

AIRDRIE ANGELS

FASTPITCH ASSOCIATION



COACHES HANDBOOK

www.airdrieangels.com

Introduction

The Airdrie Angels Fastpitch program offers membership to all children aged 7-19 who reside North of Highway 1 (to the Wheatland County border) and west of Highway 9. This includes the city of Airdrie, the towns of Crossfield, Carstairs, and Didsbury and the hamlet of Balzac. Our program is focused on skills and development but also teamwork, friendship, and fun. Children between 5 and 7 can also become members of our **Learn to Play** team.

Our Purpose

Our program, above all else, wants to offer a quality softball program to the youth of our community, and as a result, cultivate a lifelong love of the game with our members.

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VOLUNTEERING PROCEDURE

Purpose

AAFA wants to ensure the sustained success of our Fastpitch program, which is exclusively ran on volunteer power. Volunteering can also be a great way to meet new people, learn new skills and gain valuable experience.

Procedure

The Airdrie Angels Fastpitch program offers a variety of volunteer opportunities at both the Association and Team levels. No prior experience is required for most roles, and most positions require little or no training. We will provide any necessary training and support to help you succeed.

At the Association level, volunteer positions include: President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, Registrar, Coach Director, Player Director, Equipment Coordinator, Apparel Coordinator, U7 Coordinator (Learn to Play Program), Tournament Coordinator, and Member at Large.

At the Team level, volunteer roles include: Coach, Assistant Coach, Team Manager, Jersey Manager, Bench Mom, Scorekeeper, and Umpire.

If you're interested in volunteering, please complete the AAFA Volunteer Application Form available in the Forms section of the AAFA website. Coaches and Assistant Coaches should also review and follow the Coaching Policy and Procedures outlined in this document.

Calgary Minor Softball Association requires all Coaches and Managers to have a current and valid vulnerable sector check to ensure the safest possible environment for our minor players. Vulnerable Sector Checks must be renewed every three years, including if they expire in the same calendar year as the current season.

STEP 1: Request a volunteer letter

- Coaches and Managers listed on a team roster must request a volunteer letter from AAFA before applying for their Vulnerable Sector Check. A significant portion of this cost is covered by the CMSA, by using this letter.
- To request your letter, email coach@airdrieangels.com

STEP 2: Apply In Person

- After receiving your letter, take this and your identification to an RCMP station. Vulnerable Sector Checks are often provided same day.

STEP 3: Share your results

- Once you have received your Vulnerable Sector Check, please forward this to policechecks@calgaryminorsoftball.com. Do not send this to AAFA.

COACHING POLICY & PROCEDURE

Purpose

AAFA wants to thank you for choosing to coach! The **Airdrie Angels Fastpitch** program is committed to helping you succeed in your role.

Policy

Coaches are the foundation of the **Airdrie Angels Fastpitch** program. Our goal is to provide coaches with all the resources and training needed to effectively teach our athletes proper technical skills, drills, and gameplay. This will ensure they stay healthy, fit, and ready to compete while having fun.

Potential coaches or assistant coaches should complete the **AAFA Coaching Application Form**, available on the AAFA website. Completed forms can be emailed to coach@airdrieangels.com.

Procedure

The **AAFA** has 4 requirements for **ALL Coaches & Assistant Coaches**:

- The Community Softball Coaching Course (NCCP - level 1) or the Foundations of Coaching Softball, you'll need the 1st part of the 60 min online course
- A complete and current Vulnerable Sector Check (see Volunteering Procedure)
- The Coaches Respect in Sport Certification. (RIS for Activity Leaders)
- Safe Sport. This is a free course and will take about 90 minutes.

If a team (U13 to U19) would like to compete in Provincials, that team will require at least one coach that has their **Community Softball certification** (formerly NCCP Certification Level 1 (which includes Making Ethical Decisions (MED))) or Competition - Introduction certification (formerly NCCP Certification Level 2). **One female Coach must have their MED - Making Ethical Decisions.**

AAFA will pay for Community Softball and Competition - Introduction Certification training for coaches. The coach will be required to pay for the training upfront. Upon completion of one full season of coaching with AAFA, the Coach is eligible to receive reimbursement for the cost of these courses.

We have many resources to help you succeed as a coach in our association.

- The AAFA Coaches Handbook can be found on our Coaches Page
- Drills, Practice Plans, and more can be found on the Coaches Toolbox page of our website.
- [CMSA 2025 Rulebook](#)

FAIR PLAY PLEDGE

Purpose

AAFA in partnership with CMSA want to ensure that all association members have a safe, fun, and rewarding season in the **Airdrie Angels Fastpitch** program.

...for Coaches

- I will be reasonable when re-scheduling games and practices, remembering that players have other interests and obligations.
- I will teach my players to play fairly and to respect the rules, officials, and opponents.
- I will ensure that all players get instruction, support and playing time in an equitable manner.
- I will not ridicule or yell at my players for making mistakes or for performing badly.
- I will remember that players play to have fun and must be encouraged to have confidence in themselves.
- I will make sure that equipment and playing fields are safe and match players ages and abilities.
- I will remember that participants need a coach they can respect. I will be generous with praise and set a good example.
- I will obtain proper training and continue to upgrade my coaching skills.
- I will work in cooperation with officials for the benefit of the game.
- I will respect and inspire respect from my players for the playing facilities provided for my team and our opponents .

...for Players

- I will play softball because I want to, not because others or coaches want me to.
- I will play by the rules of CMSA and in the spirit of the game.
- I will control my temper – fighting or 'mouthing off' can spoil the activity for everyone.
- I will respect my opponents.
- I will do my best to be a true team player.
- I will remember that winning isn't everything – that having fun, improving my skills, making friends and doing my best are also important.
- I will acknowledge all good plays and performances - those of my team and of my opponents.
- I will remember that coaches and officials are there to help me. I will accept their decisions and show them respect.
- I will respect the playing facilities provided for me team and my opponent.

FAIR PLAY PLEDGE

...for Parents

- I will not force my child to participate in softball.
- I will remember that my child plays sports for his or her enjoyment, not mine.
- I will encourage my child to play by the rules and to resolve conflict without resorting to hostility or violence.
- I will teach my child that doing one's best is as important as winning so that my child will never feel defeated by the outcome of the game.
- I will make my child feel like a winner every time by offering praise for competing fairly and trying hard.
- I will never ridicule or yell at my child for making a mistake or losing a competition.
- I will remember that children learn best by example. I will applaud good plays/performances by both my child's team and their opponents.
- I will never question the officials' judgment or honesty in public.
- I will support all efforts to remove verbal and physical abuse from children's sporting activities
- I will respect and show appreciation for the volunteer coaches who give their time to provide sport activities for my child.

FAIR PLAY - ATHLETE & COACH AGREEMENT

ATHLETE

I AGREE TO:

- Always play by the rules
- Never argue with an official. When a call is disputed, I'll let the coach or team captain handle it.
- Remember that I'm playing because I enjoy the sport. Winning is fun, but so are many other things about the sport.
- Work at achieving my personal best and to not get discouraged if it's not the best.
- Show appreciation for good plays/performances, even by opponents.
- Control my temper and not be a show-off.

COACH

I AGREE TO:

- Remind my athletes that winning a game or trophy isn't the only measure of success.
- Encourage my athletes and offer constructive criticism.
- instruct my athletes to follow both the letter and the spirit of the rules.
- Teach my athletes that officials are an important part of the game. They should be respected at all times, as should their decisions.
- Encourage my athletes to be good sports.
- Give every participant a chance to play and learn the skills.
- Remember that my actions speak louder than my words.

INTRODUCTION TO COACHING

Welcome to the Airdrie Angels Fastpitch Association!

Thank you for volunteering your time to coach. Whether you have played softball or baseball before or even if you've previously coached, this handbook contains fundamental skills along with examples of drills you can run to create a practice scheme or plan.

The videos and drill sheets will not only prepare you to teach and correct your team's fundamental skills but also keep them engaged in the practice and prepared for every aspect of the game.

Section One of this handbook is dedicated to educating new coaches about proper fundamental skill techniques. They also lay the foundation of a player's skill set. The Airdrie Angels Fastpitch program strives for every coach to be teaching their players, at every level, the proper techniques. Not only will this keep a consistent message to all our players throughout their club membership, it also will improve the overall safety for our players and eliminate injuries related to improper fundamental skill techniques.

Section Two of this handbook is printable reminders of Drills that can be run for all the different Skills that are used in Fastpitch; Fielding, Hitting, Base Running, Pitching and Catching.

Section Three of this handbook provides information about the 'other stuff' that coaches are asked to do during a season. It includes a pre-season Coach/Parent meeting, the information to pass on to your team managers, as well as links on where to find rules and more information.

Remember that practices and pre-game warm ups should be fun for the players, so ask them at the end of a practice what they like and what they did not like and tailor the practice with those comments in mind.

SECTION ONE

Player Positions

PITCHER

Throws the softball from the pitcher's mound to the catcher. The pitcher uses an underarm motion to pitch the ball toward the "strike zone". After making a pitch, the pitcher gets ready to field balls hit up the middle and be prepared to cover the other bases. When a runner is on 3rd and the catcher has missed the ball, the pitcher follows their pitch to home plate, so they are ready to help get the runner out.

CATCHER

Plays in a semi-crouched position behind home plate and receives pitches thrown by the pitcher. The catcher uses their glove and body to block pitches. When runners are on base the catcher is ready to throw to 1st, 2nd or 3rd base to get the runner out. The catcher also receives throws from fielders attempting to make outs at home plate.

1ST BASE

Positioned just to the left of the first base. Her main role is to make fielding plays on balls hit towards 1st base. If the ball is not coming in the direction of 1st base, the player gets in position on the base, ready to receive the ball. For safety of both players, the player can only touch the white part of the base.

2ND BASE

Plays in the gap between the bag at second and the first baseman. She fields "grounders" and "pop ups" hit to this side of the infield. When the ball is not hit in her directions she goes to the base ready to receive throws from fielders attempting to make outs at 2nd base. When there is a runner on 1st the player is ready to get to her base between pitches to stop a steal at 2nd.

SHORT STOP

Fields the balls hit to the infield between second and third base. She covers 2nd base (along with the second baseman) and is often involved in force plays and "double plays" with the second baseman. Also covers 3rd base when 2nd base is fielding the ball.

3RD BASE

Plays to the left of third base and covers any plays there. Receives throws from other fielders attempting to make outs at 3rd base. When there is a runner on 2nd the player is ready to get to her base between pitches to stop a steal at 3rd. When there is a runner on 3rd, player is always ready to make and receive throws from the catcher, especially between pitches.

OUTFIELDER

Positioned beyond the infield in Left, Right or centre, they catch and field "fly balls," line drives, and ground balls hit into the outfield. The players also throw the balls in to make a play.

BATTER

Positioned in the batter's box at home plate. Between pitches they must move out of the batter's box for safety and to get out the field of play. If the batter hits the ball into the field of play they run to 1st base. The batter then becomes the runner. At 1st base the runner must decide to run through or make a turn to 2nd base. If they run through the MUST touch the orange half of 1st base only. If a runner wants to steal a base they can run as soon as the pitch leaves the pitchers hand, or they can wait and decide once the ball is not caught by the catcher.

Diamond Set-Up (Layout Drawing)

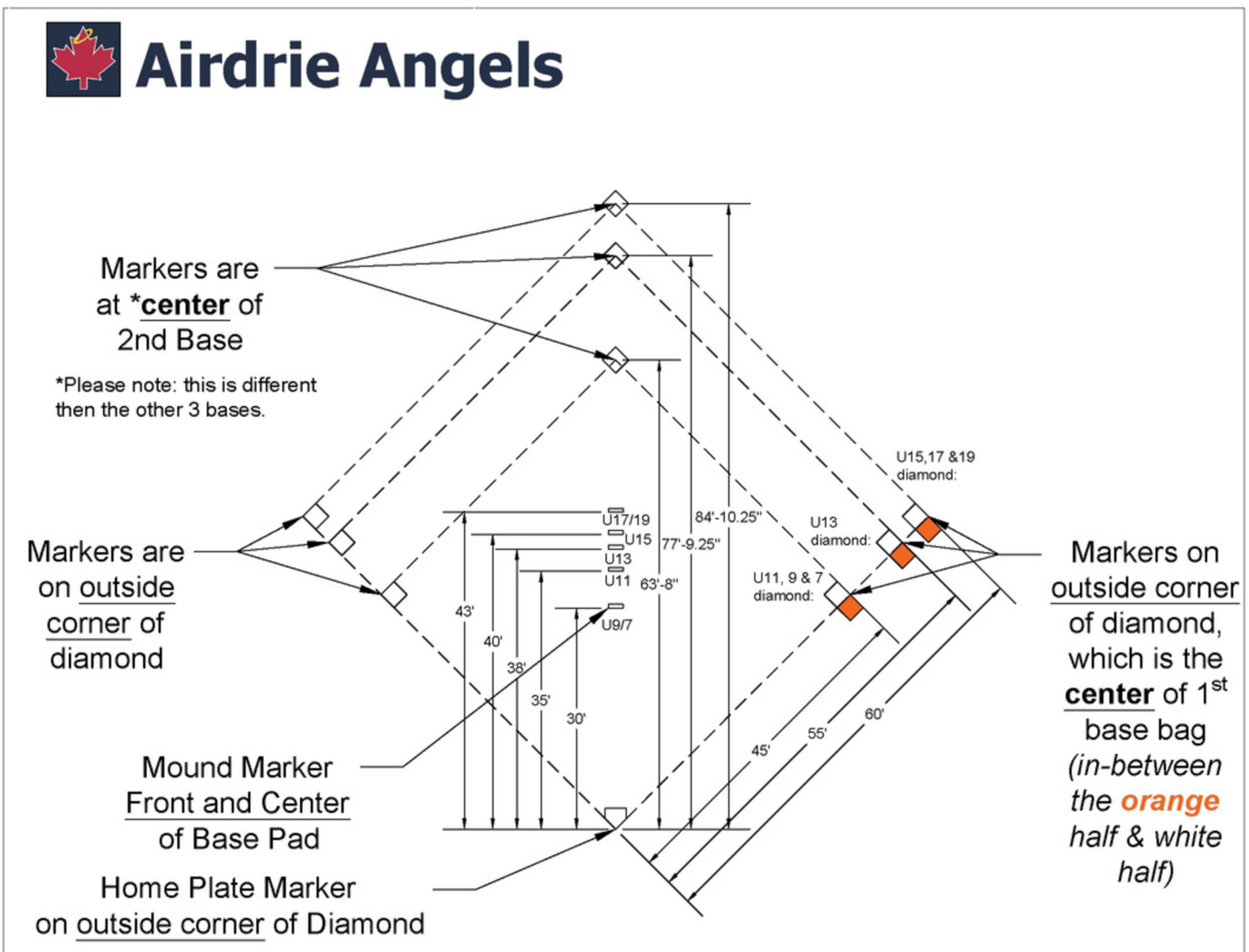
This section reviews the Diamond Set-up for all age groups from U7-U19, including base placement, mound placement and line placement. AAFA will mark the diamonds with base markers at the start of the season. However, these may get pulled out, buried or lost throughout the season. If you find markers missing, please use the measuring tapes found in the equipment box to set that base as per the layout.

Please also notify our Equipment Manager by emailing equipment@airdrieangels.com.

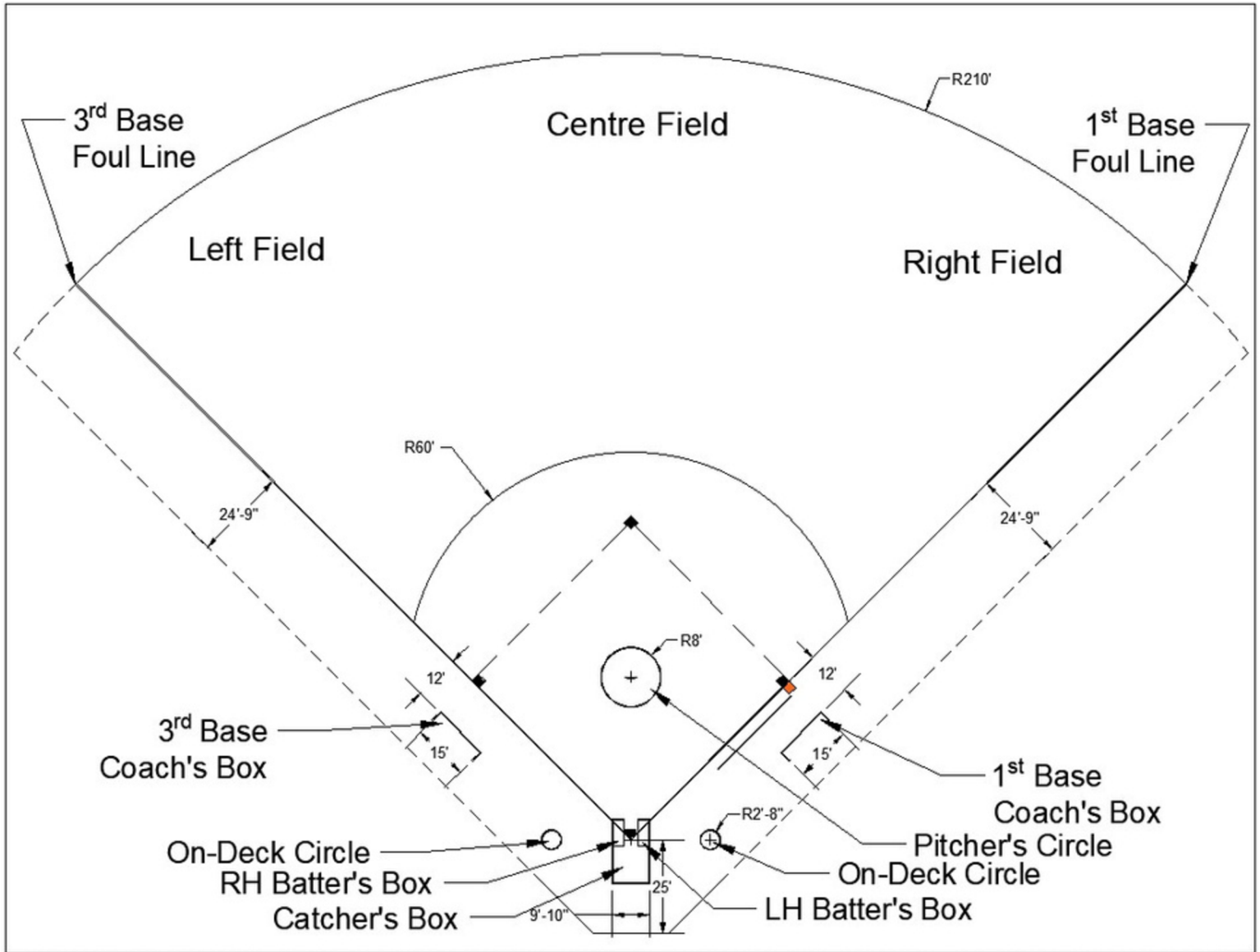
LAYOUT

Each coach should have a scheduled diamond set-up crew to complete the base installations ahead of a game or practice.

This diamond layout can also be found in the Coaches Toolbox on our website.



Field of Play



Fundamental and Position Training (How to Videos)

This section is going to include brief descriptions of the major fundamental skills that are required for players to be a well-rounded Fastpitch player. These may be a little too in depth for beginner players, but these skills are something our program should be striving for as the players progress.

Fielding

Throwing

Coaches should be focussing on proper throwing techniques at all ages and skill levels. Ensuring proper technique will not only promote faster and more accurate throws but will also prevent injury. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fB6-rRxMVE>

Catching (Receiving)

Coaches should also pay close attention to players in their ready position for catching and fielding. Ready position basics are a building block of many of the Fielding skills and promote faster reaction times and thereby reduce the likelihood of being struck by the ball or missing it completely.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKwgYM3Nzo8>

Fielding (Infield and Outfield)

Fielding techniques for both infield and outfield.

<https://youtu.be/yVOCljuiz4o?t=1s>

Ground Balls

Ground Ball fundamentals.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TM6hnPz8-uo>

Fly Balls

Fly Ball Fundamentals.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QQ4IrNN5Pv8>

Hitting

How to Hit a Softball:

Teaching the proper Fastpitch swing is imperative at all ages and skill level of players. Breaking down the swing and being able to diagnose swing problems will be key in your teams hitting success. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pUa2OEo8HSI>

Throughout Practice

There are several items that need to be stressed throughout the entire practice and through any drills of any kind.

These should be enforced in every situation:

Calling for the Ball:

One of the simplest things a player can do is calling for the ball. Shouting, "mine" when fielding prevents:

- a) No-one going for the ball – because they all thought someone else was going for it.
- b) Kids running into each other.

Two-Hand Catching:

Proper catching technique while fielding is so important. It allows the player to:

- a) Ensures the ball is secured in your glove
- b) Reduces transfer time from glove to throw

SECTION TWO

Introduction

Team practices are recommended but not mandatory. Every coach will need to arrange their own practice time. AAFA have four (4) Airdrie diamonds scheduled from Monday~ Friday, 6pm to 9pm, as well as Saturday & Sunday, 10am to 2pm, and 5pm to 9pm starting the last week of April.

Practice times will be determined at the beginning of each season, and will remain as a consistent time-slot for the duration of the season. It is recommended to obtain the top 3 day/time choices from your parents at your Parent/Coach Meeting. A member from the Board will work with Coaches & Team Managers to secure your weekly practice block.

**** Keep in mind the warm up time before each game is NOT considered practice time. ****

Team Practice Breakdown

This section is going to provide some basic drills that you can perform with your team. Please see an Index of Drills below, we have divided them into 6 sections; Warm up, Fielding, Hitting, Running the Bases, Pitching and Catching.

Index of Drills

- Fastpitch Warm Up
- Pitching Warm Up
- Fielding Drills
- Hitting Drills
- Coverages
- Video Links
- Practice Plans

FASTPITCH WARM UP

Introduction

The Fastpitch Warm Up is done before each practice and each game!

Muscle Warm Up

Jogging

- Light run/jog around the field (half field for U9 and under)
- Line up at the foul line facing the field for Dynamic Stretching

Dynamic Stretching

Dynamic Warm Up

- Butt Kicks
- High Knees
- Mini Skips
- Power Skips

Get Loose ~ Stationary *(Pick 4 or 5 from this list.)*

- Arm Circles
- Lateral Arm Swings
- Giant Mixer
- External Rotations
- Trunk Rotation
- Leg Swings (Forwards/Backwards)
- Stationary Lateral Lunges
- Iron Cross
- Scorpion

Get Loose ~ Move Across the Field *(Pick 3 and go back & forth with each.)*

- Knee Hug to Front Lunge & Twist
- Quad Stretch & Toe Touch
- Glute Stretch & Calf Raise
- Backward Lunge & Overhead Reach
- Inchworm

Get Fired Up! *(2-3 minutes.)*

- Lateral Shuffle (3 forward/1 back, repeat)
- Lateral Cross-Overs (3 forward/1 back, repeat)
- Jump then 75% max speed sprint.

Form a Circle to Complete Stretching

- 10 ankle/wrist rolls, both directions
- Sitting on the ground in side split, reach and hold each foot for a few seconds, one foot at a time with both hands. 3X/Side.
- Standing Quad Stretch, 3X/Side

Throwing Warm Up

Pair up the players in two rows, facing each other, about 5-10 feet apart. The younger the age division the further the distance should be between them.

- Start on knees, with glove knee up, and have them do 10 wrist flicks each. *Focus on the girls keeping their elbow high, around shoulder level)*
- One of the rows should now take a step back for approx. 2 strides. Remaining on their knees, with glove knee up, start with hand back, ball facing away, throw and follow through. Throwing hand should finish by thigh. Have them throw 10 times each. *Focus on them opening up for a full extension and following through to their partner/catcher.*
- The same row can now take another 2 strides back. Standing, with feet stationary, shoulder width apart and facing their partner/catcher, full upper body extension and follow through throws. 10 throws each. *Same focus as above, to ensure they're opening up for a full throw, but ensuring they're only using upper body. Their feet should be stationary facing their partner/catcher.*
- Take another 2 strides back, and continue into full throws. Step with throwing hand foot sideways, plant glove foot pointing at target, thumb to thigh, elbows high (ball facing away), then throw and follow through. 10 throws each. *Watch footwork, elbows high, and follow through.*
- Same side can 2 more strides back, for longer throws. Same technique but with more arc on the throw. Ensure players are hitting their partner/catcher in the chest. 10 throws.

PITCHING WARM UP

Introduction

It is very important for a pitcher to get a warm up completed before going in, at any age group, this will avoid most injuries that can happen. As a coach, you will be given resources to make sure you can warm up your pitchers with at least nets and a ball. However, this is a great opportunity to engage a parent to act as your “bull pen” manager and catch for them.

*Anyone catching for pitchers (parents, coaches or otherwise) are **required by CMSA to wear an approved mask** at any time during the warm up or game. Failure to do so could result in forfeiting the game. This should also be enforced at practice to protect the catchers as well as reinforce the rule.*

There are also rules for pitchers, for age groups U9 to U15, with regards to innings allowed to pitch in any game. Make sure you are aware of those before the start of the season. These rules are in place for player safety.

Warm Up

Please have pitchers run the Fastpitch Warm Up up to (but not including the throwing warm up) before they start the pitching warm up. Line pitchers up in pairs with catchers, coaches or parent volunteers. *During the first 4 warm-up stages, pitcher should be on a slight angel to their catcher. Pitchers who have attended clinics will know the proper stances.*

- 10 Wrist Flicks, about 6-8 feet away from their catcher,
- 10 K-Throws, feet stationary, about 15-20 feet away from their catcher,
- 10 K-Throws, with front foot step, about 15-20 feet away from their catcher,
- 10 Full-Windmill throws, with front foot step, about 20-25 feet away from their catcher,
- 10-15 Full Pitches, full windup, full distance, 30, 35, or 38 feet.

Pitchers need to work on correct form throughout their windup and delivery. A quick arm and strong throws along with a full follow through. If a player can throw change ups they can mix them in.

Coaches need to be watching young pitchers during warm up to correct their form and give advice to correct any issues like:

- Proper grip;
- Following through;
- Striding;
- Looking at their target (Catcher);
- Proper spin
- Power line (ball/arm location during windmill)
- Arm Speed

Once identified, focus on the areas they need more help with to make them a better pitcher. As they get the feel for a solid pitch, ensure you encourage them with positive feedback, too!

FIELDING DRILLS

Introduction

Proper technique while making a play for the ball and then delivering the throw will greatly improve team defense while producing more outs, either on the bases or through catching fly balls. Teaching each player where to play the ball when they receive it along with how to cover other positions when the ball does not come to them is the second part of good team defense and will reduce the runs scored against you.

The increased technical skills coupled with an increased knowledge of the game/position comes with repetition and game experience. While game experience is tough to re-create fielding drills that show real game scenarios will give them confidence to deliver during a game. As we know confidence is key when it comes playing any sport at a high level.

The suggested times are only estimates to help coaches prepare a practice plan. The durations and frequency will ultimately be dictated by the needs of the team.

Technical Skills

Ready Position (Infield)

For an infielder the ready position starts with players standing at the correct position in the field, then their feet should be wider than shoulder width apart, butt should be down, with their glove should be out in front, thumbs on both hands pointed up, and they will be watching the batter. They should be on the balls of their feet ready to react with every pitch.

Ready Position (Outfield)

For an outfielder the ready position starts with players standing at the correct position in the field, glove and throwing hand relaxed, moving themselves back and forth and watching the batter.

Good Throwing Position

For fielders the throwing position for fielding includes keeping the elbows up, a proper grip on the ball, eyes on the target, step toward the target and ensure to follow through.

FIELDING DRILLS

Infield Ground Balls *~all infielders*

This drill will have the players receiving ground balls and then throwing them to either a coach or player. This drill is a common warm up drill in pre-game as well as a staple in regular practice.

There are multiple ways to do this drill, the players can lineup in small groups at each infield position or they can all just lineup in single file at one set location. If the players are in an infield scenario, then the drill is throwing to 1st base, if the players are just in a lineup, have them throw back to the hitter (home plate) where a catcher will receive the ball.

The coach is looking for good pick-up techniques where the player moves to the ball and receives it on the inside of their front glove side foot for a forehand pickup. From there, the coach will look to ensure the player has good footwork on their throw, stepping toward the base and following through on their throw. The coach will also look to have the player's target the chest of the receiving player on the throw. This will prevent bad throws and reduce extra bases for the runner. **Plan for 15 minutes.**

Backhand & Forehand *~hitter, catcher, regular balls 3-12 players*

Like the ground ball drills, this drill will help a player to pick up a ground ball, but it will specialize the technique for a ball that isn't hit directly to them.

Players can line up at one position in the infield or just in a straight line, if you have more coaches, try breaking up the players in two lines for increased repetition. **Plan for 15 minutes.**

Ground Ball

This will be a standard ground ball rolled from the coach at about 20 feet away to either side of the player. The player should be able to reach the ball without having to move away from their starting position.

The player on the forehand pickup will step forward with their glove hand and make the pick up. Then transition to their throwing position by stepping and throwing back to the catcher. Move to the back of the line, do over on a miss.

The player on the backhand pickup will turn their body to the side of their throwing hand so their back is partially facing away from the hitter. Their glove will be open and facing the incoming ball and the player will attempt the pickup by moving their glove toward the ball. The player's elbow of their glove hand should be bent and the height of their body from the ground should be controlled with their legs. From there, the player will transition to their throwing position and throw back to the catcher.

One Hop Pick-Ups

This will be a one bounce ball thrown by the coach at about 20 feet away to either side of the player. The player should be able to reach the ball without having to move away from their starting position.

The player on the forehand pickup will step forward with their glove hand and make the pick up. The player will attempt to time the bounce, so they can make a clean pickup, this could require additional steps forward if the throw is off. Then transition to their throwing position by stepping and throwing back to the catcher. Move to the back of the line, do over on a miss.

The player on the backhand pickup will turn their body to the side of their throwing hand so their back is partially facing away from the hitter. Their glove will be open and facing the incoming ball and the player will attempt the pickup by timing the bounce and moving their glove toward the ball. The player's elbow of their glove hand should be bent and the height of their body from the ground should be controlled with their legs. From there, the player will transition to their throwing position and throw back to the catcher.

For both drills, try and work the players out of stabbing at the ball. The idea is to create a confident pickup that leads to a smooth transition into a throw. The player will be balanced and less likely to make a throwing error.

Barehand Drill ~no gloves, regular balls 2-12 players

The objective in this drill is to really work the players on the importance of two hand catches. This will lead to muscle memory when picking up ground balls and transitioning to throwing.

The players can pair up with one ball between the two of them. They players then roll the ball back and forth to each other making two hand ground ball pickups with a quick transition into their throwing position before rolling it back to their partner.

This is not a speed drill, coaches look for good pickups with two hands on the player's glove side foot and then a transition into a good throwing position. **Plan for 10 minutes.**

Fly Ball Catches, 2 Hand Technique ~regular balls 3-12 players

The objective of this drill is to work the players on getting a good position on making a catch on a fly ball and controlling the catch with 2 hands. This will lead to a good transition into a throw back to the infield to deter runners from advancing.

There can be different setups to this drill depending on how the players are doing. The players can line up in a straight line and the fly balls can be directed to their ready location. The other option is to have the players start in one location and send the fly ball to another and have them run to make the catch. Throw the balls from 60-100 feet depending on the age group.

When the player runs for the ball, ensure they are drop stepping with the correct foot, a ball to the player's right will require them to step first with their right foot, left foot on the left side. This ensures that they will have a better chance to make the catch.

Two hands when making the catch will then ensure a smooth transition to their throwing position and then making a throw into the catcher. Have the player try again on a miss, correcting mistakes on movement or lack of hands. **Plan for 15 minutes.**

Fly Ball Positioning ~tennis balls, tennis racket & helmets, 3-12 players

This drill is designed to have the player get under the fly ball, ensuring a good position for a catch.

Have the players don their batting helmets and have them out about 80 feet away from the coach. The coach will then hit fly balls into the air to the left or the right of the player, the player will attempt to run under the ball and have the tennis ball hit them in the helmet. This will help build the player's confidence in getting under the ball.

Ensure that the player is watching the ball all the way in and at the last second, letting it hit the helmet, some will get lucky but try and keep the player watching the whole time. The attempt here is to have the player get into position quickly and watch the ball into their glove. It's extremely fun for the players, so it can be a regular activity. **Plan for 15 minutes.**

Relay Throws ~regular balls, 4-6 players in a row

This drill is designed to train the players to accept a throw from another player and turn and relay the ball to another location quickly.

Have the players get in rows of 4 - 6 people and about 25 - 30 feet away from each other. Then start at one end and have the players throw to the next person down the row, when they reach the end, send it back down the row to the starting person. This is a fun relay for the players and making it a competition can help enhance the point of it.

Coaches should be looking for good two hand catches, good turns to the glove side of the player and good strong throws to the recipient's chest. Have the slower rows do a couple push ups or something to promote the competition. **Plan for 15 minutes.**

Coverages ~team on the field, regular balls

There are lots of different coverages out there, we will briefly cover the most common but for more detail, engage a senior coach for a practice or there are video resources available as well that will help in understanding who needs to be where during certain plays. The most common are:

Bunt Coverage

This is when the batter has bunted the ball or has squared around to bunt. The 1st base person and the 3rd base person will charge the plate. From there, depending where runners on base are, the in/outfielders will cover those positions. Typically, Pitcher will cover 1st and S/S will cover 3rd.

2nd Base Pick Off

This is when the catcher throws the ball down to the 2nd base, to throw out a base-runner stealing 2nd. The S/S will be receiving the ball at the base, the 2nd base person will circle in behind 2nd to cover the throw.

Outfield Coverages

Outfielders need to help each other out on every hit to the outfield, by running for a ball hit to their closest outfield teammate, this helps if one player falls or misses the ball, the other can get the ball and throw it in. Outfielders also have the responsibility to help cover infield bases on throws as well. Those vary on the play, but outfielders will never just be standing around!

Plan for 15-30 minutes.

There are lots of videos online about coverages. Not all will be encountered or required at every age group, although, these should be worked on with every age group so their transition to the next age level doesn't come with a pile of new learning required.

Please check the section on Coverages to see some more information.

Make it a part of every fielding practice plan to bring up and work on a couple coverages so that in time, the players will do them without thinking out there.

HITTING DRILLS

Introduction

Proper swing technique helps optimize power and achieves good contact on the ball. The hitting drills in this section will work on all aspects of a player's swing. They will work on hitting pitches all over the strike zone, and adapting to different pitches, as well as, hitting for power no matter where they make contact.

Hitting drills should be (if possible) set up as stations and having all the players work through the stations at the same time will make running these drills the most efficient.

Technical Skills

Ready Position (Hitting)

A batter in the batter's box is in the ready position when the knees are slightly bent, the weight is on the balls of their feet, which are slightly wider than shoulder width apart with the front foot halfway up the plate. The player's knocking knuckles are lined up, hands are together, and their arms are away from their body about chin height, and the bat is off the shoulder.

Hitting Drills *~Tee Required, 8 Regular Balls, Net, 3-4 per group*

High, Low, Middle

This drill is designed to train the player how to adjust to hit balls at different heights of the strike zone.

The player will stand in their ready position in the batter's box and the coach or parent will set the tee height to either their knees, belt or chest. Give each player 5 swings at that height and then adjust or repeat as desired.

Ensure proper mechanics, small trigger step, correct weight transfer and good swing mechanics, correct where required. **Plan for 10 minutes.**

Inside Pitch

This drill is designed to help the player adjust to hitting an inside pitch.

The player will stand in their ready position in the batter's box and the coach or parent will set the tee to belt height. Move the tee so the ball position would be on the inside edge of the plate. Give the player 5 swings, alternatively, raise and lower the tee to offer more challenge.

Ensure proper mechanics, small trigger step out to adjust to pitch, correct weight transfer and good swing mechanics, correct where required. **Plan for 10 minutes.**

Outside Pitch

This drill is designed to help the player adjust to hitting an outside pitch.

The player will stand in their ready position in the batter's box and the coach or parent will set the tee to belt height. Move the tee so the ball position would be on the outside edge of the plate. Give the player 5 swings, alternatively, raise and lower the tee to offer more challenge.

Ensure proper mechanics, small trigger step in to adjust to pitch, correct weight transfer and good swing mechanics, correct where required. **Plan for 10 minutes.**

Hitting Drills (cont.) ~Tee Required, 8 Regular Balls, Net, 3-4 per group

Keep Bat in the Zone

This drill is designed to keep the player's eye on the ball and their bat in the hitting zone to ensure quality hits.

The player will stand in their ready position in the batter's box and the coach or parent will set the tee to belt height. This drill can be done in three phases or it can just be a full hitting station.

The player, when swinging at the ball, needs to keep their eye on the tee straight through the swing, thus keeping their eyes and their bat in the hitting zone for as long as possible.

This can be done in three parts as well:

- Freeze at Contact
 - Player swings and freezes just after hitting the ball, ensuring their head stays down and watches the ball and remains fixed on the tee.
- Freeze at Extension
 - Player swings and freezes at full extension, same thing as above, ensure their head stays down and watching the ball and eyes remain fixed on the tee.
- Full Follow Through
 - Player swings at full speed straight through, same thing as above, ensure their head stays down and watching the ball and eyes remain fixed on the tee.

Plan for 15 minutes.

One Arm Drills

These drills are designed to keep a player's hands in the correct position and the correct arm position at contact. It will also help players who drop their shoulder and "dip" at contact.

The player will position themselves in the batter's box on one knee, their forward leg up. The ball will be slightly forward of their raised knee on the lowered tee. Using just their forehand or their backhand to swing the small bat. Forehand swings; have the player stop the bat just after contact. You are looking to see if their palm is facing upwards when they hit the ball, this ensures good hand position.

Backhand swings; have the player stop at full extension after they hit the ball, their palm should be face down.

In addition, on the backhand, if the player is not making good contact, break down the backhand and have the players run through this process:

- Elbow pointing at the ball
- Know of the bat at the ball
- Swing

These drills will enable the coach to really break down a player's swing and help to ensure good contact and good technique for hitting.

'Plan for 15 minutes.

Hitting Drills - Whiffle Ball Toss ~Whiffle Balls, Net, 3-4 per group

Multi Coloured Balls

This drill will help the players to really focus on the ball when it is being pitched to them. This will increase the chance of good contact based on the player's focus.

Set a net up and have 5 to 10 of the multi coloured balls, have the player setup in their ready position about 8 feet away from the net, they will hit into the net.

The coach will kneel at 45 degrees from the player at the corner of the net, depending on the side the player hits from. The coach will then toss the balls one at a time for the player to hit. The player must call out the colour they see hit their bat at contact. Do this for each pitch. **Plan for 15 minutes.**

Multiple Balls

This drill will help the players to really focus on the ball when it is being pitched to them. This will increase the chance of good contact based on the player's focus.

Set a net up and have 10 to 20 whiffle balls in different colours, have the player setup in their ready position about 8 feet away from the net, they will hit into the net.

The coach will kneel at 45 degrees from the player at the corner of the net, depending on the side the player hits from. The coach will then toss 2 different coloured balls and call out one of the colours. The player must hit the chosen colour, ignoring the other ball. Coaches can use balls of different sizes as well to increase the challenge. 5 - 10 pitches each. **Plan for 15 minutes.**

Hitting Drills - Soft Toss ~Regular Balls, Net, 3-4 per group

This drill will help the player to adapt to various pitch locations as well as hand eye coordination. This is an excellent station to have setup before games as part of a pre-game warmup. This should also be a station used at every batting practice.

Set a net up and have 10 regular balls, have the player setup in their ready position about 8 feet away from the net, they will hit into the net. This drill can also just be done using the whole field, have the other players out catching fly balls and throwing them back in to the pitcher as they get them.

The coach will kneel at 45 degrees from the player at the corner of the net, depending on the side the player hits from. The coach will then toss balls for the player to hit. Try to throw the ball to the same spot each time if possible. To challenge hitters, the coach can vary the location of the pitch. 10 pitches each rapid fire.

Ensure the player resets their ready position each time and correct swing issues as required. **Plan for 10 minutes.**

Hitting Drills - Bunting ~Pitcher or Pitching Machine, Regular Balls, Net, Plate, 3-4 per group

This drill is designed to work on a player's bunting.

Setup a net or pick a section of fence to backstop the player. Have the player setup in ready position, try and use a plate or a glove to simulate a plate so the player sets up properly in the batter's box. Pitch from about 20 - 30 feet away from the hitter and have them bunt the ball.

Call out bunt locations (1st base, 3rd base) to help challenge the player. Work on the player not revealing the bunt too early to increase the muscle memory of adapting from ready position to bunt position quickly.

Look for the player to have a good balanced stance when they move into bunt position, it may require that a new player be setup in their bunt position to receive pitches at first. Work to have the player then change from ready position to bunt position as the pitch is coming. The player should not be moving the bat to hit a ball at different heights, the player should be adjusting using their legs. **Plan for 15 minutes.**

Hitting Drills - Live Pitch ~Pitcher, Regular Balls, Field, 11+ Players

This is just a standard game formation drill where the whole team participates.

Often it is beneficial if you have a consistent pitcher who can pitch strikes regularly, to have them pitch in a game style hitting practice.

The objective here is to incorporate hitting with infield and outfield plays as well, having base runners trying to make things happen on base.. **Plan for 20-25 minutes.**

VIDEO LINKS

Basic Drills ~ Intro to Coaching

Throwing

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fB6-_rRxMVE

Catching

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKwgYM3Nzo8>

Fielding

<https://youtu.be/yVOCljuij4o?t=1s>

Ground Balls

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TM6hnPz8-uo>

Fly Balls

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QZ4lrNN5Pv8>

Hitting a Softball

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pUa2OEo8HSl>

Hitting Drills

Player Keeping their Head and Eyes in the Hitting Zone through Contact

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ReOwgzVPk4>

Player Dipping During their Swing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wWifRMGH2-o>

Swing Mechanics

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Jqyx8mDwkY>

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

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

Preparing to Hit at Each at Bat

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ON-hx6SuiEU>

One Arm Drill

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9xJVg9hXl6l>

Inside Pitch Drill off Tee

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ntloXM7f5A>

Sacrifice Bunt

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

Bunting to Specific Areas

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pWsaNbPU2LI>

Slap Hitting (Left Handed Hitter)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S1Ka4pfZqTM>

VIDEO LINKS

Infield Drills

Good Infield Drills, Back to Back

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

Catcher Position

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qwdeRteH3es>

Quick Hands Drill

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wjzrSDYzd2Q>

Soft Hands Drill

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

Ready Position - Picking Up Grounder(s)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ccta-HWnXis>

Base Running

How to Slide

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=65GBpY6Cjno>

Running to First Base

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EqcDG9_oni0

Rounding A Base

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hy5eE4Ac2mk>

More Base Running

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=awBfD3Fm-y4>

Leadoffs

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fDGW8yymfiE>

PRACTICE PLANS

Having written practice plans prepared before practices will help you focus on and accomplish your practice goals. It will also allow you to do this in the most efficient manner without players getting frustrated with time spent standing around waiting.

Blank / Template Sheets to create your practice plans are available in the Coaches Toolbox area of our website.

SECTION THREE

Introduction

Being a coach entails more than just teaching their players and managing during the games. There is work that needs to be done ahead of the season as well as things that could come up during a season or game that needs to be handled.

This section is going to briefly explain some of these things. Most of the areas in this section have either a policy or a procedure in the AAFA Policy & Procedure manual.

Other Coaches Duties

PARENT MEETINGS

At the start of every season, you will need to have a Parent Meeting to set expectations for the season; to your players, but more importantly to their parents.

- CREATE A MEETING AGENDA
 - Before the Parent Meeting you should have an agenda set, to ensure you cover everything required, and to have a reference point should questions arise after the meeting.
 - We have a sample Meeting Agenda that is available in the Coaches Toolbox on our website.

PARENT VOLUNTEER REQUESTS

As part of the Parent meeting you will be requesting parent volunteers. There are a few must have parent positions:

- Team Manager
- Jersey Manager *~may be one in the same as your Team Manager*
- Bench Mom(s) *~highly suggest having more than one, for back-up purposes*
- Score Keeper(s)
- First Aid Coordinator

Depending on your age group, you may also require the following:

- Parent Umpire(s) / Team Umpire Coordinator
- Parent 'Bull-Pen' Managers. The pitcher/catcher warm-up team.

We **strongly** encourage you to fill these positions at your parent meeting, as waiting for volunteers after this meeting could prove difficult.

Medical Form & Injury Reporting

You will need to collect information for each player related to their medical information.

Each player needs to complete the Athlete Medical Form.

In the event of an injury to one of your players during the season, during a game or practice, you will need to fill out an Injury Report form.

Both of these forms can be found in the Coaches Toolbox on our website.

Player Evaluations

All coaches are expected to participate in Player Evaluations. The AAFA Coach and Player Directors will contact coaches with information on when and how this will happen each year.

Indoor Clinics & Evaluation Prep

Clinics

During the Winter months AAFA offers various clinics for our athletes. To reduce the cost to the club, we try to get coaches out to assist during these clinics. The number of volunteers required depends on the clinic. Please consider assisting at these clinics if you can, especially if you have a son or daughter participating.

Evaluation Prep

Before evaluations, each age group is offered a preliminary indoor practices, to brush off the winter cobwebs. Please consider assisting at these practice/prep sessions for your age group.

AAFA Policies & Procedures

Please take the time to go over the AAFA Policies and Procedures manual. If all of our coaches and volunteers follow these procedures and adhere to these policies we can avoid most of the conflicts that we see in any given year.

Finding Help

If you are having trouble with anything, please reach out to a member of the AAFA board.

Please do not feel like you are in this alone. We are here to provide advice, guidance, to clarify a rule, or anything in between.

You can email any of us, or ask a question via direct message through our Facebook Page at <https://www.facebook.com/AirdrieAngelsFastpitchAssociation>

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