

LMBA The Twins Way



A Guide To Coaching Baseball
Version 1 – 2018

Twins Way

The Twins Way is a guide that serves how LMBA wishes to develop its players. It starts at the Mite level and works up through Midget to ensure we are using best practice and understandings to allow our athletes to reach their potential in baseball.

LMBA expects all coaches to follow this guide in its planning for the season as well as in team practice plans. The ideas are not to constrict a coach's creativity or knowledge base; however, providing consistent instruction to our players should lead to a more effective and efficient means as to future development as the player progresses through the divisions.

The following guide will consist of common understandings, skill development (including skills, strategy and rules) and motor skills. A guide explaining the specific teaching of the skills at each level will also be provided again to ensure a consistent approach in teaching and learning will occur.

I = Skill introduced

C = Continued Development

R = Reviewed

HITTING	Mite	Mosquito	Pee Wee	Bantam	Midget
Bat gripped in fingers	I	C	C	R	
Foot position at plate & Balance	I	C	C	R	
Stance & hand position	I	C	C	R	
Load & weight shift	I	C	C	R	
Swing mechanics	I	C	C	C	C
Situational hitting			I	C	C
Hit and Run			I	C	C
Bunt for a hit			I	C	C
Squeeze bunt			I	C	C
Sacrifice bunt			I	C	C
Pitch Selection		I	C	C	C

BASERUNNING	Mite	Mosquito	Pee Wee	Bantam	Midget
Home to 1st (through bag)	I	C	R		
Home to 1st (round bag)	I	C	C	R	
Home to 2nd	I	C	C	R	
Tagging up from 1st		I	C	C	R
Tagging up from 2nd		I	C	C	R
Tagging up from 3rd		I	C	C	R
Lead Offs (Primary & Secondary)			I	C	R
Sliding (feet first)		I	C	R	
Straight steal		I	C	R	
Delayed steal			I	C	R
Diving back to a base on a pick-off throw			I	C	C

THROWING	Mite	Mosquito	Pee Wee	Bantam	Midget
4 seam grip	I	C	R		
Correct lead foot	I	C	R		
Ball to ground, ball behind you, throw	I	C	R		
Step at target	I	C	R		
Elbow up above shoulder	I	C	R		

GROUNDERS**Mite****Mosquito****Pee Wee****Bantam****Midget**

Perfect stance	I	C	R		
Pre-pitch position	I	C	R		
Glove up & out front	I	C	R		
Head up/balls of feet	I	C	R		
Footwork left and right	I	C	R		
Read the ball	I	C	C	R	
Throwing hand used	I	C	R		
Footwork	I	C	C	C	R
Throwing mechanics	I	C	C	R	

CATCHING THE BALL**Mite****Mosquito****Pee Wee****Bantam****Midget**

Using 2 hands	I	C	R		
Catching ball below waist	I	C	R		
Catching ball above waist	I	C	R		
Fly balls	I	C	R		

**INFIELD
DEFENSE****Mite****Mosquito****Pee Wee****Bantam****Midget**

Force Plays	I	C	R		
Tagging the runner	I	C	C	R	
Backing up throw from catcher to 1st		I	C	R	
Covering bag on steal		I	C	C	R
Double Plays		I	C	R	R
Cut-offs	I	C	C	C	C
Double Cuts		I	C	C	C
Bunt defense			I	C	C

OUTFIELD-DEFENSE**Mite****Mosquito****Pee Wee****Bantam****Midget**

Fielding ground balls	I	C	C	C	R
Fly ball communication	I	C	C	C	R
Coming in on a fly ball	I	C	C	C	R
Fly ball over head		I	C	C	R
Backing up bases		I	C	C	C
Backing up each other		I	C	C	R
Cut-offs		I	C	C	C
Throwing to bases	I	C	C	C	C
Crow-hop/Step behind		I	C	C	R
Shielding the sun with glove		I	C	C	C

PITCHING**Mite****Mosquito****Pee Wee****Bantam****Midget**

Set position		I	C	C	R
Wind-up				I	C
Balance position		I	C	C	R
Hands separating, thumbs down		I	C	R	
Lift and drive		I	C	R	
Equal opposite		I	C	R	
Hip shoulder separation (center line)		I	C	R	
Square up to plate		I	C	R	
Elbow above shoulder		I	C	R	
Pick Offs			I	C	C
Controlling Running Game			I	C	C
2 seam fastball		I	C	C	R
4 seam fastball		I	C	C	R
Change-up		I	C	C	R
Curve Ball				I	C

PITCHER**Mite****Mosquito****Pee Wee****Bantam****Midget**

Back-up play responsibilities		I	C	C	C
Run downs		I	C	C	C
Bunt defense responsibilities			I	C	C
Fly ball communication	I	C	C	C	C
Ground ball communication	I	C	C	C	C
Covering 1st base		I	C	C	C
Feeds to 1st base		I	C	C	C
Covering home on pass ball		I	C	C	R

1st BASE**Mite****Mosquito****Pee Wee****Bantam****Midget**

Position depth	I	C	C	C	C
Taking a throw at 1st	I	C	C	R	R
Cut-off responsibilities		I	C	C	C
Run downs		I	C	C	C
Fielding bunts			I	C	C
Fly ball communication	I	C	C	C	R
Ground ball communication	I	C	C	C	R
Feeds to pitcher covering 1st		I	C	C	C

2nd BASE**Mite****Mosquito****Pee Wee****Bantam****Midget**

Position depth	I	C	C	C	C
Backing up throw from plate		I	C	C	C
Covering 2nd on steal		I	C	C	C
Cut-off responsibilities		I	C	C	C
Run downs		I	C	C	C
Bunt defence responsibilities			I	C	C
Covering 1st	I	C	C	R	R
Fly ball communication	I	C	C	C	C
Holding Runners			I	C	C

3RD BASE**Mite****Mosquito****Pee Wee****Bantam****Midget**

position depth	I	C	C	C	C
Covering 3rd on steal		I	C	C	C
Cut-off responsibilities		I	C	C	C
Run downs		I	C	C	C
Bunt defense responsibilities			I	C	C
Fly ball communication	I	C	C	C	R

SHORTSTOP**Mite****Mosquito****Pee Wee****Bantam****Midget**

Position depth	I	C	C	C	C
Backing up throw from plate		I	C	C	C
Covering 2nd on steal		I	C	C	C
Cut-off responsibilities		I	C	C	C
Run downs		I	C	C	C
Bunt defense responsibilities			I	C	C
Fly ball communication	I	C	C	C	R
Holding Runners			I	C	C

CATCHER**Mite****Mosquito****Pee Wee****Bantam****Midget**

Blocking balls in dirt		I	C	C	C
Stance & Footwork		I	C	C	C
Pop-ups		I	C	C	C
Calling pitches			I	C	C
Framing pitches			I	C	C
Target inside/outside			I	C	C
Communication with pitcher and catcher		I	C	C	C
Throwing to 2nd base		I	C	C	C
Throwing to 3rd base		I	C	C	C
Throwing back to pitcher		I	C	R	R
Hustle after pass balls		I	C	C	R
Tag play at home		I	C	C	R
Fielding bunts			I	C	C

DOUBLE PLAYS**Mite****Mosquito****Pee Wee****Bantam****Midget**

Coverage		I	C	C	C
Depth		I	C	C	C

RULES**Mite****Mosquito****Pee Wee****Bantam****Midget**

Infield fly		I	C	C	R
Balk			I	C	R
Obstruction			I	C	C
Interference			I	C	C

Teaching Progressions

1. Hitting

Key teaching points

- Relaxed grip – bat in fingers – “knocking” knuckles lined up
- Feet shoulder width apart or slightly more – athletic stance – feet square to plate
- Weight slightly on back leg – but still balanced w/ hips between knees
- Relaxed between pitches

A. Load

- Shift hands to at or slightly above shoulders height and pushed back from rear shoulder, bat angled away from catcher
- Shift more weight onto back foot – without changing knee flex or shifting hips outside feet

B. Explode

- Lower body explodes first – younger kids – “squish the bug” – older hitters – “get on to your front side” and up on the back toe
- Hips then hands – butt of bat to the pitcher – barrel will follow on its own

C. At contact

- Power position – trailing arm maintains flex though contact – avoiding “casting” the bat
- Head has remained still – if head pulls out early, shoulders and bat will follow

Skill progression

Mites:

- Stance & grip
- Load
- Squish bug
- Hands to pitcher

Mosquito

- Weight transfer – get onto front side
- Ball/strike recognition

Pee Wee

- Hit ball where its pitched
 - o inside – pull
 - o over plate – square – hit up the middle
 - o outside – stay on ball, keep ball in hitting zone and hit ball away
- introduction of bunting
 - o sacrifice bunt
- plate approach – recognizing count and looking for pitches

Situational Hitting

Mosquito – sacrifice fly

Pee Wee and higher

- Bunting
 - o Mechanics
 - § Pivot on balls of feet to square hips and shoulders while keeping feet in same spots – making it easy to pull bunt back or even fake a bunt
 - § Barrel of bat above hands
 - § Deaden the ball by cushioning it
 - § Directing ball down 1B, 3B lines
 - o Sacrifice Bunt
 - § Runner on first – bunt down 1B line
 - § Runners on second or third – bunt down 3B line
 - o Bunting for a hit
 - § Down 3B line with a RHP on mound
 - § Down 1B line with LHP on mound
 - § Drag bunt (LHB)
 - o Squeeze Play
 - § Communication – BOTH the hitter and the runner MUST know
 - § Safety squeeze – walking lead – runner takes off when bunt is laid down
 - § Suicide squeeze – runner take off when pitcher commits to home
- Hit and Run
 - o Runner on first base (or first and third)
 - o Batter needs to hit a ground ball, preferably the opposite way
 - o Batter should swing and attempt to hit any ball if possible, unless in the dirt – if batter swings through, then at least it make the catcher's job
 - o Runner takes off once pitcher commits to home, and needs to pick up the ball off the bat – giving the runner at least a chance to get ball on a fly ball
 - o Best used when:
 - § Average speed or slow runners on first or at the plate (to try to stay out of double play)
 - § The right hooter is at the plate – good contact hitter, not one of your power bats
 - o Avoid using when:
 - § Two outs – as the play can often generate an out at first
 - § Quick runner on 1B (at younger levels for sure as a steal is likely anyways)

Base Running

General Knowledge

Level I

- Always know where the ball is, do NOT turn your back to the ball.
- Know the situation and anticipate the action.
- Knows the score, inning, outs and count at all times.
- Always Run Hard
- Use the third base coach on plays you can't see

Level C

- Being able to read and anticipate pitched balls in the dirt and advancing when possible.
- Check out the back stop. Is it close or far? Is it just fence or is there some other type of material behind the catcher that makes the ball bounce back quickly?

Level R

- When you are on deck, it is your job to help the runner coming to the plate. Make sure the bat is out of the way. Tell them whether they need to slide or if they can stay up. Let them know which side of the plate to slide on.
- ALWAYS look for opportunities to advance. If you see one, start taking a base. Your coach will tell you to stay if needed. After all, if you think you have a chance to make it to the next base, you certainly have enough time to come back if the coach doesn't agree. If the coach has to tell you to go before you go, you're probably too late. Usually, a base coach saying go should only be a confirmation of what you are already doing.
- Look to take advantage of fielders, specifically outfielders. They usually want to show off their arms by trying to throw out base runners. Say there's runner on second and you get a base hit. Look to advance on the outfielder's attempt to throw the runner out at home plate.

Home to First, Running Through Base

Level I

- If a ball is hit on the ground, put your head down and run as hard as you can with as much efficiency as possible.
- After about three steps take a peek to see if the ball went through the infield. If it doesn't get through, you're going to run straight through first base bag.
- Focus on the front part of the bag. That is where your foot will hit, since it is the closest and safest spot to hit the bag when sprinting. Stepping on the back part or the side of the bag increases your chance of turning an ankle. Always hit the front part of the bag. Do not lunge for the base.

- After you hit the bag, stop your momentum by chopping your feet as quick as possible and turn your head to the right, just to see if the baseball got past the 1st baseman.

Level C

- When coming back to 1st base, always turn to your right and come back, so the umpire never has the thought that you were thinking of going to second base. If he feels you were trying to go just for a split second and you get tagged, you will be called out.

Level R

- Understand the 45-foot line. Getting hit by the baseball outside of this box could result in an out.

Home to First, Rounding Base and Home to Second

Level I

- Start Early. Start this turn early right when you see it went through – don't wait until you are 20 feet from the bag. Start early and make it a gradual arch.
- Make a 'BIG' turn on a base hit to the outfield.
- Can 'cut the corner' touching the inside corner of the base.

Level C

- If a high pop fly is dropped, you, as a batter-runner should be well on your way to 2nd base, or better yet, standing on 2nd base, when the ball drops not scrambling to get to 1st base.
- Hit the bases on the inside corner with your right foot whenever possible (this is the ideal situation). However, hitting the base with your left foot in stride is better than trying to stutter step so that you can hit the base with your right foot.
- Plan Your Path. This is the exact path we want to take on a double or triple. We always want to try to attain the straightest path possible when going into a bag where there could be a potential play.

Level R

- Check if the runner scores from 2B before going 1st and 3rd.

Tagging at First

Level I

- Freeze on a line drive
- With a slapper at the plate – don't run into a tag, make it tough on the defense.
- On a routine fly ball to the outfield with less than 2 outs, stay in an athletic stance. Don't just stand on the base after the catch. Perhaps even make a move off the base so that the outfielder has to make a sharp throw in. If they rush, if they make a mistake, you get

the next bag. Don't just stand there in an un-ready position and allow the outfielder to take their time and have an easy throw in.

- Tagging up at 1st Base. This should be done on deep, but routine, fly balls. The base runner needs to have some speed as well. They can always tag and read the throw. Another time a base runner on 1st base needs to tag up is on routine fly balls with runners on 1st and 3rd base and the outfielder makes a high or lazy throw to home plate.

Level C

- Tag Up and Read. Trail base runner should tag up about half speed and read where the outfielder's throw is going. If the throw is not to the base they are advancing to or a high overthrow is made, they should advance to the next base. They need to make sure the base runner in front of them, if there are any, also advances.
- No Tag Up. There are certain situations when tagging up is not recommended. When a team is trailing by a lot of runs, when it's late in the game and the team is losing by a few runs or when the scouting report says an outfielder has a great arm they shouldn't tag up.

Tagging at Second

Level I

- Freeze on a line drive
- Ball to RF, tag up
- Ball to LF, go half way

Level C

- Ground balls – general rule is to advance on a ball that you can get in front of. Right side of infield, advance. Left side of infield, make sure the ball is thru or thrown to 1B.
- If a batted ball is hit to your right (after you have completed your secondary lead) stay at second base. The throw to first is long and a much easier play for the shortstop is to come up and throw to third base.
- If a batted ball is hit to your left (after you have completed your secondary lead) advance to third base. If the shortstop is moving to his left, he will just continue and take the out at first. A ball hit to the second baseman is too risky of a play to try to get the out at third.
- Don't make the 1st or 3rd out at third base. If you stop at 2nd with no outs, the hitter can move you up to 3rd with one out so you can score multiple different ways without needing a hit. Make sure you can get there.

Level R

- If a chopper is hit where the third baseman has to charge in hard and field the baseball, move up to third base.
- If a batted ball is hit to your right and the third baseman is playing deep and has to go a

long way to his right or left to make a play, you may be able to move up to third base.

Tagging at Third

Level I

- Take the lead in foul territory at 3B and returns to 3B in fair territory.
- When you're on 3rd base with less than 2 outs, do NOT automatically break home on a ground ball to the left side (3rd baseman or shortstop).
- Any ball hit in the air, you should start back towards third base (Unless 2 outs)

Level C

- If the catcher catches the ball, have your weight on your right side, (on a pitch).
- Another important point when taking your secondary lead is to make sure you keep your hips and shoulders square to the field so you can easily continue towards home or get back to third quickly if necessary.
- Always watch the ball all the way from the pitchers hand to the plate. The trajectory of the pitch will give you a good indication of what might happen.

Level R

- With the fly ball hit down the left field line or corner the base runner should have his right foot on the base, so he doesn't have to look across this body. On all other fly balls the left foot should be the push off foot. This also keeps the hips lined up to home plate.
- The depth of the shortstop and second baseman will let you know if they are willing to give up a run for the out or not. If they are deep you should be able to score on any ground ball hit to them.
- An important note is the runner on third must watch for two things: First, he must watch the catcher's shoulders. When a catcher is throwing to third, his left shoulder will open up towards third base. In this scenario, the runner must get back to third right away.

Lead Offs

Level I

- The player should take his lead at the front edge of the bag. In other words, the runner should be as close to the pitcher as possible while still being even with the base.
- Don't get called out for leaving too soon in Mosquito. The ball must cross the plate before leaving the base.
- Always keep your eyes on the pitcher (or wherever the baseball is) when you are off of the bag. Even if you are just one foot off the bag, keep your eyes on the baseball.
- Proper Footwork- Take a crossover step behind the right foot, followed by two sideways steps. This is a good base to work from and the lead can be extended or shortened from there.
- A better rule might be on your first lead, go with the body length and a step, wait for a

pick-off attempt, and evaluate your lead. Some pitchers have quick moves, while others are rather slow. A base runner must take advantage of every opportunity.

Level C

- Freeze on all infield line drives with less than 2 outs.
- Take a quick step back after the catcher catches the ball.
- Looking to advance on a 'ball in the dirt'. If the pitch hits the dirt, start your momentum to the next base.
- Teach getting good secondary leads so you can try to get that extra base on a hit.
- Shuffle Steps. Once the pitcher starts his movement home, your lead starts to turn into a secondary lead by taking 2 shuffle steps toward the next base.
- Balance. As you take your shuffle steps, keep your feet close to the ground and keep your center of gravity over your toes in case you need to change direction quickly.
- Weight Distribution. As the pitch gets into the strike zone you should have your weight about 70/30 to your right foot, and your momentum should be stopped. From this position you can continue easily to the next base; or if the catcher tries to pick you off, you are in a good position to get back to the bag.
- Step Back. Once the catcher secures the ball, take at least one hard step back to the bag. This hard step will stop any thoughts of catcher trying to pick you off and will give you good habits to prevent any base running mistakes.

Level R

- Take a 'jab step back' against a lefty pitcher to prevent getting picked off.
- Recognize a pitcher's 'slide step' motion and is able to 'shut it down' when stealing.
- Your leads should be the same every time, so you don't tip off when you are about to steal.

Sliding

Level I

- Slide feet first, maintaining contact with the bag
- One of your legs is going to be extended and will make contact with the bag. It doesn't matter which one you choose.
- Your ankle of your other leg will be placed under your straight leg's hamstring. This will look similar to the number "4".
- You should make contact with the ground with your rear end and the upper part of the back of your straight leg. Teach the players to get their hands in the air to make them sit back as they slide. This will avoid the cleats or bent knee digging into the ground.

Level C

- Goes hard into 2B to break up the double play or beat a force play.
- Start to teach the hook slide to avoid tags.
- Keep the head forward with the chin tucked close to the chest.

Level R

- Keep your weight centered on your butt to avoid scraping your side. It's easy and sometimes even comfortable to tilt to the side when you slide, but you'll end up with bruises and scrapes on your legs and sides, or even bigger injuries. Instead, sit flat on your butt.
- Keep your core tight and tuck your chin into your chest. A tight core will help you keep your balance

Straight Steal

Level I

- Glances a 'peek in' on the 3rd step while stealing 2B to see where the ball is.
- The initial distance in your leads from 2nd should be based on whether you can get back to the bag on a pick from the pitcher. You can also use the middle infielder positioning as a guide. Players should be able to go as far as they are. Coaches should help the baserunner. First base coach should gauge the shortstop and the third base coach gauge the second baseman.

Level C

- Teach how to take an extra base when the outfielders 'air mail' the cutoff man.
- Makes sure the pitcher throws home on a hit-and-run-play or 3-2 counts.
- Runners are going on a full count and two out.

Delay Steal

Level I

- The key is to take a secondary lead as you would on a pitch that you are not stealing on. For our purposes, a secondary lead is two wide shuffles.
- It is also important to remember that a good secondary lead helps set up the delay for future use.

Level C

- One important note is the base runner must keep his shoulder square to home plate. The minute you open the right shoulder to second base you will tip off the defense.
- After the second full shuffle--the runner must make sure he FINISHES the second shuffle--the runner takes off for second base. At this point the ball has just about crossed home plate, but the first basemen has no idea that the runner took off for second. By the time he says anything the runner is about 10 feet from the bag and it is too late.
- Read the middle infielders, if they are not paying attention after each pitch that is a good time to try a delayed steal.

Pickoffs

Level I

- Important runners stay low so they move and get down quicker
- Dive back with right arm
- Turn your head to right field, don't look at the ball!

Level C

- Reach for the back corner of the bag
- After any pick-off attempt, check to see if the outfielder was covering.
- Takes a step and a dive to get back to 1B on a pitcher's pickoff throw.
- Before you take your lead off second you should have an idea who is holding you on. If it is the shortstop, you are using the eyes of the 3rd base coach to help you out. If it's the 2nd baseman, you are still using the 3rd base coach's eyes but you are also using your peripheral vision to aid in getting back to the bag.

Level R

- Looks for the 'inside move' at 2B when the pitcher 'spins' around.

Reading the Defense

Level I

- Tag up on all foul fly balls.
- Knowing where your defense is playing behind you, especially the outfielders so you can react to the ball and not have to wait and look to see what happens. Always check the defense for gaps and position/depth.
- Always running hard through home, especially with two outs

Level C

- Makes the ball go 'thru' in front of them when at 2B with 1st base unoccupied and less than 2 outs.
- Be aggressive when the outfielder is moving away from the next base to field the ball (i.e. moving to your right when you are on second base).

Level R

- Before the game observe your opponent in pre-game drills are they left or right handed? Are they quick? Are their throws accurate? Who has a strong arm? Who doesn't? Who sets up their throw from the outfield?
- Watch the catcher for quickness of release, arm strength, accuracy, and footwork.
- Watch the pitcher warming up for any weaknesses or tendencies.

Tagging at Second

I = Skill introduced

Freeze on line drives

Ball to RF, tag up

Ball to LF, go half way

C = Continued Development

Ground balls – general rule is to advance on a ball that you can get in front of. Right side of infield, advance. Left side of infield, make sure the ball is thru or thrown to 1B.

If a batted ball is hit to your right (after you have completed your secondary lead) stay at second base. The throw to first is long and a much easier play for the shortstop is to come up and throw to third base.

If a batted ball is hit to your left (after you have completed your secondary lead) advance to third base. If the shortstop is moving to his left, he will just continue and take the out at first. A ball hit to the second baseman is too risky of a play to try to get the out at third.

Don't make the 1st or 3rd out at third base. If you stop at 2nd with no outs, the hitter can move you up to 3rd with one out so you can score multiple different ways without needing a hit. Make sure you can get there.

R = Reviewed

If a chopper is hit where the third baseman has to charge in hard and field the baseball, move up to third base.

If a batted ball is hit to your right and the third baseman is playing deep and has to go a long way to his right or left to make a play, you may be able to move up to third base.

Tagging at Third

I = Skill introduced

Take the lead in foul territory at 3B and returns to 3B in fair territory. Also have this in Leadoff Tab

When you're on 3rd base with less than 2 outs, do NOT automatically break home on a ground ball to the left side (3rd baseman or shortstop).

Any ball hit in the air, you should start back towards third base (Unless 2 outs)

C = Continued Development

If the catcher catches the ball, have your weight on your right side, (on a pitch).

Another important point when taking your secondary lead is to make sure you keep your hips and shoulders square to the field so you can easily continue towards home or get back to third quickly if necessary.

Always watch the ball all the way from the pitchers hand to the plate. The trajectory of the pitch will give you a good indication of what might happen.

R = Reviewed

With the fly ball hit down the left field line or corner the base runner should have his right foot on the base, so he doesn't have to look across this body. On all other fly balls the left foot should be the push off foot. This also keeps the hips lined up to home plate.

The depth of the shortstop and second baseman will let you know if they are willing to give up a run for the out or not. If they are deep you should be able to score on any ground ball hit to them.

An important note is the runner on third must watch for two things: First, he must watch the catcher's shoulders. When a catcher is throwing to third, his left shoulder will open up towards third base. In this scenario, the runner must get back to third right away.

Lead Offs

I = Skill introduced

Take the lead in foul territory at 3B and returns to 3B in fair territory. Should we put this in the "Tag at 3rd" tab?

The player should take his lead at the front edge of the bag. In other words, the runner should be as close to the pitcher as possible while still being even with the base.

Don't get called out for leaving too soon.

Always keep your eyes on the pitcher (or wherever the baseball is) when you are off of the bag. Even if you are just one foot off the bag, keep your eyes on the baseball.

Proper Footwork- Take a crossover step behind the right foot, followed by two sideways steps. This is a good base to work from and the lead can be extended or shortened from there.

A better rule might be on your first lead, go with the body length and a step, wait for a pick-off attempt, and evaluate your lead. Some pitchers have quick moves, while others are rather slow. A base runner must take advantage of every opportunity.

Your ideal lead is somewhere between 9 and 12 feet away from the bag?
2 to the right and one back?

C = Continued Development

Freeze on all infield line drives with less than 2 outs.

Take a quick step back after the catcher catches the ball.

Looking to advance on a 'ball in the dirt'.

Getting good secondary leads so you can try to get that extra base on a hit.

Shuffle Steps. Once the pitcher starts his movement home, your lead starts to turn into a secondary lead by taking 2 shuffle steps toward the next base.

Balance. As you take your shuffle steps, keep your feet close to the ground and keep your center of gravity over your toes in case you need to change direction quickly.

Weight Distribution. As the pitch gets into the strike zone you should have your weight about 70/30 to your right foot, and your momentum should be stopped. From this position you can continue easily to the next base; or if the catcher tries to pick you off, you are in a good position to get back to the bag.

Step Back. Once the catcher secures the ball, take at least one hard step back to the bag. This hard step will stop any thoughts of catcher trying to pick you off and will give you good habits to prevent any base running mistakes.

R = Reviewed

Take a 'jab step back' against a lefty pitcher to prevent getting picked off.

Recognize a pitcher's 'slide step' motion and is able to 'shut it down' when stealing.

Your leads should be the same every time so you don't tip off when you are about to steal.

Sliding

I = Skill introduced

Don't Slide Head First

Maintain contact with the bag

One of your legs is going to be extended and will make contact with the bag. It doesn't matter which one you choose.

Your ankle of your other leg will be placed under your straight leg's hamstring. This will look similar to the number "4".

Arms should be bent at the elbows and hands up in the air. This is so when you make contact with the ground you will not slam your wrists in the ground and break a wrist.

You will make contact with the ground with your bent knee and the upper part of the back of your straight leg.

C = Continued Development

Goes hard into 2B to break up the double play or beat a force play.

When in doubt, hit the deck (slide).

How to Hook Slide

Keep the head forward with the chin tucked close to the chest.

R = Reviewed

Keep your weight centered on your butt to avoid scraping your side. It's easy and sometimes even comfortable to tilt to the side when you slide, but you'll end up with bruises and scrapes on your legs and sides, or even bigger injuries. Instead, sit flat on your butt.

Keep your core tight and tuck your chin into your chest. A tight core will help you keep your balance

Straight Steal

I = Skill introduced

Glances a 'peek in' on the 3rd step while stealing 2B to see where the ball is.

The initial distance in your leads from 2nd should be based on whether you can get back to the bag on a pick from the pitcher, regardless of where the middle infielders are playing.- Same distance as middle infielders?

As you get to your desired lead, listen to your third base coach, he will help you with the middle infielders and how close they are to you.

C = Continued Development

Takes an extra base when the outfielders 'air mail' the cut off man.

Makes sure the pitcher throws home on a hit-and-run-play or 3-2 counts.

R = Reviewed

Tries to steal 2B early in the count with 2 outs.

Is ready to steal 3B off a lefty pitcher especially with 1 out.

Delay Steal

I = Skill introduced

The key is to take a secondary lead as you would on a pitch that you are not stealing on. For our purposes, a secondary lead is two wide shuffles.

It is also important to remember that a good secondary lead helps set up the delay for future use.

C = Continued Development

One important note is the base runner must keep his shoulder square to home plate. The minute you open the right shoulder to second base you will tip off the defense.

After the second full shuffle--the runner must make sure he FINISHES the second shuffle--the runner takes off for second base. At this point the ball has just about crossed home plate, but the first basemen has no idea that the runner took off for second. By the time he says anything the runner is about 10 feet from the bag and it is too late.

Read the middle infielders, if they are not paying attention after each pitch that is a good time to try a delayed steal.

R = Reviewed

Pickoffs

I = Skill introduced

Important runners stay low so they move and get down quicker

Dive back with right arm

Turn your head to right field, don't look at the ball!

C = Continued Development

Reach for the back corner of the bag

After any pick-off attempt, check to see if the outfielder was covering.

Takes a step and a dive to get back to 1B on a pitcher's pickoff throw.

Before you take your lead off second you should have an idea who is holding you on. If it is the shortstop, you are using the eyes of the 3rd base coach to help you out. If it's the 2nd baseman, you are still using the 3rd base coach's eyes but you are also using your peripheral vision to aid in getting back to the bag.

R = Reviewed

Looks for the 'inside move' at 2B when the pitcher 'spins' around.

Reading the Defense

I = Skill introduced

Tag up on all foul fly balls.

Knowing where your defense is playing behind you, especially the outfielders so you can react to the ball and not have to wait and look to see what happens. Always check the defense for gaps and position/depth.

Always running hard through home, especially with two outs

C = Continued Development

Makes the ball go 'thru' in front of them when at 2B with 1st base unoccupied and less than 2 outs.

Be aggressive when the outfielder is moving away from the next base to field the ball (i.e. moving to your right when you are on second base).

R = Reviewed

Before the game observe your opponent in pre-game drills are they left or right handed? Are they quick? Are their throws accurate? Who has a strong arm? Who doesn't? Who sets up their throw from the outfield?

Watch the catcher for quickness of release, arm strength, accuracy, and footwork.

Watch the pitcher warming up for any weaknesses or tendencies.

Throwing

Levels I, C & R

- Ensure proper "C" grip is taught
- Start players on one knee and teach ball to the ground, ball pointing behind you (elbow above shoulder) and then throw
- When moving to standing position, ensure player uses the correct lead foot and transfers weight from back foot to front foot

- Lead with front elbow or glove to point to target

Ground Balls

Infield key teaching points: Ready position or Pre-Ready actions:

- The feet are about 1 1/2 shoulder width apart, but this will vary from player to player depending on his limb length and ratios.
- The infielder's hands should be off-of his knees, hanging loosely in front of his body with his glove fully open and extended towards the hitting zone
- His head is pointed towards the batter with his eyes following the flight of the ball from the pitcher towards the hitting zone and (hopefully) to its destination off the bat.
- Have the player move their feet towards the ball so they are square to the ball.
- Ball is fielded with glove out front. Player should pretend to sit on a bucket as they move lower to pick up the ground ball.
- Two hands are used to field the ball. Throwing hand is used beside the glove and to support a quick transfer.

How do we know they have it (after 10 000 reps) :

1. Play becomes more consistent with each rep... ball is caught, thrown accurately to destination
2. Anticipation of the hop or distance to the ball becomes more consistent allowing for more accurate and consistent outs.
3. Coaches begin to realize players' muscle memory with their pre-play routines... feet, glove, eyes every time with fewer reminders practice to practice.
4. Start with no glove or a wooden glove to reinforce two hands.
5. As players get older, teach them how to play the ball to the backhand.
6. Footwork will get more complex as the players get older. Players should be able to use their feet to make the throw quicker.

Glove Work - Catching the Ball

Using 2 Hands

Level I

Teaching Points: (Start with no glove, then wood glove then a real glove. Always use two hands playing catch)

1. Feet are shoulder width apart and one foot slightly ahead of the second foot.

2. Thumbs together when above the waist
3. Pinkies together when below the waist

Indicators of Success:

1. Hand position is correct
2. Feet are in correct position
3. Using both hands to secure the ball

Level C

Teaching Points:

1. Move feet to the ball so you can use two hands
2. Second hand positioned beside the glove
3. Use second hand to help glove to close

Indicators of Success:

1. Hand position is correct
2. Feet are in correct position
3. Using both hands to secure the ball

Level R

Teaching Points:

1. Move feet to the ball so you can use two hands
2. Second hand positioned beside the glove
3. Teach using the open hand to start a throw

Indicators of Success:

1. Hand position is correct
2. Feet are in correct position
3. Using both hands to secure the ball

Catching the Ball Below the Waist

Level I (no glove, then wood glove, then a real glove)

Teaching Points:

1. Feet must be shoulder width apart and one slightly in front of the other.
2. Pinkies together
3. Two hands used

Indicators of Success:

1. Foot position
2. Are pinkies together?
3. Using two hands

Level C

Teaching Points:

1. Using two hands
2. Feet must be in a position to be behind the ball
3. Knees slightly bent

Indicators of Success:

1. Player uses two hands and positioned correctly
2. Player moves to get behind the ball
3. Player's knees are slightly bent

Level R

Teaching Points:

1. Second hand ready to make a throw
2. Cheat with your feet (start to get them pointed to where you will make a play)

Indicators of Success:

1. Player can move the ball from glove to hand quickly
2. Feet are slightly pointed to where the next play will be
3. Player's hands are out front and cushioning the ball on the catch

Catching the Ball Above the Waist

Level I (start with no glove and then real glove. Use a softer ball)

Teaching Points:

1. Feet must be shoulder width apart and one slightly in front of the other.
2. Thumbs together
3. Two hands used

Indicators of Success:

1. Foot position
2. Are thumbs together?
3. Using two hands

Level C

Teaching Points:

1. Knees slightly bent
2. Glove in position and behind ball
3. Move to the ball so the player is behind the ball

Indicators of Success:

1. Players knees slightly bent
2. Player moving behind the ball
3. Players hands are correctly positioned

Level R

Teaching Points:

1. Second hand ready to make a throw
2. Cheat with your feet (start to get them pointed to where you will make a play)
3. Hands out front and bring them back on the catch

Indicators of Success:

1. Player can move the ball from glove to hand quickly
2. Feet are slightly pointed to where the next play will be
3. Player's hands are out front and cushioning the ball on the catch

Fly Balls

Level I (Start with no glove and a soft ball. Then move to real glove)

Teaching Points:

1. Feet are shoulder width apart and one foot slightly in front of the other.

2. Two hands are used and positioned to the side of the face
3. Knees are slightly bent

Indicators of Success:

1. Foot position
2. Knees slightly bent
3. Using two hands

Level C

Teaching Points:

1. Glove and open hand should be positioned to the glove hand side of the face.
2. Player runs to get behind the ball
3. Keep your glove down as you run (no elephant trunks)

Indicators of Success:

1. Player moves to the ball
2. Hands positioned properly when catching the ball

Level R

Teaching Points:

1. Players need to have open hand ready to make a throw
2. Players should time the catch to gain momentum on the throw
3. Players position themselves in line to where the throw will be going

Indicators of Success:

1. Player is able to time the catch properly
2. Player is positioned properly to make the next play
3. Player can quickly transfer the ball to make the next play

Infield Defence

Doubling up 6:4:3, 4:6:3

1. Along with activating prior knowledge of the above ready position.. knowing who covers the bag is important... right handed batter may require shortstop to be ready to play to second... 6:4:3, while left handed batter may require second base to be ready to play to shortstop covering second.

2. Practice judging distance so that throwing vs. shovelling the ball becomes second nature... some players will need to practice as a hard throw from 10' will cause more trouble than it will obtain outs. Shovel is likely a more useful play for doubling up. Be sure the receiver provides a good chest high target.
3. Teach players (esp. Bantam and up) to move quickly to the bag, make their play and get out of the base path to avoid cleat injuries. Footwork is essential and must be taught at this level.

Tagging Runners

1. Be sure to teach the kids to take the throw at the base. Players should only move if the throw is offline.
2. Teach younger players to drop their glove straight down to the base. Do not reach for a runner.
3. The tag should be made, when possible, with the closed side of the glove towards to the runner. Using two hands when they can is also a plus.

Cutoffs

1. Cutoffs will vary depending on the situation and level of players. Ensure we teach the players how to line up in a line between the thrower and the base.
2. Hands should be in the air and the player should have verbal communication with the thrower.
3. Footwork is also a key. If we can get our players to have their feet set towards the base they will relay the ball to, it will save them time. They will need to twist their top half towards the thrower.
4. Double cuts will be set by the coach's preference. Keep the same principles in mind as above.

Bunt Defense

1. This will be mostly dependent on the coach's strategy to cover bunts; however, there are a few keys to keep in mind:
 - a. Communicate to the kids early what coverage is being used.
 - b. Ensure the players know where they will be moving on the coverage. All 9 players have a job.
 - c. Teach your catcher to take control of the situation.

Rundowns

1. Maximum of four players involved.
2. Ball should be in bare hand and shown to teammate.
3. Do not run directly behind the runner as it is difficult to see the ball when thrown.

4. Ensure players follow their throw and cover the base they throw to once they make a throw.
5. As they get to Pee Wee, teach them a kill play to minimize the number of throws.

OUTFIELD-DEFENSE

Start with a basic brief review of what an outfield defence looks like, and how that evolves with changing situations.

Level I

Teaching Points:

1. Always pay attention to the communication from the field and the coach's
2. Movement of player with changing batter hands (L or R) – “shift”
3. Fly and ground ball tracking and perception
4. Where does the ball go once it has been fielded?
 - a. Open field – 2nd base
 - b. Runner on – coaches teach the many different scenarios of defence.
 - c. Repetitiveness with many different situations of runners and outs.
5. Feet are shoulder width apart and one foot slightly in front of the other.
6. Knees are slightly bent – Baseball ready position
7. The outfielder's hands should be off-of his knees, hanging loosely in front of his body
8. Initial bat contact. - Fly ball first step – to the side
9. Learn to evaluate the path of the ball either grounder or POP up.
10. Pop fly, glove on the side of the head and watching it into the glove.
11. Ground ball kneeling down with body behind the ball, play the ball and rely to 2nd base
12. Backing up bases
 - a. Every fielder has a different job in the field
 - b. LF – backs up (1st), RF (3rd), CF (2nd)
13. Cut- offs, teach the “Hands up” or “call out” for cut-off, position play of the infielder or cut-off man.
 - a. Other infielders helping cut-off man getting into the proper position.
14. Fielding a ball with intent of throw out
 - a. Crow-hop throw technique and the purpose of this
 - b. Step behind thrown and the proper technique
15. Shielding sun from the baseball path and eyes with glove

Indicators of Success:

1. Foot position
2. Readiness
3. Using two hands
4. Tracking balls – fielding correctly

5. Knowing where to throw the ball

Level C

Teaching Points:

1. Glove and open hand should be positioned to the glove hand side of the face.
2. Player runs to get behind the ball
3. Keep your glove down as you run (no elephant trunks)

1. Play becomes more consistent with each rep... ball is caught, thrown accurately to destination
2. Anticipation of the hop or distance to the ball becomes more consistent allowing for more accurate and consistent outs.
3. Coaches begin to realize players' muscle memory with their pre-play routines... feet, glove, eyes every time with fewer reminders practice to practice.

Pitching breakdown & drills

Set Position- The pitchers feet should be anywhere from 6 inches to shoulder width apart with 90% of the weight on the drive foot. The hands should be together in front of the chest in a relaxed position as to not engage the trapezius muscle. Shoulders should be slightly bent over the belly button. There aren't drills for this, but a thorough and consistent explanation are necessary.

Level I Teaching Points (right hander)

- Both feet pointed towards third base, right foot on edge of rubber, left foot instep parallel with right foot toes
- Ball starts in right hand on hip, glove resting lightly on knee
- Move to "set" position by bringing hands together, ball into glove meet at center line of body

Indicators of Success

- Consistent foot placement, width and alignment
- Consistently starting with ball out of glove
- Hands coming together at center line of body

Level C Teaching Points

- Both feet pointed towards third base, right foot on edge of rubber, left foot instep parallel with right foot toes, Ball starts in right hand on hip, glove resting lightly on knee
- Receive sign from catcher
- Move to "set" position by bringing hands together, ball into glove meet at center line of body, and find grip/seams in glove

Indicators of Success

- Consistent foot placement, width and alignment. Consistently starting with ball out of glove
- Able to read signs from catcher
- Hands coming together at center line of body, able to consistently find grip without looking into glove

Level R Teaching Points

- Both feet pointed towards third base, right foot on edge of rubber, left foot instep parallel with right foot toes. Ball starts in right hand on hip, glove resting lightly on knee
- Receive sign from catcher, able to find seams when ball out of glove without looking
- Move to “set” position by bringing hands together, ball into glove meet at center line of body, vary delivery time

Indicators of Success

- Both feet pointed towards third base, right foot on edge of rubber, left foot instep parallel with right foot toes. Ball starts in right hand on hip, glove resting lightly on knee
- Receive sign from catcher, able to find seam for pitches without looking
- Consistent grip for pitches, able to vary delivery time to disrupt base runners

Balance position (younger than bantam)- To achieve a proper balance position, the stride leg should be lifted from the knee towards the back shoulder ensuring the ankle is relaxed. Shoulders and glove should remain quiet through this movement. Drills to achieve this are simply to have pitchers repeat the knee lift motion without going through the pitching delivery and hold their balance position for a 5-10 second count.

Reach back towards second is terminology that will have athletes tighten their warms. What we want to see is the hand following the knee down out of knee lift and separating thumbs down and then being lifted with the elbows, but this will happen after lift and thrust. Lift and thrust should be taught to bantam age players as there is no actual balance position, because the pitcher is trying to achieve maximum momentum, which balancing at knee lift would hinder. In order to maximize momentum, the pitcher must put his weight on the instep of his drive foot and thrust his front hip towards his target. The Hershiser drill which can be seen here- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0F3DWWO7a1I> (is great for this as well as starting the pitcher's drive foot angled on the rubber as shown in the picture below).

Balance Position

Level I,C & R Teaching Points

- Come to set position, lift knee up to glove maintain balance
- Knee goes up glove goes up, knee goes down glove goes down, knee goes out glove goes out

- Maintain center of gravity

Indicators of Success

- Balance duration increase
- Pitcher stays balanced throughout movement

Equal opposite- The throwing arm and glove arm should mirror each other. If they do not, always correct the glove arm. The best way to achieve a consistent equal and opposite is to get pitchers to spread their feet 80%-100% of their stride with their feet in a straight line towards their target and their front foot at a 45-degree angle. Have the pitcher's hands in front of their chest just like the set position and have them separate their hands thumbs down, lifting with elbow, then tell them to have a look at their arms to see if they're the same. Once the position becomes comfortable, incorporate a towel and begin throwing from this position. When it becomes a natural movement, introduce a baseball.

Hands Separating, Thumbs down

Level I Teaching points

- From Set position ball in glove players work on separation with elbows leading
- Thumbs will naturally rotate down
- Palms facing opposite direction

Indicators of Success

- Throwing hand does not pull the ball out of the glove
- Thumbs facing down, ball has naturally rotated to second base
- Arms are separating in unison

Level C + R Teaching Points

- From Set position ball in glove players work on separation with elbows leading, Thumbs will naturally rotate down, Palms facing opposite direction
- Elbows equal distance apart
- Throwing arm continues to extend backwards, ball faces second base, elbows should be level or front elbow slight above rear shoulder height

Indicators of Success

- Elbows equal distance apart, separating in unison
- Thumbs rotated down

Lift & Drive

Teaching points

- Knee to glove
- Knee goes down, glove goes down
- Weight in heel, sit down
- Foot goes out, glove goes out

- Spine angle straight up and down
- leg up, (2) squat, load (3) glide down and out stride path

Equal Opposite, Teaching Points

- At foot strike glove and ball hand are in equal and opposite direction
- Glove hand stays in line to home plate
- Helps maintain balance, bent at elbows

Hip/Shoulder Separation Teaching Points

- Shoulders are delayed from hip rotation opening up
- Hip/butt cheek lead
- Shoulders rotate the opposite directions

Square up to plate

- Head and eyes at target
- Flex at hips
- Chest forward home plate

2 Seam Fastball Teaching Points

- 2 finger grip inside narrow part of seam
- Has movement, usually moves back towards thrown hand side of plate
- Not thrown as hard

4 Seam Fastball teaching Points

- 2 finger grip across c- seams
- More accurate, runs straight
- Hand over wrist stacked

Change up Teaching Points

- Varying grips, circle change, hold ball deeper in grip, must be comfortable for pitcher
- Needs to look like a fastball, don't back off

Curve Ball Teaching Points

- Hand turn at separation, ball rotates from facing down to facing third base
- No violent snapping motion from thumb up to thumb down

Pitchers

Back up Responsibilities

- Teach pitchers that they have to move on every play.
- Bunt defence is set by each coach. Each player's responsibilities should be practiced. Younger kids need to be told on each play.
- When pitchers cover first base, they need to start by running to the first base line and then turning and follow the base line to first base providing a good target for the player throwing the ball.
- Pitchers need to be reminded to cover home on a pass ball. Pitchers should be vocal when they cover the plate, so the catcher can hear them.

Infield Specifics

- Depth will depend on each situation. As the players get older, have the first baseman play further off the base, as the pitcher can cover the base.
- Bunt defence will be determined by the coach.
- The shortstop or catcher should be the boss on a fly ball in the infield.
- Teach your infielders to cover bases when they can.
- Cutoffs are set by the coach and responsibilities are dependent on the age of the players and situations.

Catchers

Blocking Balls in Dirt Teaching Points

- Drop to knees
- Hands out in front, free hand behind glove
- Position body so everything is funneled back to home plate
- Chin tucked to chest
- Glove on ground
- Not catching the ball (block before catch)
- Chest tipped forward
- Shoulders over knees

Stance and Footwork Teaching Points

Primary Stance

- Weight on inside of feet
- Get low
- Wrap free hand thumb into grip, hide hand behind back

Secondary Stance (Runner on Base)

- Free hand thumb wrapped into grip approximately one ball length behind glove
- Feet slightly wider than primary
- Weight in the balls of the feet
- Drop right foot back (right toes to left heel staggered)

Pop ups Teaching Points

- Mask off
- Turn back to center field
- Find the ball
- Baseball will naturally have backspin on popup, bringing the ball back to the catcher

Calling Pitches Teaching Points

- Up on toes
- Flat back
- Glove hangs over knee
- Sign in middle of stance, tucked up as high as possible

Throwing to Second teaching Points

- Middle of right foot to heel of left foot towards second base (walking foot drill)

- (Exploding) right foot replaces left foot all in one motion left foot goes forward
- Don't stay too low, stand as tall as batter

Framing Pitches

- Read pitch first
- Receive ball towards the plate and deep into strike zone
- Allow enough time for umpire to consider his call but not too much time as to offend

Target inside or outside

- Give pitcher large target in area you want pitch to finish
- Allow pitch to cross plate and receive ball deep into strike zone

Rules

A. Infield Fly

Levels I, C & R

- Rule only applies when runners are occupying first and second base or if the bases are loaded.
- Teach the players to stay on their bases, even if it is dropped as the batter is out already (no force play)
- Be sure to teach your fielders what to do if the ball is dropped (no force play, so they must tag a runner)

B. Balk

Levels I, C & R

- Help define when you are a pitcher and when you are a fielder (when you step off the rubber backwards)
- You cannot fake a throw to first or third
- Hands high in the set position to avoid illegal shoulder movement
- Lefties need to know the 45 degree rule

C. Obstruction

Levels I, C, & R

- Teach the rule - obstruction occurs when a fielder who does not have the ball or is not making a play on the ball impedes the runner's progress.
- Teach infielders where to play when they do not have the ball (move away for the baselines and bases)
- Your catcher cannot block the plate without the ball. Teach him where to be when receiving the ball.

- Rundowns is another place to go through this

D. Interference

Levels I, C & R

- A runner or batter interferes with the defenders making a play is called interference
- Teach your runners to ensure they do not run into a fielder trying to make a play on the ball, even if he is in the baseline. The runner must go around the fielder.
- A runner can be hit by the ball if an infielder (not the pitcher) has already made an attempt on the ball. This is common with the SS and 3B positions.

