



## 9U Rules of Play

1. 60 foot bases
2. Pitching will be done by a coach who will pitch to their own players. Pitching must be **OVERHAND** and firm (try to avoid lobbing the ball) at all times!! This helps develop the kids for higher divisions. **ABSOUTELY** no underhand pitching to players. FMMBA recommends that coaches pitch from one knee that way they are at the same height as the player and the ball can be thrown straight and firm with little to no arc.
3. All games start exactly on time and as per the schedule. Please ensure to have your teams arrive 30 minutes prior to start times to allow for warm up and set up, etc.
4. Home team is responsible to ensure that the bases have been put on the diamond for fields where it necessary.
5. All players are to be listed on the game sheet and take their turn at bat regardless of whether are not they are playing defensively at the time.
6. Maximum of 10 players on the field defensively. Teams shall have a minimum of 7 players and no less. When playing with 7 or 8 players the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> place in the batting order are not an automatic out.
7. If the opposing team has less than 7 players, they forfeit the game. Balance the teams with the players present, play the game and HAVE FUN!!
8. All players must rotate their position on regular bases, and cannot play the same position 2 innings in a row or more than 2 times during the game. Players are also **REQUIRED** to play a set position. That means a maximum of 6 players in the infield and 4 in the outfield (with the rover). Players must play that position for the entire inning and cannot be switched. The purpose is to give all kids the opportunity to play all positions.
9. Each player plays a minimum of 3 full innings.
10. Coaches from the batting team will call outs for their players since they are already coaching 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> base.
11. The offensive team may have 3 adult coaches one the field. One at 1<sup>st</sup> base, a coach at 3<sup>rd</sup> base and the coach pitching. The defensive team may have 3 coaches in the field to assist with the positioning and reinforcing fundamentals. Both team coaches are responsible for making sure that players are paying attention to the game to avoid injury. An additional coach/parent needs to oversee the dugout/bench area (batter safety as well as catcher).

12. Each batter is entitled to 5 Hittable pitches (Strikes). Remember we are trying to develop our players so if a player is coming close to hitting a ball a few additional pitches may be given. Both coaches should support the decision for additional pitches. If a player does not hit a pitch the tee will be used. A maximum of 7 batters or 3 outs whichever occurs first shall complete one half an inning. When the 7<sup>th/last</sup> batter hits, the play is not deemed dead until an out is made which is the 3<sup>rd</sup> out of the inning or until a player has stopped the play by touching home plate with the ball in hand.
13. **A batter who throws a bat must re-bat with a warning and no out will result. The second offense is an automatic out.**
14. The ball is called dead and play stops if the ball hits the coach pitching. The batter will go to first base and all base runners will advance one base only.
15. We suggest helping limit the kids overthrowing the ball that runners will be limited to one base for balls hit in the infield. An extra base can be taken on an overthrow of the batted ball. If a ball is hit into the outfield runners can continue to run but should be stopped once the ball has entered the infield. A player that hits off the tee will only be allowed to take one base even if there is an overthrow. This is the same if the player is the 7<sup>th (last)</sup> batter of the inning.
16. No lead offs! No stealing of bases! Infield fly rule does not apply!
17. If the defensive team creates an out, the play shall be deemed as stopped. Players can only advance on a fair hit ball.
18. Metal cleats are prohibited.
19. Helmets with the chin strap under the chin and fastened is mandatory for all batters, base runners, and on deck batters.
20. All diamonds are to be left clean after each game.

#### **During a Tournament**

- Scores will be kept during games. Please come to the concession to report who won on the board after each game.
- Tournament games cannot end in a tie.
- In the event of a tie the International Tie Breaker Rule is in effect.
- A regulation game is six innings or 1 hr 45 minutes from the listed game start time. No new inning shall start after 1 hr 45 minutes from the listed start time. A game is considered complete if:
  - 5 complete innings are played or
  - After 4 ½ innings played the home team is ahead or
  - The Mercy Rule is in effect 10 run differential when the losing team after completing their 3<sup>rd</sup> offensive inning at bat. If both teams wish to continue playing after no scoring shall be kept after Mercy has been called.
- When possible umpires will be provided for all rookie tournament games.

**Have FUN and PLAY SAFE!**



## Rookie Coaches Initiatives

Hi and welcome to Rookie my name is Andrew Swagers and I am going to provide you with a guideline to teaching basic fundamentals for Rookie age ballplayers. First of all before we get going I just want to say thank you for committing to helping out the players, our association and the wonderful sport of baseball. It is because of people like you that this sport will continue to thrive in the wood buffalo region. You are a very important factor as to how much a child is going to enjoy his/her baseball experience. The goal is to provide every participant with a positive baseball experience with the hope that they will want to continue to play on a yearly basis. How do we achieve that goal? By making the experience a fun, positive one and teaching basic proper fundamentals so the players can see improvement. Anyone who is in this type of atmosphere usually enjoys themselves. If you have never coached before we have practice plans in place and will do everything we can to help make your own experience a positive one.

### Basic Fundamentals

The following are basic fundamentals that every player needs to learn and will use for as long as they play the game. At the beginning of the season use all 4 steps once they are all doing this well you can eventually eliminate steps 1 and 2.

**Throwing:** It is very important to try and teach proper throwing fundamentals at a young age so that the players develop the right habits. Some players will be able to play together but you may have a few that have trouble playing catch and can have an adult work with them in groups of 2-3.

1. Get the players to start off on 1 knee the same knee as the hand they throw with. All they are going to do is simply flip the ball to their partner who will only be 3 to 4 feet away. The focus is to create good backspin on the ball and keep their throwing elbow even or above their shoulder. Try and throw the ball to their partners' chest. This will be done without gloves. (2-3 minutes)

2. Staying on the same knee get them to put their gloves on. Now have them start with the hands together, take the ball out of the glove pushing the ball away from the body, point the glove towards the target and throwing the ball to their partners' chest. Try and make sure that the hand and ball are making somewhat of a circular motion from original start point to release point. Once again make sure they are keeping the throwing elbow even or above the shoulder and not pushing the ball or working underneath it. (2-3 minutes)
3. Stand the players up and back up to where they can still play controlled catch. The one throwing the ball will start off sideways with his/her feet wide enough so that he/she can deliberately transfer his/her bodyweight from leg to leg. Start with the hand and ball in the glove, rock the weight back while taking the hand and ball out away from the body and pointing the glove to the target, shift weight as you come around and throw. Same fundamentals as on the one knee with the arm action only now we have our hips and lower half involved. (2-3 minutes)
4. Back the up a little, start off with feet shoulder width apart facing partner sideways. Lift the front leg separate the hands and step towards the target and throw. Emphasis on the same fundamentals as the previous 3 steps but now we are putting the entire package together. (2-3 minutes)
5. For the longer throws it is important that the players begin to gain ground towards their target. Take 3 steps for example a right hander would begin by taking a step with the left foot, then right and then left and throw. This creates momentum and usually results in a more powerful throw.

**Catching:** As well as throwing we want to teach the proper fundamentals in the catching department to create good habits that will stick with the players. The best way to enforce these habits is to have small groups giving the players a lot of repetitions and attention. Make sure the players always start with the knees slightly bent and hands are thumb to thumb. The general rule is that when the ball is above the waist we want to catch it with the fingers up and below the waist fingers down.

1. Using the soft stitch ball or even tennis balls begin with using bare hands. Try to teach the players to catch the baseball with their fingers up and having the glove hand as the backstop and the throwing hand as the trapper. A lot of young players want to try and catch everything with the palm up instead of palm towards their partner. Start off nice and close and throw simple underhand tosses towards their chest. Make sure they keep

their eyes on the ball and use the hand to stop the ball. If the throw is around waist high get them to bend their knees and catch with fingers up, if it is lower then we catch with fingers down. Once they have done a good job with their bare hands then we can move on to using gloves.

2. We will now use the gloves and do the exact same thing making sure they focus on keeping the palm out and fingers up, remembering that the glove is the back stop and the hand is the trapper.

**Groundballs:** Fielding groundballs at this age group is a lot easier than catching fly balls but also needs to be taught correctly instilling proper fundamentals. This can be done with partners as the coach walks around or in small groups. Strong emphasis on triangle position between feet and point of contact, bending the knees, using 2 hands (alligator) and being aggressive towards the target once ball is fielded.

1. No gloves, have them roll the ball back and forth using 2 hands and focusing on the alligator position with the hands eating the ball. The hand that the glove usually goes on will be the hand closest to the body with palm facing out (bottom of alligator mouth). The other hand will be the top of the alligator mouth. If the ball is a little to the side have them shuffle and field the ball in the middle of their body with their chins down. (3-4 minutes)
2. Gloves on same hand as without gloves except now they are a little farther apart and will focus on having an eye in their glove from start point and not taking the eye off the ball. Have them imagine that the eye is in the middle of their palm and that they can't take the eye off the ball. This will eliminate flipping the glove down which is a bad habit for a lot of players. (2-3 minutes)
3. Have them in small groups and roll each one a ball, they will field the ball down out in front and come up making a throw back to you. Give them each a lot of reps stressing the importance of doing it with the proper technique. (4-5 minutes)

**Flyballs:** This is probably the biggest challenge for young players as the fear of getting hit in the face is in their minds. Most young players want to catch the ball away from their heads with their palm facing up. Just as we talked about at the beginning the important thing to stress here is palm out and fingers up. Back stop (glove) and trapper (hand).

1. Form small groups and start them off with their gloves on nice and close. Underhand flip balls to them emphasizing the fundamentals that we have talked about. As they get

better and more confident you can start throwing the balls higher up. Make sure they use 2 hands and get their body underneath the ball. (5-10 minutes)

**Hitting:** Hitting for the majority of new baseball players is their favourite part of the game. Instilling proper fundamentals at a young age usually leads to success which keeps the player interested in the game. This is Rookie but I want to provide you with some insight on the proper swing:

Every hitter's swing must have a coil (gather and load), a stride (ready to transfer weight), hip rotation while pulling the hands through, and finish all while trying to maintain balance and being efficient and in control. This obviously takes a lot of practice and some good guidance which is where we come in to play as coaches. Not only do we have to try and provide knowledge of proper hitting mechanics but we also need to help each individual develop a mindset that works for them. Some hitters are at their best when there is absolutely no pressure and some thrive off of it. We need to make the hitter understand that the only pressure that exists is the one that he/she puts on him/herself. He/she needs to find which state he/she is most successful in and create that every time he/she is at the plate. Hitting like every other part of this game is about confidence and that is something as coaches that we can all play a big role in developing into our players.

1. Spread your players out each with a bat and helmet. Show them how to properly grip the bat by lining up their knocking knuckles. Grip the bat loose and be relaxed, face the "T" with feet shoulder width apart and bat head facing up. In order to hit the ball hard they will need to get extension with the arms, bat and transfer their weight. Get them to take swings and take them through the correct path to the ball. We want them to lead with the knob of the bat keeping the hands close to the body and taking the shortest path to the ball. Have them swing down towards the ball and not upwards. They should focus on hitting the ball as hard as possible on a line and not upwards. Once they have worked on this we can lead them to the T's. (3-4 minutes)
2. Have 2 to 3 players per T and work on swinging down to the ball trying to make contact with the arms extended and keeping their eyes on the ball at point of contact. Make sure they are getting their entire body involved in the process, rotating their hips as they transfer weight to hit the ball. Work on everything that we have discussed and stay positive with the players. (Have the players hit 3 to 4 balls in a row and rotate within their group for up to 8 minutes.)
3. We want to make sure the Rookie players have an understanding of the load and weight transfer. Get behind a screen and simply underhand pitches to your hitter no

more than 15 feet away. Make sure you are deliberate about taking your hand back before you come forward and be consistent with this. Your hitter will use this as a timing device and as you go back with your hand your hitter will be getting his/her load. This is an easy and effective way for you to see if they are transferring weight and getting loaded. Throw 5-6 pitches in a row and rotate within the group. (6-7 minutes)

**Baserunning:** Teaching baserunning is probably the easiest out of the fundamentals that we have gone over but equally important. We need to make sure that the players understand the rules and what it takes to properly run the bases.

1. Take the players through the proper route to every base. Once they have hit the ball they need to run as fast as they can to 1<sup>st</sup> base and touch the middle front part of the bag. Show them that they are allowed to run through the bag and break it down after. Explain to them why this is allowed and that if there is an over throw they can proceed to the next base at their or the coaches discretion.
2. Running the bases at the beginning of practice and going over the importance of this is a good way to get your team warmed up and is also fun for the players. Make sure you teach the importance of this every time you take them through it.

**Player Management:** In order to have an enjoyable experience for yourself and for your players you must have control of your team. One of the most important things to teach a young ballplayer is respect for his teammates, his coach and the game. There will always be some that are going to be more interested than others but it is very important that they understand that they need to respect one another and a big part of that is listening to their coach. The more they pay attention as a group the more fun they are going to have. Discipline is a part of all sports and will have to happen at times if certain individuals continue to disrupt the group. It is very important to have a meeting with all parents at the beginning of the season to go over your season objectives. You definitely can use as much help as possible and think it's a good idea to address that early. Practices run a lot smoother when there are more hands helping, however in saying that you are the head coach and everyone needs to understand that. At this age group it is very important that every player gets an equal opportunity to try every position. Winning is always fun but not as important as development at this stage. I suggest that the batting order rotates every game so that every player at the end of the season has had the opportunity to hit in every spot in the line-up regardless of skill level.

## Conclusion

By following these basic fundamentals you will be providing your players with the proper techniques to becoming a better ball player. However the most important part of this experience is for the players to have fun and enjoy a positive experience. If at any time you have questions please feel free to contact me at [inquiries@fmmba.ca](mailto:inquiries@fmmba.ca) . Thanks for taking the time. Good luck and PLAY BALL!





## Rookie Practice Plan # 1

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### **0:00-0:10 Stretch and active warm up**

Start down the right or left field line have the kids run to the centerfield fence and back as a group. Take them through the stretch and active warm up routine.

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### **0:10-0:25 Throwing**

Go through the 4 different components of throwing in the coaches initiatives handout.

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### **0:25-0:30 Water break**

### **0:30-0:45 Infielding/Outfielding**

If possible separate your team into 2-4 small groups and rotate them through these two stations.

Take your team through steps 1-3 of fielding groundballs. (7-8 mins)

Work on the basic fundamentals of catching flyballs. (7-8 mins)

### **0:45-1:00 Hitting**

Divide the team into 3 groups; group # 1 fielding the batted balls, group # 2 hitting coach towards the field, group # 3 hitting off T's against the fence. (5 mins per group and working on proper hitting fundamentals).

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### **1:00-1:02 Water break**

### **1:02-1:18 Simulated game of outs**

Divide your team into two teams and play a game. Everyone on the hitting team hits once and then switches with the defensive team. The team which makes the most amount of outs is the winner. Keep rotating until time is up.

### **1:18-1:25**

Have the players cleanup and comb the park for any baseballs and put them in the bucket should only take a couple minutes. Have them line up at home plate and all run through 1<sup>st</sup> base 3 times, from home to second twice and home to home twice.

### **1:25-1:30 Practice wrap up**

Discuss and go over fundamentals learned and end with positive comments.



## Rookie Practice Plan # 2

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### **0:00-0:10 Stretch and active warm up**

Start down the right or left field line have the kids run to the centerfield fence and back as a group. Take them through the stretch and active warm up routine.

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### **0:10-0:25 Baserunning**

Take the team through basic baserunning fundamentals beginning with home to 1<sup>st</sup>. Then home to 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> and finish with 2<sup>nd</sup> to home. Talk about the rules and take them through some different scenarios for example flyballs in the infield, when to tag up and when to go halfway.

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### **0:25-0:28 Water break**

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### **0:28-0:40 Throwing**

Take them through the proper fundamentals of throwing: steps 1-4. Finish with some competition if the ball drops both partners will have a seat. The team that doesn't drop the ball will be the winner. This will make them focus on trying to play clean catch.

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### **0:40-1:00 Fielding Stations**

**(if possible divide team into 2 and have one coach run each station for more reps)**

#### **Station # 1 (10 mins) Groundballs**

First of all start by rolling ground balls to the players with no gloves stressing the importance of using both hands with the alligator technique. Once they have this down we can use gloves and

you can start rolling side to side having the field the ball in the middle of their body whenever possible. Incorporate a competition by splitting the group in two and receiving a point for every ball that is properly fielded and thrown.

**Station #2 (10 mins) Flyballs**

Go over proper fundamentals of catching flyballs. Start off by using barehands making sure they are using the catching hand as the backstop and throwing hand as the trapper. Have them put their gloves on and continue to use the proper catching fundamentals. Have a competition within their group with a point only be awarded if the ball is caught properly.

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**1:00-1:02**

**Water break**

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**1:02-1:26**

**Hitting Stations**

**(if possible separate your team into 3 groups and rotate them through these stations, you will need help from parents or another coach)**

**Station # 1 (8 mins) T's and form work**

Work on the correct swing path down to the ball. Have your hitters hit wiffle balls off a T focusing on swinging down and hitting the bottom half of the ball making sure their lower half is involved and creating a good hip turn.

**Station # 2 (8 mins) Front toss**

Underhand flip from behind a screen trying to get your players to hit line drives off the screen. Make sure that your hitters get a consistent toss so that they can develop the habit of getting a good load for every pitch. Rotate your players through taking no more than 6 sings per turn.

**Station # 3 (8 mins) BP**

Batting practice on the field. Throw to your players as you would in a game having them hit on the field as they would be in a game. Once again stressing the importance of the different components of the swing. Rotate your players through with no more than 6 swings per turn.

**1:26-1:30 Practice wrap up**

Clean up discuss and go over fundamentals learned and end with positive comments.



## Rookie Practice Plan # 3

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### **0:00-0:10 Stretch and active warm up**

Start them off by having a light jog. Once they have warmed up take them through the stretch routine. Finish by having 5 or 6 lines of 2 and work on their form running. The form running is very important to their development as an athlete.

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### **0:10-0:22 Throwing**

Have your team warm up together going through the 4 steps of throwing.

### **0:22-0:28 Accuracy competition**

Divide team into 2 groups each with a ball. Coach will stand in front of each line being the target. Player will throw the ball to the coach if he catches the ball without leaving his feet a point is awarded to the team. Coach then throws the player back his/her ball and they return to the back of the line. Team with the most points after 6 minutes are the winners.

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### **0:28-0:30 Waterbreak**

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### **0:30-0:38 Groundballs**

Have half your players on one side of the infield and the other half on the other. 1 at a time they will come in between two bases or cones that you will set up about 10 feet apart. You will roll the ball somewhere in between those cones or bases and make sure they are shuffling and trying to keep the ball in front of their body not letting it get past them. Incorporate a competition within your group.

### **0:38-0:45 Groundball/Throw**

Have your players at 2<sup>nd</sup> base and hit or roll them balls from home plate. They are to use proper fielding fundamentals to keep the ball in front and make a throw to 1<sup>st</sup> base. Have them

rotate at 1<sup>st</sup> base so they can all get a chance to try it out. Make sure they gain ground towards their target once they pick the ball up.

### **0:45-0:55 Flyballs**

Have your players spread out in the infield into 2 groups. Make sure they know how to communicate within their groups. Teach them to scream I got it as the ball is at its peak level. Make sure they get underneath the ball and catch with 2 hands. You can use tennis balls or softstitch balls. Throw the flyballs to different players within your group making sure they understand the concept and importance of communication.

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### **0:55-0:57 Waterbreak**

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### **0:57-1:13 Hitting Stations**

**(divide team into 2 groups rotate them through the two 8 minute stations)**

#### **Station # 1 Stance**

Have your players get in their respective stances and make sure that they are in a comfortable position. Have them take some dry swings stressing the importance of swinging down to the ball with know of the bat leading while keep their hands close to their body. Make sure they are getting a load and good hip turn when swinging. Once they are doing this right have them go against the fence the distance of their bat length away. Have them take swings making sure their path is downwards toward the ball. This will make them keep their hands close as they won't be able to swing otherwise.

#### **Station # 2 T's**

The focus here will be to show the players what hitting different areas of the ball will do. Have them hit on the field from home plate with a T. Half of the group can retrieve baseballs while the other half is hitting. Teach them the importance of swinging down and hitting the ball with backspin instead on swinging up and creating topspin. Have them focus on a specific spot on the ball as opposed to the entire ball. This will improve the hitter's focus as there will be a smaller margin for error.

### **1:13-1:27 Simulated game**

Divide the team in two and play a game with you being the pitcher. A team may be able to go through their line up no more than twice. Make sure to keep score and that the defensive team knows what to do with the ball at all times in every circumstance.

**1:27-1:30 Discussion/Wrap-up**

Clean up and go over what was learned in today's practice.