

2015 SOFTBALL COACHES HANDBOOK

Holmdel Youth Athletic Association

4 Crawford's Corner Road, Holmdel, NJ 07733

Tel: (732) 945 8016

www.hyaa.org

Dear Coaches,

Thank you for volunteering to coach softball for HYAA. Your time and effort is invaluable and the reason we are able to provide such an awesome experience for so many kids!

The information in this handbook will give you a good start to your season and will answer many questions, especially if you are new to coaching. Please read it carefully and if you have further questions you can follow up with HYAA Commissioners and league presidents for clarification or to ask questions.

Thanks again, have a great season and have fun.

Commissioner: John Migliazza – 732.939.8864

Commissioner: Chris Briamonte – 201.424.2113

League Presidents:

Tee ball (prek/K) - John Yasnowski - 908-723-6270

Clinic (1st/2nd) - Jaimie and Bryan Hynes -917 575 6526 & 732-809-2842

Minors (3rd, 4th, 5th) - Jim Quirk 732-539-2895

Majors (6th, 7th, 8th) - Chris Briamonte 201-424-2113

For more softball information, including game schedules and all season specific documents please visit the baseball/softball page at www.hyaa.org

COACHING AND TEAM FORMATION

Over 120 participants and families in our Spring softball program rely on our volunteer coaches to make this a fun, educational and rewarding experience. Coaches are critical to the success of this program. We rely on you to help shape and develop our players and to keep them excited about this sport that they have a chance to continue to participant at with enthusiasm.

A head coach can request an assistant coach and those players are assigned to a team. At minimum we need one Head Coach and one assistant coach on every team. Teams are selected by our league presidents and our head coaches. We cannot guarantee that each team will be balanced in terms of ability, but the nature of recreational softball is that you take the team you are assigned, focus on fun and learning and enjoy your season, no matter what the results.

We will hold a coaches meeting on Sunday March 29th at the Satz gym from 12:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. ALL coaches are strongly encouraged to attend. At this meeting we will hand out balls and equipment and conduct skills sessions that will include lives demos. Please do your best to attend.

The following responsibilities are *suggestions* of how the coaches (preferably 3) can work together. However, depending on your relationships, friendships and experience our coaches can decide how to best work together.

HEAD COACH

The head coach is responsible for:

- Selecting practice day/s, time/s and location and communicating that to the team.
- Communicating information to the team about practices and games.
- Planning and leading the practices.
- Coaching the games.
- Communicating with parents about their child and the team.
- Handling concerns with the team, opposing coaches, parents etc.

ASSISTANT COACH

The assistant coach is responsible for:

- Assisting the head coach in practices and on game days.
- Standing in when the head coach is absent or unavailable.
- Helping the head coach performs of his/her duties.

LEAGUES & ROSTERS

Teeball; 1st and 2nd Grade (8 years old and under)

Our 1st and 2nd grade and Teeball leagues explain and demonstrate the basics of “what” the sport of softball is. Players hit off the tee in Teeball and coaches pitch for the majority of the season in 1st and 2nd grade. The spring season usually has 12 games played on weekends and evenings. No scores are kept and everyone bats every inning. If there is enough time, games are normally three innings in length. If we have enough parents and volunteers to assist, we will hold a season end barbecue to celebrate the season. Players receive "participation awards."

3rd, 4th and 5th Grade

The league explains “how” to play the game. The basics of Windmill Fast Pitch pitching are developed. The emphasis is on developing pitching, so the play rules have been modified to provide for pitching improvement. Scores are kept but no standings are maintained. Pitching is done in a "controlled" environment that maximizes the player's ability to learn pitching, without the pressure of issuing walks to batters. This is accomplished by allowing the batter's coach to step in and pitch to the batter after four balls have been thrown. No walks or base stealing is allowed.

Games are played on weekday evenings and weekends. Twelve games are played with a town playoff followed by an inter-town world series. If we have enough parents and volunteers to assist, we will hold a season end barbecue to celebrate the season. Scores are recorded but no standings are maintained. Youth umpires manage the games and are paid by HYAA.

6th, 7th and 8th grade (11-13 year olds)

In this league, competitive play begins. Intermediate windmill pitching is allowed but there is a limit on how many innings a pitcher can pitch. Balls and strikes are called by adult umpires. Players do all the pitching with walks and base stealing allowed. Many of the official ASA (Amateur Softball Association) rules are enforced in order for the girls to get better prepared for rules that will be imposed at the high school level. A 12 game regular season schedule is played that end the season with HYAA playoffs and an inter-town world series. Scores are kept but standings are not. In the middle of the season we will put together an All-Star game that allows the coaches to pick representatives from each team to compete in a single game with the emphasis on fun and friendship.

ROSTERS

Coaches will receive their team rosters prior to our Coaches Meeting or they will participate in a team draft along with the league president. **Coaches are not allowed to trade players without approval of the league president and commissioners.** Anyone found doing so will jeopardize their coaching position.

Please contact everyone on your roster before March 23, 2015. Contacting players before practices are set to start eliminates a lot of phone calls as parents call in a panic that they haven't been contacted. Do not rely on e-mail as your only means of initial communication as we cannot guarantee that the e-mail addresses on the roster are accurate and up to date. Please follow up with a phone call if you don't receive a response. Make your own e-mail distribution list to add second e-mails, work e-mails, both parents, etc. and then use that for the season.

If you cannot reach a family and it appears that the contact information is incorrect please contact the HYAA office so they can look for and provide you with alternate phone numbers/e-mails.

If you contact a family and get no response (after trying multiple numbers/e-mails) please let the office know. A player who does not return calls/e-mails and does not show up at all needs to be reported.

If a parent indicates their child might not play please let the league president know so we can follow up immediately. **Do not** imply they will be refunded. Players only receive a refund if there is a player on the waitlist to replace them and there is an administrative charge. The best case scenario for everyone is if we can replace dropping players with waitlisted players and the sooner we can do this the better.

GENERAL GAME INFORMATION AND LEAGUE RULES

LEAGUE RULES

At the Coaches Clinic each Head Coach will get a copy of this Handbook and a set of rules for the all the Leagues. **YOU NEED TO READ THE RULES THAT APPLY TO YOUR LEAGUE.** Also, the Handbook and League

rules can be found on the HYAA website. We recommend you bring a copy of your league's rules to each game so if a question comes up, you can show the umpire the official league rules.

PLAYING TIME

This is a recreational League. Therefore, everyone must play in every game. This means that everyone who shows up must bat in a specified order, even if they are not playing in the field that inning. This takes away the need for the coach to waste valuable coaching time trying to substitute players. Remember that we are trying to develop players. Give players the opportunity during the regular season to play different positions. Players should be rotated on and off the field every inning and no player should sit out on defense for more than one consecutive inning. You might be surprised what you find out by doing this. This will also strengthen your team because you'll be developing competent "backups" for those times when players are absent, late or have to leave early from a game

SPORTSMANSHIP

- **Harassment of the umpires by coaches, parents and spectators will not be tolerated.** Coaches may only approach the umpire for an interpretation of the rule in question. If no umpire is available coaches will share umpire duties.
- Positive chatter is fine, but harassing or negative chatter or cheers are forbidden.
- **No spectators are allowed to stand or sit behind the backstop**
- No smoking!
- No coaches or spectators are allowed to stand/sit in front of dugout fence with the exception of base coaches.

EQUIPMENT

- Players must wear team jersey, softball pants, and gym shoes with laces tied or multipurpose rubber cleats (no metal spikes).
- Catcher must wear a mask, hockey style helmet, chest protector, and shin guards.
- There are boxes by each field that hold bases, pitchers mounds, measuring tapes, extra bats and helmets.
- All batters and base runners must wear a batting helmet. Batter helmet must have a face guard. There are extra helmets in the boxes by the fields in case players do not have one.
- Infield masks are encouraged but not required.

Tips on Player Safety

Each coach has a duty to safeguard the health and safety of his or her players. Plan your practices and games with safety in mind. There are few tips to keep in mind:

- Players should stretch before exercising and bring water to drink

- Remind players in the field to always watch where the ball is and not be 'day-dreaming' and looking elsewhere. Once hit by a softball, they will quickly realize there is nothing SOFT about the ball. By paying attention, they should hopefully escape this pain.
- Base runners and batters must wear protective helmets at all times.
- The player on-deck should be in the on-deck circle or behind the dugout fence with helmet and bat. There should be no other player holding or swinging a bat.
- All players other than those fielding, on base, at bat or on-deck should be seated on the team bench. Discourage wandering over to the other team's bench or sitting in the spectator bleachers.
- No jewelry may be worn during practices or games. This is for your own protection. Medic alert brackets are allowed as long as they are taped to the skin.
- Catchers must wear all of their protective gear whenever they are catching. That means not only in a game, but while they are warming up a pitcher on the side lines.
- Players must be taught not to throw the bat after hitting a ball. An umpire will give the player a first warning, but if the player throws the bat again during the game the umpire will most likely EJECT the player for the safety of both the other players and the umpire.
- When warming up, players should face each other in pairs, and each pair should be parallel to all other pairs warming up. This will avoid errant throws from striking other players.
- Players should be taught to slide and NOT to try to run standing up into a catcher or base fielder. Such contact will usually result in the player being called out, regardless of whether they are safe or not. (Stealing is permitted in the Ponytail and Underwood Leagues.)
- Pitchers should warm up for at least 15 - 20 minutes before entering a game, regardless of the urgency to get them into the game.
- Do not overwork pitchers. Be aware of pitcher complaints of elbow, shoulder or arm soreness. It is not a good practice to have the pitcher throw if experiencing any pain.
- Only coaches are allowed to stand in the base line coach's box without a helmet. All players or individuals under the age of 18 must wear a helmet in the baseline coach's boxes.

WHAT TO DO IN CASE OF A PLAYER INJURY

Despite our best efforts to promote safety, injuries can and will occur. Normally, the injuries bear watching but are not serious. Each coach should have a first aid kit. If there is not one in your team equipment bag, contact your league president or league equipment coordinator. Injuries to pay particular note to are head and limb injuries. Any player who sustains head trauma should be taken out of the ball game and sat down. Take nothing for granted. Consider having the parent take the player to an Emergency Room for evaluation. In case of severe injuries, such as head trauma, it is recommended that **911** be called for emergency assistance. **Do not move the player.** Let trained medical personnel take over.

Once the player has been taken care of, the coach should fill out an injury report. This report will ask you to describe how and when the injury took place. The report should be forwarded to the League Commissioner.

EQUIPMENT BAGS

Coaches in our clinic, minor and majors divisions are provided with an equipment bag that contains; 2 batting helmets, practice and game softballs, catcher's gear, ice packs and a first aid kit. This is available for pick up at the coaches meeting and must be returned at the conclusion of the season. Coaches cannot keep bags and equipment (including softballs). The equipment must be inventoried, cleaned, and then the bags are re-stocked and re-issued each season. We expect to lose equipment and there is obvious wear and tear but the value of the equipment bag and its contents is approximately \$300 so please take good care of it.

Please do not write your team name on the softballs or helmets.

Coaches will receive keys to the storage boxes and sheds at their fields. Softball has our own set of keys so please do not lend and give your keys away. Keys will be returned at end of season.

FIELDS

HYAA has many softball and baseball fields located in our parks and on school grounds. Fields used by softball are as follows:

Cross Farms - Field #2

This field is located at Cross Farms Park directly behind the snack shack. It is used primarily for Teeball games and our HYAA travel softball teams.

Indian Hill – Lower

This field is located behind Indian Hill School and is positioned to the left along the fences as you walk behind the school. It is used primarily by our 1st and 2nd Grade league.

Germinario

This field is located at the Satz Middle School and it runs along the parking lots to the left side of the school. It is used primarily by our 3, 4th and 5th Grade league.

High School Upper

This field is located up the driveway alongside the Germinario outfield and gas depot on the left side of Satz Middle School. It is not visible from the parking lots. It is used primarily by our 6th, 7th and 8th Grade league.

Teams are welcome to practice on any open fields or in the outfields on any day that is not your assigned day provided they do not interfere with an ongoing practices or games. Fields noted as free on the HYAA website are on a first come, first served basis so please be flexible, share and work with other teams and coaches. Games always have priority on the fields.

FIELD MAINTENANCE

Our league encourages all team parents to help run our programs. This includes maintaining and setting up our fields prior to each game. At the start of our season, our league presidents will assign a league Field Coordinator who will be responsible to ensure teams set up fields prior to their games. Field duties include care and maintenance of our softball fields such as raking fields prior to and after our games, laying down bases and pitchers mounds and lining fields. Each team will have a field liaison who will work with the Field Coordinator to assign field duties for teams scheduled to be on the field that day. It is the responsibility of assigned parents to find fill-ins if they cannot handle field duties during their assigned time. Coaches should walk parents through the field duties at the first practice or soon afterward. Please note that this is a new request of parent's this year and should take less than 15 minutes. Most important, it provides our coaches more time to get their teams ready to play.

League Field Coordinators also make the final decision on whether a field is "playable" due to water or other conditions. Field Coordinators will notify league presidents and the two head coaches or township representatives) if a field is not playable no later than 30 minutes prior to the scheduled game time, unless both teams agree to an alternative time.

If applicable, Field Coordinators also work with the township office to ensure umpires are scheduled for each game and notified of any changes or cancellations. If the Field Coordinators are not available, the responsibility will fall on the League President.

UNIFORM INFORMATION

Uniforms are purchased by HYAA for the entire league and are included in the registration fee. The uniforms add a great, professional look to our leagues and the kids love them. In addition to the t-shirts, girls are provided matching tie dye socks and a hat (in certain leagues). Coaches are encouraged to have the teams wear same color pant if/when possible.

If for some reason a player receives a uniform that does not fit and there's no-one to exchange with on your team please instruct parents to contact the league president to see if we have a uniform from another division that may fit. Replacements can be ordered if necessary but it will take at least two weeks. All uniform issues need to be resolved prior to the second game if possible, but definitely by Picture Day so don't delay handing them out.

UMPIRES

This year we are experimenting with using teenage umpires for our leagues. A majority of our umpires are experienced players: recreational, travel, and possible high school and they all know the game. **We have a zero tolerance policy as far as umpire abuse** and we ask that you respect the umpires, let them do their job and not shout or criticize from the bleachers. Concerns should be reported to our softball commissioners who will handle them accordingly.

MULTI-TOWN LEAGUE PLAY

Holmdel participates in a multi-town league along with Hazlet, Matawan/Aberdeen, Keansburg and St. Joe's. All our age divisions will travel for games in these towns and we see this approach adding an exciting element to our recreational league. We have published League-wide rules for each division that can be found on the baseball/softball page of the HYAA website. All coaches are expected to be familiar with league rules and abide by them.

At the end of the season, our Minors and Majors divisions will have an in-town playoff sending the winning team to a League World Series!

ONLINE GAME SCHEDULES

Game schedules are posted online for all divisions. To view the schedules please visit www.hyaa.org.

Schedules will be updated throughout the season with any changes, rain outs, reschedules etc. so please continue to check and consider what is posted online to be the most accurate and up to date. We try to avoid game conflicts for head coaches coaching more than one team so they can be at all games. We cannot guarantee it 100%, but try to make accommodations when possible.

RESCHEDULES

League Presidents will be responsible for rescheduling cancel games. Preferences will be considered but not guaranteed. All coaches are responsible to ensure they update parents and players with new games or practice times.

TELEPHONE HOTLINE AND ONLINE UPDATES – WEATHER & FIELDS

When the Township or Board of Education closes fields **ALL** community sports groups are made aware of the closure and we expect, but can't guarantee, that everyone adheres. Official field closure means **ALL** practices and/or games are cancelled.

Coaches are responsible for contacting their team. If fields are open but you choose to cancel that is at your discretion. Make your team aware but don't assume they see your email. It may be best to all send text messages or have it posted in the website if there is enough advanced notice.

Coaches should try to “make up” practices missed due to bad weather but it is not always possible. The League Presidents will always try to reschedule games cancelled due to the weather, but depending on the severity of the rain throughout the season we cannot guarantee it.

PICTURE DAY

Picture Day is scheduled each season and each team is assigned a specific time. The schedule will be posted online. Coaches will receive their picture envelopes with the uniform pick-up and these should be handed out about one week prior to the date. If you hand them out earlier parents may lose them! Players should wear their full uniform (jersey, socks, and hats) and sneakers. Cleats are not allowed in the gym. Instruct players to arrive 15 minutes before your scheduled time. Pictures will be handed out at the end of the season. Players are not required to purchase pictures, but everyone should be encouraged to attend to be a part of the team picture.

Pictures are scheduled back to back where possible for head coach and assistant coaches coaching more than one team. If you cannot make the picture time you have been scheduled please let us know as soon as possible to reschedule the time. An alternative date will not be available.

TROPHIES (FINAL DETERMINATIONS MADE AT END OF SEASON)

At the end of the season players will receive a participation medal in t-ball and Clinic and first and second place trophies in other leagues. These will be available for pick up at the last game and we encourage all coaches to take a final game picture, if possible.

TIPS FOR GETTING STARTED WITH YOUR SOFTBALL TEAM

While there is no one magic formula for being successful with your new softball team, these tips should make the process a little smoother for the players, their families and you, as a coach. The most important thing for you to remember is to make softball FUN for your players. This will guarantee that your players will come away with a good experience after the season is over.

In general, there are keys to being an effective coach:

- Always be prepared – know what you want to accomplish and how you will do it in all practice and game situations.
- Make it fun!
- Stay flexible – if what you are doing is not working, do something else.
- Be Positive – words of encouragement go a long way!
- Keep the energy level high
- Keep your eyes open and get to know your team. They are a group of individuals with specific learning and communication styles.

Pre-season steps:

Schedule a pre-season parents meeting (this could be before your first practice or at a separate time). Call or e-mail all the parents to say “hello” and inform them of the date of the meeting. Things to cover at this meeting are:

- a) Introduce yourself & assistant coaches – tell them a few things about yourselves, your athletic history, your family, your coaching philosophy.
- b) Solicit a team coordinator and a field coordinator.
- c) Hand out uniforms (if available) and discuss equipment that players must have (cleats, mitt, helmet, field masks, etc.).
- d) Discuss schedules for practices and games.
- e) Encourage parents to check the web-site for schedules, weather, updates etc.
- f) Discuss practice policies – why attendance and timeliness are important.
- g) Set up phone tree and/or e-mail list.
- h) Review important points the Parent’s Code of Conduct
- i) Discuss your expectations for the season, i.e., practices and games are fun, everyone plays, what age-appropriate skills can be taught at specific age levels.

During the season:

Plan your practices. Don’t try and “wing” it – do your homework and practices will be much more fun and useful. Spending 15-20 minutes planning your practice will pay off. Have REALISTIC expectations of what children can learn at different ages and don’t expect too much too soon.

Practices should follow a logical, consistent pattern.

First Practice Guidance:

Whether you're a new or experienced coach, you want to be successful, and we want you to be successful. Here are some basic points on coaching.

Be Organized.

At the first practice or the first time you meet your players you should have:

- A typed list of all your players, organized by name.
- A sheet for each of your players with your name, your assistants and everyone's telephone numbers and email addresses.
- Copies of the practice schedule—dates, times and places—for each player.

Give Your Players Ample Time to Get Ready.

It is a good idea to start with stretching exercises. Experts in sports medicine counsel coaches to get their players used to doing stretching before exercising. Exercising without proper preparation can overextend even young muscles.

Get them to warm up throwing the ball easily among themselves. This accomplishes two things; one, it gets them doing something. Secondly, it gives you time to introduce yourself to the parents, hand out the telephone lists and answer questions.

Have a Script

Plan in advance what you are going to do in the first practice. You should have a practice plan prepared for each practice.

Get Your Assistants on the Same Page

Don't do it all yourself. If you don't have assistants, recruit any parents who are standing by watching or reading the newspaper in the stands. Don't be bashful. They wouldn't be there unless they were interested and probably dying to get involved. This is particularly true for the older leagues, where at least two or three assistants are necessary.

Keep Each Drill Short

For the younger girls, you should decrease the length of drills from 10 to 15 minutes. If you have assistants, have multiple drills (stations) going and have the girls rotate to the next station or drill on your call.

Plan more activities than you think you will need. If an activity does not seem to be working, move to the next activity. Our league presidents may distribute activity ideas throughout the season. If you have a good activity, please share it with your league presidents so we can incorporate into other team practices.

Try to keep your instruction to a minimum. Learning will be reinforced naturally as the player masters a skill. A few comments between activities are all that most children will absorb. Again, remember to keep your directions age-appropriate. Remember to keep it positive!

Keep Them Moving

Standing around invites disorganization. Don't be hesitant to suspend the drill and call for running laps around the field.

One good drill to end a practice is to split the players into two equal teams. Place one team at second base and the other at home plate. Give each a ball. At your call they should begin running the bases in a counter-clockwise fashion, touching all bases on path to the base from which they began. At this point they should hand the ball off, in relay fashion, to the next team member. Position coaches and parents at third and first base to ensure each base is touched. Failure to touch the base will mean the player must return to touch the base.

Cheer on each team as they run the bases until all players have run an equal number of times. The first team to successfully touch all bases first wins. As a reward the winning team can help put away the equipment. The losing team should run an additional two laps (or whatever you feel appropriate) around the circumference of the field.

Give Your Players Periodic Breaks

Particularly in hot weather, be sensitive to the impact of the sun and heat on your players. You may need to schedule a brief water break.

Communicate with Your Players and the Parents

- Review what you did today. Give your impressions; ask the same of the players.
- Tell them what you plan to do next practice.
- Explain to the parents and players you're coaching philosophy, what you expect out of them, and what they should expect from you.
- Ask all players to be at practice at least 15 minutes before the scheduled beginning time. You understand that they may well have other obligations, but so do you.
- Explain that you plan to begin practice promptly at the scheduled hour and end it at the approximate time and the players need to do the necessary warm-up and stretching exercises before practice begins.
- Players should come properly dressed, equipped and prepared to participate. In the Ponytail, Underwood, and Glover Leagues players should consider acquiring softball cleats (non-metal) or other appropriate footwear.
- Players should bring a supply of water to each practice and game.
- Parents should pick up their players promptly at the scheduled time. (While the Coach is obligated by AGSA to stay with the player until her parent/guardian arrives, don't let 'tardy' parents make you a baby sitter.) If a player is going home with another parent or player, the parents or player should inform you beforehand.

***NOTE:** Should coaches encounter such problems on a frequent basis, they should contact their respective League Commissioners, who will contact the parents to remind them of the League's policy.*

Plan your game day:

- Make sure that parents know to arrive to a game early. 20-30 minutes ahead of the scheduled game time. This will also leave parents on field duty time to prep fields.
- Determine which responsibilities will be taken by coaches and asst. coaches.
- Plan your line-up, but be flexible. Be sure to incorporate substitutions.
- Keep sideline direction to a minimum. Coaching is done 95% during practice sessions. Let the players play and don't commentate.
- Focus on small victories – "nice pitch", "great hit" rather than runs.
- After the game, conclude with a few positive feedback points and things to think about for the next practice or game.

AGE APPROPRIATE PROGRESSIONS

T-BALL & 1st Grade Goals:

1) Learning the basic rules:

- a. The right direction to run when the ball is hit
- b. Where the bases are and runners must touch the bases
- c. How to record outs (catch the ball in the air, throw to first, or tag the runners)
- d. Running past first base
- e. Concept of a team
- f. Three outs constitute a half an inning (our games will not count outs – all players bat)

2) Throwing Mechanics:

- a. Turn the body so the front shoulder points toward the target
- b. Keep the throwing elbow above the shoulder
- c. Step toward the target with the non-throwing foot and release the ball

3) Tracking:

- a. Follow the ball with the eyes into the glove
- b. Whether on the ground or in the air use softer balls
- c. Use two hands to catch and field
- d. Try to catch the ball out in front of the body

4) Hitting:

- a. How to hold and swing a bat
- b. Batting safety! When not to swing bats and wearing batting helmets
- c. Hitting off a tee
- d. Hitting softly tossed pitches

5) Learning Position Play:

- a. If the ball is hit to a teammate let him or her field it
- b. Proper fielding position (down and ready)

2nd 3rd and 4th Grade Goals:

1) Learning the basic rules:

- a. Concept of TEAM
- b. Force outs
- c. Tagging up
- d. What is a double play
- e. Base running -When you don't have to run -Not running into or past teammates on the base paths -
Always keep running after ball is hit with two outs
- f. Balls and Strikes
- g. Good Sportsmanship

2) Throwing Mechanics

- a. Introduce the four-seam grip
- b. Line up feet and shoulders – face to the side, not chest to target
- c. Point the front shoulder, step and throw
- d. Introduce the concept of generating momentum to the target and following the throw.

3) Catching and Fielding

- a. Thrown and hits balls
- b. Fingers up versus fingers down
- c. See the glove and the ball
- d. Use two hands
- e. Forehands and backhands
- f. Introduce the underhand flip
- g. First-base fundamentals
- h. Cross over and drop steps

4) Hitting

- a. Choosing the right bat
- b. Proper grip
- c. Hitting pitched balls
- d. Introduce drill work (tee, soft toss, short toss)
- e. NO elbows up

5) Learning Position Play

- a. Learn the positions and the areas each player should cover
- b. Cover the nearest base when the ball is not hit to you.
- c. Basics of cut-offs and relays

6th 7th & 8th Grade Goals

1) Learning the Basic Rules

2) Base Running

- a. Leads
- b. Stealing
- c. Extra-base hits
- d. Tagging up and going half way
- e. Proper Sliding techniques

3) Pitching & Throwing Mechanics

- a. Push off mound
- b. Four seam grip
- c. Step, throw, follow

4) Hitting

- a. Repetitions
- b. Drill Work
- c. Tee -Soft toss -Quick Swings -Stick Ball
- d. Bunting

5) Learning Team Fundamentals

- a. Cut-offs and relays
- b. Basic bunt defenses
- c. Basic first and third situations
- d. Double plays
- e. Defending the steal
- f. Infield and outfield communication and priorities
- g. Backing up bases

Hitting

Main Points

1. **Selecting a bat**-pick a bat that feels right and that is light enough to generate good bat speed. Player should be able to hold bat straight to the side, shoulder height for at least 20 seconds.
2. **Stance**-starting point; need vision, balance, and plate coverage.
3. **Weight shift**-weight shifts to backside, generating energy, before being taken forward; verbal cue: "You have to go back to go forward." (Load Phase).
4. **Stride**-short and soft (toward pitcher) or none at all.
5. **Swing**-short and quick, using waist, backfoot/leg, hands, wrists and forearms. Head down, rotating at the hips as back foot rotates towards pitcher so laces face pitcher.
6. **Follow-through**-one or two hands; takes care of itself if all elements of swing are in place.

Batting Technique Basics

Proper Stance

- Feet -shoulder width apart,
- Square the feet to home plate –you can draw a line in the dirt to show the players where to stand
- Bend the knees slightly
- Grip the bat with the fingers, not tightly with the palm of hand. A relaxed grip is preferred
- Square the shoulders to the feet, chin should be closer to the front shoulder.
- Elbows should be slightly bent with the hands just outside the back armpit.

Proper Swing Motion

- Load and transfer -Begin the swing with a little to no step toward the pitcher.
- Do not pick the foot up high. It's a very subtle lift and move forward.
- The stance should remain closed –do not step out towards third. This is a big mistake many young batters make – use a towel and place along third base line so the batter steps on it if they step toward 3rd.
- Keep palms of hands perpendicular with the sky and the ground – girls should swing with one palm facing up and the other one facing down – they should see their finger nails as they make contact with the ball (see One Arm Tee Drill).
- Throw hands toward the ball, bringing bat through the hitting zone to hit the ball. Start turning the back foot so the laces end up facing the pitcher.
- As the hands come through, turn hips at the same time. The player should turn on the ball of back foot. Be careful using the term squashing the bug as we want some weight to shift to the front leg.
- Eyes should remain on the ball through impact.
- Proper stance and swing should be balanced.

Hitting a Softball

Hitting a softball is difficult! Teaching kids how to hit a softball shouldn't be. Holmdel follows a few simple concepts that will help our coaches and players get the most out of every at bat, at every age level. The following videos will cover the basics, at any age level and truly a good chunk of what you need to know about proper stance and form.

How to Hit a Baseball (Baseball and Softball have the same swings – this video is great in summarizing the key points of stance and form).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2rvu4WRc3ms>

How to Hit a Softball – video #2

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HFXIONfyjek&index=4&list=FLhdXEE4FJLPVr_ weyCFGMmg

How to Hit a Softball – video #3

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l73XZIQeyAA>

Using the Batting Tee

Helps a player develop skills in keeping eye on the ball, good form and hip rotation.

Equipment:

Bat and helmet; Batting Tee

Setup:

Use this drill as a batting practice station. For younger players, you can draw a smiley face “target” on a ball and center it on the tee.

Execution:

Start by placing a ball on the tee and lining up the girls so the meat of the bat is even with the ball as they extend their arms. They should be positioned behind the ball with their front foot along the corner of the tee. Have the girls focus on developing a level swing, not extending their arm before they reach the ball (if it looks like a sideways pendulum, they have extended too early). Once they strike the ball they should be extending the bat towards the pitcher and then wrap their arm around.

Tee Work

Objective To develop proper weight shift; verbal cue: “You have to go back to go forward” **Setup** Batting tee, bucket of balls, net, screen or fence to hit into **Execution** Players adjust the batting tee to a height that makes them swing down slightly to get the barrel of the bat to the ball. Players hit into the screen or a net with a target. Work strictly on weight shift (“Go back to go forward”). Take all the weight to the back side before exploding forward. Keep the head down and eyes on the ball. Take the front foot and front shoulder directly toward pitcher. Try to hit the ball at the target each time. Avoid an uppercut swing. If you don’t have a net, plastic balls, tennis balls, or soft rubber balls can be hit into a fence. Never hit softballs into a fence.

Coaching Keys To help keep players from dropping the front shoulder, tell them to focus on hitting the ball into a target directly in front of the tee. If they’re pulling the ball weakly, remind them to go straight back first before striding straight forward toward the pitcher (“Go straight back, then straight forward”). If they hit the tee, top ground balls, or swing and miss often, have them pick a spot on the ball and focus on that spot until they make contact.

Double Tee Drill

This drill will teach the player to extend the bat through the ball. Set up two tees, one in front of the other at equal heights. Player should swing and hit the ball on the first tee and then follow through so the bat swings through the ball on the second tee. If the first ball takes out the second ball, that’s ok. They should finish with their arms around the body and hips properly rotated.

Hip Turn Drill

The hip turn drill helps in developing proper hip rotation needed for a good swing. It can be done individually or as a group. The player takes a bat and places it behind their waist with their hands holding near the ends of the bat. Have a tee set up and have them take a small stride and swing with the bat behind them. They should finish with the hips properly rotated with their back hand out over the plate area.

Soft Toss

Objective To use a proper grip and understand how that helps improve bat speed, verbal cue: “Loose hands, quick bat” **Setup** Bucket of balls, coach, player or toss machine to toss; net screen, or fence to hit into **Execution** This is a standard hitting drill that can be done virtually anywhere. Teammates can toss to one another, or a coach can toss to a player.

The batter takes his or her stance; the tosser kneels across from the hitter, slightly in front of home plate in foul ground, not in the direction that the ball will be hit. The ball is tossed underhand so the batter can hit it out in front of the plate. The hitter wants to concentrate on having a loose grip in the fingers with the “door knocking” knuckles lined up. This will allow the wrists to unlock, promoting a quicker swing using the hands, wrists, and forearms. Batters should think loose hands, quick bat. This

drill works best if done into a screen with a target, but it can also be done into a fence if plastic balls, tennis balls, or rubber balls are used. Never hit softballs into a fence.

Coaching Keys If players seem to be getting jammed quite a bit, take a look at where the tosses are coming from and are being hit. A lot of coaches try to soft toss from a position directly across from the batter. When the ball is coming directly at the batter, he or she actually has to drag the bat to the ball, hitting it at a location that's not in front of home plate. The toss should come from an angle slightly in front of home plate and be struck slightly in front of the plate. This allows the wrists to unlock and the barrel of the bat to get to the ball.

Watch The Ball Drill

Watch the ball involves three players and helps in keeping the batters eye on the ball. You have a pitcher, a catcher and the batter. The pitcher pitches to the catcher while the batter simply watches (Does not swing) every pitch all the way into the catcher's glove. This helps in picking up the ball from the pitcher as well as keeping your eye on the ball all the way through.

Hitting Contests

Objective To add a competitive angle to regular hitting drills to make them seem less like work **Setup** Depends on the drill; usually a bucket of balls and a coach or pitching machine to feed or pitch **Execution** Almost any hitting drill can be turned into a contest using a point system. Award a point for a hard ground ball up the middle, 2 points for a line drive up the middle, and 5 points for a line drive up the middle that reaches the back wall of a cage or the outfield grass (depending on where you're hitting). Develop your own point systems for whatever concept you're teaching. Stress proper hitting mechanics at all times. The scoring sheet included here is designed to help you track individual and group totals for two rounds as well as the team total. Keep a record and compare results over the season to see how your team is progressing.

Throwing Main Points

1. Use a four-seam grip.
2. Take the ball down, out, and up out of the glove (circular motion).
3. Hand above the ball at first, shifting to behind the ball as release point approaches.
4. Elbow above the shoulder.
5. Point front shoulder toward target.
6. Step toward target.
7. Release ball.
8. Follow through.

Fielding Drills:

1. **Thumbs Up and Thumbs Down: (Beginner – 1st Lesson)** Teach girls that any ball arriving above their belly they should catch with thumbs and fingers pointing up. Any ball arriving below their belly should be caught with thumbs and fingers pointing down. Form two Lines with two coaches throwing balls to them. One coach throws balls above their belly, the other below. Girls rotate lines after each catch. This can be done with tennis balls and no gloves, and then with gloves and softballs.
2. **Windshield Wipers: (Beginner – 2nd Lesson)** – Teach the girls to reach for the ball by extending their glove in clockwise and counter clockwise movements replicating a windshield wiper. Use a tennis ball and no glove at first then add gloves and softballs. Each girl steps up and gets three balls tossed to her from a short distance. First to their left, then over their head, then to their right. Form as many lines as you have coaches and have the girls rotate lines to keep them moving.
3. **Triangles:**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-BgiappeTZk>
4. **Gators and Flies:** Form 2 Lines, coaches roll balls to the first girl in each line, they field it with two hands (gator chop) and throw it back to coach. Coach then throws them a pop fly to the right or left that they must run to and catch. They throw back to coach and switch lines. Next girl goes. This can also be done with mini hurdles or ladders to improve footwork.
5. **Fielding Buddies:** Triangles, Oven Mitts; Avoid Ostriches Behind the Back; Airplanes - No Helicopters Allowed; Forehands and Backhands
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZLhf8Ep8t4>
6. **Ground Ball Work: More Advanced**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XDwFdR4gluQ>

Throwing Drills:

1. One Knee Snap Throws & Figure Eights

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uqbF3nIMKAE>

2. Throwing Mechanics: Finger Tips, C Grip, Heel Step, Elbows Up, Fire and Follow Through

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dpPh2D1T9iY>

Combo Fielding and Throwing Drills:

1. Bucket Ball: (Great for younger grades) – Form two teams of fielders. Each team faces a bucket with a helmet on top. Coaches roll ground balls to the girl in the front of the line who throws the ball at the helmet. If they hit the bucket or helmet they get 1 point, if they knock the helmet off the bucket they get two points. Then they run to the back of their team's line. First team to 10 points wins.

2. Groundball Work (Advanced):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XDwFdR4gluQ>

3. Cross Fire: Form two teams of 3 infielders. One team fields grounders hit from home plate to SS and the SS throws to 1B who throws to the catcher at home who flips back to the coach and repeats the process. The second team forms the same combination by fielding balls hit from second base to a "SS position" on the first baseline between home and 1B, and then throws to the first baseman (who is playing at 3B) who then throws to a catcher (at 2B), who flips back to the coach who repeats the process.

This can be played as a speed game (first team to get ball back to the catcher 10 times wins), or as a point system awarding points for getting an out on a cleanly fielded ball.

4. Turn 2 and Throw'em Out: This is a drill which allows you to get the entire infield involved and works on Pitching, Catching, Fielding, and turning double plays. Set up a complete infield with a pitcher. The pitcher throws a pitch to the catcher who then throws to 3B. The third baseman then throws the ball back to the pitcher and they repeat the process. Meanwhile a coach is standing slightly up the first baseline (just outside left-handed batter's box) and hits a

groundball to SS who tosses to 2B who then throws to 1B. The first baseman then throws to a 2nd catcher standing by the coach who flips to the coach who then hits a ball to second baseman who flips to SS and the process repeats again.

5. **Relays** – Form teams of three girls who line up in a distance appropriate for their age. Each team has a ball and throws to the “Relay Girl” in the middle who turns and throws to the next girl behind her, who then throws back to the “Relay Girl” etc. Most important in this drill is the “Relay Girl’s” glove should be crossing her chest to catch the ball. This way she doesn’t have to spin to throw it to the next girl. Once she catches the only thing that moves is her hand to glove and then throw. First team to go up and down the line 10 times wins. A major focus in this drill should be getting girls to move their feet and go to the ball to receive it, not stand still and simply reach for the ball.
6. **Circle of Doom – (Faceguards recommended and an odd # of players are required)**. The girls line up in a circle in a throwing distance appropriate for this age group. One girl begins by throwing a ball to the girl opposite her in the circle, who then throws the ball to one girl to the right of where it came from, repeat. Add additional balls.
7. **Outfield Drill: Knee Down vs. Crow Hops (Advanced)** – Teach the girls the difference between fielding a ball with no one on base (or no urgent throw) vs. needing to charge the ball and throw a runner out. Also, keeps the girls moving and sprinting through the rotations.

Form a line in LF with a coach at home plate who hits a ball to the first girl in line who fields the ball with knee down and throws to 2B. The second baseman then throws her a grounder which she charges and throws to catcher at home with a crow hop, and then rotates to 2B. Then repeat with next girl, while second baseman rotates to catcher, and the catcher then sprints to the back of the LF line of girls.

A second line is formed in RF and a second coach (standing slightly up first baseline) hits a ball to first girl in line who charges the ball and throws to 1B as quick as possible to try and throw the hitter out. The first baseman then throws her a grounder which she fields knee down, and throws in to a second alternate catcher standing to the right of the coach up the first baseline. The RF then rotates to 1B, the first baseman rotates to catcher, and the catcher sprints to the back of the RF line of girls.

After about 4-5 rotations switch up the stations: girls in LF, 2B and catcher, move to RF, 1B and alternate catcher (up first baseline) and vice versa.