



5-Point Review of Baseball & Softball Skills



Throwing

- Grip the ball loosely with fingers “across the seams” (across the horseshoe) and thumb underneath the ball...this is for the best accuracy and velocity
- Rotate shoulders so that the non-throwing shoulder points toward the target
- Hold the ball high (hand above shoulder making an L) and have ball pointed away from the target. (Think: if a giant is standing behind you, hit him under the chin with the ball).
- Feet: “heel-to-heel.” If right handed, step with the left foot toward target, the heel on the right foot should move toward the left foot’s heel, and then step with the heel of the left foot moving toward the target and release the ball
- Follow through with entire body moving toward the target

Fielding Ground Balls

- Start in athletic position (feet - shoulder width apart), knees bent (not leaning over with a flat back!), hands out front toward the ball, and head up facing the ball
- Keep feet moving before the ball is hit (think baby steps toward the batter)
- When ball is hit move toward the ball and try to field ball in front of the body where the eyes can see the ball going into the glove with glove on the ground at about 45 degree angle to the field. (Glove is not between legs and under the body). Don’t wait for the ball to get to you.
- Throwing hand above the glove with palm facing down. This helps protect the face in case of a bad hop and helps be in position to retrieve the ball from the glove quickly. (looks like an alligator chomp)
- After the ball reaches glove, hand goes into glove to retrieve the ball, grip across the seams, and body then moves into throwing position

Catching Throws and Fly Balls

- Let’s break the ‘ball in the air’ into 2 categories
 - For a ball below the waist, have the player turn his/her glove palm up when moving the glove toward the ball. Once the ball hits the glove, using the throwing hand to “chomp” the ball with help them secure it.
 - For a ball above the waist and higher, the child should turn the glove fingers up to allow the ball to enter the glove. A similar “chomp” may be used to secure the ball.
 - For most Tee Ballers, you really need to work up to a ball high in the air. Always use Tee Balls or tennis balls at this age when training. One real baseball in the chops at this age can turn them away for weeks or months.
 - Early on, it’s best to roll or bounce the ball back to your Tee Baller.



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Hitting

- Grip: align the middle knuckles of the top and bottom hand (door knocking knuckles). Hold the bat firmly, but not tight!
- Stance: Have a balanced stance with the weight on the balls of your feet. Your weight should be shifted **slightly** to have more on your back leg than your front. The width of your stance should be slightly wider than shoulder width apart and you should have some flex in your knees. Try to work with a stance where you can see the ball coming from the pitcher with both eyes, typically with eyes level.
- Hands: Have your hands off your shoulder and at the top of the strike zone (about shoulder height). This puts your hands in the best starting position for swinging the bat. (Once the swing begins hands should always be coming down to the ball).
- Load and Stride: The load is a movement made by a hitter where they will turn and move back **slightly** prior to taking their stride. It's much easier to swing the bat and achieve better timing if you move back before going forward. The stride of the front foot (nearest pitcher) actually occurs before the actual swing. Stride **softly** to have foot plant all the way down and slightly open. Be balanced after your stride foot lands (weight equal between direction of catcher and pitcher).
- The swing: Hips start to rotate with the hands closer to the body than the barrel of the bat and the hands need to move the path of the barrel (like a ferris wheel) having the barrel enter the strike zone closer to the ground than the hands. A "squish the bug" action likely will happen with the back foot as the hands guide the bat toward the path of the pitch. The back foot may end up coming off the ground with an aggressive swing. Don't attempt to do so, however.
- Contact and follow through: Drive the bat through the ball. (Act like there are 2 baseballs right behind the ball you're hitting and you need to drive through all 3 to hit the ball hard. Try to continue to increase your bat speed during contact, don't stop the forward thrust on contact). Watch the ball to the point of contact and then keep your eyes on that point for a split second before you look up to see where it has gone.

Base Running

- To first base with a ball hit in the infield
 - Run straight toward the base touching the part of the base closest to home plate.
 - Run through the base (do not slow down as you approach the base, but slow down about 4-5 steps past the base).
 - Turn the head to the right to see if there is an overthrow.
- When on base, face the batter and start with the left foot on the base and the right foot towards the next base. Begin running with the left foot crossing over towards the next base.
- Rounding the base. Run hard toward the base and make a slight curve when about 8-10 feet from the base in order to touch the inside of the base (the part closest to the pitcher) without slowing down.

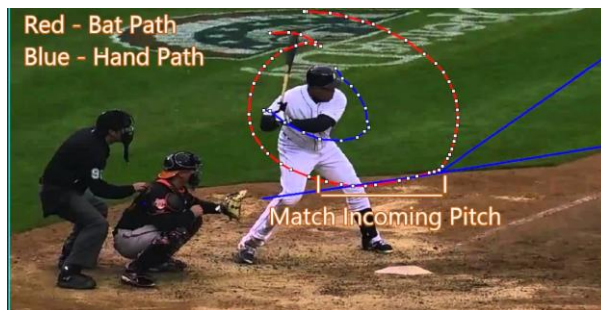
Diagrams

- Across the seams grip



- Side view of hitter

- Bat path



- Hands and feet positioning at contact with ball

