**Interior Baseball League**

**Fairbanks, Alaska**

**http://www.FairbanksIBL.com**

**Coaches Manual**

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*“The difference between school and life?*

*In school, you’re taught a lesson and then given a test.*

*In life, you’re given a test that teaches you a lesson.”*

- Tom Bodett

**Interior Baseball League Coaches Manual**

**Adopted December 12th, 2021**

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# Clarification Statement

The information included in this manual is supplementary to the *IBL Bylaws*, *IBL Rules and Regulations*, and *IBL Policies*. Coaches should be familiar with those documents and should refer to them as necessary for additional guidance.

# Section 1 – The League

*“Education is the progressive discovery of our own ignorance.”*

- Will Durant

## Chapter 1.1 – Welcome to Interior Baseball League

**Mission Statement.** Interior Baseball League (IBL) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote, develop, supervise, and voluntarily assist in all lawful ways, the interest of those who will participate in PONY Baseball in the Interior of Alaska. Through proper guidance and exemplary leadership, IBL assists youth in developing the qualities of citizenship, discipline, teamwork, and physical wellbeing through baseball. By espousing the virtues of character, courage and loyalty, IBL is designed to develop superior citizens while encouraging athleticism.

**Objective 1 -** IBL and its members, by every given action, shall promote the ideals of good sportsmanship and character for all participants.

**Objective 2 -** IBL shall provide instruction, supervision, and administration so that the youth of the community may engage in recreational and competitive baseball under specialized rules and regulations.

**Objective 3 -** IBL shall make every effort to secure suitable and adequate financing through fundraising, sponsorships, player fees, and/or donations. No person who is a member of, or who is in any way connected with IBL, shall receive any personal financial benefit in carrying out the purpose for which IBL has been organized.

### Leadership

IBL leadership aims to empower our coaches and volunteers through detailed guidance by the IBL Board of Directors in line with the objectives listed above. The Board is tasked with strategically growing and supporting IBL coaches by empowering coaches to be ambassadors of IBL, the teams they lead, and themselves.

### Committee Approach

**Executive** (President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Office Manager)

**Administration** (Secretary, Office Manager, Division Coordinators)

**Resources** (Vice President, Equipment Mgr, Uniforms Mgr, CCE Chair, and Members at Large)

**Fundraising** (Treasurer, Sponsorship Coordinator and Members at Large)

**Fields** (President, Fields Coordinator, and Members at Large)

### Fundraising

All player/team sponsorship questions, requests, coordination and approval is to be coordinated by the **IBL Sponsorship Coordinator** with the following goal: **Every team sponsored**. Additional questions regarding specific fundraising efforts can also be answered such as:

* Team Sponsorship submission/approval;
* On-going IBL sponsorship opportunities;
* Coffee Sales and or similar team level opportunities;
* IBL Raffle;
* Large donations – corporations, individuals;
* Fundraiser baseball clinics;

### Office Manager – Mesa Matheny

### Communication

**From IBL.** From time to time or when necessary, IBL has the ability to distribute information through email correspondence at the discretion of the executive committee. It is not unusual to receive correspondence once a month from IBL in the off-season and more frequently during the season.

**From Coaches.** As needed, all Head Coaches assigned to an IBL team will be given proper support from IBL to correspond to team players and parents in an allowable and monitored platform. For more information regarding communication with your players, contact an IBL Administration Committee member.

### EAFB Winter Ball

IBL offers an off season Winter Ball fundamentals and conditioning program available to all our coaches, players, and parents. For more information regarding winter ball, visit the IBL website at <http://www.FairbanksIBL.com>

## Chapter 1.2 – Frequently Asked Questions

As a Coach you will be asked a lot of questions throughout the season. Knowing that you are an ambassador for IBL puts you in a position that requires some basic knowledge of league facts, and where or how to learn more.

### Skills Assessments & Preseason:

Q: **When are skills assessments?**

A: Skills assessments for players ages 9-14 generally are scheduled early to mid-April of any given pre-season. Assessments for our youngest players ages (5-8) are not required as they will automatically be assigned to a team.

Q: **When are the tryouts?**

A: There are no tryouts for IBL recreation/developmental teams, only skills assessments. Tryouts for travel baseball through North Stars Baseball Club are generally in early May. Announcements will be made at the skills assessments.

Q: **What is the last day I can sign up?**

A: For Pony (13-14), Bronco (11-12), and Mustang (9-10), the last day for registration is generally the last day of May. For Pinto (7-8) and Shetland (5-6), the last day of school is the last day for registration. Registration period may be extended due to weather and field conditions.

Q: **Will there be another skills assessment other than indoor ones?**

A: Only if necessary. To be announced after the skills assessments.

Q: **I can’t make assessments. Will my child still be able to get on a team?**

A: Yes. If your child played last year, skill level will be based off their previous assessment. If your child did not play last year, assessment of skills will be based on a parent interview regarding the players’ experience.

Q: **What is the age limit?**

A: Ages 5-14. To play for Shetland (5-6) you must be at least 5 years old on August 31st of the current season. To play Pony (13-14) you cannot be older than 14 on August 31st of the current season.

Q: **How much does it cost?**

A: Shetland (5-6) – $145; Pinto (7-8) – $165; Mustang (9-10) – $215; Bronco (11-12) – $235; Pony (13-14) – $265

### Team Formations:

Q: **Can I get my kid on the same team/Coach as last year?**

A: We do have a special request section on the registration form but there is no guarantee.

Q: **How do I make sure my kid is NOT on the same team/Coach as last year?**

A: Write it on your child’s registration form under special requests or talk to your Division Coordinator prior to team formations.

Q: **Are the teams mixed boys and girls?**

A: Yes. IBL is open to both boys and girls, and the [Interior Girls Softball Association](https://www.igsaak.org/) offers an alternative option for girls ages 8-18.

### Equipment:

Q: **What equipment does my kid need to play?**

A: Each player needs a baseball glove and good running shoes. Baseball cleats are not required. Only rubber cleats are allowed except in the Pony Division, where metal cleats are permitted. Mustang, Bronco, and Pony players are encouraged to wear an athletic cup. IBL provides bats, helmets, baseballs, and other equipment.

Q: **Do I need to buy the uniform or is it included in the cost?**

A: The player participation fee covers the cost of the uniforms. Uniforms will be issued by the Coach.

### Coaches Corner:

Q: **I coached last year. Can I use my background check from last year?**

A: No. A new background check is required for every baseball season.

Q: **Who covers the cost of background checks cost?**

A: IBL pays for background checks.

Q: **Can I use my military background check?**

A: Yes. You can use a military, Fairbanks Police Department, or Alaska State Trooper background check unless it is out of date. Submit these alternate source background checks to the IBL Office Manager or the Vice President for consideration.

### Baseball Season:

Q: **When do games start?**

A: IBL regular season games are weather dependent and are tentatively slated to start the first week of May. When applicable, there may be scheduled a one day multi-game ‘Dust-Off’ Tournament to prepare athletes for game play. A typical season with good weather runs through July 15th for the end of the regular season with end-of-season tournament play commencing the following week and lasting potentially two weeks.

Q: **Do we play make-up games for rain-outs or cancellations?**

A: Yes, cancelled and terminated games are generally rescheduled.

Q: **I’m going on vacation. Will that hurt the team?**

A: No. We ask for your vacation days on the registration form so we can factor in player absences to the team formation process.

### Umpires:

Q: **How do I become an Umpire?**

A: Contact the *Fairbanks Baseball Umpires Association*. See the Contacts roster on the IBL website main menu.

## Chapter 1.3 – Age/Division Eligibility

Eligibility to play in each Division is **based on a child’s age on August 31** of the year they will play. The table below outlines those age requirements:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Division |  Players Age | As of |
| Shetland |  5-6 | August 31st |
| Pinto |  7-8 | August 31st |
| Mustang |  9-10 | August 31st |
| Bronco |  11-12 | August 31st |
| Pony |  13-14 | August 31st  |

## Chapter 1.4 – Parent Orientation

As necessary, IBL may from time to offer an organizational wide parent orientation that introduces families to organized baseball in the interior. Communication for the time and date of the orientation is through email, website, and social channels.

## Chapter 1.5 – North Stars Interior PONY Baseball

North Star Interior PONY Baseball Program (NSBC) is the competitive/travel program within the IBL umbrella. Athlete travel is generally in-state, but out-of-town. From time to time, and with parent approval, NSBC does make available to the athletes out of state travel to compete in tournament and showcase events. Managers focus on fielding a competitive team while also providing the players with a fun learning experience. Tryouts for NSBC typically happen in the spring and/or fall depending on what age group. Player-candidates can be identified at the skills assessments, and then invited to tryout through the IBL coaches, who are the first screeners. For more information regarding North Stars Interior PONY Baseball, visit <http://www.NorthStarsBaseball.com>

## Chapter 1.6 – Fairbanks Baseball Umpires Association (FBUA)

Per IBL Rules and Regulations, FBUA is “…the organization entrusted as the enforcement authority…” by IBL. FBUA provides umpires for all youth, high school, and adult recreational leagues for Interior Alaska (i.e., high school, IBL, Legion, and Fairbanks Adult Amateur Baseball League). In short, IBL is just one of a handful of organizations vying for support from FBUA. As such, it is important that each Coach do their best to foster a good relationship with each umpire and instill in their players appropriate respect for the authority of the umpires.

## Chapter 1.7 – IBL Board of Directors

The current members of the Board of Directors can be found on the IBL website at <https://www.leaguelineup.com/directors.asp?url=fnsbibl>.

Each Division in IBL has a **Division Coordinator** responsible for coordinating and supervising all Division activities throughout the season. Although you may contact any member of the Board of Directors with questions or requests for assistance, your Division Coordinator is the expert within your Division and is there to ensure you have the information and materials you need to be successful throughout the season.

## Chapter 1.8 – IBL Bylaws

The current IBL Bylaws can be found on the IBL website at <https://www.leaguelineup.com/miscinfo.asp?menuid=33&url=fnsbibl>. Coaches should be familiar enough with the Bylaws to have a general understanding of how the IBL operates.

## Chapter 1.9 – IBL Policies

The current IBL Policies can be found on the IBL website at <https://www.leaguelineup.com/miscinfo.asp?menuid=34&url=fnsbibl>. Coaches must be familiar with IBL Policies as they related to the duties of coaches.

## Chapter 1.10 – IBL Rules and Regulations

The current IBL Rules and Regulations can be found on the IBL website at <https://www.leaguelineup.com/miscinfo.asp?menuid=31&url=fnsbibl>. IBL game play falls under the rules of Major League Baseball and PONY Baseball. However, there are cases in which IBL has made adjustments to those rules to better serve the needs of the community we serve. Coaches must be intimately familiar with the IBL Rules and Regulations, as failure to comply, even inadvertently, could result in a penalty to the team.

## Chapter 1.11 – Field Maintenance

IBL relies on the user groups who benefit from the availability of the fields (i.e., baseball teams, made up of coaches, managers, players, parents/guardians, etc.) to help keep the fields in good playing condition throughout the season.

The IBL uses 15 Fields at 9 locations – 5 in Fairbanks, 4 in North Pole:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Location ID** | **Division** | **Fields** | **Vicinity** |
| 1 | Shetland | Noyes, Sunriser | Fairbanks |
| 2 | Pinto | Nussbaumer, Stockton | Fairbanks |
| 3 | Mustang | Franis, Kiwanis | Fairbanks |
| 4 | Mustang | Morningstar 1 | North Pole |
| 5 | Bronco | Morningstar 2 | North Pole |
| 6 | Bronco | Optimist, Rankin | Fairbanks |
| 7 | Pony | Growden 4, Growden 5 | Fairbanks |
| 8 | Pony | North Pole Middle | North Pole |

Each location is outfitted with tools, supplies, and equipment for conducting the field maintenance.

### Field Restoration

Field restoration occurs once per year and entails major effort to restore the fields to playable condition. This includes the edging of the base paths, weeding the exposed soil infields, deep dragging the infields, and minor repairs. Coach, parent, and player participation in annual field restoration work is a tradition in most baseball communities. Working together on the fields encourages teamwork regardless of what team the athlete plays on.

### Routine Maintenance

See *IBL Policy 12.0 – Field Maintenance Procedures*

Routine maintenance of the fields occurs throughout the season, before/after games and after practices. This is all about “rake, water, chalk” before the games, and “rake & water” after games and practices. We are to leave the fields as good as, or better than, we found them. More specific guidelines for field maintenance are found in **IBL Policy 12.0 – Field Maintenance Procedures**. The following may help in successfully accomplishing field maintenance:

* Explain the importance of field maintenance and provide a schedule to the parents at the first parent meeting;
* Assign duties to players and parents for each practice and each game;
* Parents will need to take on a greater share of the tasks for the younger Divisions;
* Remind your players and families why this maintenance is so important. Maintained fields are safe fields. Kids who participate in field maintenance take pride in their fields and are more respectful of them.

### Small Improvement Projects

This category is to be a prioritized approach for all fields, all divisions – some completed each year, so all players and teams continue to benefit.

# Section 2 – The Coach

*“A coach must never forget that he is first of all, a teacher. He must come (be present),*

*see (diagnose), and conquer (correct). He must continuously be exploring for ways*

*to improve himself in order that he may improve others and welcome every person and everything that may be helpful to him.”*

- John Wooden, legendary former UCLA basketball coach

## Chapter 2.1 – Becoming an IBL Coach

There are 3 steps to be completed to become a coach with IBL (Head Coach, Assistant Coach, or Team Manager):

1. Application (online) – <http://www.FairbanksIBL.com>
2. Background Check – Completed by IBL (Link will be sent to coach via email provided with a successfully completed online application);
3. Coaches Continuing Education certification – Online training and support through *USA Baseball.*

Once your application for coaching has been submitted, a Resources Committee member will reach out to you for next steps and coordination for your coaches credentials completion.

## Chapter 2.2 – Coaches Continuing Education (CCE)

IBL recognizes that player development and enjoyment is directly related to coaching competency. Better coaching is often the difference between a player enjoying the sport and developing their baseball skills or not progressing. When players have an enjoyable time, they are more engaged and naturally gain more advanced skills. For these reasons, IBL has instituted a **Coaches Continuing Education** (CCE) plan with 3 main goals:

1. Provide Coaches with teaching techniques, learning styles, examples, and drills;
2. Improve the baseball and teaching skills of Coaches and Players;
3. Increase coach and player retention;

**CCE requirements apply to all managers, coaches, assistant coaches, etc., participating in any Division of IBL.** **Training is required annually, to be completed by June 1st, and includes an online component with additional in person (classroom/field) training.** The location changes from class to class when offered, see IBL website for current information, or ask your Division Coordinator.

From time to time, and as warranted, IBL may offer a supplemental CCE in person course to further drive home the concepts and strategies that make a successful coaching experience. When these in person classes are offered, information will be communicated through all major communication outlets available to IBL.

### RETURNING COACHES

Returning coaches are asked to continue their education certification by building on their USA Baseball A Certificate training from Yr 1. In year two, coaches can expect to get support in training athletes regarding the fundamentals of baseball including culture and experience and enhancing the coach, athlete, and parent experience with umpiring. Year three brings the training full circle to include strategies, game management, and the creation of a positive baseball experience for all involved.

**Required Yr Two Cert**: USA Baseball Coaches "B" Certification (<http://www.usabdevelops.com>)

**Required Yr Three Cert:** USA Baseball Coaches "C" Certification (<http://www.usabdevelops.com>)

### NEW COACHES

Year one (1) of your IBL coaching experience begins with you, the modern coach, learning and training on topics such as health and safety of the athletes, creating a positive environment for learning, protecting the arms of our young athletes, and recognizing and responding to misconduct.

IBL utilizes USA Baseball Coaches Development and Certification program to help build well rounded, knowledgeable, and supportive coaches. By completing the CCE journey, you are pledging your commitment to the growth of yourself as the coach and the athletes.

**Required Yr One Cert**: USA Baseball Coaches "A" Certification (<http://www.usabdevelops.com>)

## Chapter 2.3 – Coaching Basics

Welcome coach to your new LEADERSHIP role! In order to make the season successful we want to take the time to give you a few ingredients that we feel will help you support, manage and coordinate all the parts of your team – players, parents, umpires, league management, spectators, etc. Remember your best attribute is communicator! Everyone feels engaged when they are included in the communications. And, relish in your role as leader, mentor, and teacher.

### YOUR STAFF

* Head Coaches are responsible for ensuring that Assistant Coaches and other volunteers who routinely have contact with the players complete a background check before they can participate in IBL activities.
* Head Coaches are responsible for coordinating with Division Coordinators and Resources Committee members to ensure Assistant Coaches are properly vetted and listed on the IBL Coaches Roster with proper coaching certification. Division Coordinators must be notified immediately of changes to your coaching staff.

### YOUR PLAYERS

* Respect your ball players.
* Learn to recognize their different learning styles, strengths, weaknesses, moods, etc.
* Provide engaging, challenging practices.
* Enjoy the games!

### YOUR SUBJECT MATTER

* Respect the game.
* Study the material provided and ask questions of experienced coaches.
* Keep Learning! Your passion for the game will rub off on others, and everyone around will benefit.

### YOUR PLAYER AGENTS (PARENTS)

* Dignity breeds respect. Establish positive relationships early, and keep them.
* Be a good listener. Consider their perspectives thoroughly.
* Be honest and be clear.
* Follow through.

### YOUR PLAN (FOR THE SEASON)

* Keep a folder/binder with medical releases, contact information, etc.
* Be prepared to administer first aid and/or activate EMS.
* Plan and conduct a parent/player orientation meeting at the first practice:
1. Coaching approach and expectations;
2. Player responsibilities (gear list);
3. Parents responsibilities (on time, ready, and rested);
4. Positive experience for all;
5. Contact information;
6. Skills targets;
7. Rules;
8. Special events, schedule;
9. Policies;
10. Questions;
* Designate a communicator and initiate the communication system (i.e., phone calls and messages, texting, email, Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
* Make a basic practice plan:
1. Warmup
2. Main practice objective(s) (3 max)
3. Closing event – competition, game, cool down, review chat, etc.
* Study the Division specific skills targets for your age group;
* Write out practice and game schedules for the season (early, mid, late);
* Be in contact with your Division Coordinator – a huge resource for your success.
* Consider planning a team celebration at the end of the season. It doesn’t have to be elaborate – ask for help from team parents.

### YOUR TEAM

* Be mindful of skill sets at the bottom, middle, top if the lineup;
* Focus on player development for ALL athletes throughout the season;
* Team skills are difficult without competent individual skills first;
* Individual and team goals are useful;

### YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

* Provide a safe physical environment for all athletes, coaches, parents;
* Communicate in a positive way;
* Teach the skills, strategies, and rules of baseball;
* Supervise players during practices and games;
* Help players become fit and value fitness for a lifetime;

## Chapter 2.4 – Division Specific Baseball Skills Progress Targets

IBL has several levels organized around age and skill to help develop players from ages 5 through 14. The progression of a child will vary based on the age at which the child starts playing organized baseball and the amount of time the child has practiced the skill. The goals at one level should be accomplished before the goals at the next level can be pursued for maximum success.

**As kids move through the progressions or age groups, keep in mind that some kids mature physically faster than others - some kids will master fundamental skills faster than others too.** How you assess skill growth should be flexible. If you’re coaching a team of 7-year-olds and it’s obvious that they have not mastered the concepts and skills set forth in the age-appropriate goals for the 5-to-6 age group, it’s imperative that you go back and work with the players until they have achieved those goals before moving on to more advanced skills. On the other hand, if your team achieves the age-specific goals quickly, it might be worthwhile to jump ahead and attempt to accomplish some of the goals outlined for the next age group

### SHETLAND (AGES 5-6)

Shetland (T-Ball) is generally the first introduction to organized baseball for most players. The primary objective by the end of the season is to ensure that each player has a "positive experience" with baseball, desires to play again the following year, and has successfully demonstrated the skills listed below.

* Proper warm up techniques for arms, legs, and muscles;
* Names of defensive positions;
* How to execute a throw (proper grip, arm motion) to 30 feet;
* Proper ready position for fielding;
* How to hold a bat correctly with proper batting stance;
* Successfully hit off a tee routinely – Advanced soft toss;
* What to do after the ball is hit (as a batter and a runner);
* Know how, why and when to run to the next base;

### PINTO (AGES 7-8)

Pinto moves the athletes into machine pitched balls for consistent delivery and mastering of the batting technique. As with Shetland, the primary objective at this level is to ensure that each player has a "positive experience" with baseball, desires to play again the following year, and has learned the skills listed below.

* Introduction of the TEAM concept;
* Reinforce proper warm up techniques;
* Number of outs per inning (basic out and safe rules);
* Fielding techniques and positions (proper down and ready position);
* Catching progression; Both hands; Thrown and hit balls;
* Understands where to make the defensive play;
* Proper Batting position and stance;
* Proper base running (on the ground vs. in the air);
* Introduction of the catcher position;
* Good Sportsmanship (End each game with a High Five);

### MUSTANG (AGES 9-10)

At the Mustang level, all games will be player-pitch and will use a hard ball for all innings. The Mustang level is where the players should recognize situations and understand "HOW BEST" to make certain plays. Mustang see the continuation of the primary objective to ensure that each player has a "positive experience" with baseball, desires to play again the following year and has learned the skills listed below with the emphasis on "HOW BEST".

* Advanced warm up techniques;
* Advanced ground ball fielding techniques;
* Where to make the play;
* Relaying the ball from the outfield to the infield;
* Batting stance (closed, open) Tee, soft toss, short toss;
* Pitching mechanics; Wind-up vs Stretch; Pick off; Pitch Counts;
* Bunting;
* Infield Fly Rule;
* Communication (calling for a fly ball);
* Backing up plays;
* Difference between a Force Play and a Must Tag; Tagging up;
* Base stealing, sliding;
* Good Sportsmanship

### BRONCO (AGES 11-12)

The Bronco level is both competitive and instructional with more emphasis on instructional than competitive during the regular season. The Bronco age group is when players begin to decide for themselves that they like baseball and might want to pursue it a little more seriously. It is critical that the managers and coaches of this division provide sound training and good balance of playing time and position rotations for all players. Players should focus on refining their baseball skills with a strong emphasis on consistency. Besides building upon the skills taught to them at the preceding levels, players should successfully demonstrate the following skills:

* Coming on time to practices and games prepared to play baseball;
* Competence in batter's box positioning;
* Show proper grip, batting stance, bat position, and swing execution;
* Acceptable level of determining ball vs. strike;
* Passing the bat through the strike zone;
* Proper base running techniques including stealing, sliding, and tagging up;
* Correct pitching mechanics and baseball grips (fastball, change-up);
* Proper footwork to field and throw quickly;
* How to go back on a fly ball;
* Sacrifice situations;
* How to rundown a base runner (pickle);
* Covering bases and backing up positions after a hit;
* Always show good Sportsmanship on and off the field (no bad mouthing other players);

### PONY (AGES 13-14)

Players at the Pony level are making the adjustment to the 80- or 90-foot diamond while waiting for their bodies to mature physically. Players at the Pony level are refining their skills just before transitioning to High School or Legion baseball.

* Throwing mechanics and pitching – Control, velocity, movement, strategies;
* Hitting – Situational hitting (inside-out swing; hitting behind runners; hit and run; productive outs); sacrifice bunting versus bunting for a hit; understanding the count;
* Hitting – Drill work (tee, soft toss, short toss, stick¬ball, lob toss, one-arm drill); Bunting.
* Base running – First-and-third situations; Reading situations and reacting to them; Extra-base hits;
* Fielding – Crossover and drop steps; Backhands and when to use them; Double-play depth; Pitcher covering first; Infield communication; Infield Fly; Balks;
* Pickoff plays;
* Double plays and underhand flips;
* Cutoffs and relays;
* Defending the steal;
* Infield and outfield communication and priorities;

## Chapter 2.5 – Recommended Player Gear List

As the coach and leader, it is helpful to know the recommended player gear list to keep athletes safe while playing the game of baseball.

### PROVIDED GEAR

IBL provides a player uniform pack to all registered players that consists of:

* Team hat;
* Jersey;
* Pants;
* Belt;
* Socks;

Players may purchase pants from another source, but they must be gray with no stripes down the legs to conform to uniform requirements set forth in *IBL Rules and Regulations*.

### REQUIRED GEAR

* Appropriate shoes;
* Baseball glove;
* Long sleeve shirt; (weather dependent);
* Sweatshirt; (weather dependent);
* Rain/wind jacket; (weather dependent);
* Water bottle
* Bug spray
* Sun block

### OPTIONAL GEAR

* Batting glove(s);
* Bat; (make sure all self-purchased bats are compliant);
* Helmet;
* Cleats;
* Sunglasses;
* Chapstick;

## Chapter 2.6 – Interacting With an Umpire

*“It is better to know some of the questions than all of the answers.”*

- James Thurber

As stated in Chapter 1.6, FBUA is the enforcement authority during IBL baseball games. It is incumbent upon coaches to respect their authority and model for their players and parents how to appropriately interact with umpires. This expectation also applies to volunteers who fill the role of umpire in the absence of a FBUA representative.

### PLEASE DO …

* **Do** remember that you are representing IBL in your interactions with umpires and you are setting an example for your players every moment of every game.
* **Do** control your anger. Most umpires will entertain conversations – but none should have to listen to you yell at them. Also, be very careful about physical contact with an umpire. This is a very serious situation which could result in a suspension.
* **Do** go directly to the umpire who made the call, not their partner. And if you think the other umpire had a better vantage point, ask the 1st umpire to confer with their partner. If you do manage to get the umpires to confer with each other, you have achieved your objective, so stay away and let them confer. The umpire who made the call will be the one who comes out of conference and confirms the call or changes it.
* **Do** be respectful in your conversation(s) with the umpires. There is a chance *you* have the rule wrong, *not* the umpire.
* **Do** put the past in the past. You and the umpire(s) are paired for the entire game (and perhaps many more times during the season). That call is history. What you’re really interested in are the calls for the rest of the game. Don’t let past calls keep you both from focusing on each of your responsibilities in the game.
* **Do** set a positive role model for your players. Hustle onto the field to greet the umpire, calmly ask your question or make your point, and return to your position.
* **Do** know the rules to a reasonable level. If you’ve been chirping “1+1” after every overthrow, or “that’s at the letters”, don’t expect to be taken seriously when you come out to discuss a rule interpretation.
* **Do** allow the umpire to be in control of the game. If the umpire doesn’t ever call a curveball or won’t give the outside corner, then their reality differs from yours. But their reality is the only one that counts. You and your players must adjust to it. If you and your players can adapt to it faster than the other coach and team, then you have an advantage.

### PLEASE DON’T …

* **Don’t** show up an umpire or grandstand. You’re free to ask for clarification, not put on a performance for the crowd.
* **Don’t** make personal accusations to the umpire. The word that may get you ejected immediately is not the dreaded F-word, but the Y-word “You.” As in “You are a terrible umpire!” or “You are awful”, etc. Better to direct the attention to the call, not to the umpire.
* **Don’t** moan to your players about the umpire, ever. You are setting an example and teaching players that they can blame their lack of success on anything and/or everything external to themselves.
* **Don’t** make catcalls or sarcastic comments or taunts from the dugout. If you start yelling “balk”, or “He’s not stopping,” etc. from the dugout, chances are you will never get that call. The smart move is to discuss this with the umpire between innings.
* **Don’t** be the guy who can’t let it go. When it’s over it’s over. Getting into a shouting match with the umpires after the game is over only detracts from your credibility as a teacher and coach. If necessary, contact the Division Coordinator when you get home or better yet, the next day. Remember that umpires are taught from day one that each game is a new contest and the slate is clean for all involved. That is a pretty good piece of advice for coaches, too.
* **Don’t** ever bring a rule book onto the field. The umpire is supposed to know the rules. This can also give the perception that you are trying to embarrass or show up the umpire.

# Section 3 – The Sport

*“If the only tool you have is a hammer, you tend to see every problem as a nail.”*

- Abraham Maslow

## Chapter 3.1 – Hitting

The basic idea of hitting mechanics is to keep all actions simple. The 6 Absolutes by 22 yr MLB hitting instructor **John Mallee** are not designed to teach each hitter to have the same style, but to give practical advice to coaches on hitting mechanics. Coaches must take into account that hitters have different physical and mental make-ups while encourage all athletes to be themselves and develop their own style and approach at the plate.

Whether you’re a little leaguer or a big leaguer, certain swing similarities and absolutes take place throughout the swing. These similarities and absolutes must occur during each phase of the swing to have a consistent hitting approach.

### Teaching the Professional Swing: The 6 Absolutes of Hitting

1. Go back before forward – Stance & Weight Transfer;
2. Walk away from hands – Stride & Separate;
3. Keep Head in between feet – Axis of Rotation;
4. Start swing from the lower half, ground up – Approach to Contact;
5. Take a straight line to and through the ball – Swing Plane;
6. Maintain balance throughout – The Follow Through;

### Absolute No. 1 – “Go back before forward”

**Pre-Swing Weight Transfer**. This mechanical move is the first pre-swing movement for the hitter, after establishing his hitting stance in the box. It is completed prior to the stride, and consists of a slow, easy, early move. This weight transfer to the back leg (the leg load) stores potential energy for the swing. There are several variations and styles which the hitter must experiment with to see which suits their ability.

**Stance.** The basics of a good hitter’s stance are: feet separated wider than the shoulders, toes pointed straight ahead, knees bent, hips straight to plate, proper grip to allow rotation, hands aligned over back foot, back elbow slightly lower than forearm. The hitter’s stance has great variability; it is essentially an individual preference and should only be changed when a problem results from it. If it is a stance that prevents the player from executing the proper fundamentals, then make adjustments accordingly.

**Points to Remember – Stance and Weight Transfer**

* Knees in between feet – balanced stance;
* Level body segments;
* Both eyes on the pitcher;
* Bat in the finger tips, relaxed;
* Transfer some weight to back leg – early, slow, easy

### Absolute No. 2 – “Walk away from hands”

**Stride and Separate.** The stride is a mechanical tool to help the hitter get into a strong hitting position. This is the position from which the hitter judges speed/distance/location/type of pitch. As the stride foot moves forward, the hands should move back in the opposite direction. (Hence the terms “separate the hands from the feet” or “walk away from the hands”). Upon completion of transferring some of his weight onto his back leg (*Absolute No. 1*), the hitter will begin the stride with his front leg. The stride foot should be on the ground at or before the ball is half way towards home plate. Focusing on the pitcher’s hand separation will help the hitter develop a rhythm with the pitcher and see the ball.

**When to Start.** The hitter must develop a rhythm with the pitcher’s motions. This rhythm and a solid vision plan will help start the pre-swing movements on time and ensure early pitch recognition. A basic start time is when the pitcher separates his hands and moves to the hitter, the hitter should stride and separate his hands and move to the pitcher.

**The Stride.** The stride foot should first land on the inside ball of the foot and then the front foot should immediately plant. Landing on the inside ball of the foot will help the hitter keep the weight back and when the front heel plants, the hitter should again be at a balanced position. The stride foot knee can now stay inside the stride foot allowing the hitter to keep his hips closed. The stride foot should be open at least 30 degrees with the goal being open at 45 degrees.

**The Hands.** The stride separation consists of two body parts moving in the opposite direction at the same time, with the result being balanced. As the stride moves forward, the hands move back. This is also called a trigger stride. This hand movement allows the hitter to overcome inertia and get into a strong hitting position. This strong hitting position is the foundation of the swing. The position the hitter is in when the stride foot lands directly affects the quality of the swing. As the stride foot comes completely down, the weight continues to shift forward into a balanced position. Remember, in order to have a good swing, you must be in a good position to swing.

**Points to Remember – Stride & Separate**

* Develop a rhythm with the pitcher; start pre-swing moves early;
* Pitcher separates/hitter separates;
* Stride foot moves forward, hands move backward;
* Land balanced on inside ball of stride foot;
* Weight stays back and stride knee is inside foot;
* Stride foot opens 30/45 degrees;
* Recognize pitch;

### Absolute No. 3 – “Keep head in between feet”

**Head and Body Centerline and the Axis of Rotation.** Once the stride foot is planted, the swing is ready to begin. The head should stay directly centered in between the feet. The axis of rotation is an imaginary vertical line around which the body rotates during the swing. The straighter the line (plumb), the faster the body can rotate. This is also referred to as “staying behind the ball.” The hitter should imagine a pole coming from the sky through their head, down the spine and into the ground. The body will rotate around this pole. Keeping the head as still as possible will help the hitter slow the ball down and give them the best chance to recognize pitches.

**Balanced Body Posture in the Swing.** The body posture during the pre-swing movements and the approach to contact is critical. Balance, swing plane, axis of rotation, and weight transfer are directly affected by poor posture. Once the stride foot is planted, the upper body posture should be set and remain in that position throughout the swing. The proper pre-swing movements (weight transfer back, stride separation) helps the hitter to get a good balance posture set. To maintain the axis of rotation, the hitter must try to stay as “plumb” as possible during rotation. If there is a lean or tilt in the posture towards the plate during the swing, the axis of rotation will be affected. The focus should be to work from the top of the strike zone down. See the ball and stay tall.

**Points to Remember – Axis of Rotation**

* Head in between feet – stay balanced; pre-swing movements determine posture;
* Stride foot is planted, athletic position to swing;
* Axis of Rotation – plumb posture required for faster body rotation;
* Plumb posture is key to staying behind the ball;
* Keep head as still as possible, stay ‘tall”;
* Work from the top of the zone down;

### Absolute No. 4 – “Start from the ground up”

**The Swing.** Once all pre-swing movements are completed, the swing begins. It is initiated from the ground up and happens in sequence so that all body parts are incorporated in the swing for maximum energy transfer at impact. Once the stride foot heel is on the ground, the back heel will lift and initiate rotation. The back knee will then turn. As the foot and knee begin rotation, the front side can remain closed and set up the hips to lead the hands. At this point, the hands are still back in the launch position. The lower half leading the hands is how the hitter develops torque, which is the key to develop forceful rotation, which in turn creates bat speed.

**All About Weight Transfer and the Legs Control Rotation During the Swing.** The hitter’s weight should be transferred throughout the swing process. The weight is first shifted back in the lower half leg load (*Absolute No. 2*), then the weight will shift forward to a more balanced position when the stride foot is planted (*Absolute No. 3*). The back leg will rotate the hips to 45 degrees beginning the weight transfer forward. The front leg will then push on the front hip, snapping straight just prior to, or at contact. As the front leg snaps straight, the weight will then shift into a firm front side completing the weight shift. The head should remain in between the feet (along the axis) throughout this process. At contact, the back leg should be non-weight bearing with the back foot toe pointed straight down.

**Points to Remember – Approach to Contact**

* In order – foot, knee, hips, hands;
* Front foot down, back heel up;
* Back foot and knee rotate; hands stay back;
* Hips lead the hands;
* Torque creates forceful rotation and bat speed;
* Weight transfers from back to front throughout the swing;
* Front leg snaps straight, weight shifts to front;
* Back leg non-weight bearing at contact;

### Absolute No. 5 – “Take a straight line to the ball.”

**The Contact Position**. The contact position is where the barrel of the bat meets the ballin relation to the hitter’s body. The hitter’s goal should be to make contact off the stride foot. The inside pitch should be contacted in front of the stride foot. The pitch down the middle should be contacted parallel to the stride foot and the outside pitch should be contacted behind the stride foot…at varying degrees. All three of these locations should be contacted within a few inches of each other.

**The Power Position**. The power position is the position the hitter is in at the point of contact. Once the swing has started forward and down inside the ball, the back elbow will travel close to the body and be bent at contact. This helps provide leverage, strength, and power through the swing. It will also assist in creating extension through the ball at contact. At contact, the head should be directly in between the feet (at the axis).

**The Straight Line.** Once the back foot initiates rotation, the hips will lead the hands in a straight line to and through the ball. The barrel will flatten its path in the hitting zone with the direct route being forward and down. It is critical for the barrel of the bat to stay inside the ball during the approach to contact. This is called “short to long,” meaning the barrel gets in the hitting zone quickly (short to it) and stays in the hitting zone until the wrists begin their natural roll (long through it). With this “short to long” swing plane, the hitter’s timing doesn’t have to be as precise which will aid in solid contact. Swinging forward and down will ensure that a straight line can be taken to and through the ball.

**Points to Remember – Swing Plane**

* Hips lead hands forward and down;
* Bat flattens while in the hitting zone;
* Keep the barrel inside the ball (knob first through the zone);
* Swing plane helps timing;
* Think “short to it, long through it”;

### Absolute No. 6 – “Maintain balance throughout”

**Follow Through/Finish.** The quality of the finish and the swing is directly related to the quality of the approach. In the hitting process, we are only as good as the previous phase. If a hitter makes a mistake in his weight transfer going back, or stride separation, it is almost guaranteed to have a negative impact through the process. If the hitter executes the process correctly, the follow through and finish will take care of itself. Hitters who have trouble with post-contact extension and stable head position can benefit from a top hand release. A late release should not have a negative impact on power. Young hitters and hitters who lack strength can benefit from keeping the top hand on the bat throughout the swing.

**Points to Remember – Follow Through**

* Poor approach = poor finish;
* Solid approach = finish naturally;
* Release after wrists roll;
* Release helps post-contact extension;
* Late release doesn’t affect power;

## Chapter 3.2 – Bunting

### Steps to Proper Bunting Position

1. Batting stance in batter box – Start normal;
2. Pivot feet (hands stay up!);
3. Slide TOP Hand UP the bat; DON’T drop bottom hand. Keep it in position;
4. Turn upper body, bring bat with you, keep it high;
5. Lower bat to top of strike zone BY BENDING YOUR KNEES!
6. Bat to stay at 45-degree angle, barrel UP!

### Aligning the Bat Barrel during the Bunt

**Horizontal Positioning of Bat**. Bat barrel MUST be in FRONT of the plate, so bunted ball can go into fair territory.

**Vertical Positioning of Bat.** Starting position of bat is at/near the top of the strike zone.

Balls that are pitched HIGHER (over) the bat are out of the strike zone, and bunting a high pitched ball almost always results in a pop up bunt. Lower the bat by bending knees. Bunt the ball DOWN.

**Directional Control of Bunted Ball**. There two methods when it comes to directional control of the bat while bunting:

* Method 1 – Align the bat perpendicular to desired baseline side, before the pitch;
* Method 2 – Steer the bunted ball with “rudder” control;

**Push Bunt or Sacrifice Bunt.** To push bunt for a base hit – hands stay back, toward the chest, then PUSH to ball at contact. To sacrifice bunt – the hands stay out away from the chest, then “absorb’ (catch) the ball at contact.

## Chapter 3.3 – Base Running Basics

From running the bases, to leading off, and sliding – We’ll cover some baseball base running basics to help you score some runs.

### Running to First Base

There are two ways a base runner will run to first base dependent on the result of a ball batted into play:

**Infield Hit.** An infield hit is when the ball is put into play and it stays inside the infield. Typically in this play, the runner has a play at first base (the ball is coming to first). When this happens, the runner should be running towards first base with the objective to touch the right side of the base and peel off toward the dugout in foul territory. Once the play has been made (or there is an overthrow), the base runner can attempt to take second base if applicable.

**Outfield Hit.** An outfield hit is a batted ball that has made its way to the outfield grass. The base runner should take a wide turn at first base striking the base and looking towards second base. With direction from the base coach, the runner can either return to first base or advance to second base.

### Taking a Lead

To lead off, or to take a lead, refers to the position a baserunner takes just prior to a pitch - a short distance away from the base the player occupies. There are three components to taking a lead:

**Primary Lead**. The primary lead is the initial lead taken by the base runner prior to or during the pitch once the pitcher has engaged with the pitching rubber. Generally, a “left-right-left” foot sequence from first base, then pivoting to athletic running position squaring up to home plate is considered the primary lead. The base runner should be prepared to go (steal or hit) or return to the base (pick-off attempt). The runner should never cross their feet during the primary lead.

**Secondary Lead.** The secondary lead is accomplished once the pitch is thrown by an aggressive shuffle of a few steps towards second base. The secondary lead gives the base runner the proper physical position to retreat to the base as he draws a possible throw from the catcher.

**Return Lead.** Returning to the base the runner occupies after a pitch is the return lead. Preferable after the secondary lead it could require the runner to dive back to the base away from the throw toward the back of the base furthest from home plate. Or, the runner could return standing up, cross over step and left foot lands on back corner of the bag Sliding away from the bag/avoid the tag/avoid the fielder/interference.

### Rounding Bases

As an athlete approaches each base and the decision has been made to round the base and advance to the next, there is a technique that goes with it. Simply, at about 10 feet from the approaching bag, make a small arc so that we are approaching the bag at an angle instead of straight on. Always strike the bag with the left foot to *lean* into the turn while the right foot does the crossover step to start toward the next base. To keep players from over-running second or third base, teach them to put their foot on the bag and at the same time drop their butt just a little bit. This action will take runners from full speed to zero speed immediately.

**Pick Up the Base Coach.** At the plate, athletes have a tendency to watch the ball when they make contact. At practice, instruct your players to draw their attention to first base after a hit, and to listen for your instruction. If they are trying to beat out a ground ball, be sure to teach them to run through first base, and not slow down as they are approaching it. If you are coaching third base, be sure to teach your athletes that if they are on first or second base to pay close attention to your instruction when the ball is struck by the batter. You may have an opportunity for your team to grab an extra base, but that won’t happen if the runner on first or second is watching the ball and not watching you.

### Tagging up

To **tag up** is for a base runner to retouch or remain on their starting base (the time-of-pitch base) until (after) the ball either lands in fair territory or is first touched by a fielder. By rule, base runners must tag up when a fly ball is caught in flight by a fielder. After a legal tag up, runners are free to attempt to advance, even if the ball was caught in foul territory. On long fly ball outs, runners can often gain a base; when a runner scores by these means, this is called a sacrifice fly.

## Chapter 3.4 – Sliding

If you have a new ball player that has yet to learn the sliding techniques, here is a great walk through of the basics of sliding feet first:

1. On the outfield fair line, take your cleats off, sit down, legs out straight;
2. Tuck left leg under right knee area (so right leg is out). Explain why right leg out;
3. Reach down with both hands, pick up handfuls of grass;
4. Raise hands in air, lean back until feet come off the ground;
5. Landing zone is the butt – don’t lean over onto hips, BUTT lands first!

Once your athletes have mastered the sitting motion, progress the slide progression to add approach to a temporary base in the grass which will provide a softer landing for the players. Once they have successfully master the slide on the grass, move to the base paths.

## Chapter 3.5 – Offensive Strategy

As the coach, you’ll be in charge of some basic offensive strategies to keep the game moving when your team is up to bat. Use these strategies as the foundation for your players to learn the fundamentals of strategy when offensive plays take place.

### Communicating Signs

Before and during at bats, base coaches should take the opportunity to deliver signs to the batters and baserunners, if any. Examples of signs that could be indicated include – take a pitch, bunt, fake bunt, steal, hit and run, etc. It is important to note that communicating signs should not happen as the pitch is being made since it distracts the batter and limits problem solving skills.

### Left Hand vs. Right Hand Batters

Depending on the skill of the batter and the law of averages, you can use the hand of the batter to predict hit outcomes. Use this information to help teach athletes how to contribute effectively during their at bats.

### Offense Plays – 1st and 3rd

There are specific plays that happen when runners are on 1st and 3rd that a coach will need to address and instruct their players on. From tagging up (when there are less than 2 outs and a runner on third with a hit to the outfield, to advancing from 1st to second on a ball put in play that is not a pop fly) players must know what base to advance to when hits occur while they are on base.

### Offense Plays – Bunting

When a bunt play is called, the ideal scenario is a runner is advanced sacrificing an out. By using this play, a coach could instruct his players to utilize the play to advance a runner for the next batter to bat them how with a successful hit. I.e. moving a runner from 1st to 2nd to get into scoring position with a hit or moving a runner from 2nd to 3rd to try for a sacrifice fly.

### Hit Behind the Runner

As a general rule, batter typically will try and hit the ball behind the runner to put pressure on the defense to make a play on it. Example would be a right handed hitter obtaining a base hit to right field or through the first baseman and second basement gap with a runner on 1st base.

## Chapter 3.6 – Throwing a Baseball

Throwing a baseball to an intended target correctly with good form and accurately is in and of itself a basic fundamental that a coach should strive to teach all baseball athletes. Throwing mechanics should not be limited to initial training either – but reiterated with all athletes throughout each season of youth baseball regardless of age. **Let’s walk through 6 steps to instruct an athlete to be able to throw a baseball correctly and accurately.**

### Step 1: Reach and Flick

Throwing knee down, glove foot out, partners close. Reach, wrist flick to deliver, finish by raking the grass outside of glove knee.

### Step 2: 90/90

Throwing knee down, glove foot out, partners move back ½ distance. Chest is 90 degrees to partner, glove shoulder points at partner, glove hand tucked to chest. Ball in hand, take the ball DOWN, then up to the 90/90 position. Hand turned showing back of hand, 90-degree angle from body to upper arm bicep, 90-degree angle from upper arm bicep to forearm, entire throwing arm aligned with chest. Rotate upper body to throw, reaching out and delivering the ball with a reached out Step 1 flick, then finish by raking the grass outside of the glove knee – just like Step 1.

### Step 3: Pitchers Set Position

Same set –up as Step 2 PRECEEDED BY: Throwing hand has ball, join throwing hand and glove hand like a pitcher coming to the set position of the stretch type delivery, THEN – STEP 2, THEN STEP 1.

### Step 4: Step 2 Standing Up

Same as Step 2, only standing up. NO stepping toward partner. Turned 90 degrees to partner. Partners move back another ½ distance. Weight transfer from back foot (at 90/90) to front foot (at ball delivery) progressing from Step 4 to Step 1. At this point, the partners should be far enough apart to be throwing the ball, not flicking it.

### Step 5: Step 3 Standing Up

Same as Step 3, only standing up. No stepping toward partner. Still turned 90 degrees to partner, weight transfer, progressing from Step 5 (3) to Step 4 (2) to Step 1.

### Step 6 – The Throw

Put it all together now. Start by straight facing your partner. Take a BIG step toward your partner with your THROWING FOOT, pivot on your throwing foot to Step 5 position, then progress through Step 4 (2), then your delivery.

One of the most important points to remember while teaching throwing is to remember NO “chicken wings”… the ball must go DOWN (toward the ground) before it gets to Step 2 position. Don’t let the player bring the ball UP to get to step 2 (chicken winging).

## Chapter 3.7 – Beginning Pitching

At the youth level, every player on the team should get at least a chance to pitch and to learn the basics of pitching. It is important that coaches focus on development of pitchers and spend less concern on the pitchers effectiveness in a game. As long as players are being taught correct mechanics, coaches can ensure proper development of arms and pitching know-how.

**Basics of Beginning Pitching**

1. Start from stretch delivery position;
2. Feet apart, hands apart (ball either in hand or glove);
3. Feet together, hands together (glove vertical, helps prevent chicken wing) (Throwing Step 3);
4. Glove knee to 90 degrees up, coil hips, break hands, fall down the hill. Knee up creates high center of mass, generating greater potential energy;
5. Stride step toward home plate, release ball at the “reach” point;
6. Finish in defensive position;

## Chapter 3.8 – Catcher Defense

Positioned behind home plate and facing toward the outfield, the catcher is in the best position to direct and lead the other players in a defensive play. The catcher typically calls for pitches using hand signals. Essentially, the catcher controls what happens during the game when the ball is not in play. Foul tips, [bouncing balls](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bouncing_ball) in the dirt, and contact with runners during plays at the plate are all events to be handled by the catcher, necessitating the use of protective equipment.

**Basics of Playing Catcher**

1. Off haunch positioning for the pitch;
2. Straight chested, knees down, body blocking;
3. Backhanding and when;
4. Stab it, stick it, sell it;
5. Return throws to the pitcher;
6. Warm up throw to second base (during warm up);
7. Throwing to a base after a pitch;
8. Positioning in front of home plate for the throw and tag;
9. Mask off and away, turn around to catch pop up;
10. Throws to first, inside and outside;
11. Calling pitches and defensive plays;
12. Umpire relations and courtesy;

## Chapter 3.9 – Infield

An infielder is a [baseball](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baseball) player stationed at one of four defensive "infield" positions on the baseball field – First base, second base, third base, and shortstop. Players in the infield learn to execute basic infield throws to infield bases, and learn proper footwork and execution of ground ball plays.

**Basics of Playing the Infield**

1. Athletic position – defense stance;
2. Positioning – in/middle/back;
3. Gather ball through body mid-line, gather feet, make a good throw;
4. Backing up the pitcher;
5. Backing up every throw;
6. Backhand/one-handed fielding – off the foot;
7. Infield fly and communication;

## Chapter 3.10 – Outfield

An outfielder is an athlete playing in one of the three defensive positions in baseball farthest from the batter. These defenders are the left fielder, the center fielder, and the right fielder. As an outfielder, their duty is to catch fly balls and/ ground balls then to return them to the infield for the out or before the runner advances, if there is any runners on the bases. All outfielders should possess a strong arm, as they’ll be throwing to a cutoff man most of the time. But while a strong arm is important, quickness is the most valuable asset in the outfield as they’ll need to get the ball back to the middle of the field as quickly as possible.

**Basics of Playing the Outfield**

1. Fielding position – same as infielder, only hands are waist high and fielder is ready to run;
2. First step is always BACK, on THROWING foot side, accomplished with a step and a half shuffle;
3. Cross over step to continue on throwing side of body;
4. Open up with glove foot to go to glove side of body;
5. Block the sun with throwing hand;
6. Catch the ball high (above head) so glove and ball can both be seen;
7. Crow hop – land on throwing foot TWICE;
8. Long hop or line drive throws – no short hops, no rainbows;
9. “Find the fence”
10. Outfielder communication – “Name!”/“I got it!”/“Ball!”

## Chapter 3.11 – Defensive Strategy

<https://protips.dickssportinggoods.com/sports-and-activities/baseball/defensive-lineup-strategies-for-youth-baseball>

Players, particularly young ones, are often just as sensitive to where they appear in the field as where they appear in the batting lineup. In the formative years of Shetland and Pinto play it’s important to give players a chance to play all over the field, testing their arm strength, catching ability and knowledge of the game. As players progress through the season, keep in mind through teaching:

1. The most important thing you will ever do on defense is ***catch the ball;***
2. The second most important thing you will ever do on defense is ***make a good throw;***
3. Individual skills and team skills (team skills are difficult to accomplish without competent individual skills);
4. Pick offs and step-offs – keeping the runner honest vs. trying to get an out. Three speeds of body, three speeds of throw, variability. Use the “A” game move to get an out;
5. Cut-offs;
6. Drop third strikes;
7. 1st and 3rd base defenses;
8. Bunt defenses;
9. Situational defense;
10. Run downs;
11. How to take the field;
12. Pregame routine;
13. “Preparation builds confidence”;
14. Game management – playing all your players and diversity exposure;

Generally, your best fielders should be pitcher, second base, shortstop and center field. The left side of the field should have strong arms, while the right side of the field should have agile ball catchers. If you follow these general rules you’ll be positioned to win a fair amount of games this season.

*“The beautiful thing about learning is that no one can take it from you.”*

- B.B. King

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