

RIVER FALLS YOUTH BASEBALL ORGANIZATION

12/13 LEAGUE SKILLS/PHILOSOPHIES TO BE TAUGHT

I. 12/13 LEAGUE PHILOSOPHY (TO HAVE FUN, PREPARE KIDS FOR 14/15 LEAGUE)

- A. Learn: baseball skills in organized, safe, FUN environment; sportsmanship and teamwork
- B. Instructional, AND COMPETITIVE! Game scores/standings ARE kept; skills emphasized
- C. More complete baseball concepts (strikeouts, walks, stealing bases, etc.) taught at this level
- D. All players bat in each game, develop 2-3 positions each
- E. Pitching – managers and coaches will use good judgment re: who pitches and who doesn't

II. TEACHING “THE BIG 3” FUNDAMENTALS (THROWING, CATCHING, FIELDING)

- A. Throwing the Ball (Season End Goal: Kids Should Improve Throwing & Proper Mechanics)
 - 1. Improve 5 “proper throwing steps”: (1) Pop; (2) Crow hop; (3) “T”; (4) Throw; (5) Finish
 - 2. Emphasize balance, “power position”; kids on “balls of their feet”; should hit their target
 - 3. Emphasize that throwing is done with LEGS! Emphasize OVERHAND throwing skill!
- B. Catching the Ball (Season End Goal: Kids Should be able to Track and Catch the Ball Better)
 - 1. Improve 6 “proper catching steps”: (1) See where ball is going; (2) Move to ball, get nose to ball; (3) Be in power position, get SQUARE to ball; (4) Extend both arms to ball; (5) Catch ball with TWO hands, teach pinkies or thumbs; (6) look ball in, with “soft hands”
 - 2. Emphasize balance, “power position”; kids on “balls of their feet”; should catch ball well
 - 3. Emphasize that catching is also done with LEGS! Teach moving to the ball, nose to ball!
- C. Fielding the Ball (Season End Goal: Kids Should be able to Move into Position to Field Ball)
 - 1. Improve 6 “proper fielding steps”: (1) Ready position, see ball; (2) Move to ball, get nose to ball; (3) Be in power position, get SQUARE to ball; (4) Extend both arms to ball; (5) Field ball with TWO hands, teach pinkies or thumbs; (6) look ball in, with “soft hands”
 - 2. Emphasize balance, “power position”; kids on “balls of their feet”; should make a play!
 - 3. Emphasize that fielding is also done with LEGS! Teach moving to the ball, nose to ball!
- D. Pitchers (Season End Goal: Kids Should Learn and Improve on Pitching, Proper Mechanics)
 - 1. Have most of them start from the stretch, windup discouraged at this age; NO curve balls!
 - 2. Teach the “proper pitching steps”: (1) Rock/set; (2) Balance; (3) T; (4) Throw; (5) Finish
 - 3. Emphasize balance (leg bent at 90 degrees), the “power position” (elbow above the shoulder, also bent at 90 degrees), always finish on the ball of leading foot, finish “long”
 - 4. Emphasize body positions during the throwing steps; head level, body vertical until finish
 - 5. Emphasize OVERHAND throwing motion! Throw across the body, finish past lead knee
 - 6. Teach pitchers to field their position after they finish their follow-through; ready position
 - 7. Get kids used to covering first base on any ground ball to the right side! Do it right away!

E. Catchers (Season End Goal: Kids Should Learn and Improve Catching & Proper Mechanics)

1. Receiving position; balls of feet, feet shoulder-wide, back forward, balanced, extend arm
2. Elbow in, thumb out; relaxed, subtle movements; catch “around” ball, in glove webbing
3. Emphasize balance, and the “power position”; always get kids on the “balls of their feet”
4. Teach blocking balls in the dirt! Starts with LEGS; shift/move to the ball, nose to ball!
5. Teach kids to give pitchers a good target with catcher’s glove; teach proper depth in box
6. Teach kids to give pitcher a good return throw! Pitcher comes toward catcher to help out

F. General Issues – Throwing, Catching, Fielding (Season End Goal: Improve Situational Skill)

1. Place the kids in fun, competitive, team situations while teaching baseball fundamentals
2. As their skills progress over time, practice drills and games will be more game-situational
3. Teach kids simple force plays, double plays, simple cutoffs, etc., improve communication
4. Kids will STILL always be practicing “the big 3” – throwing, catching, and fielding skills

III. HITTING FUNDAMENTALS (TEACH “AGGRESSIVE” HITTING AND MECHANICS)

A. Bat Selection and Grip/Depth and Distance from Plate (Season End Goal: Comfort as Hitter)

1. Choosing a bat: hold bat straight out to one side, one arm; hold easily for 30 seconds, OK
2. Hold bat loosely in fingers, knuckles in line. Depth: front foot is at midpoint of the plate
3. Distance: batter can easily touch outside front corner of the plate holding bat in lead hand

B. Power Stance/Bat Angle/Location (Season End Goal: Kids Have Balanced, Prepared Stance)

1. Pigeon toes, balls of feet, feet slightly wider than shoulders & lined up straight to pitcher
2. Hands high (at ears), knees bent, shoulders level (front shoulder down a bit), head up/still
3. Emphasize balance and “power position”; arms (hands to elbows) form a 90-degree angle
4. Bat angle 45 degrees, not flat across back or straight up; hands back comfortably & loose

C. Hitting Steps (Season End Goal: Kids Know Strike Zone and Develop a Good Sound Swing)

1. Five steps of hitting: (1) Power Stance; (2) Load (Inward Rotation); (3) Small Step (Stride); (4) “Squish the bug” (back foot planted, rotates forward); (5) Swing-EXPLODE!
2. Should be balanced from start to finish; do balance checks on players during all five steps
3. Teach kids to swing at strikes; know the strike zone! If pitch is a “strike”, be aggressive!
4. Hitting drills at practice: start kids on some tees; soft toss and live hitting; balance drills!

IV. BASERUNNING FUNDAMENTALS (BASERUNNING MECHANICS AND STEALING)

A. Home to First (Season End Goal: Kids Should Master “Running Through”, “Making Turn”)

B. First to Third/Second to Home (Season End Goal: Kids Should Know How to Properly Run the Bases Mechanically, and Should Understand Proper Situational Base Running Approach)

C. Stealing (Season End Goal: Kids Learn Appropriate Technique and Proper Sliding)