



COACHING 12U PLAYERS

FEATURES OF THIS AGE GROUP

- Fine-muscle motor skills starting to develop
- May learn better by breaking a skill into components
- May have difficulty adapting to body changes (hormonal and growth)
- Sense of competition developing

PRINCIPLES

- Focus developing more intricate motor skills
- Emphasize the development of concepts of team work, cooperation, and importance of practice
- Ensure base of fundamental skills
- Increase competitiveness but still not intense competition
- Focus on developing good practice/learning habits

MENTAL PREPARATION

- Introduce basic strategy: stealing, bunting
- Develop the role and positioning of different positions (e.g. middle infielders have 2 bases to cover)
- Teach principle of coverage (all plays have a backup)
- Emphasize importance of teamwork and sportsmanship
- Practice different types of focus, mental prep for each play
- Introduce and practice imaging visualization
- Introduce concept of self-talk
- Introduce concept of pre-game preparation:
 - Mental: focus
 - Physical: what to eat/not eat before or during a game
 - Review importance and techniques of warming up
- Begin individual goal setting (skill development)
- Expect 100% in practices and games

SOFTBALL SKILLS – PHYSICAL

Ensure the players can correctly perform the most fundamental skills in softball: throwing and catching the ball, and running. Some players may learn better by imitation (teach the whole motion of a skill) whereas others will learn better by breaking a skill down into its components.



THROWING

- By this age players should have the basic mechanics - but review and check periodically
- Teach proper grip and wrist snap to get backspin on the throw
- Teach leg drive to add power to throw
- Stress the importance of accuracy
- Do not allow sloppy throwing mechanics during warm ups



FIELDING

Fielding Ground Balls

- Review and practice the basic fielding “ready” position
- Emphasize moving to the ball and cradling the ball up to the belly (practice without gloves as much as possible)
- Introduce lateral movement: shuffle step
- Check the following:
 - Eye following ball into glove (or hands)
 - Catching ball in front (not between legs)
 - Keeping low while moving to ball
 - Ready to field on every pitch



Fielding Flys

- Introduce proper body and hand position
- Focus on running hard to ball and waiting for it
- Practice running with glove (ensure proper running mechanics, NOT running with glove out)
- Ensure lots of practice judging fly balls

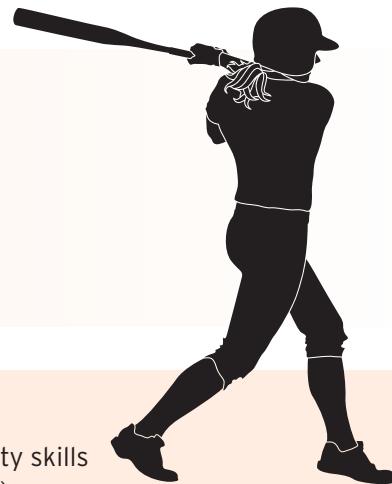
RUNNING AND BASE RUNNING

- Require “running start” from a base
- Practice running for speed over short distances (e.g. home to first)
- Review running fundamentals
- Introduce bent leg slide

SOFTBALL SKILLS – PHYSICAL

HITTING

- Develop a desire to hit (de-emphasize bases on balls)
- ✓ Check the following:
 - Grip, stance
 - Trigger, stride
 - Attack: pivot, hands to ball, head down, braced front leg



BUNTING

- Teach the basic sacrifice bunt - add directing ball down both baselines
- More skilled bunters can work on showing bunt later

FITNESS

- Develop flexibility skills (how to stretch)
- Develop speed (short distance drills)

CATCHING

- Focus on safety and confidence (they go hand in hand)
- ✓ Check the following:
 - Position, umpire view
 - Setting up, target.
 - Receiving ball
 - Blocking balls in dirt
 - Retrieving passed ball/wild pitch

PITCHING

At this level pitchers should be able to throw strikes about 50% of the time.

- Emphasize the long term nature of learning to pitch, the necessity of constant practice. Encourage/require parental commitment to daily practice. Teach parent the fundamentals.
- Teach pitchers components only to fix problems, most will learn better using whole motion ("walk through")
- Introduce leg drive for power
- ✓ Check the following:
 - Body rotation (open > close)
 - Pitching arm in the correct plane (straight up and down - ear and hip)
 - Release point at the hip: do not allow for leaning forward on release (to aim the ball into the strike zone)
 - Stride foot is landing on the power line (line leading straight to plate)
- Teach pitching to the corners
- Advanced pitchers should:
 - Have a consistent a change-up that they can throw for a strike on any count
 - Begin developing a movement pitch, typically a drop ball



SOFTBALL WORKOUT

