



# COACHING 14U PLAYERS

## FEATURES OF THIS AGE GROUP

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

## PRINCIPLES

- Focus developing more intricate motor skills
- Emphasize the development of concepts of team work, cooperation, and importance of practice
- Increase attention to mental skills
- Review base of fundamental skills
- Increase competitiveness, still keeping it in perspective
- Focus on developing good practice/learning habits

## MENTAL PREPARATION

- Expand strategy: delay steal, bunt and steal, tag up on fly balls
- Emphasize importance of teamwork and sportsmanship
- Ensure mental prep for each play
- Continue to develop and practice imaging/visualization.
- Expand concept and use of self-talk
- Expand pre game preparation:
  - Introduce concept of ideal performance state
  - Encourage keeping a journal
- Continue individual goal setting (skill development)
- Begin team goal setting
- Expect 100% in practices and games

# SOFTBALL SKILLS – PHYSICAL

**Ensure the players can correctly perform the most fundamental skills in softball.** Most will learn new skills better by breaking them down into components.

## THROWING

- By this age players should have the basic mechanics - but review and check periodically
- Teach crow hop and leg drive to add power to throw
- Stress the importance of accuracy
- Do not allow sloppy throwing mechanics during warm ups
- Introduce “dart throw”



## FIELDING

- Ensure proper fielding “ready” position and move to get in front of ball (don't allow reaching for ball)
- Teach lateral movement: review shuffle step and introduce crossover step
- Introduce backhand and forehand catch
- Introduce “quick release” - (glove is only a transfer mechanism)
- Expect anticipatory movement on every pitch
- Review body and hand position on flys
- Practice running with glove
- Ensure lots of practice judging fly balls
- Introduce and practice diving for balls to side and in front

### Defensive Play

- ✓ Check the following:
  - Bunt coverage
  - 2b coverage of 1b
  - RF play at 1b
  - Making a tag
  - Relay (more advanced may introduce cut off)



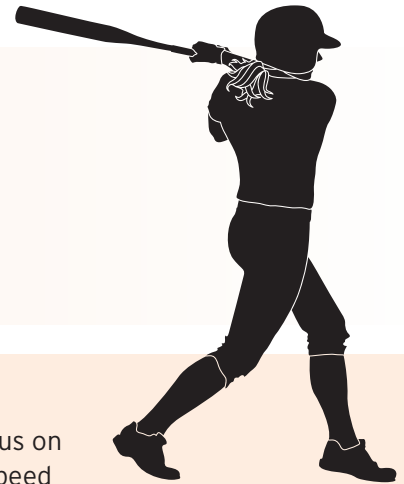
## RUNNING AND BASE RUNNING

- Review running fundamentals
- Teach how to round bases
- Teach lead off and introduce retreat slide
- Practice bent leg slide; introduce “fade away” or “back door” slide

# SOFTBALL SKILLS - PHYSICAL

## HITTING

- Ensure proper rotational hitting fundamentals
- Teach strike zone and "smart hitting" (but reiterate that a hit is preferred to a base on ball)
- Introduce strategy of hitting based on count and "umpire's strike zone"
- Introduce running slap to left handers



## BUNTING

- Introduce bent leg or drag bunt.
- Introduce fake and slap

## FITNESS

- Continue to focus on flexibility and speed

## CATCHING

- Review catching positioning and umpire view.
- ✔ Check the following:
  - Strong throw to 2b
  - Quick throw to corners
  - Blocking balls in dirt
  - Blocking plate and making tag
  - Raming the ball
  - Retrieving passed balls or wild pitches
  - Pop ups - usual direction and behavior

## PITCHING

At this level pitchers should be able to throw strikes from 50% to 80% of the time

- Focus on pitching to corners
- Teach pitchers mainly by breaking components down - sequential
- Introduce leg drive for power
- ✔ Check the following:
  - Body rotation (open > close)
  - Pitching arm in the correct plane (straight up and down - ear and hip)
  - Release point at the hip: do not allow for leaning forward on release (to aim the ball into the strike zone)
- Pitchers should:
  - Have a consistent a change-up that they can throw for a strike on any count.
  - Have a consistent movement pitch, typically a drop ball, that they can throw for strikes
  - Advanced pitchers may be developing a 2nd movement pitch such as curve ball or screw ball. A rise ball may be developed if the pitchers speed is approaching 60 mph (from 43 ft.)



