]

- 3 players all in a line, 1 ball
- 10-25 yards separation
- Throw ball down line and back
- Man in middle must catch, turn, throw...quickly
- All three players...quick-hands and be ready to throw...move body to catch ball "in-the-circle" (within the torso area)
- Let them practice and then make it a race...first team to complete 10 down-and-backs

Barrel Throw [I,M]

- Barrel or bucket at third base
- Players at second (or right field for older kids)
- Coach hits or throws balls...players throw to barrel
- Preferable if bounce it to bucket...teaches low accurate throw (skidders OK)
- 1pt for within 3 feet, 2pts for hit bucket, 3pts for into barrel

Long toss [I, M]

- Make sure warmed up first
- Players separated by 30-40 yards
- Long, loopy throws. (In fact less stress on the arm if they are slightly out of range because they won't over-do it...they'll be more relaxed throwing skidders, than trying to gun it all the way there)
- Encourages body...legs, torso, arm. This is how you correct the pushing motion.
- Develops fluid throwing motion
- Take steps toward target after release...not launching from back leg
- Good 2-step throwing drill (see above for 2-step throw technique)

Catching and Fielding

Glove

- Size...beware of the glove too large (12" glove is too big for players 10 and under)
- Shape...beware of the book shaped glove...
 - Taco shape (thumb to pointer finger) vs. Book shape (thumb to little finger)
 - Different styles – just make sure the glove is open
- Push on fingers to open

Fielding a ground ball

- Feet wide & back straight (do not hunch over)

- Alligator hands – hands in front
- Push on fingers to open glove (Taco shape)
- “go get it” (AKA...”charge it” or “play the ball don’t let the ball play you”)
- Catch it out in front, preferable glove-side eye

Fielding a ball in the air (line drive or fly ball)

- Hands Thumb to Thumb
- Below waist – bare hand covers from over the glove
- Above waist – bare hand covers from behind/under the glove
 - Turn glove vertical when ball at chest level or above...**important for their confidence and safety (especially for girls)**. Ball less likely to bounce off their glove and hit their face.
- Catch within small circle around chest and head (“in the circle”). Teach kids to move body to catch ball near torso.
- Don’t run with your glove in the air. Run to the spot, get there, then put glove up.
- Keep eyes steady – run on **toes** so eyes do not bounce

Catching Drills

(T=Tball, I=Intermediate, M=Minors)

3 players and a coach [T,I,M]

- Players fan out
- Coach throws grounders and line drives and flies to each kid
- Keep it moving...more than one ball?
- Make it random
- Award points? (2 points for catch, 1 point for good throw, earn fly balls?)
- For minors...star pattern...but keep a coach in the group (5 points of a star)
- For minors...coach can hit the balls rather than throw

Knock it Down [T,I]

- Great for Kids who are afraid of the ball or who cannot catch very well
- Teaches fingers-up technique
- Use tennis balls or wiffle balls (grab a bunch...rapid fire more fun and more reps)
- Coach tosses balls at player’s chest (dart throw...not underhand toss)
- Player uses back of glove (with fingers up) to knock balls away
- Great confidence builder and breaks the “always-catching-with-palm-up” bad habit

Flip game [T,I,M]

- Good warm up game
- Players pair up
- Underhand flip...first pair to 50 wins
- With and without glove
- Advanced second step...Quick toss...Short throw drill...10 yards separation...watch the creeping in

Ball Handling [T,I]

- No Glove, all players with a ball
- Like basketball drills
- Toss to self...two hands, one hand, alternate hand, catch after one bounce on ground, catch after bounce off knee, ball around waist, ball around knees, etc. Kids copy coach and then let kids come up with ideas

- Ball on ground behind player, pick up ball quickly when coach says go. Instruct kids to pick ball up with two hands quickly and bring to stomach (like picking up a grounder)
- Coaching Tips: Catch with two hands, fingers out, soft hands, watch ball all the way into hands

Wide receiver [I,M]

- Line next to coach
- Player runs away like football wide receiver (or sometimes V-cuts back and forth)
- Run on toes, catch ball at high point (discourage the bucket catches)
- Bring ball back to line (no throwing)
- Vary the height and location of the throws
- Fun drill...keep it moving

Pickups [I,M]

- 1 coach, 1 player
- Roll balls side to side
- Player fields grounder and tosses back to coach
- Shuffle feet (don't cross), hands out front (alligator), back straight
- Race another player...first to 25 wins

Baserunning

Technique

- Hit inside corner of base when rounding
- Hit foul side of first base when running through
- Run through first base...do not slow down
- Explain that base is "safe" to T-batters (not all of them know this)
- Sliding
 - Never at first base
 - Hands up – no jammed fingers or wrists
 - Front foot up – no jammed ankles

Baserunning Drills

(T=Tball, I=Intermediate, M=Minors)

Home-second relay [I, M]

- Half of the team at home, other half at second
- Ball is the baton
- Round the bases – but not too much...they will figure it out...but remind them
- Great end of practice fun & conditioning drill

Hot box drill [I,M]

- 1 runner, 4 fielders
- Runner...start in-between bases...try to get to a base safely...stay in base-path
- Fielders throw and go behind
- Good drill for fielders too...quick catch and throw...and throwing around runners
- For intermediate: coaches are fielders and players only run

Roll the Ball Game [I,M]

- "Batter" rolls ball to infield (where-ever he wants)
- Defense makes the play and tries to get an out
- Lots of base-running opportunities and strategy

- Fun and competitive...play 3-out innings and keep score

Sliding [T,I,M]

- Practice sliding! (kids are doing this less at home...they need the practice)
- Wet outfield grass
- Hands up, front foot up
- Get a feel for the distance (not too early, not too late)

Combination (Team) Drills

(T=Tball, I=Intermediate, M=Minors)

Everybody touch it [T,I,M]

- Split teams – 5 or 6 per team
- Team #1 in the field, team #2 at bat
- Coach pitches to batter (for T-ball...the coach bats to reduce confusion)
- Hitter runs until everyone on the fielding team touches the ball at least once
- Count total bases by batting team
- Switch teams after everyone hits
- Fielders may find clever ways to get all the players to touch it...allow it until last round and then maybe enforce some rules (ball needs to alternate outfield to infield or ball needs to go to at least 3 bases, etc.)

Corners and Middles Infield Drill [I,M]

- Fielders at 3rd, SS, 2nd, 1st
- Coach #1 at home with bat and ball
 - Hit grounders to SS and 2nd for play at second base (flip)
- Coach #2 on third baseline with ball
 - Roll grounders to 3rd or 1st for play to first base (or third)
- Good rapid fire infield drill...keep players moving...lots of reps

Fungo scrimmage [M]

- Split into two teams...adults in outfield if you need more players
- Batter tosses to self or hit off tee or coach front toss behind L-screen
- Can play 2 or 3 outs per inning
- Lots of baserunning, fielding, action, relays, covering bases
- Allow fielders to shift defense if hitters always hitting to same spot...teaches hitters to hit to different spots in the field

Coach-pitch scrimmage [M]

- Split into two teams... adults in outfield if you need more players
- Coach as pitcher with bucket of balls, no catcher
- No called strikes unless obvious (or batter not swinging)
- Can play 2 or 3 outs per inning
- Lots of baserunning, fielding, action, relays, covering bases