

Mountain View ASA Softball

MVASA Coaching Guidelines for Player Progression

The following are general guidelines to be used for coaches at each level. While it is understood that each player is at a different skill and interest level, using these guidelines will help the development of all players and should make the experience more fulfilling and enjoyable for all the players.

8U

Fielding

- All players should know where every position is on the field.
- Players should learn proper techniques for fielding ground balls (glove down) and fly balls (glove up, two hands).
- Upon moving up to 10U, players should start to have an idea of what positions they may like to focus on, but each player should have an opportunity to play each position in game or practice situations.
- Players should understand the proper techniques for transferring ball from glove to throwing hand.
- Players should have proper overhand throwing form using their whole arm, hip rotation, and footwork (not sidearm, not “shot-putting” throws, not “dart throwing”), eyes on target, elbow higher than shoulder
- Players should learn how to grip ball when throwing using fingers, releasing off fingertips, not using palms
- Introduce crow hopping technique
- Introduce difference between force out and tag out
- Introduce covering bases for force outs
- Introduce rounding the ball on ground balls

Batting

- Players should understand what the batter’s box is and to stand inside it when batting
- Players should understand proper swinging techniques (no upper-cutting, keeping both hands on the bat, keeping head and front shoulder down until contact)
- Keeping back foot still and rotation of hips to swing; stepping in to a swing is acceptable but not necessary if proper hip rotation is practiced.
- NO THROWING OF BATS
- Bunting should be introduced and proper techniques of bunting shown (fingers behind the barrel, squaring up of legs and shoulders)
- Players should be able to identify balls / strikes when batting and learn to not swing at balls

Base running

- Players should understand how to run the bases (1st to 2nd to 3rd to home)
- Players should be taught to run as fast as they can to first base upon making contact with ball when batting
- Pushing off with toes, not running flat footed

- Players should understand to run through 1B – not slowing down at the base
- Hustling at all times on bases should be stressed
- Players should understand tagging up (fly ball, less than 2 outs), force outs, and tag outs

Catchers

- At the 8U level, the coach should identify which players have the desire and ability to play the catcher position. This position is not for everyone and it can be scary to younger children.
- The catcher should understand how to use the equipment to protect themselves (not sitting on their knees).
- Catchers should be able to catch most pitches thrown within the vicinity of the strike zone.
- Catchers should start to develop skills for blocking low balls
- Catchers should be able to throw the ball back to the pitcher accurately

Pitchers

- At the 8U level, the coach should identify which players have the desire and ability to pitch. This position is not for everyone and it can be scary and mechanics can be difficult for younger children.
- Pitchers should be able to start with both feet on rubber, first movement being forward.
- Pitchers should understand to stay relaxed and not aim the ball towards the plate.
- Pitchers should keep their backs straight (not bent over like bowling) and learn to release the ball with wrist snap at the hip.
- Coaches should identify which players have potential for pitching at older levels and may recommend them to work with individual pitching coaches or coaches may bring in a pitching coach to work with them individually at practices.

10U

Fielding

- Players should have identified their 2 or 3 best / most desirable positions but should have experience playing each position on the field.
- No player should be pigeon-holed to one position exclusively. This is a developmental league and intended to develop entire teams – not individual players. No player should play the same position more than 2/3 of the defensive innings over the course of the regular season. Pitchers and catchers may be an exception to this IF there are not viable alternatives at those positions.
- At least 3 players per team should be capable of playing each position with the skills listed below.
- Players should master proper techniques for fielding ground balls (glove down) and fly balls (glove up, two hands).
- Upon moving up to 12U, players should start to have an idea of what 2 or 3 positions they may like to focus on, but each player should have an opportunity to learn each position in game or practice situations.
- Players should master the proper techniques for transferring ball from glove to throwing hand.
- Players should master proper overhand throwing form using their whole arm, hip rotation, and footwork (not sidearm, not “shot-putting” throws, not “dart throwing”), eyes on target, elbow higher than shoulder
- Players should master how to grip ball when throwing using fingers, releasing off fingertips, not using palms
- Work on crow hopping technique and understand when to use it
- Completely understand the difference between force out and tag out
- Players should understand covering bases for force outs and how to move when ball is hit or thrown; at this level, they won’t remember to do this every time but they should understand what they should do and situations (runners on, different locations of hits) should be covered in practice
- Master rounding the ball on ground balls
- All infielders should learn to charge (move in) on ground balls; not backing up or waiting for ball to come to them
- All infielders should be able to know what to do on a batted ball with any combination of runners on and based on number of outs; they may not be able to react quickly in game situations but they should at least understand what they should do
- Introduce backhand plays and when to use them

First Base

- Players identified for 1B should be able to cover the base on a batted ball
- First baseman should learn when to immediately cover 1B and when to go after a ball; if pitcher or 2B can easily make the play, they cover first, but if they can get to the ball and get to 1B before runner, they should
- Throwing hand foot is on the front inside corner of the base
- Feet close together until throw is coming to them, then step towards throw with glove hand foot
- Dropping down to one or both knees to block balls in dirt if necessary

Second Base

- Immediately moving to cover 2B on ball hit to left side (3B or SS)

- Should be able to consistently, accurately throw to first base
- Introduce covering 1B if first baseman charges in for ball
- Introduce moving in for weak hitters, moving back for strong hitters
- Backing up throws back to pitcher
- Introduce cutoff scenarios for balls in outfield

SS

- Immediately moving to cover 2B on ball hit to right side (1B or 2B)
- Should be able to consistently, accurately throw to first base even if it's bouncing
- Should throw line drives to first base – no rainbows
- Introduce covering 3B if third baseman charges in for ball
- Introduce moving in for weak hitters, moving back for strong hitters
- Backing up throws back to pitcher
- Introduce cutoff scenarios for balls in outfield

Third Base

- Introduce covering of bunts – charging in hard when batter squares to bunt
- Should be able to consistently, accurately throw to first base even if it's bouncing
- Should throw line drives to first base – no rainbows
- Understand to cover 3B when runners on 1B and 2B; understand they can touch third on a ground ball to them in this situation
- Introduce moving in for weak hitters, moving back for strong hitters

Outfielders

- Introduce cutoff scenarios and looking for cutoff man
- Introduce backing up 1B (RF) and 3B (LF)
- Outfielders should start to learn to tracking fly balls off the bat
- Introduce concept of drop step and running back on balls, not back-peddling, not holding glove up while running

Batting

- Players should master proper swinging techniques (no upper-cutting, keeping both hands on the bat, keeping head and front shoulder down until contact)
- Player should master keeping back foot still and rotation of hips to swing; stepping in to a swing is acceptable but not necessary if proper hip rotation is practiced.
- Bunting should be practiced and the players should be able to consistently make contact with the pitched ball when bunting; proper bunting techniques should be practiced (fingers behind the barrel, squaring up of legs and shoulders)
- Players should be able to identify balls / strikes when batting and learn to not swing at balls; at this age they are seeing real pitchers for the first time; they should understand discipline to not swing at balls in the dirt or over their head

Base running

- Players should master the act of running as fast as they can to first base upon making contact with ball when batting
- Hustling at all times on bases should be stressed
- Players should master tagging up (fly ball, less than 2 outs), force outs, and tag outs
- Stealing of bases is introduced at this level; they need to learn to watch pitched ball all the way to the batter and not leave the base until ball reaches home plate

- When stealing, they should put their head down and run to the next base as fast as possible; do not look at the ball once they begin to steal
- Sliding should be introduced and practiced often
- Players should master running through 1B and practice rounding 1B and picking up the ball

Catchers

- Catchers should master how to use the equipment to protect themselves (not sitting on their knees, throwing hand to the side of their thigh).
- Catchers should be able to catch pitches thrown within the vicinity of the strike zone.
- Catchers should continue to develop skills for blocking low balls; dropping to their knees to block the ball
- Catchers should be able to throw the ball back to the pitcher accurately
- Catchers should understand throwing to 2B or 3B when runner is stealing; they must be able to throw line drives to 2B and 3B, even if they bounce several times; rainbow throws are not allowed

Pitchers

- Pitchers should be able to start with both feet on rubber, first movement being forward.
- Pitchers should understand to stay relaxed and not aim the ball towards the plate.
- Pitchers should keep their backs straight (not bent over like bowling) and learn to release the ball with wrist snap at the hip.
- Pitchers should be able to throw strikes consistently (at least 50% of the time)
- Pitchers should work on accuracy and speed at this level. Speed work should be done in practice and speed should not be stressed in game situation
- Coaches should identify which players have potential for pitching at older levels and may recommend them to work with individual pitching coaches or coaches may bring in a pitching coach to work with them individually at practices. For 10 year olds moving up to 12U, extra pitching work outside of practice and regular season is needed. However, this should not be overdone.

12U

Fielding

- Players should have identified their 2 or 3 best / most desirable positions but should have experience playing most positions on the field.
- No player should be pigeon-holed to one position exclusively. This is a developmental league and intended to develop entire teams – not individual players. No player should play the same position more than 2/3 of the defensive innings over the course of the regular season. Pitchers and catchers may be an exception to this IF and only if there are not viable alternatives at those positions.
- At least 2 players per team should be capable of playing each position with the skills listed below.
- Players should master proper techniques for fielding ground balls (glove down) and fly balls (glove up, two hands).
- Players should master the proper techniques for transferring ball from glove to throwing hand.
- Players should master proper overhand throwing form using their whole arm, hip rotation, and footwork (not sidearm, not “shot-putting” throws, not “dart throwing”), eyes on target, elbow higher than shoulder
- Players should master how to grip ball when throwing using fingers, releasing off fingertips, not using palms
- Players should master crow hopping technique and understand when to use it
- Players should be able to understand covering bases for force outs and how to move when ball is hit or thrown; at this level, they may not remember to do this every time but they should be able to do it most of the time and they should immediately understand when they fail to do it. Situations (runners on, different locations of hits) should be thoroughly covered in practice
- Master rounding the ball on ground balls
- All infielders should master the act of charging (move in) on ground balls; not backing up or waiting for ball to come to them
- All infielders should be able to know what to do on a batted ball with any combination of runners on and based on number of outs; they should be able to react quickly in game situations most of the time but it should be expected that at times they will forget – be patient with them
- All infielders should start to learn cutoff positions and base coverage responsibilities based on any ball hit and any combination of base runners
- Infielders should always be on their toes and moving in on the pitch and immediately in motion on any batted ball
- Master backhand plays and moving to left or right to field ground balls

First Base

- First baseman should master when to immediately cover 1B and when to go after a ball; if pitcher or 2B can easily make the play, they cover first, but if they can get to the ball and get to 1B before runner, they should
- First baseman should master technique of throwing hand foot is on the front inside corner of the base, feet close together until throw is coming to them, then step towards throw with glove hand foot
- Practice dropping down to one or both knees to block balls in dirt if necessary
- Understand to look at other runners on base after making an out at first

Second Base

- Immediately moving to cover 2B on ball hit to left side (3B or SS)
- Master covering 1B if first baseman charges in for ball

- Master and be able to recognize moving in for weak hitters, moving back for strong hitters
- Practice cutoff scenarios for balls in outfield
- Understand covering of second base on steals (coordination with SS); not moving too soon on a steal but getting there before the runner
- Introduce / practice turning double plays with SS
- Practice covering 1B on bunts

SS

- Immediately moving to cover 2B on ball hit to right side (1B or 2B)
- Should be able to consistently, accurately throw to first base on a line without bouncing
- Master covering 3B if third baseman charges in for ball
- Master and be able to recognize moving in for weak hitters, moving back for strong hitters
- Practice cutoff scenarios for balls in outfield
- Understand covering of second base on steals (coordination with 2B); not moving too soon on a steal but getting there before the runner
- Introduce / practice turning double plays with 2B
- Covering 3B on bunts

Third Base

- Master covering of bunts – charging in hard when batter squares to bunt
- Should be able to consistently, accurately throw to first base on a line
- Master covering 3B when runners on 1B and 2B; master they can touch third on a ground ball to them in this situation
- Understand and be able to recognize moving in for weak hitters, moving back for strong hitters
- Should be able to knock down well hit ground balls within their reach

Outfielders

- Continue practicing cutoff scenarios and looking for cutoff man; they should be able to identify and hit the cutoff man
- Players should master backing up 1B (RF) and 3B (LF)
- Outfielders should continue to work on tracking fly balls off the bat
- Outfielders should understand and continue to work on concept of drop step and running back on balls, not back-peddling, not holding glove up while running
- Drop step and running back on balls, not back-peddling, not holding glove up while running

Batting

- Proper batting stance and swing should be mastered
- Players should master identifying strikes vs balls and not swinging at balls
- Players must be able to bunt fair balls consistently
- Players should practice bunting to first or third base line as directed by coach
- Players should get in the habit of stepping out of batter's box and look at coach for signs after every pitch
- Players should be able to make contact on most strikes
- Players should understand mechanics of pulling a pitch or hitting a pitch to the opposite field; front shoulder down; hands inside the pitch

Base running

- Players should master running through and rounding 1B and be able to pick up the ball and listen / look for coach upon rounding 1B, 2B, or 3B
- Most players should be able to slide properly and understand when to slide
- Players should be able to steal all bases with straight steal
- Players should be taught and practice delayed steal
- Players should look at coaches between every pitch. It is up to the coach's discretion whether to give signs for stealing but the player should know to look at the coach between every pitch and should know when to steal if the situation calls for it
- Players should master tagging up on fly balls with less than 2 outs and should practice how far to go off the base depending on where the ball is hit
- Players should practice looking at or listening for 3B coach upon rounding 1B or 2B or 3B
- Players should practice locating a batted ball while running at full speed
- Players should master stealing immediately upon release of ball from pitcher's hand
- Every player must be able to execute slide and should be able to slide according to situation (slide to the right side or left side of base or plate, late slide to break up double play, etc.)
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Catchers

- Catchers should master how to use the equipment to protect themselves (not sitting on their knees, throwing hand to the side of their thigh).
- Catchers should be able to catch any pitch thrown within their vicinity – they should be able to spring up quickly for high pitches
- Catchers should master skills for blocking low balls; dropping to their knees to block the ball
- Catchers should be able to throw the ball back to the pitcher accurately and quickly – quick, hard throws back to pitcher
- Catchers should understand throwing to 2B or 3B when runner is stealing; they must be able to throw line drives to 2B and 3B even on a bounce – absolutely no rainbows; pitcher should know to duck on throws to 2B
- Catchers should set up high, low, inside, outside when coach calls for it
- Practice exchange from glove to throwing hand when stealing
- Catchers should start to communicate with infield and take charge as leader of the infield
- Practice fielding bunts

Pitchers

- At this level pitchers should be able to consistently throw strikes
- They should be able to throw high, low, inside, outside as directed
- They should work on changeups – should be able to throw different speeds of pitches somewhat consistently for strikes
- Introduce cutoff for plays at home on balls hit to OF
- Should be able to field bunts and accurately throw to 1B

14U

Fielding

- Players should have identified their 2 or 3 best / most desirable positions
- No player should be pigeon-holed to one position exclusively. This is a developmental league and intended to develop entire teams – not individual players. No player should play the same position more than 3/4 of the defensive innings over the course of the regular season. Pitchers and catchers may be an exception to this if and only if there are not viable alternatives at those positions.
- At least 2 players per team should be capable of playing each position with the skills listed below.
- All infielders should understand cutoff positions and base coverage responsibilities based on any ball hit and any combination of base runners
- Infielders should always be on their toes and moving in on the pitch and immediately in motion on any batted ball
- All infielders should be able to know what to do on a ball hit to them with any combination of runners on and based on number of outs and score of game
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First Base

- Master blocking balls in dirt; dropping to one or both knees if necessary
- Master footwork and stepping in to catch a throw
- Footwork for throwing back to home on a 1B to home play
- Work on and practice pick off plays from catcher
- Positioning on inside vs outside pitch – communication with 2B
- Charging to cover bunts; communicate with pitcher on fielding bunts
- Fly balls in front of them on the right side or near pitcher are their responsibility; communication with pitcher and 2B

Second Base

- Covering of second base on steals (coordination with SS)
- Should master how to position when cutoff to RF or CF; SS to line them up
- Master turning double plays with SS
- Master covering 1B on bunts
- Fly balls behind 1B are their responsibility; communication with 1B
- Positioning on inside vs outside pitch – communication to 1B

SS

- Covering of second base on steals (coordination with 2B)
- Should master how to position when cutoff to LF or CF; 2B to line them up
- Master turning double plays with 2B
- Master covering 3B on bunts
- Fly balls behind 3B are their responsibility; communication with 3B
- Runners on first and third plays (catcher may throw to P, 3B, or SS)
- Positioning on inside vs outside pitch – communication to 3B

Third Base

- Covering of bunts
- Turning double plays with 2B
- Positioning on inside vs outside pitch – communication with SS

- Fly balls in front of them on the left side or near pitcher are their responsibility; communication with pitcher and SS

Outfielders

- Identify and consistently hit the cutoff man
- Positioning dependent on batter (weak – move in; strong – move out) and/or number of outs and situation of game (bottom of 7th, 2 outs, tie game, way in); always looking at coach before every pitch for positioning
- Master backing up 1B (RF) and 3B (LF)
- Master tracking fly balls off the bat
- Master drop step and running back on balls, not back-peddling, not holding glove up while running

Batting

- Players must be able to bunt fair balls consistently to first or third base line as directed by coach
- Players must step out of batter's box and look at coach for signs after every pitch
- Players should be able to make contact on hit and run plays
- Players should understand mechanics of pulling a pitch or hitting a pitch to the opposite field; front shoulder down; hands inside the pitch

Base running

- Players should be able to steal all bases
- Players should understand and be able to execute either straight steal or delayed steal
- Players should look at coaches between every pitch. They must steal when given the steal sign. It is up to the coach's discretion whether to give certain girls green light at all times to steal.
- Players should understand tagging up on fly balls with less than 2 outs and how far to go off the base depending on where the ball is hit
- Be able to recognize coach's sign for hit and run and run immediately on the pitch.
- Players should master looking at or listening for 3B coach upon rounding 1B or 2B or 3B
- Players should master locating a batted ball while running at full speed
- Players should master stealing immediately upon release of ball from pitcher's hand
- Every player must be able to execute slide and should be able to slide according to situation (slide to the right side or left side of base or plate, late slide to break up double play, etc.)

Catchers

- Catchers should not allow any ball to get by them unless extremely wild pitch
- Catchers should be able to throw the ball back to the pitcher accurately and quickly – quick, hard throws back to pitcher
- Catchers should be able to throw runners out at 2B and 3B when stealing with hard, line drive throws to the glove side of the fielder
- Catchers must look at coach before every pitch for pitch calling. Coach may relay call from catcher to pitcher or may give signal to pitcher and catcher at the same time. Catcher should set up properly (high, low, inside, outside) based on the called pitch
- Master exchange from glove to throwing hand when stealing
- Catchers should constantly communicate with infield and take charge as leader of the infield
- Catchers should be able to cover any short bunts and practice throwing to first on the outside; first baseman needs to learn to move to outside of base on this play when runner is on the line

Pitchers

- Able to hit locations consistently (high, low, inside, outside) 80% of the time
- Able to throw more than one speed of pitch consistently for strike 80% of the time
- Should master where to position for cutoff for plays at home on balls hit to OF; catcher should line them up
- Master fielding bunts
- At this age, pitchers should have a pitching coach and should work on pitching in the off-season; 3 months of no throwing is recommended; strength training is very important especially for legs, hips, and back