



DEVELOPMENTAL BOOK

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Strike Zone's Development Program:

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Section I INTRODUCTION

Strike Zone Mission Statement We Help Make Dreams Come True...

The Strike Zone program regards each player as the "Most Valuable Player" in each of our programs and realizes that their dedication deserves special recognition.

As baseball and softball instructors, we understand how challenging baseball and softball skills can be to master and value the idea that they are games designed principally for enjoyment.

Players are provided ample opportunity to develop their skills in a friendly, and controlled atmosphere designed to be constructive and encouraging. Key elements in our program include a disciplined environment with educated and well qualified instructors for all different skill levels.

Overall, the Strike Zone's main objective is to offer the very best in baseball and softball training in the Midwest in preparation for coaching and playing baseball and softball at all different ages. Throughout many years, the ultimate goal is to prepare the athlete to compete and be successful at the college level, and beyond.

In preparation, all coaches and athletes need to have a complete understanding of the game at different age and skill levels, and it starts with the coaches and parents preparing the athlete, depending on what age and skill level they are, to get to the next level.

These are the guidelines for parents and coaches to follow in order for an athlete to go above and beyond high school baseball. The time spent for private lessons, team sessions, and all the leagues the Strike Zone offers is goal orientated for getting the athlete to the next level of this program and to eventually help the athlete get a college scholarship.

There have been numerous collegiate and professional players that have been involved with the Strike Zone. It is the Strike Zone's number one priority for everyone who is involved in our programs to be successful at the next level and have fun in doing so. Once involved, everything starts and relies on great coaching, but with great coaches, requires great responsibility. The Strike Zone prides itself on having well qualified coaches that have solid principals and strong ethics. The following is what is required of all Strike Zone coaches.



Section II



Coaching Principals And Ethical Standards

The ethics code is intended to provide standards of ethics and conduct that can be applied not only in baseball and softball, but more importantly, in life. Whether or not a coach has violated the ethics code does not by itself determine whether a contract or agreement is enforceable or whether other legal consequences occur. Results are based on legal rather than ethical rules. However, compliance with violation of the ethics code may be admissible as evidence in some legal proceedings, depending on the circumstances.

This code is intended to provide the principals and the decision rules to cover most of the situations encountered by coaches. It has as its primary goals the welfare and protection of the individuals and groups with whom coaches work.

The code also provides a common set of values. It is the individual responsibility of each coach to aspire to the highest possible standards of conduct. Coaches should respect and protect human civil rights, and should not knowingly participate in or condone unfair discriminatory practices.

Coaches are aware of their ethical responsibilities to the community and the society in which they work and live. They apply and make public their knowledge of sport in order to contribute to human welfare. Coaches try to avoid misuse of their work and remain professionally honest. Coaches need to understand fully the consequences of their actions, whether it be lying, stealing, cheating, and even unsportsmanlike behavior, will not be tolerated. Coaches comply with the law and encourage the development of law and policies that serve the interest of sport. Coaches uphold professional standards of conduct, clarify their professional roles and obligations, accept appropriate responsibility for their behavior, and adapt their methods to the needs of different athletes. Coaches consult with, refer to, or cooperate with others professionals and institutions to the extent needed to serve the best interest of their athletes, or other recipients of their services. Coaches' moral standards and conduct are personal matters to the same degree as is true for any person, except with coaches' conduct may compromise their responsibilities or reduce the public's trust in coaching and or the coaches. Coaches are concerned about the ethical conduct of their colleagues. When an ethical issue occurs and there is a dispute, it's expected to be reported to a Strike Zone employee and dealt with before it escalates.



Strike Zone's Principals

COMPETENCE

Don't tell people how good you are, show them.

Coaches strive to maintain high standards of excellence in their work. They recognize the boundaries of their particular competencies and the limitations of their expertise. They provide only those services and use only those techniques for which they are qualified by education, training or experience. In those areas in which recognized professional standards do not yet exist, coaches exercise careful judgment and take appropriate precautions to protect the welfare of those with whom they work. They maintain knowledge or relevant coaching educational information related to the services they render, and they recognize the need for ongoing education. Coaches make appropriate use of scientific, professional, technical and administrative resources and referrals.

COMPASSION

Character means doing the right thing when no one is watching

In their actions, coaches consider the welfare and rights of their athletes and other participants. When conflicts occur among coaches' obligations or concerns, they attempt to resolve these conflicts and to perform their roles in a responsible fashion that avoids or minimizes harm. Coaches are sensitive to differences in power between themselves and others, and they do not exploit nor mislead people during or after their coaching relationships. Coaches should treat every athlete equally but as in individual, no matter what level they are at.

RESPECT

Don't let anyone make an excuse for you

Coaches and players need to respect the game as much as they want to be respected. Coaches are expected to respect the fundamental rights, dignity and worth of all participants. Coaches are aware of cultural, individual and role differences, including those due to age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, and socioeconomic status. Coaches try to eliminate the effect of biases on their work, and they do not knowingly participate in or condone unfair discriminatory practices. If a dispute is brought upon a coach, it's in the coaches' best interest to address it immediately with a Strike Zone official, rather than have a Strike Zone official have to question the coach due to complaints and then ask why the coach didn't report it.



Ethical Standards

Baseball teaches kids to steal in the game, not in life.

While many aspects of personal behavior and private activities seem far removed from official duties of coaching, all coaches should be sensitive to their positions as role models for their athletes. Private activities perceived as immoral or illegal can influence the coaching environment, and coaches are expected to uphold standards of this ethics code.

A. Nondiscrimination and Sexual Harassment

1. Coaches do not engage in discrimination based on age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, socioeconomic status, or any basis prescribed by law.
2. Coaches do not engage in sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is sexual solicitation, physical advances, or verbal or nonverbal conduct that is sexual in nature and either:
 - A. Is unwelcome, is offensive, or creates a hostile environment, and the coach knows or is told this:
 - B. Is sufficiently severe or intense to be abusive to a reasonable person in context. Sexual harassment can consist of a single intense or severe act of multiple persistent or pervasive acts.

B. Sexual Intimacies

1. Coaches do not engage in sexual intimacies with current athletes or others over whom the coach has authority.
2. Coaches do not coach athletes with whom they have engaged in sexual intimacies.
3. Coaches do not engage in sexual intimacies with a former athlete for at least two years after termination of professional services.

Other Harassment

1. Coaches do not engage in or condone behavior that is harassing or demeaning to persons with whom they interact in their work including, but not limited to the following factors: a person's age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation.

D. Treatment

- I. Coaches will treat sexual harassment complainants and respondents with dignity and respect. Coaches do not participate in denying an athlete the right to participate based on their having made, or being the subject of, sexual harassment charges. Member organizations must address in their by-laws to deal with substantial claims. Again, by parents and coaches, reporting the issue immediately will overall result in a better treatment for the problem.

E. Public Statements

- I. Avoid False or Deceptive Statements
 - A. Coaches and players should not make statements that are false, deceptive, misleading, or fraudulent (either due to what they state, convey or suggest, or because of what they omit) concerning their work activities or those of persons or organizations with which they are affiliated. As examples, (and not limitations) of this standard, coaches do not make false or deceptive statements concerning training, experience, competence, academic degrees, credentials, institutional or association affiliations, records or fees
2. Testimonials

Coaches do not solicit testimonials from athletes or others who, because of their particular circumstances, are vulnerable to undue influence.

F. Illegal Drugs, Gambling, Pornography, Alcohol, and Tobacco

- I. Coaches do not tolerate the use of performance-enhancing drugs and support athletes' efforts to be drug free. Any suspicion of illegal drug activity needs to be addressed in an appropriate immediate fashion.
2. Coaches refrain from using alcohol before or while coaching.
3. Coaches prohibit players from gambling in any way.
4. Coaches do not gamble on the sport they are associated with or let their players know they are gambling on other sporting events.
5. Coaches discourage the use of pornographic material and refrain from using pornography while in the presence of their athletes.
6. Coaches discourage the use of alcohol and tobacco while participating in anything associated with the team.

G. Supervision

- I, Coaches who are responsible for training programs for other coaches seek to ensure that the programs are competently designed, provide the proper experiences and meet the requirements for coaching education, certification or others goals for which claims are made by the program. Honoring commitments is important, but coaches are responsible for everything he says and is in charge of.

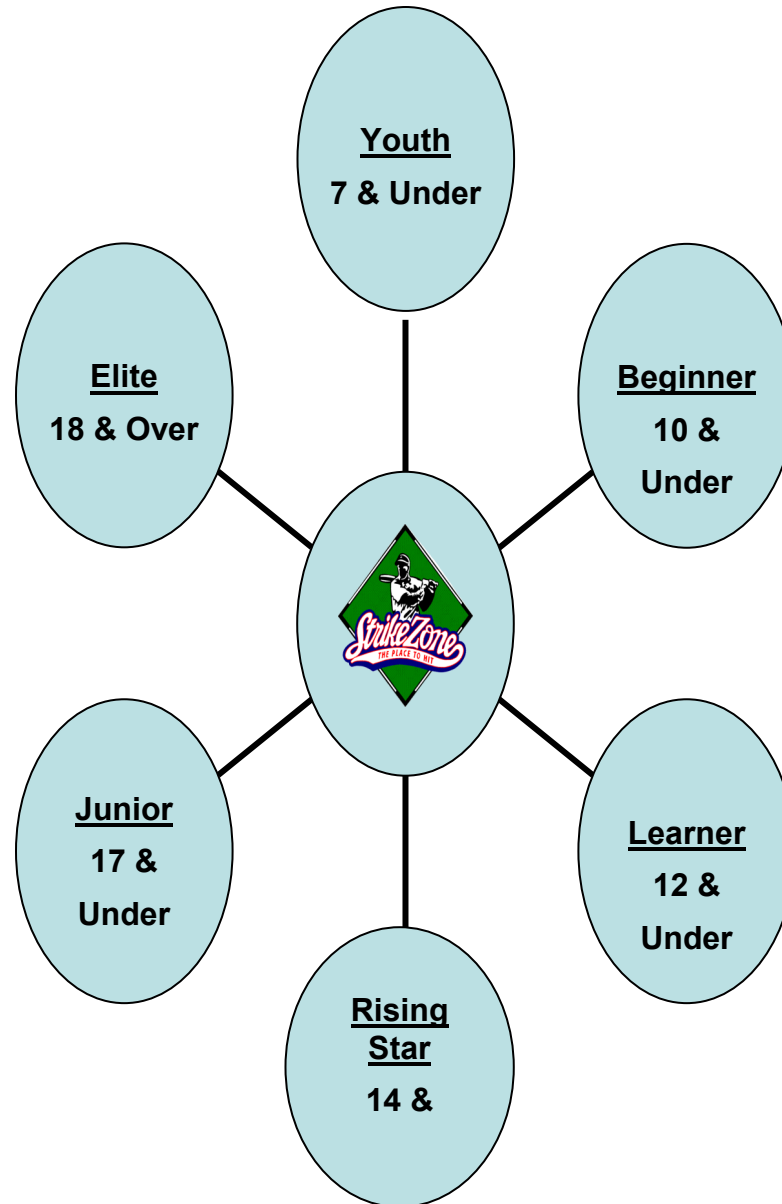
H. First Aid

- I, Coaches need to be aware of the modern advances in first aid and know how to act during a minor injury and during a life threatening injury such as the following
Example: Sprained ankle, broken bone, cut, heart attack, heat stroke and concussion.

I. Reporting

1. In any case of misconduct from players or parents, the coach is responsible for reporting them as soon as possible to a Strike Zone employee.
2. In any case of misconduct from coaches, assistant coaches, players and parents are responsible for reporting them as soon as possible to a Strike Zone employee.

STRIKE ZONE DEVELOPMENT PIPELINE





YOUTH **7 and Under**



If it is to be, it is up to me

Coaches Goal:

Coaches should maximize their goals for their players after evaluating them on their skill level. At the Strike Zone, instructional safety tips are crucial. Feet first sliding, catching the ball with two hands, and making sure everyone is paying attention needs to be a top priority. In addition, equipment needs to be properly secure such as helmets and catcher's gear. Learning proper safety is important for the 7 and under because once they are a "Beginner" they will be expected to know it.

Coaches need to make sure all the players learn all the different positions. However, do not put a player, during a game, at the catching position that does not want to play it. Teach the kids how to pitch from the stretch only, get a sign, come set, lift leg at 90 degree angle and throw.

The coaches need to be overly enthusiastic and use nothing but positive reinforcement. Critical coaching and sarcastic humor is not acceptable coaching for this age level.

It is crucial that these players need to have fun during practice and during the game because if they are not having fun at this age and level, they will lose interest in the game. Competing is not a top priority, having fun for them is, but as a coach, learning how to be safe is the top priority.

Goal Setting For Players:

Players need to have a full understanding that they are there to learn how the game is played safely. All players will learn and play all the positions on the field with the exception of catching. Players that want to catch need to show the coach they are capable of catching before a game. Players are also responsible for bringing their own water to all events.

Players will be expected to learn the basic base running skills, five step throwing mechanics, bend the back during the follow through, hit your back with the bat after you swing, alligator drill for fielding ground balls, sliding properly, step with opposite foot while you are throwing the ball, push off the back foot when throwing the ball, move your feet to catch the ball when you are playing catch, don't stop moving your feet when catching a fly ball, and catch the ball with two hands near the face (closer the ball is to the players face, easier it is to catch the ball). Players need to understand that for the game to be fun, it has to be organized, listen to your coaches.



YOUTH

7 and Under

At the 7 and under level, players should focus on the Player Competencies listed below:

Goal Setting:

Players should:

1. Establish specific and measurable **performance** goals that are written, shared with coaches and revised on a regular basis to promote *development and accountability*.
Example: *To develop the straight-in slide. Be able to execute 7 out of 10 slides successfully in game conditions.*
2. Divide performance goals into three broad categories based on time needed to accomplish the goal: long-term, intermediate and short-term. Daily tasks should then be planned on the goals set.
Example:

Long-term	1 year
Intermediate	4-6 Months
Short-term	1-3 Months
3. Be able to engage in evaluation of play after a game and re-adjust daily practice sessions or short-term goals based on that evaluation.

Periodization:

Not applicable to the 7 and under level



YOUTH

7 and Under



Maximize Practice Time:

Players should:

1. Be on time, alert, hustle, and actively involved in the participation and planning of the practice sessions.
2. Practice the proper techniques of the fundamentals of baseball.
3. Understand and use these basic components in the following sequence at every practice.
 - Warm-up and Stretching
 - On-field warm-up
 - Review previously learned skills
 - Learn new skills
 - Practice game situations
 - Play game or modified games
 - Conditioning
 - Cool-down and stretching
 - Evaluate the practice
4. Learn new skills in the first half of practice and do physical conditioning near the end of practice so as not to impair learning due to fatigue.
5. Practice with the same intensity as in the game.
6. Develop one or two specific ways that help concentration and the ability to stay focused on the task at hand during each practice.
 - A. *A police car passes by with siren blaring, distracting your players. The coach whistles to bring the players' focus back to the practice session.*



YOUTH

7 and Under



Strategies:

The level standards and strategies that coaches should teach Youth players include:

1. Make the game FUN for kids
2. Coaches must be positive
3. Emphasize beginning skills
4. Teach position locations
5. Rotate positions on defense (all 9 positions)
6. Force out versus tag play
7. Individual and Team practices on a regular basis
8. Anticipate the ball being hit to you
9. Self-esteem building is imperative

Skills:

The skill areas to teach Youth players include;

Base running

- a. Home to first base
- b. Base running from 1B to 3B
- c. Circle the bases
- d. Base running from 2B to home
- e. Tag-up
- f. Straight-in slide
- g. Running form/run fast
- h. React to base coaches
- i. Look for the ball off the bat
- j. Teach turns

Throwing/Catching

- a. Use two hands to catch
- b. Move to the ball
- c. Arm up
- d. Bend the back when throwing
- e. Step to throw with correct foot
- f. Bend front knee
- g. Follow through

3. Hitting

- a. Be aggressive
- b. Level swing
- c. Proper stance
- d. Eyes on the ball
- e. Practice hand/eye coordination/timing
- f. Emphasize aggressiveness

4. Defense

- g. Teach Ready position to anticipate the play
- h. React to the ball
- i. Introduce ground ball fielding
- j. Introduce the stretch play
- k. Introduce fly ball catching
- L. Introduce force out on a ground ball

Fitness Testing and Training:

Players should:

1. Take standardized physical fitness tests several times a year to compare results and analyze progress.
2. Take baseball specific tests several times a year to compare results and analyze progress.
3. Understand the importance of knowing how to properly warm-up and stretch prior to, cool-down, and stretch after every practice and game.

Injury Prevention:

1. Understand that warming-up, stretching and cooling down on a daily basis helps prevent injury.
2. Proper care and fitting of equipment.
3. Understand the concept of **R.I.C.E.** for treating injuries:

Rest
Ice
Compression
Elevation

Nutrition:

1. Understand the importance of and practice proper hydration before, during, and after practice and games.
2. For evening practices and games, eat a normal breakfast and lunch. Before the practice or game, eat a light snack. After the game, eat a light snack.
3. For early morning games and practices, eat lightly at breakfast. After practice or game, eat a snack.
4. Study the food pyramid.

Sports Psychology:**Players should:**

1. Develop an offensive and defensive routine before every pitch.
2. Conduct yourself on the baseball field with an air of confidence, good body posture, and appear in emotional control at all times.
3. Understand the difference in being relaxed and tense.
4. Understand that making mistakes is common and part of the game.
5. Understand the benefits and the use of positive reinforcement. Realize that positive comments help reduce stress, enhance self-image, enhance the team's image, and can increase the enjoyment of games and practices.
6. Understand the damage negative self-talk can do both to the mind and the body. Realize that negative conversations can contribute to low self-esteem and sabotage the enjoyment of the game.

Media Skills:

Not applicable at the 7 and under level.



YOUTH

7 and Under



Sportsmanship/Character Development:

1. Realize the importance of honesty and integrity on the field.
2. Develop a sense of responsibility for your actions, on and off the field.
3. Demonstrate high levels of sportsmanship.
4. Have respect for teammates, coaches, opponents, officials, and parents.
5. Demonstrate the ability to balance, school, social activities, sports, and family.
6. Develop a sense of team commitment.
7. Be on time for games and practices.
8. Understand that they must say no to drugs and other harmful substances.

Parent Education:

1. Enable parents to understand the objectives of the program.
2. Allow parents to become acquainted with you, the person responsible for their son or daughter.
3. Inform parents about the nature of the sport and its potential risks.
4. Explain team rules, regulations, and procedures.
5. Let parents know what is expected of the athletes and them.
6. Enable you to understand parent's concerns.
7. Establish clear lines of communication between you and parent's.
8. Obtain help from parents in conducting seasons' activities.
9. Expect punctuality and regular attendance at practice and games.



BEGINNER

10 and Under



The harder you work, the luckier you get.

Coaches Goals:

At this level, coaches need to prepare the athletes for competitive baseball. Coaches need to make sure that all the basics are mastered such as base running, catching a fly ball, throwing mechanics, pop up slide, tag up rules, charging ground balls, shuffling off the base, stealing, advancing on a passed ball, double plays, balks, fly ball- first step back, pick offs, and most importantly hitting mechanics. Hitting mechanics include stride action, bunting, front elbow down, bat grip, hip rotation, bat selection, turn the back/don't dodge the ball, and what the strike zone is.

At this age, they are still learning how to play the game and they still want to have fun, but they are also learning more advanced ways of how to play the game. Teaching them that mistakes will happen, and learning from them is the best way to deal with them, "don't show your opponents you are hurt." Coaches are accountable for teaching responsibilities at this level, such as the on deck batter needs to get the bat away from home plate after a hit where a runner is going to slide into home, call the ball out loud on fly balls, bunting situations, cut offs, don't swing at a 3-0 count, stealing bases and basic pitching fundamentals.

Coaching pitching tactics should still remain simple for this level because the strike zone is so small, tell the pitcher to throw hard, but let him hit the ball. Since they should have already learned how to pitch from the stretch, teaching them the full wind up is an option, but if they are not comfortable, don't make this a mandatory aspect. Since they will not be pitching off a mound, teaching the kids to follow through and bend over in the same position needs to be repetitive and over emphasized.

Throwing strikes is the number one goal, however, this is the critical age in which fundamentals need to be changed so good habits are developed so bad habits don't have to be changed when they are older.



BEGINNER

10 and Under



At the 10-and-under level, players should focus on the Player Competencies listed below:

Goal Setting:

Players should:

1. Establish specific and measurable **performance** goals that are written, shared with coaches and revised on a regular basis to promote *development and accountability*.
Example: *To develop the straight-in slide. Be able to execute 7 out of 10 slides successfully in game conditions.*
2. Divide performance goals into three broad categories based on time needed to accomplish the goal: long-term, intermediate and short-term. Daily tasks should then be planned on the goals set.
Example:

Long-term	1 year
Intermediate	4-6 Months
Short-term	1-3 Months
3. Be able to engage in evaluation of play after a game and re-adjust daily practice sessions or short-term goals based on that evaluation.

Periodization:

Not applicable to the 10 and under level



BEGINNER

10 and Under



Maximize Practice Time:

Players should:

1. Be on time, alert, hustle, and actively involved in the participation and planning of the practice sessions.
2. Practice the proper techniques of the fundamentals of baseball.
3. Understand and use these basic components in the following sequence at every practice.
 - Warm-up and Stretching
 - On-field warm-up
 - Review previously learned skills
 - Learn new skills
 - Practice game situations
 - Play game or modified games
 - Conditioning
 - Cool-down and stretching
 - Evaluate the practice
5. Learn new skills in the first half of practice and do physical conditioning near the end of practice so as not to impair learning due to fatigue.
6. Practice with the same intensity as in the game.
7. Develop one or two specific ways that help concentration and the ability to stay focused on the task at hand during each practice.
 - A. *A police car passes by with siren blaring, distracting your players. The coach whistles to bring the players' focus back to the practice session.*



BEGINNER

10 and Under



Strategies:

The level standards and strategies that coach should teach 10 and under players include:

1. Continue rotation of positions on defense to develop all player skills (pitch/catch, all 7 positions)
2. Teach position specific responsibilities
3. Individual and team practices on a regular basis
4. Focus on individual skills
5. Self-esteem building is imperative
6. Teach basic rules of the game (i.e. 4 balls/3strikes/3outs)
7. Very limited post-season competition

Skills:

The skill areas to teach 10 and under players include:

Base running:

- Stealing techniques
- Shuffle off of base
- Pop-up slide
- Move on passed ball to next base
- Proper running form
- Introduce reacting to the play by yourself
- Emphasize headfirst
- Emphasize proper hip rotation

Throwing/Catching:

- Proper arm angle on the throw
- Teach correct grip
- Focus on proper ground ball form
- Going back on a fly ball (Drop step)
- Develop “quick feet”
- Solidify using two hands on defense



BEGINNER

10 and Under



Hitting:

- Stride Action
- Introduce bunting
- Teach “avoiding pitch”
- Emphasize front elbow down
- Introduce all fields
- Introduce knowledge of the strike
- Emphasize proper hip action
- Emphasize the footwork of leaving the batter’s box
- Proper Bat Selection

Defense:

- Stretch Play
- Tag Play
- Introduce communications on fly ball
- Charging a ground ball
- Introduce catching fundamentals
- Teach cut-off man responsibilities
- Teach basic stealing defenses
- Introduce bunting defenses

Pitching:

- Teach basic stealing defenses
- Starting Position, backward foot step, thumbs down,
- Balance, eyes to target, follow through
- Pitchers fast ball only
- Focus on throwing strikes



BEGINNER

10 and Under



Fitness Testing and Training:

Players should:

1. Take standardized physical fitness tests several times a year to compare results and analyze progress.
2. Take baseball-specific tests several times a year to compare results and analyze progress.
3. Understand the importance of knowing how to properly warm-up and stretch prior to, and cool-down and stretch after every practice and game, and do it.

Injury Prevention

Before players get to the age of 12 they need to understand the different levels of pain and remember the word “**RICE**” when they have an injury that can heal faster if handled properly.

Levels of Pain

One:

Discomfort or mild pain but resolves with warm-up or continued playing

Two:

Mild pain during play not resolved with warm-up or play that resolves within 24 hours.

Three:

Mild to moderate pain during and after play that exceeds 48 hours.

Four:

Mild to moderate pain that continues during play, after play and does not respond to specific warm-up activities.

Five:

Moderate to severe pain that alters baseball technique.

RICE

Rest

Ice

Compression

Elevation



BEGINNER

10 and Under



Nutrition:

1. Understand the importance of and practice proper hydration before, during, and after practice and games.
2. For evening practices and games, eat a normal breakfast and lunch. Before the practice or game, eat a light snack. After the game, eat a light snack.
3. For early morning games and practices, eat lightly at breakfast. After practice or game, eat a snack.
4. Study the food pyramid.

Sports Psychology:

Players should:

1. Develop an offensive and defensive routine before every pitch.
2. Conduct yourself on the baseball field with an air of confidence, good body posture, and appear in emotional control at all times.
3. Understand the difference in being relaxed and tense.
4. Understand that making mistakes is common and part of the game.
5. Understand the benefits and the use of positive reinforcement. Realize that positive comments help reduce stress, enhance self-image, enhance the team's image, and can increase the enjoyment of games and practices.
6. Understand the damage negative self-talk can do both to the mind and the body. Realize that negative conversations can contribute to low self-esteem and sabotage the enjoyment of the game.

Media Skills:

Not applicable at the 10 and under level.



BEGINNER

10 and Under



Sportsmanship/Character Development:

1. Realize the importance of honesty and integrity on the field.
2. Develop a sense of responsibility for your actions, on and off the field.
3. Demonstrate high levels of sportsmanship.
4. Have respect for teammates, coaches, opponents, officials, and parents.
5. Demonstrate the ability to balance, school, social activities, sports, and family.
6. Develop a sense of team commitment.
7. Be on time for games and practices.
8. Understand that they must say no to drugs and other harmful substances.

Parent Education:

1. Enable parents to understand the objectives of the program.
2. Allow parents to become acquainted with you, the person responsible for their son or daughter.
3. Inform parents about the nature of the sport and its potential risks.
4. Explain team rules, regulations, and procedures.
5. Let parents know what is expected of the athletes and them.
6. Enable you to understand parent's concerns.
7. Establish clear lines of communication between you and parent's.
8. Obtain help from parents in conducting seasons' activities.
9. Expect punctuality and regular attendance at practice and games.



LEARNER

12 and Under



Don't ever give up, and don't show them you're hurt

Coaches Goals:

This is the level where players need to establish goals, written or verbal, and it is the coach's responsibility to make sure they reach these goals before entering their freshman year in high school. Practices will be the most beneficial for this age group to develop new skills and to make good habits, great qualities. To make sure they don't forget what they have learned, review with them what they learned consistently. For them to stay focused, a key teaching tool is to ask a question and end the question with someone's name, do this consistently and the kids will always be focused when you are teaching and asking questions.

Advanced new skills should include hook slides, first and third stealing situations, read the runner ahead of you, emphasize tight turns, double tag ups, infield fly, how to round the base with the ball behind you, ground ball bare hand pick ups- when, where and why, running to first on dropped third strikes, diving catches, intentional walk techniques, backhand techniques and teach the differences between how outfielders should throw the ball (12 to 6) and how infielders should throw the ball (3 to 7) be aggressively smart by using good judgment and make sure the players learn from their mistakes so they are not repeated and introduce the head first slide. In addition, sacrifice bunts, back heel action (squish the bug), on deck preparation, run and hit, bunt and run and the squeeze also need to be introduced.

Team defenses need to be introduced at this age, and practiced repetitively depending on how much practice time is available. Coaches should introduce rundowns, relays, double plays, advanced steal defenses for first and third situations, pickle and run down strategies, pitchers covering first base, and fly balls near fences- communication!

This is also the level where pitchers need to develop a changeup, this is NOT the age where pitchers start throwing a curveball or slider. Pitchers and batters need to develop an offensive and defensive routine before each pitch as well because they need to understand the difference between being relaxed and tense. For example, be relaxed with the hands when at the plate and exhale through the mouth when you swing or throw.

This is the age where injury prevention starts to emerge. Coaches need to be aware of many stretches the kids need to do before they play, but a warm up, such as jogging, needs to be done before stretching so the blood flow starts circulating. Holding the stretch for at least over 10 seconds before going on to the next one, do not skip stretching, remember, they are growing.



LEARNER

I2 and Under

Player Competencies



At the I2-and-under level, players should focus on the Player Competencies listed below:

Goal Setting:

Players should:

1. Establish specific and measurable **performance** goals that are written, shared with coaches and revised on a regular basis to promote *development and accountability*.
Example: *To develop the straight-in slide. Be able to execute 7 out of 10 slides successfully in game conditions.*
2. Divide performance goals into three broad categories based on time needed to accomplish the goal: long-term, intermediate and short-term. Daily tasks should then be planned on the goals set.
Example:

Long-term	1 year
Intermediate	4-6 Months
Short-term	1-3 Months
3. Be able to engage in evaluation of play after a game and re-adjust daily practice sessions or short-term goals based on that evaluation.

Periodization:

Not applicable to the I0 and under level



LEARNER

I2 and Under



Maximize Practice Time:

Players should:

1. Be on time, alert, hustle, and actively involved in the participation and planning of the practice sessions.
2. Practice the proper techniques of the fundamentals of baseball.
3. Understand and use these basic components in the following sequence at every practice.
 - Warm-up and Stretching
 - On-field warm-up
 - Review previously learned skills
 - Learn new skills
 - Practice game situations
 - Play game or modified games
 - Conditioning
 - Cool-down and stretching
 - Evaluate the practice
4. Learn new skills in the first half of practice and do physical conditioning near the end of practice so as not to impair learning due to fatigue.
5. Practice with the same intensity as in the game.
6. Develop one or two specific ways that help concentration and the ability to stay focused on the task at hand during each practice.
 - ex. *A police car passes by with siren blaring, distracting your players. The coach whistles to bring the players' focus back to the practice session.*



LEARNER

I2 and Under



Strategies:

The level standards and strategies that coach should teach I2 and under players include:

1. Limit early specialization of players (develop versatile players)
2. Rotation system on defense
3. Keep improvement and learning as a major goal
4. Introduce team skills/concepts
5. Infield play is explained/learned
6. Individual and team practices on regular basis
7. Self-esteem building is imperative
8. Limited post-season competition

Skills

The skill areas to teach 12 and under players include:

Base running:

- Hook slide
- Double steal
- Ready runner ahead of you
- Emphasize tight turns
- Introduce double tag-up
- Round bases will ball behind you
- Be aggressive with proper judgment
- Refine headfirst

Throwing/Catching:

- Solidify proper throwing technique
- Picking up misplayed ball with bare hand
- Different arm angles for certain throws
- Diving for ball
- Develop “quick feet” communication
- Stay low on throws
- Introduce intentional walk techniques
- Introduce backhand technique

Hitting:

- Introduce sacrifice bunts
- Back heel action
- Introduce on-deck preparation
- Introduce run and hit
- Introduce run and bunt
- Introduce squeeze play

Team Defense:

- Introduce rundowns
- Introduce relay play
- Solidify fly ball communication
- Solidify basic catching fundamentals
- Introduce double plays
- Introduce cut-off plays
- Double steal defense/SS 2b bag
- Basic bunt defenses
- Pitcher covering 1 B
- Fly balls near fence

Pitching:

- Change-up
- Solidify basic pitching mechanics
- Limit specific pitches per outing

Basic Signs:

- Verbal or Physical
- Bunt
- Steal
- Take
- Run/Hit

Fitness Testing and Training:**Players should:**

1. Take standardized physical fitness tests several times a year to compare results and analyze progress
2. Take baseball-specific tests several times a year to compare results and analyze progress
3. Understand the importance of knowing how to properly warm-up and stretch prior to, cool down, and stretch after every practice and game.

Injury Prevention:

1. Understand that warming-up, stretching and cooling down on a daily basis help prevent injury.
2. Proper care and fitting of equipment.
Understand the concept of **R.I.C.E.** for treating injuries:

Rest

Ice

Compression

Elevation



LEARNER

I2 and Under



Nutrition:

1. Understand the importance of and practice proper hydration before, during, and after practice and games.
2. For evening practices and games, eat a normal breakfast and lunch. Before the practice or game, eat a light snack. After the game, eat a light snack.
3. For early morning games and practices, eat lightly at breakfast. After practice or game, eat a snack.
4. Study the food pyramid.

Sports Psychology:

Players should:

1. Develop an offensive and defensive routine before every pitch.
2. Conduct yourself on the baseball field with an air of confidence, good body posture, and appear in emotional control at all times.
3. Understand the difference in being relaxed and tense.
4. Understand that making mistakes is common and part of the game.
5. Understand the benefits and the use of positive reinforcement. Realize that positive comments help reduce stress, enhance self image, enhance the team's image, and can increase the enjoyment of games and practices.
6. Understand the damage negative self-talk can do both to the mind and the body. Realize that negative conversations can contribute to low self-esteem and sabotage the enjoyment of the game.

Media Skills:

Not applicable at the I2 and under level.



LEARNER

I2 and Under



Sportsmanship/Character Development:

1. Realize the importance of honesty and integrity on the field.
2. Develop a sense of responsibility for your actions, on and off the field.
3. Demonstrate high levels of sportsmanship.
4. Have respect for teammates, coaches, opponents, officials, and parents.
5. Demonstrate the ability to balance, school, social activities, sports, and family.
6. Develop a sense of team commitment.
7. Be on time for games and practices.
8. Understand that they must say no to drugs and other harmful substances.

Parent Education:

1. Enable parents to understand the objectives of the program.
2. Allow parents to become acquainted with you, the person responsible for their son or daughter.
3. Inform parents about the nature of the sport and its potential risks.
4. Explain team rules, regulations, and procedures.
5. Let parents know what is expected of the athletes and them.
6. Enable you to understand parent's concerns.
7. Establish clear lines of communication between you and parent's.
8. Obtain help from parents in conducting seasons' activities.
9. Expect punctuality and regular attendance at practice and games.



RISING STAR



14 and Under

When you're not playing, find a way to help your team

Coaches Goal:

Prepare the athletes for high school. Being organized and over prepared is crucial. Pre and post game speeches need to be motivational. This is the age where winning becomes more important, but is not the most important aspect to be preached. Yes, this is the age where the kids need to come together as a team to find a way to win, however, they need to understand that you learn more from losing than you do from winning. They also need to understand that winning the wrong way, is not what we teach.

Winning the wrong way is losing in the long run, we don't ever preach plowing over the catcher, sliding very late feet first, or calling for a fly ball when your team is up to bat. But especially, when a player is hurt on the field, the play is dead. Do not argue with the umpire about how your runner should be able to keep running when a player is hurt on the field.

This is not the professionals, coaches and players do not retaliate by throwing at batters intentionally, charging the mound, or getting into any kind of verbal or physical fight on the field. Coaches need to especially discourage players arguing with umpires. Coaches should also refrain from arguing with umpires in an aggressive manner.

Players should be focused on no more than four primary positions. At this age, self esteem issues and mood swings happen rapidly, and the momentum during a baseball game can change dramatically, however, a coach's shouldn't. This is not the age where teammates pick each other up. This is the age where the coaches teach players to pick others and more importantly, themselves up.

New skills for players include avoiding catcher interference, first four steps after hitting, leads/steals/breaks from a left handed pitcher, balk steals, head first steals, long toss, backing up bases, defensive preparation before a pitch, positioning,

This is also the age where catchers need to start the advances to the next level such as basic signals, receiving the pitch, blocking balls, catching pop fly's, fielding bunts and stance on stealing.

Signals and signs in baseball are crucial at the big league level, and this is the age where they need to be introduced. An indicator and then bunt, steal, take, run and hit, bunt and run, squeeze, verification, and wipe off signals needs to be memorized and used often so players are always focused.

These signals become much more advanced when they get older.



RISING STAR

I4 and Under

Player Competencies



At the I4-and-under level, players should focus on the Player Competencies listed below:

Goal Setting:

Players should:

Establish specific and measurable **performance** goals that are written, shared with coaches and revised on a regular basis to promote *development and accountability*.

Example: *To develop the straight-in slide. Be able to execute 7 out of 10 slides successfully in game conditions.*

Divide performance goals into three broad categories based on time needed to accomplish the goal: long-term, intermediate and short-term. Daily tasks should then be planned on the goals set.

Example:

Long-term 1 year

Intermediate 4-6 Months

Short-term 1-3 Months

Be able to engage in evaluation of play after a game and re-adjust daily practice sessions or short-term goals based on that evaluation.

Set goals that encompass all of the various areas of their development including technique, strategy, tactics, fitness, and mental toughness.

Develop some **outcome** goals that target development and championships. Strive to achieve outcome goals while understanding results are not totally player controlled.

Demonstrate intrinsic motivation.

Show intensity in practice

Be attentive and dedicated to physical training

Show evidence of independence as a player

Have a written plan to demonstrate a systematic approach to training and scheduling as it relates to Periodization. Practice good habits in nutrition and overall good health.



RISING STAR

I4 and Under



Periodization:

Players should:

1. Develop a schedule which clearly identifies the level of competition where they hope to peak as well as provide appropriate time for preparation, games, physical and psychological recovery.
2. Participate in a fitness program, which includes training for both aerobic and anaerobic energy systems as well as muscular training.

Maximize Practice Time:

Players should:

1. Be on time, alert, hustle, and actively involved in the participation and planning of the practice sessions.
2. Practice the proper techniques of the fundamentals of baseball.
3. Understand and use these basic components in the following sequence at every practice.
 - Warm-up and Stretching
 - On-field warm-up
 - Review previously learned skills
 - Learn new skills
 - Practice game situations
 - Play game or modified games
 - Conditioning
 - Cool-down and stretching
 - Evaluate the practice
4. Learn new skills in the first half of practice and do physical conditioning near the end of practice so as not to impair learning due to fatigue.
5. Practice with the same intensity as in the game.
6. Develop one or two specific ways that help concentration and the ability to stay focused on the task at hand during each practice.
 - ex. *Cheerleading practice is disturbing your practice, the coach shouts to bring the players focus back into attention.*

7. Use drills to isolate work on baseball skills and techniques. After the initial learning stages, emphasize should be on live game-like drills to insure maximum transfer to playing situations.
8. Be able to set specific performance goals for each practice.
 - a. *During batting practice I will hit 10 hard balls or line-drives rather than I will work on my hitting.*
9. Devote a significant amount of practice time to develop strategies as well as time to improve weaknesses.
10. Use drills to isolate work on baseball skills and techniques. After the initial learning stages, emphasize should be on live game-like drills to insure maximum transfer to playing situations.
11. Be able to set specific performance goals for each practice.
 - A. *During batting practice I will hit 10 hard balls or line-drives rather than I will work on my hitting.*
12. Devote a significant amount of practice time to develop strategies as well as time to improve weaknesses.

Strategies:

The standards and strategies that coaches should teach the Rising Star include:

1. Begin specialization of players based on athletes tools (running speed, arm strength)
2. Develop a system of defense that allows for creating versatile athletes.
3. Keep improvement and learning as a major goal.
4. Expand on team skills and concepts.
5. Advanced offensive and defensive base running concepts introduced (leads, holding runner, dropped 3rd strikes)
6. Individual and team practices on a regular basis
7. Self-esteem is imperative
8. A greater emphasis on the Rules of the game
9. Be able to do a post-game self analysis of which tactics and strategies worked well and which ones did not. Be able to discuss the game with a coach and turn it into a positive learning experience.
10. Choose a team whose style of play, temperament and playing strengths will compliment their own.
11. Show an understanding of percentage baseball by making wise decisions based on the following factors:
 - ♦ Score, outs, innings, ball and strike count
 - ♦ Field conditions
 - ♦ Playing conditions
 - ♦ Team's strengths and weaknesses
 - ♦ Opponent's strengths and weaknesses

12. Have a clear understanding of the responsibilities of each of the nine defensive positions. Be able to execute all the plays to each selected position with skill and confidence.
13. Have the variety and flexibility that allows a change in tactics when the game is not going well.
14. Work with a coach to devise a game plan that will take advantage of their team's strengths and capitalize on the weaknesses of the opponent.

Skills:

1. Base running

- A. Rounding the bases with tighter turns
- B. Batter-runner to 1st base
 - ♦ First 4 steps
 - ♦ Avoiding interference
- C. Running at 1st base
 - ♦ Leads
 - ♦ Breaks
 - ♦ Steals
- D. Running in the "1st and 3rd" situation
 - ♦ Straight double steal
- E. Running at 2nd base
 - ♦ Leads
 - ♦ Breaks
 - ♦ Steals
 - ♦ Rules on batted balls
- F. Running at 3rd base
 - ♦ Leads
 - ♦ Introduce squeeze play
- G. Sprinting technique
- H. Continue to define headfirst

2. Sprinting

- A. Form running

3. Throwing/Catching

- A. Long toss is emphasized

4. Defense

- A. Run down

- B. Sacrifice bunt defense
- C. Pick-offs
 - ♦ Basic daylight play
 - ♦ Basic catcher pick-off
- D. Introduce 1st and 3rd defense
- E. Wild pitch or passed ball
- F. Re-emphasize fly ball communication
- G. Solidify basic cut-off plays
- H. Introduce double relay plays
- I. Backing-up bases

5. Catchers

- ♦ Basic signals
- ♦ Stance
- ♦ Receiving the pitch
- ♦ Introduce blocking balls
- ♦ Tag play
- ♦ Fielding pop fly's
- ♦ Introduce fielding bunts
- ♦ Introduce throwing out base runner attempting steal

6. Infielders

- ♦ Mental preparation before the pitch
- ♦ Positioning on the field
- ♦ Develop proficiency in fielding ground balls
- ♦ Develop catching fly balls
- ♦ Teach sound mechanics of the double play

7. Outfielders

- ♦ Mental preparation before the pitch
- ♦ Positioning on the field
- ♦ Develop catching fly balls
- ♦ Develop fielding ground balls
- ♦ Throwing
- ♦ Technique for relay play
- ♦ Become more proficient in throwing to cut-off

8. Hitting

- ♦ Proper bat selection
- ♦ Proper position in the batters box
- ♦ Re-emphasize correct grip
- ♦ Sound mechanics
- ♦ Stance

- Stride
- Follow through
- ♦ Introduce various mental aspects of hitting
 - Two strike hitting
 - Anticipation of pitch selection
- ♦ Develop proficiency of run and hit
- ♦ Bunting
 - Develop proficiency of sacrifice bunt
 - Bunting for a hit

9. Signs

- ♦ Verbal or physical
 - Bunt
 - Steal
 - Take care
 - Run/hit
 - Wipe off
 - Squeeze play
 - Verification

10. Pitching

- Proper warm-up routine
 - 3 minute cardiovascular exercise
 - Proper stretch
 - Soft toss to long toss
 - Warm-up each pitch specifically
- Introduce set position
- Introduce curve ball-if pitcher is fully developed
- Fielding your position
 - Fielding bunts
 - Fielding batted balls
- Develop proficiency of covering 1st base on ground ball
- Maintain sound pitching mechanics
- Limit specific pitches per outing



RISING STAR



I4 and Under

Fitness Testing and Training:

1. Take standardized physical fitness tests several times a year to compare results and analyze progress.
2. Take baseball-specific tests several times per year to compare results and analyze progress
3. Understand the importance of knowing how to properly warm-up and stretch prior to, cool-down, and stretch after every practice and game.
4. Understand what each fitness test and baseball-specific test measures and how their results compare with other players of the same age group or playing ability.
5. Set realistic yet challenging goals for improvement in weak areas.
6. Recognize the significance of aerobic and anaerobic conditioning and include this training in their periodization schedule.
7. Understand the importance of foot skills and movement in baseball and be able to use on-and-off-field drills to improve movement.

Injury Prevention:

1. Understand that warming-up, stretching and cooling down on a daily basis helps prevent injury.
2. Proper care and fitting of equipment.

Understand the concept of **R.I.C.E.** for treating injuries:

Rest

Ice

Compression

Elevation

Understand the **5 levels of pain**, what treatment to seek, and how much play is safe at each level.

Levels of Pain

One:

Discomfort or mild pain but resolves with warm-up or continued playing

Two:

Mild pain during play not resolved with warm-up or play that resolves within 24 hours.

Three:

Mild to moderate pain during and after play that exceeds 48 hours.

Four:

Mild to moderate pain that continues during play, after play and does not respond to specific warm-up activities.

Five:

Moderate to severe pain that alters baseball technique.

Nutrition:

1. Understand the importance of and practice proper hydration before, during, and after practice and games.
2. For evening practices and games, eat a normal breakfast and lunch.
Before the practice or game, eat a light snack. After the game, eat a light snack.
3. For early morning games and practices, eat lightly at breakfast. After practice or game, eat a snack.
4. Study the food pyramid.
5. Be able to devise and follow a daily eating plan that consists of sound nutritional choices to enhance athletic performance.



RISING STAR



14 and Under

Sports Psychology:

Players should:

1. Develop an offensive and defensive routine before every pitch.
2. Conduct yourself on the baseball field with an air of confidence, good body posture, and appear in emotional control at all times.
3. Understand the difference in being relaxed and tense.
4. Understand that making mistakes is common and part of the game.
5. Understand the benefits and the use of positive reinforcement. Realize that positive comments help reduce stress, enhance self-image, enhance the team's image, and can increase the enjoyment of games and practices.
6. Understand the damage negative self-talk can do both to the mind and the body. Realize that negative conversations can contribute to low self-esteem and sabotage the enjoyment of the game.

Media Skills:

Players should:

1. Speak positively about opponents being respectful of their playing ability and personal attributes.
2. Be aware of posture and make eye contact with fans and on-field personnel.

Sportsmanship/Character Development:

1. Realize the importance of honesty and integrity on the field.
2. Develop a sense of responsibility for your actions, on and off the field.
3. Demonstrate high levels of sportsmanship.
4. Have respect for teammates, coaches, opponents, officials, and parents.
5. Demonstrate the ability to balance, school, social activities, sports, and family.
6. Develop a sense of team commitment.
7. Be on time for games and practices.
8. Understand that they must say no to drugs and other harmful substances.

Parent Education:

1. Enable parents to understand the objectives of the program.
2. Allow parents to become acquainted with you, the person responsible for their son or daughter.
3. Inform parents about the nature of the sport and its potential risks.
4. Explain team rules, regulations, and procedures.
5. Let parents know what is expected of the athletes and them.
6. Enable you to understand parent's concerns.
7. Establish clear lines of communication between you and parent's.
8. Obtain help from parents in conducting seasons' activities.
9. Expect punctuality and regular attendance at practice and games.



JUNIOR 17 and Under



Fear nothing, respect everything.

Parents: It is necessary for you to submit the NCAA Clearinghouse Forms for your son or daughter to be eligible for competition at NCAA Division I or Division II institutions. Possible drafted players need to be aware that engaging the services of an agent can potentially endanger the athlete's college eligibility. High school baseball is where the players start to show off their skills they've learned over the years. From 14 years and up, players should have seen a curve, slider, knuckleball, sinker, splitter, 2 seam, and a cutter while hitting, unless the league wasn't advanced. The mindset a player must have while batting is simple, "Throw me your best pitch." Vise versa, the mindset a defensive player must have is, "Hit the ball to me." In addition, the mindset the pitcher must have is "Try to hit this."

In preparation, players should develop a schedule which clearly identifies the level of competition where they hope to peak as well as provide appropriate time for preparation, practices, games, and physical psychological recovery. Typically, high school spring baseball is more competitive than summer baseball. If bad habits need to be corrected, defensively or offensively, they need to be corrected in the summer. For example, if a player wants to go from a closed to an open stance, they need to maximize their time in the batting cage to develop muscle memory, although at this age it takes a lot more work and time to develop muscle memory than it would have if it would have been changed or corrected at age 12.

Players need to understand that it's not how many hours you put in at this level that matter, at this level, what matters is what you put into the hours. Players need to develop one or two specific cues that help concentration that the ability to stay focused on the task at hand during each practice. Example would be during a batting practice, "I will work on my hitting today" is not specific enough. It needs to be changed to "I will hit at least five line drives in a row."

Players need to solidly commit to no more than four positions, including pitching. Understand that no matter how much you learn or accomplish, you can never stop learning about the game and improvement needs to stay a major goal.

After each game, reflect on what you could have done better and what you did well with a parent, teammate and coach. Typically, the assistant coaches are the best to reflect this upon at this age, but don't make the conversation all about you in front of the whole team. Make sure the coach understands; you want to get better to help the team. This conversation should be done before or after practice, in private. Bus trips normally work the best after a game.



JUNIOR

17 and Under



Player Competencies

At the **17 and under** level, players should continue to work on the competencies suggested for the twelve and fourteen year olds, but start focusing on the following new competencies.

Goal Setting:

Players should:

1. Establish specific and measurable **performance** goals that are written, shared with coaches, and revised on a regular basis to promote *development and accountability*.
 - a. Example: *To develop hitting skills necessary to strike out less than 8% of at bats.*
 - b. Develop performance goals into three broad categories based on time needed to accomplish the goal: long-term, intermediate, and short-term. Daily tasks should then be planned based on the goals set.

Example:

Long-term	1 Year
Intermediate	4-6 Months
Short-term	1-3 Months

3. Be able to engage in evaluation of play after a game and readjust daily tasks and short-term goals based on that evaluation.
4. Set goals that encompass all of the various areas of their development including technique, strategy, tactics, fitness, and mental toughness.
5. Develop some **outcome** goals that target development and championships. Strive to achieve outcome goals while understanding results are not entirely player controlled.
6. Demonstrate intrinsic motivation.

Example:

Show intensity in practice
Be attentive and dedicated to physical training
Show evidence of independence as a player

7. Have a written plan to demonstrate a systematic approach to training and scheduling as it relates to Periodization. Practice good habits in nutrition and overall good health.



JUNIOR

17 and Under



Periodization:

Players should:

1. Develop a schedule which clearly identifies the level of competition where they hope to peak as well as provide appropriate time for preparation, practices, games, physical, and psychological recovery.
- 2.
3. Participate in a fitness program which includes training for both aerobic and anaerobic energy systems as well as muscular training.
4. Be able to construct a yearly schedule of games played, practice, and rest. Use periodization concepts so that a long-term plan is designed to control volume, intensity, and frequency of training and maximize performance at desired times.
5. Consider the following when planning their schedule:
 - a. Results of fitness training
 - b. Development of goals both mechanical and competitive
 - c. Variables such as age and gender
 - d. Recommendations of coaches
5. Have their fitness programs include:
 - a. Ample time for development of an aerobic base
 - b. General and baseball specific anaerobic training
 - c. Specific training drills while on the road and during in-season play
 - d. Recovery time
6. Have a strength-training program which demonstrates an understanding of reaching a physiological peak. The program should include:
 - a. Time to develop a muscular base
 - b. Training at an increased intensity level
 - c. An in-season strength training maintenance program



JUNIOR

17 and Under



Maximize Practice Time:

Players should:

1. Be on time, alert, hustle, and actively involved in the participation and planning of the practice sessions.
2. Practice the proper techniques of the fundamentals of baseball.
Understand and use these basic components in the following sequence at every practice.
 - Warm-up and Stretching
 - On-field warm-up
 - Review previously learned skills
 - Learn new skills
 - Practice game situations
 - Play game or modified games
 - Conditioning
 - Cool-down and stretching
 - Evaluate the practice
4. Learn new skills in the first half of practice and do physical conditioning near the end of practice so as not to impair learning due to fatigue.
5. Practice with the same intensity as in the game.
6. Develop one or two specific ways that help concentration and the ability to stay focused on the task at hand during each practice.
Ex. Cheerleading practice is disturbing your practice, the coach shouts to bring the players focus back into attention.
7. Use drills to isolate work on baseball skills and techniques. After the initial learning stages, emphasize should be on live game-like drills to insure maximum transfer to playing situations.
8. Be able to set specific performance goals for each practice.
a. During batting practice I will hit 10 hard balls or line-drives rather than I will work on my hitting.
9. Devote a significant amount of practice time to develop strategies as well as time to improve weaknesses.



JUNIOR

17 and Under



Strategies:

The standards and strategies that coaches should teach the JUNIOR include:

1. Begin specialization of players based on athletes tools (running speed, arm strength)
2. Create a system that allows a continued variety of specialization.
3. Keep improvement and learning as a major goal.
4. Expand on team skills and concepts.
5. Advanced offensive and defensive base running concepts introduced (leads, holding runner, dropped 3rd strikes)
6. Individual and team practices on a regular basis
7. Self-esteem is imperative
8. A greater emphasis on the rules of the game
9. Be able to do a post-game self analysis of which tactics and strategies worked well and which ones did not. Be able to discuss the game with a coach and turn it into a positive learning experience.
10. Choose a team whose style of play, temperament and playing strengths will compliment their own.
11. Show an understanding of percentage baseball by making wise decisions based on the following factors:
 - Score, outs, innings, ball and strike count
 - Field conditions
 - Playing conditions
 - Team's strengths and weaknesses
 - Opponent's strengths and weaknesses
12. Have a clear understanding of the responsibilities of each of the nine defensive positions. Be able to execute all the plays to each selected position with skill and confidence.
13. Have the variety and flexibility that allows a change in tactics when the game is not going well.
14. Work with a coach to devise a game plan that will take advantage of their team's strengths and capitalize on the weaknesses of the opponent.
15. Keep a record of diary of every practice session and game. Include a brief scouting report on each opponent for future games and a summary of their own performance.



JUNIOR I7 and Under



Skills:

The skill areas to teach the **JUNIOR** players include:

I. Base running:

- A. Understand that in-dugout observations regarding the opponent's strategies and individual idiosyncrasies can be transferred into better base running.
- B. Continue to observe and solidify observations made in the dugout.
- C. Batter-Runner to 1B
 - Develop proficiency leaving the batters box
 - Have sound mechanics on running through 1B on ground ball to infielder and be mentally alert to the overthrow
 - Have the ability to steal second base given specific set of circumstances
- D. Have sound mechanics on rounding the bases
 - Aggressively taking the extra base
 - Ball in the vision of the base runner
 - Ball out of the vision of the runner
- E. Running from 1B
 - Constantly execute a variety of leads
 - Consistently execute a variety of breaks (ground ball, ball in dirt, etc)
- F. Running in the "1st and 3rd" situation
 - Consistently execute a variety of offensive plays (double steals, two-out situations, early breaks)
- G. Running from 2B
 - Consistently execute a variety of leads in coordination with the base coach
 - Consistently execute the guidelines on batted ground balls and fly balls, consistent with conventional baseball theory
 - Have the ability to steal 3B given a specific set of circumstances
- H. Running from 3B
 - Consistently execute a variety of leads

- Consistently execute a variety of breaks (fly ball, line drive, on-contact play)
 - In co-ordination with the batter, consistently demonstrate the ability to execute a variety of squeeze plays (suicide and safety)
- I. Understand conventional base running strategy and techniques in the following situations
- First and second
 - Second and third
 - Bases loaded

2. Sprinting

- a. Able to demonstrate proper sprinting technique (hip-torso action, arm action, hand action, leg action)
- b. Begin advanced training techniques such as interval training and plyometrics

3. Throwing/Catching

- a. Able to demonstrate proper throwing and catching techniques
- b. Begin advanced training techniques such as specific weight training exercises to improve throwing

4. Team Defense

- a. Demonstrate the ability to execute the “one throw” rundown
- b. Consistently execute conventional bunt defenses in a variety of game situations
- c. Consistently execute an extensive variety of pick-off plays (day light, timed plays, catcher pick, specialty picks)
- d. Consistently execute “1st and 3rd defense” with a variety of techniques to combat any and all game situations
- e. Consistently execute wild pitch and passed ball defenses in a total team concept
- f. Consistently execute fly ball protocol with an emphasis on communication that will succeed in various playing environments
- g. Master individual techniques and team tactics for all cut-off situations
 - Nobody on base, single to all fields
 - Man on 1B, single to outfield
 - Man on 2B, single to outfield
 - Man on 3B or 1B and 3B (sacrifice fly, single, pop up)
 - Nobody on base (long single possible double)
- h. Master individual techniques and team tactics for all double relay plays

- Nobody on base, sure double (ball down the line, ball in alley)
- Man on 1B, sure double

i. Demonstrate the ability to execute a variety of team tactics to defend 'hit and run' (pitch outs, switching coverage's, and deeks)

5. Catchers

- Develop a system of signals for the pitchers and team defensive plays.
- Develop a fundamentally sound catching stance that can be easily adjusted to consistently receive the ball, block pitches, and throw to infielders
- Consistently demonstrate several techniques to handle a variety of pitches to best utilize the strike zone (framing, low ball, backhand)
- Consistently block the ball in dirt
- Consistently demonstrate the ability to execute the tag play in a variety of game situations
- Demonstrate the ability to field batted balls (bunts and pop fly's)
- Demonstrate sound throwing mechanics to handle a variety of base-stealing situations
- Demonstrate good mechanics in handling the home to 1st double play

6. Infielders

- Refine the mental preparation and verbal communication before the pitch
- Understand that game situations affect positioning on the field and may lead to more situational positioning
- Refine proficiency in fielding ground balls in regard to various game situations
 - Charge the ball
 - Footwork to maximize range
 - Develop proficient glove skills so as not to "turn the glove over"
 - Understand and develop the proper angle to the ball
- Maintain proficiency in catching pop-fly's while increasing their range of coverage and ability to deal with environmental factors (sunglasses, range in outfield)
- Refine their proficiency of performing the conventional double plays and understand various unique double play opportunities that might occur in game situations.
- Develop more advanced and varied techniques in the execution of the tag play and covering bases.
- Develop proficiency in holding base runners close to the base.

7. First Baseman

- a. Refine proficiency in arriving to first base to receive a throw (distance to first)
- b. Develop the skill of getting into athletic position to receive the throw and be able to move the feet to handle a variety of throws.
- c. Develop advanced stretch techniques to receive a variety of throws (low, in dirt, high)
- d. Develop advanced techniques on a variety of tag plays (pick-off attempts, batter-runner on throws up line)
- e. Refine proficiency of breaking off the base to a fielding position, when holding a runner on first base.
- f. Demonstrate proficiency of individual responsibilities and techniques of various bunt defenses (field bunt with accurate throws to all bases)
- g. Demonstrate proficiency of individual responsibilities and techniques of various cut-off plays.
- h. Demonstrate proficiency of individual responsibilities and techniques of various double-play situations.
- i. Refine proficiency in catching pop-fly near a fence or dugout.

8. Second Baseman

- a. Develop a variety of advanced techniques to “feed the shortstop” on the double play
- b. Develop a variety of advanced techniques to execute the double play:
 - Footwork
 - Glove skills
 - Throws.
- c. Demonstrate proficiency of individual responsibilities and techniques of various bunt defenses
- d. Demonstrate proficiency of covering the proper base on various cut-off plays
- e. Demonstrate proficiency of various relay plays (be a target, catch, and throw accurately)

9. Shortstop

- a. Develop a variety of advanced techniques to “feed the second baseman” on the double play.
- B. Develop a variety of advanced techniques to execute the double play:
 - Footwork
 - Glove skills
 - Throws
- c. Demonstrate proficiency of individual responsibilities and techniques of various bunt defenses.
- d. Demonstrate proficiency of individual responsibilities of various cut-off plays
- e. Demonstrate proficiency of various relay plays

10. Third Baseman

- a. Develop a variety of advanced techniques to “feed the second baseman” on the double play.
- b. Demonstrate proficiency of individual responsibilities and techniques of various bunt defenses.
- c. Demonstrate proficiency of individual responsibilities of various cut-off plays.
- d. Assertively cut-off ground balls in front of shortstop.
- e. Refine proficiency in catching pop-fly’s near a fence or dugout.

11. Outfielders

- a. During pre-game preparations learn how the ball rebounds off the fence and plays out of the corners
- b. Demonstrate proficiency in “going back” on the fly ball (drop step)
- c. Refine proficiency in fielding fly balls
- d. Demonstrate proficiency of a variety of catches (sliding or diving)
- e. Refine proficiency in fielding ground balls in regards to various game situations
- f. Demonstrate proficiency of accurately throwing to cut-off and or relay man
- g. Properly demonstrate fielding a baseball stopped at outfield fence
- h. Demonstrate proficiency of backing up bases and infielders in various situations
- i. Refine proficiency of throwing over-hand using full arm extension and with a four seam grip

I2. Pitchers Fielding their Position

- a. Refine proficiency in fielding ground balls.
- b. Develop proficiency in fielding balls bunted down the first base line, straight at pitcher, down third base line.
- c. Develop proficiency in fielding bunts and throwing to 2nd base.
- d. Develop proficiency in fielding bunts and throwing to 3rd base.
- e. Develop proficiency in covering first base.
- f. Develop proficiency in throwing to 2nd base for a double play.
- g. Develop proficiency in covering home plate on wild pitches and passed balls.
- h. Develop proficiency on backing up bases.
- i. Develop proficiency for holding runners on base.
- j. Develop proficiency with a variety of pick-off moves.

I3. Pitching

- a. Develop a pitching specific warm-up routine in the bullpen to maximize performance.
- b. Develop the ability to throw a variety of pitches including: two seam fastball, four-seam fastball, slider, curveball, change-up, and specialty pitch.
- c. Develop command of all pitches
- d. Display knowledge of tactics and strategies to exploit hitter's weaknesses.
- e. Learn to map out and execute a specific game plan that maximizes their strengths and exposes opponent's weaknesses.
- f. Demonstrate an understanding of "percentage" baseball by making wise, tactical pitching decisions based on the following factors:
 - Staying ahead of the hitter
 - Have hitters hit your pitch
 - Know the game situation
 - Know the importance of outs and the runner on base
- g. Maintain composure at all times
- h. Consistently execute proper pitching mechanics to protect the throwing arm and maximize performance.
 - Refine pitching from wind-up position
 - Refine pitching from set position

14. Hitting

- a. To have a clear understanding that the purpose of hitting is to hit the ball hard every time, to hit line drives, hard ground balls, and be mentally ready to hit every pitch of every at bat.
- b. Develop a hitting specific routine prior to the at-bat in the dugout and on-deck circle to maximize performance.
- c. Demonstrate an understanding of “percentage” baseball by making wise, tactical hitting decisions based on the following factors:
 - Location in the batters box
 - Anticipate pitch based on the count
 - Offensive situation
 - Playing conditions
- d. Display knowledge of tactics and strategies to exploit pitcher’s weaknesses.
- e. Consistently execute proper hitting mechanics to maximize performance.
- f. Develop the ability to hit a variety of pitches (location or pitch type).
- g. Learn to map out and execute specific game plan that maximizes their strengths and exposes opponent’s weaknesses.
- h. Understand that they never waste a time at bat because at-bats are so precious.
- i. Introduce and develop the visual component of hitting to maximize performance:
 - Learn to pick up the ball
 - Learn to cue the pitcher’s action to tip pitches.

15. Bunting

- a. Develop proficiency of the sacrifice bunt.
- b. Develop proficiency of a variety of squeeze plays.
- c. Refine proficiency of bunting for a base hit to upset the defense, to help the team, to improve batting average and prevent a slump:
 - Drag bunt
 - Push bunt
 - Slash bunt

16. Signs

- a. Coach to player offensive signs
- b. Coach to player defensive signs
- c. Player to player offensive signs
- d. Player to player defensive signs

Fitness Testing and Training:

- Take standardized physical fitness tests several times a year to compare results and analyze progress.
- Take baseball-specific tests several times per year to compare results and analyze progress
- Understand the importance of knowing how to properly warm-up and stretch prior to, cool-down, and stretch after every practice and game.
- Understand what each fitness test and baseball-specific test measures and how their results compare with other players of the same age group or playing ability.
- Set realistic yet challenging goals for improvement in weak areas.
- Recognize the significance of aerobic and anaerobic conditioning and include this training in their periodization schedule.
- Understand the importance of foot skills and movement in baseball and be able to use on-and-off-field drills to improve movement.
- Recognize the importance of flexibility training and include it in daily training regimen.
- Recognize the importance of strength training and include it in daily training regimen.

- Recognize the importance of speed training and include it in daily training regimen.
- Be able to apply the principles of periodization when designing a fitness training regimen.

Injury Prevention:

- Understand that warming-up, stretching and cooling down on a daily basis helps prevent injury.
- Proper care and fitting of equipment.
- Understand the concept of **R.I.C.E.** for treating injuries:

R Rest

I Ice

C Compression

E Elevation

- Understand the **5 levels of pain**, what treatment to seek, and how much play is safe at each level.

One:

Discomfort or mild pain but resolves with warm-up or continued playing

Two:

Mild pain during play not resolved with warm-up or play that resolves within 24 hours.

Three:

Mild to moderate pain during and after play that exceeds 48 hours.

Four:

Mild to moderate pain that continues during play, after play and does not respond to specific warm-up activities.

Five:

Moderate to severe pain that alters baseball technique.



JUNIOR 17 and Under



Nutrition:

- Understand the importance of and practice proper hydration before, during, and after practice and games.
- For evening practices and games, eat a normal breakfast and lunch. Before the practice or game, eat a light snack. After the game, eat a light snack.
- For early morning games and practices, eat lightly at breakfast. After practice or game, eat a snack.
- Study the food pyramid.
- Be able to devise and follow a daily eating plan that consists of sound nutritional choices to enhance athletic performance.
- Be able to make educational food choices when traveling in the United States and internationally.

Sports Psychology:

Players should:

- Develop an offensive and defensive routine before every pitch.
- Conduct yourself on the baseball field with an air of confidence, good body posture, and appear in emotional control at all times.
- Understand the difference in being relaxed and tense.
- Understand that making mistakes is common and part of the game.
- Understand the benefits and the use of positive reinforcement. Realize that positive comments help reduce stress, enhance self-image, enhance the team's image, and can increase the enjoyment of games and practices.
- Understand the damage negative self-talk can do both to the mind and the body. Realize that negative conversations can contribute to low self-esteem and sabotage the enjoyment of the game.
- Learn and practice relaxation exercises.
- Understand and use imagery and breathing regulation techniques to calm down the mind and relax the body.
- Be able to concentrate on the field. Be aware that the natural tendency is for eyes to wander outside the field between pitches. Two techniques to help with attention control are to focus on the rawhide of the glove or grain of the bat.
- Understand the importance of keeping competition in the proper perspective.



JUNIOR 17 and Under



Media Skills:

Players should:

- Be able to successfully give a post-game speech to a crowd after winning or losing a game. Thank the sponsors, tournament director, staff, umpires, and fans.
- Speak positively about opponents being respectful of their playing ability and personal attributes.
- Be aware of posture and make eye contact with fans and on-field personnel.
- Be able to successfully use media skills in speeches to large groups with an emphasis on posture, making eye contact, and speaking slowly and succinctly.
- Always appear to be friendly, considerate, and easy-going with reporters. Try to remember names and always be polite and patient with reports who may not have an understanding of baseball terminology.
- Always speak to and look directly at the interviewer when answering questions. Resist the temptation to look at the ground or the sky.
- Make the effort to reveal a good personality during an interview. Be enthusiastic and animated in interviews after a win or loss. Understand that it is acceptable to talk about issues other than baseball.

Sportsmanship/Character Development:

- Realize the importance of honesty and integrity on the field.
- Learn coping skills to deal with stress.
- Learn to balance school, social activity, baseball, and family.
- Develop a sense of independence and responsibility for actions as an individual and as a competitor.



JUNIOR 17 and Under



- Continue competencies listed above for 12-and under.
- Develop a sense of team commitment.
- Learn not to abuse alcohol or controlled substances, and to participate in anti-drug programs.
- Appreciate the benefits received from baseball and be willing to give back to the game, particularly to younger players and fans.

Parent Education:

1. Continue competencies in Parent Education as listed in Age 14 and under.
2. It is necessary for parents to acquire, complete and submit the NCAA Clearinghouse Forms for their son/daughter to be eligible for competition at NCAA Division I or Division II institutions.
3. Parents need to familiarize themselves with the rules and regulations of the various collegiate organizations (NCAA, NAIA, NJCAA)
4. Parents of potential drafted players need to familiarize themselves with the rules and regulations of Professional Baseball.
5. Drafted players, as well as their parents, need to be aware that engaging the services of an agent can potentially endanger the athlete's college eligibility.



JUNIOR 17 and Under



Specific Position Skills

The skills are now developed at this level are now very specific and need to be broken down.

Catchers: Master the system of signs for pitchers, pick offs and team defenses before the first practice. Framing, blocking balls, and different stances need to be worked on individually outside of the team practices. Be observant of everything, you are the coach on the field, be loud and intelligently reliable. While in practice, coaches will probably work with you on home to first double plays, dropped 3rd ball strikes and throw to first, fielding bunts and being vocal about who to field the bunt and where to go.

Infielders: By this point, you shouldn't have the ball in your hands and not know what to do with it. You should be able to understand that game situations affect positioning on the field and may lead to more situational positioning, always use your best judgment, your judgment will continue to get better and better the more experience you have, learn from your mistakes. Notice who is up to bat late in the game or where he bats in the line up, remember if he was quick or slow so you know how much time you will have if you get a slow ground ball. When you stay low to the ground on a hard hit short hop ball, the closer your eyes are to the ball, the easier it is to catch or scoop. On a close sliding play, you need to tag the runner hard, he could come off the base, but don't intentionally hurt him. Have the quickest hands on the team, grab the ball, find a lace and get rid of it. Practice short hops, most will go under you, stay under the ball.

Outfielders: The number one rule, easily above all others, for outfielders is "catch the ball." During pre-game preparations, learn how the ball rebounds off the fence and plays out of the corners. Envision where the cut off man will be on all parts of the field. Notice how thick the grass is and how bumpy areas are. Everybody moves on a bunt, go back someone up, get involved in the pickles. Show off your arm on a deep fly ball with a runner tagging at third, you may have no chance at throwing him out, but its good practice. Try to get a four seam grip on the baseball and throw it 12 to 6 when you are trying to throw someone out so the ball doesn't tail as much.

Pitchers: Throw strikes, walks lead to long innings, avoid long innings when you're playing defensive, and you'll win a lot of games at this level. If you don't practice covering first base on a

ground ball hit to the first basemen at your practice, practice it somewhere else, this is not as easy as it looks. Practice pick offs and holding runners on base in different fashions and make those tendencies habits. Develop a pitching specific warm-up routine in the bullpen to maximize performance. Know what your most accurate grip and pitch is, know what your favorite 0-2 count pitch to throw is, and know what pitch you should not throw on a 2-0 count. Always know what part of the order is up, don't walk the nine hole and don't let the lead off hitter in the first inning see all your pitches.

Hitting: Develop a very specific hitting routine prior to the at-bat in the dugout and on-deck circle to maximize performance. Demonstrate an understanding of “percentage” baseball by making wise, tactical hitting decisions based on the following factors- Location in the batters box, anticipate pitch based on the count, offensive situation and playing conditions. Umpires don't like it when you stall, if you stall in between pitches, you better be swinging. Define your strike zone as a hitter, expand it when you're behind in the count, and foul off balls that are questionable to the expanded strike zone. Find the pitchers release point before you are on deck. When called to bunt, know that the coach expects you to get out, get the job done and bunt the ball, the only way you should get on base is if an over throw happens.

Base running: Know your skills and use your judgment to help the team. Example, turn a single into a double when the cut off man is missed is a very good idea for the typical lead off hitter, but typically not a good idea for a catcher or clean up hitter. No your limits and make judgments off of them, when your wrong, learn from them. Study the starting pitcher's looks at second base, does he consistently give the runner one look, pause and go home? If so, you should be able to steal 3rd base quite easily. Mechanics for base running should be developed, such as making a judgment to advance to the next base needs to be made by the coach if the ball is out of vision of the player. However, when a left handed batter is up, and you the player are on second, your primary concern is the short stop, your coach should help you out on where the second basemen is. While on first with a runner on second, ball in the dirt, immediately look to see if the runner on second took off before you steal second.



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Sports Psychology

This is the age where players need to develop a ritual or routine before each pitch, both offensively and defensively. Everyone should run onto the field with an air of confidence, good body posture and appear in emotional control at all times, never show them you are hurt. Understand the benefits of and use of positive self-talk on the field. Realize that positive comments help reduce stress, enhance self-image and can increase the enjoyment of competition and practice. Understand the damage negative self-talk can do both to the mind and the body.

Realize that negative conversation can contribute to low self-esteem and sabotage the enjoyment of the game. Be able to visibly control their breathing patterns at difficult and tense moments during the game (example: exhale when throwing and hitting, which should already be mastered). Errors will happen, mistakes shouldn't happen, but when a mistake happens, learn from it. Everyone knows what an error is, a mistake would be getting picked off, not swinging on a hit a run, popping up a bunt, forgetting how many outs there are etc. Be aware that the natural tendency is for eyes to wander outside the field between pitches, focus on the letters of bat or glove if you are having trouble focusing. Stay relaxed and want to win, don't tell yourself, "I don't want to lose" tell yourself, "I want to win."



ELITE

18 and Over

Strike Zone Upper Deck League

The Strike Zone Upper Deck League is designed to give college and former professional players the opportunity to compete against the finest baseball representation in the Midwest on a part time basis. The summer season consists of around 20-30 games and 2-4 games per week depending on if you want to play the league and on the travel team.

This league gives college students the chance to play competitive wood bat baseball and work full time in the summer. Coaches keep stats for the players and are available to write letters of recommendation for them to give to their coaches when they return to college. Through a high level of play, and the adjustment to the wood bat, the Upper Deck teams will prepare players for the next level.

An exposure camp will be offered to players looking to be evaluated for a collegiate or professional career. College coaches and pro scouts will be attending the exposure to evaluate players.

Almost all games will be night games and last 9 innings long with a run rule in effect. The travel team consists of the best players in the league, "Elite," that travels around the Midwest and play other "all-star" like teams. With the Strike Zone travel team, players and families have to be able to commit to playing more than three games a week if you're not a pitcher. The travel team will play in a regional tournament and has the possibility of playing in the national tournament.

Strike Zone coaches include former professional and college players as well as collegiate coaches.



ELITE

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Player Competencies

At the ELITE level, players should continue to work on the competencies suggested for the Rising Star and Junior but start focusing on the following new competencies.

Goal Setting:

Players should:

- a. Establish specific and measurable **performance** goals that are written, shared with coaches, and revised on a regular basis to promote *development and accountability*.
 - a. Example: *To develop hitting skills necessary to strike out less than 8% of at bats.*
- b. Develop performance goals into three broad categories based on time needed to accomplish the goal: long-term, intermediate, and short-term. Daily tasks should then be planned based on the goals set. Example:
 - Long-term 1 Year
 - Intermediate 4-6 Months
 - Short-term 1-3 Months
- c. Be able to engage in evaluation of play after a game and readjust daily tasks and short-term goals based on that evaluation.
- d. Set goals that encompass all of the various areas of their development including technique, strategy, tactics, fitness, and mental toughness.
- e. Develop some **outcome** goals that target development and championships. Strive to achieve outcome goals while understanding results are not entirely player controlled.
- f. Demonstrate intrinsic motivation.

Example:

 - Show intensity in practice
 - Be attentive and dedicated to physical training
 - Show evidence of independence as a player
- g. Have a written plan to demonstrate a systematic approach to training and scheduling as it relates to Periodization. Practice good habits in nutrition and overall good health.



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- Develop a schedule which clearly identifies the level of competition where they hope to peak as well as provide appropriate time for preparation, practice, games, physical, and psychological recovery.
- Participate in a fitness program which includes training for both aerobic and anaerobic energy systems as well as muscular training.

Periodization:

Players should:

1. Develop a schedule which clearly identifies the level of competition where they hope to peak as well as provide appropriate time for preparation, practices, games, physical, and psychological recovery.
2. Participate in a fitness program which includes training for both aerobic and anaerobic energy systems as well as muscular training.
3. Be able to construct a yearly schedule of games played, practice, and rest. Use *periodization* concepts so that a long-term plan is designed to control volume, intensity, and frequency of training and maximize performance at desired times.
4. Consider the following when planning their schedule:
 - Results of fitness training
 - Development of goals both mechanical and competitive
 - Variables such as age and gender
 - Recommendations of coaches
5. Have their fitness programs include:
 - Ample time for development of an aerobic base
 - General and baseball specific anaerobic training
 - Specific training drills while on the road and during in-season play
 - Recovery time



ELITE

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6. Have a strength-training program which demonstrates an understanding of reaching a physiological peak. The program should include:
 - Time to develop a muscular base
 - Training at an increased intensity level
 - A competition strength training maintenance program
7. Develop a year-round system of training that includes physical training, psychological training, technical development, and strategic development.
8. Have a clear understanding of the purpose of each training phase prior to implementing them to avoid both physical and psychological over-training. Training phases:
 - Preparation
 - Pre-season
 - In-season
 - D. Active rest

Maximize Practice Time:

Players should:

1. Be on time, alert, hustle, and actively involved in the participation and planning of the practice sessions.
2. Practice the proper techniques of the fundamentals of baseball.
3. Understand and use these basic components in the following sequence at every practice.
 - Warm-up and Stretching
 - On-field warm-up
 - Review previously learned skills
 - Learn new skills
 - Practice game situations
 - Play game or modified games
 - Conditioning
 - Cool-down and stretching
 - Evaluate the practice



ELITE

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- ♦ Learn new skills in the first half of practice and do physical conditioning near the end of practice so as not to impair learning due to fatigue.
- ♦ Practice with the same intensity as in the game.
- ♦ Develop one or two specific ways that help concentration and the ability to stay focused on the task at hand during each practice.
- ♦ Use drills to isolate work on baseball skills and techniques. After the initial learning stages, emphasis should be on live game-like drills to insure maximum transfer to playing situations.
- ♦ Be able to set specific performance goals for each practice.
- ♦ *During batting practice I will hit 10 hard balls or line-drives rather than I will work on my hitting.*
- ♦ Devote a significant amount of practice time to develop strategies as well as time to improve weaknesses.
- ♦ Continue competencies listed for Rising Star and Junior.
- ♦ Organize practice sessions into short, intensive work periods of 15-45 minute durations followed by short breaks for relaxation, hydration, and refocusing. Total practice time on a daily basis should be between 2 to 6 hours depending on each player's periodization schedule.



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Strategies

The standards and strategies that coaches should teach the Elite level include:

1. Refine the specialization of players based upon their qualifications and athletic tools (hitting, power, fielding skill, arm strength, and running speed).
 - a. Categories of athlete's physical tools in order of importance by position:

<u>Positions</u>	<u>1st</u>	<u>2nd</u>	<u>3rd</u>	<u>4th</u>	<u>5th</u>
First Baseman	Power	Hitting	Fielding	Arm	Speed
Second Baseman	Fielding	Speed	Arm	Hitting	Power
Third Baseman	Hitting	Power	Fielding	Arm	Speed
Shortstop	Fielding	Arm	Speed	Hitting	Power
Catcher	Fielding	Arm	Hitting	Power	Speed
Pitcher	Velocity	Movement	Breaking	Control	
Left Fielder	Power	Hitting	Fielding	Arm	Speed
Center Fielder	Fielding	Hitting	Speed	Arm	Power
Right Fielder	Power	Arm	Fielding	Hitting	Speed

2. Create a system that allows a continued variety of specialization.
3. Keep improvement and learning as a major goal.
4. Expand on team skills and concepts.
5. Advanced offensive and defensive concepts must continue to be fully developed.
6. Individual and team practice on a daily basis.
7. Self-esteem is imperative.
8. A greater emphasis on the details of the rules of the game.

- Be able to do post-game self-analysis of which tactics and strategies worked well and which ones did not. Be able to discuss the game with a coach and turn it into a positive learning experience.
- Choose a team whose style of play, temperament, and playing strengths will compliment your own.
- Show an understanding of percentage baseball by making wise decisions based on the following factors:
 - Score, outs, innings, ball and strike count
 - Field conditions
 - Playing conditions
 - Team's strengths and weaknesses
 - Opponent's strengths and weaknesses
- Have a clear understanding of the responsibilities of each of the nine defensive positions. Be able to execute all the plays to each selected position with skill and confidence.
- Have the variety and flexibility that allows change when the game is not going well.
- Work with a coach to devise a game plan that will take advantage of their team's strengths and capitalize on the weaknesses of their opponents.
- Keep a record or diary of every practice session and game. Include a brief scouting report on each opponent for future games and a summary of their own performance.
- Have the ability to take command and dominate an opponent (possess self-control, consistency, power, accuracy, variety, and finesse).

Skills:

Players should:

- Understand the skills identified at the Junior level are the same skills that the Elite athlete needs.

2. Need to continue to develop and improve those skills based upon:
 - a. Consistency: (frequency of performance level)
 - b. Performance: (level of success)

Example: *The winning type of athlete will tend to win when odds are against them.*

- c. Physical Tools: (strength, speed, and power)

Example: Professional Baseball Grading System

Rating	Radar Gun	Time To 1B	60 Yards	Steals	Pitchers Release	Catchers Release
8- Outstanding	94-96	4.0/3.9	6.4	3.0	0.8	1.6
7- Very Good	92-93	4.1/4.0	6.6	3.10	1.0	1.8
6- Above Average	89-91	4.2/4.1	6.8	3.15	1.2	1.9
5- Average	85-88	4.3/4.2	7.0	3.25	1.3	2.0
4- Below Average	81-84	4.4/4.3	7.3	3.30	1.4	2.1
3- Well Below	76-80	4.5/4.4	7.5	3.40	1.6	2.3
2- Poor	72-75	4.6/4.5	7.7	3.50	1.8	2.5

Fitness Testing and Training:

1. Take standardized physical fitness tests several times a year to compare results and analyze progress.
2. Take baseball-specific tests several times per year to compare results and analyze progress
3. Understand the importance of knowing how to properly warm-up and stretch prior to, cool-down, and stretch after every practice and game.
4. Understand what each fitness test and baseball-specific test measures and how their results compare with other players of the same age group or playing ability.
5. Set realistic yet challenging goals for improvement in weak areas.
6. Recognize the significance of aerobic and anaerobic conditioning and include this training in their periodization schedule.

7. Understand the importance of foot skills and movement in baseball and be able to use on-and-off-field drills to improve movement.
8. Recognize the importance of flexibility training and include it in daily training regimen.
9. Recognize the importance of strength training and include it in daily training regimen.
10. Recognize the importance of speed training and include it in daily training regimen.
11. Be able to apply the principles of periodization when designing a fitness training regimen.

Injury Prevention:

1. Understand that warming-up, stretching and cooling down on a daily basis helps prevent injury.
2. Proper care and fitting of equipment.
3. Understand the concept of **R.I.C.E.** for treating injuries:

Rest
Ice
Compression
Elevation

4. Understand the **5 levels of pain**, what treatment to seek, and how much play is safe at each level.

One:

Discomfort or mild pain but resolves with warm-up or continued playing

Two:

Mild pain during play not resolved with warm-up or play that resolves within 24 hours.

Three:

Mild to moderate pain during and after play that exceeds 48 hours.

Four:

Mild to moderate pain that continues during play, after play and does not respond to specific warm-up activities.

Five:

Moderate to severe pain that alters baseball technique.



ELITE **I 8 and Over**



5. Know that strength training is a key element in preventing injuries as well as improving performance.

Nutrition:

1. Understand the importance of and practice proper hydration before, during, and after practice and games.
2. For evening practices and games, eat a normal breakfast and lunch. Before the practice or game, eat a light snack. After the game, eat a light snack.
3. For early morning games and practices, eat lightly at breakfast. After practice or game, eat a snack.
4. Study the food pyramid.
5. Be able to devise and follow a daily eating plan that consists of sound nutritional choices to enhance athletic performance.
6. Be able to make educational food choices when traveling in the United States and internationally.

Sports Psychology:

Players should:

1. Develop an offensive and defensive routine before every pitch.
2. Conduct yourself on the baseball field with an air of confidence, good body posture, and appear in emotional control at all times.
3. Understand the difference in being relaxed and tense.
4. Understand that making mistakes is common and part of the game.
5. Understand the benefits and the use of positive reinforcement.
Realize that positive comments help reduce stress, enhance self-image, enhance the team's image, and can increase the enjoyment of games and practices.



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6. Understand the damage negative self-talk can do both to the mind and the body. Realize that negative conversations can contribute to low self-esteem and sabotage the enjoyment of the game.
7. Learn and practice relaxation exercises.
8. Understand and use imagery and breathing regulation techniques to calm down the mind and relax the body.
9. Be able to concentrate on the field. Be aware that the natural tendency is for eyes to wander outside the field between pitches. Two techniques to help with attention control are to focus on the rawhide of the glove or grain of the bat.
10. Understand the importance of keeping competition in the proper perspective. Reframe situations of perceived pressure in a more relaxed and realistic light.
11. Use visualization to rehearse motor skills and/or game tactics before undertaking this activity.

Media Skills:

Players should:

1. Be able to successfully give a post-game speech to a crowd after winning or losing a game. Thank the sponsors, tournament director, staff, umpires, and fans.
2. Speak positively about opponents being respectful of their playing ability and personal attributes.
3. Be aware of posture and make eye contact with fans and on-field personnel.
4. Be able to successfully use media skills in speeches to large groups with an emphasis on posture, making eye contact, and speaking slowly and succinctly.
5. Always appear to be friendly, considerate, and easy-going with reporters. Try to remember names and always be polite and patient with reports that may not have an understanding of baseball terminology.



ELITE **18 and Over**



6. Always speak to and look directly at the interviewer when answering questions. Resist the temptation to look at the ground or the sky.
7. Make the effort to reveal a good personality during an interview. Be enthusiastic and animated in interviews after a win or loss. Understand that it is acceptable to talk about issues other than baseball.
8. Recognize that questions of a personal nature do not have to be answered. Be aware that nothing is “off the record”. Anything said to a reporter may be printed in the newspaper the next day or be on television that night.
9. Understand the importance of personal appearance and dress appropriately for all situations. Make sure personal and team sponsor’s logos and products are visible.

Sportsmanship/Character Development:

1. Realize the importance of honesty and integrity on the field.
2. Learn coping skills to deal with stress.
3. Learn to balance school, social activity, baseball, and family.
4. Develop a sense of independence and responsibility for actions as an individual and as a competitor.
5. Continue competencies listed above for 12-and under.
6. Develop a sense of team commitment.
7. Learn not to abuse alcohol or controlled substances, and to participate in anti-drug programs.
8. Appreciate the benefits received from baseball and be willing to give back to the game, particularly to younger players and fans.



ELITE

18 and Over

Parent Education:

1. Continue competencies in Parent Education as listed in Age 14 and under.
2. It is necessary for parents to acquire, complete and submit the NCAA Clearinghouse Forms for their son/daughter to be eligible for competition at NCAA Division I or Division II institutions.
3. Parents need to familiarize themselves with the rules and regulations of the various collegiate organizations (NCAA, NAIA, NJCAA)
4. Parents of potential drafted players need to familiarize themselves with the rules and regulations of Professional Baseball.
5. Drafted players, as well as their parents, need to be aware that engaging the services of an agent can potentially endanger the athlete's college eligibility.



Baseball and Fitness Testing

The Strike Zone provides standardized baseball and fitness tests which should be done several times a year to compare results and analyze progress.

Baseball Test:

- 40-60 yard dashes
- Arm strength from Right field to 3 B
- Throws from shortstop to 1B (timed)
- Running Home to First base (timed)
- Running Second base to home plate (timed)
- Bat speed
- Hitting Evaluation
- Pitching Evaluation
- Catcher Pop Times

Fitness Test:

- Pro Agility (timed)
- Jump Rope-60 seconds (timed)
- Push Ups-60 seconds (timed)
- Sit Ups-60 seconds (timed)
- Grip Strength-Straight Arm Bar Hangs
- 40-60 yard dash (timed)
- 300 Yard Shuffle or 1 Mile Run (timed)
- Standing Broad Jump
- Vertical Jump

