



U9C

2026 COACHES'

HANDBOOK



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INTRODUCTION

This U9 handbook was created with information from Softball Canada, Softball BC and Delta Fastpitch Executive Members. At the U9 age level, the goal is to continue to develop fundamental movement skills such as locomotion skills, object manipulation skills, and body management skills in a fun and safe softball environment that promotes self-confidence and player development.

If you have coaching questions or need support, please do not hesitate to reach out to:

- Shaun Dadd, Director of Coaching (coaching@deltafastpitch.com)
- Paula Kolisnek, Director of the House Program (houseprogram@deltafastpitch.com)
- Jordan Chambers or Stephanie Shardlow, U9 Coordinators (U9coordinator@deltafastpitch.com)

If your equipment or bases are missing or broken, contact:

- Jenine McLean and Chelsie Erickson, DFA's Equipment Managers (equipment@deltafastpitch.com)

U9 DIVISION GOALS

THE GOALS OF THE U9 DIVISION ARE TO:

- Create a fun environment for children and adults
- Develop fundamental motor skills, teach softball skills, and basic softball rules
- Experience success with an emphasis on good sportsmanship
- Promote and increase physical literacy
- Recruit new coaches and volunteers
- Increase parent participation at this level is highly encouraged

THE FOCUS OF THE U9 SEASON

The season is focussed on developing and introducing the fundamentals of softball:

- Fundamental Movement Skills
- Throwing
- Receiving
- Hitting
- Base running

Coaches are encouraged to be on the field when the team is both playing defensively and offensively for extra support.

U9 PROGRAM OVERVIEW

U9 AGE: 8 AND 9 YEAR OF AGE (GRADES 2 AND 3)

- Game/Practice days
- Four weeks of Jamboree practices and individual team practices
- April to May – games on Wednesdays from April – May 20, games on Mondays and Wednesdays from May 27 – June 17
- Delta Cup Double Header on June 21, 2026

Week	Monday	Wednesday	Sunday
Week 1 (March 30 - April 5)	-	Meet Your Team	No Jamboree - Easter
Week 2 (April 6 - 12)	-	Team Practice	Opening Day
Week 3 (April 13 - April 19)	-	Team Practice	Jamboree Practice
Week 4 (April 20 - April 26)	-	Game	Jamboree Practice
Week 5 (April 27 - May 3)	-	Game	Jamboree Practice
Week 6 (May 4 - May 10)	-	Game	Jamboree Practice
Week 7 (May 11 - 17)	-	Game	Jamboree Practice
Week 8 (May 18 - 24)	-	Game	Team Practice
Week 9 (May 25 - 31)	Game	Game	Team Practice
Week 10 (June 1 - June 7)	Game	Game	Team Practice
Week 11 (June 8 - 14)	Game	Game	Team Practice
Week 12 (June 15 - 21)	Game	Game	Delta Cup

PLAYING FIELDS:

- North - North Delta Park / Chalmers Park / Seaquam
- South - Hawthorne Park / Brandrith Park / Imperial Park / Port Guichon / Pebble Hill
- Occasional North-South crossover games

U9 INCLUDES:

- T-Shirt Jersey
- Team photo + player photo
- 1 game (parent umpire) + 1 practice per week for April until May 20
- 2 games (parent umpire) + 1 practice per week from May 27 to June 17
- Participation in community events (e.g., Opening Day and Delta Cup Double Header)
- Opportunities to attend Delta Fastpitch lead skills clinics for players and coaches
- Team equipment provided by Delta Fastpitch Association

U9 PLAYER EQUIPMENT

PLAYER EQUIPMENT REQUIRED:

- Glove
- Batting helmet with cage
- Cleats or running shoes
- Black softball pants (long or below knee)
- Softball socks
- Infield Face Mask (e.g., Game Face) for anyone playing the pitching position

OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT:

- Bat
- Batting Gloves
- Soft core ball (11 inch)

BAT SELECTION:

It is essential that each player selects a bat that fits their unique body configuration and skill level. The player must be able to cover the entire strike zone with the bat (length) but must be able to control the bat (weight) to produce an efficient swing. Generally speaking, the lighter the bat, the faster it can be swung and the shorter the bat, the easier to control. Many mechanical issues seen in children's swings are due to using a bat that is either too heavy or too long for that player.

COACHING REQUIREMENTS

ALL U9 COACHES MUST:

- ❑ Have a [Softball BC #](#)
- ❑ Complete and pass a Criminal Record Check
- ❑ Arrive 20 minutes early to Jamborees for debriefing with Jamboree Coordinator
- ❑ Arrive early to set up fields for practices and games
- ❑ Create a fun and positive environment for all players
- ❑ Focus is on skill development and FUN, not winning
- ❑ Complete a player evaluation card for each player on team at the end of the season
- ❑ Submit the completed player evaluation card to Director of Grassroots Development

OPTIONAL COURSES:

- ❑ Complete [Softball Canada Foundations of Coaching Softball Part 1](#) (E-Learning \$10)
- ❑ Complete [Softball Canada Foundations of Coaching Softball Part 2](#) (E-Learning \$15)

U9 DIVISION RULES

- Must wear full uniform to all games and practices
- Must bring all needed equipment to practice and games
- Arrive 15 minutes early to practice and games
- Come with positive attitude
- Have FUN!!!

U9 GAME RULES

- General rules of softball should be followed.
- Bases positioned 45 feet from home plate.
- Pitching mound is positioned 30 feet from home plate.
- Use 11 inch soft core ball.
- All batters will wear a batting helmet with cage with strap done up while at bat and on base.
- Offensive and defensive coaches permitted on the playing field to assist players.
- The batting order should be shuffled every games so a different player leads off each game
- No players should sit or play the same position more than two consecutive innings.
- Score and standing will not be kept as emphasis is on player and team skill development.

SPECIAL OPERATING RULES

Softball BC has a set of special operating rules that are used for games played in British Columbia – these are located in the [2025 Softball BC Handbook](#). U9 teams will follow these special operating rules (see page 36) for the 2025 Season.

DFA has the ability to modify the special operating rules to meet the needs of players / teams. For example, the modified rules say that teams should not have more than 8-9 players; however, DFA teams may be larger due to the way we form teams at this age group (by school and friend request). Coordinators will schedule a ZOOM meeting with coaches before game play begins to confirm the rules with everyone.

DFA PITCHING CLUB

DFA is planning to introduce pitching to the game in June. This will be an opportunity for pitchers who have been participating in DFA's Pitching Club to try out their new skill! It will also help to better transition players to full pitching in U11. More information about the DFA Pitching Club to follow.

U9 PLAYER OBJECTIVES

BY THE END OF THE SEASON PLAYERS SHOULD BE ABLE TO:

- Throw accurately to a 3 foot diameter target
- Play something that resembles catch with an adult
- Hit off a coaches pitch 3 out of 5 pitches
- Demonstrate how to catch a fly ball
- Know where all the positions are on the field and where to position themselves defensively
- Understand and demonstrate when to run through 1st and when to round 1st
- Understand calls on a batter (strikes, balls, foul)
- Understand how outs are made
- Understands and demonstrates where to throw the ball to get the lead runner out
- Understand the difference of force and tag
- General understanding of pitching and catching roles

ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT MATRIX

Softball Canada's [Athlete Development Matrix \(ADM\)](#) is an outline of the skills and attributes of athletes progressing through each stage of development to provide the greatest probability of success to the individual as they mature - not just with athletic success but also participation for health and social benefits. Softball Canada's ADM is a document to help guide coaches and steer the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) content. It lays out in great detail what a player should be able to do at each stage of their Long-Term Athlete Development. Softball's ADM tries to ensure that players do not miss critical skills early in learning the game –therefore leading to more successful softball development.

SKILLS PROGRESSION

THROWING

Glove – hand transfer, load, stride, rotation, release, extension and follow through. Key points: make sure our belly button is not facing target, elbow high, ball facing back and full follow through.

CATCHING AND FIELDING

Alligator catch for grounders. For fly balls and catch we want them to have glove up with thumb pointing down. This helps prevent the ball from rolling out of the glove.

HITTING

When holding the bat, hands together, get players to stick out their index fingers (cricket antennas) we want the antennas to be in line with one another, if they aren't we need to adjust our grip. Put antennas away and bring hands (cricket) up to ears so we can hear them. Very important NO ELBOW UP!!! We want to see a power V. A nice wide stance, knees bent, front leg slightly behind the T. Weight on back leg. For the swing we want them to have their belly button away from pitcher then as they swing show the pitcher your belly button while drop, lock front leg and drive with back leg, no stride. Very important to always reinforce players to have eye on the ball.

BASE RUNNING

When running to first really emphasize not slowing down and running all the way through, touching the orange and then turning to their right.

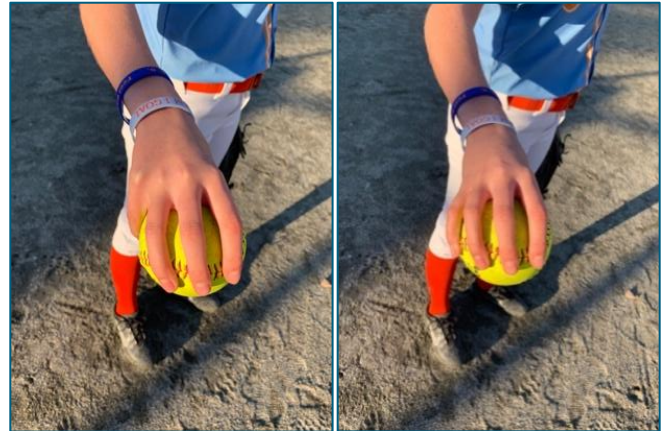
When running the bases in drills it is helpful to place a cone 3/4 of the way between bases to get players to bubble out before the base (rather than making a 90 degree turn at each base) outside foot steps on inside corner of base.

When setting up to run to the next base have players place their left foot against the edge of the base and their right foot back getting ready to run.

THROWING

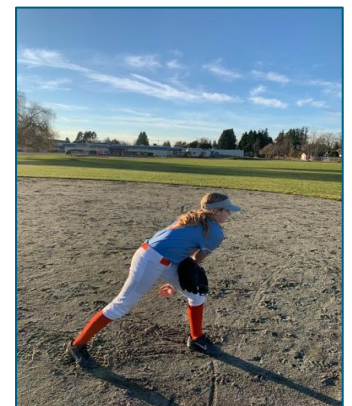
GRIP

3 or 4 finger grips can be used (depends on ball/hand size). Grip the ball across the seams with the knuckles closest to the finger tips. The ball should be touching the fingertips and not the palm of your hand. This allows for the fingertips to be the last point of contact and by pulling down across the seams during release produces a backspin on the ball.



PHASES OF OVERHAND THROW

- Glove – Hand Transfer – Transfer the ball from the glove to hand in front of the chest or middle of the body. This allows both arms to get into a good position to throw.
- Load – Ensure throwing elbow is high and ball is facing back. Shift weight to back foot.
- Stride – Stride directly toward target with foot opposite the throwing arm, landing in a slightly closed 45°.
- Rotation – Rotate back hip first, then trunk, and shoulders so weight is driven off back foot and transferred onto front foot. Rotation should not start until stride foot is planted. Bring throwing arm forward and straight over top as weight is being transferred.
- Release – Extend throwing elbow, wrist, and fingers toward target. The direction the palm of throwing hand faces at release is the direction the ball will travel. Release ball at high five position, wrist snap to create reverse spin on the ball.
- Extension/Follow Through – Throwing arm continues down to opposite hip. Continue rotation until throwing shoulder is pointing at target. Back leg naturally pulled forward with momentum.



CATCHING AND FIELDING

CATCHING SEQUENCE

- Get in an athletic position, bend your knees, a little flexed at the waist so you can move.
- Hold the glove open in front of the chest with the palm facing the thrower
- After the ball is released, move the body in line with the thrown ball
- Adjust the glove position depending on the location of the throw: If the ball is above the waist, fingers of the glove point up; If the ball is below the waist, fingers of the glove point down
- Watch the ball into the glove
- Catch the ball in the pocket of the glove, not the fingers
- Squeeze the glove closed and cover the glove with the throwing hand
- As the ball enters the glove 'give' with the hands and arms to cushion its impact and draw the ball and glove towards the body
- Take the glove and ball to the throwing shoulder as the throwing hand reaches into the glove to grip the ball ready to throw



CATCHING AND FIELDING

(continued)

FIELDING GROUNDERS

Body position

- Have the feet slightly wider than shoulder width apart
- Weight is forward, but spread along the inside part of the balls of the feet
- Bend the knees with the bottom low to the ground (like sitting on a milk crate)
- Keep the head up with eyes focused on the batter
- Keep the upper body relaxed

Hand position

- Keep the hands low
- Glove touching the ground
- Have the elbows out in front of the knees and not locked in

Fielding Sequence

- Move behind the path of the ball and set feet slightly wider than shoulder width apart
- Bend the knees and lean from the waist with the weight on the inside part of the balls of the feet
- Lean forward from the waist so that the glove touches the ground in front of the body. (Players should be able to see their elbows)
- Hold the glove wide open facing the ball with the fingers of the glove pointing down
- The throwing hand is close to and beside the glove
- Watch the middle of the ball into the glove
- Close the glove and cover it with the throwing hand to secure the ball firmly
- In one continuous motion grip the ball and transfer the glove and ball to the throwing shoulder ready to throw



CATCHING AND FIELDING

(continued)

FIELDING FLY BALLS

Body position

- Have the feet shoulder width apart
- The body is more upright for outfielders than for infielders (knees are bent less and hands are further from the ground)
- Keep the head up with eyes focused on the batter
- Keep the upper body relaxed

Body movement

- Run to get under the ball as quickly as possible
- If the ball is hit beyond the fielder avoid running backwards to get to the ball
- If the ball is hit to the left turn to the left to get to the ball
- If the ball is hit to the right turn to the right to get to the ball

Fielding sequence

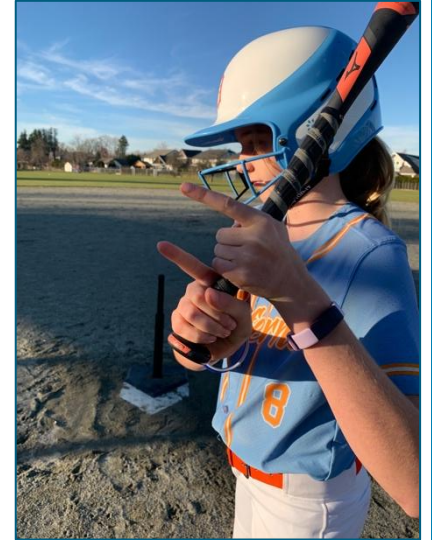
- Move feet and body under the ball
- Hands are above the head and in front of the line of the body
- Hold the glove wide open facing the ball with the fingers of the glove pointing up
- The throwing hand is close to and beside the glove to secure the ball
- Watch the middle of the ball into the glove
- On impact close the glove and cover it with the throwing hand to secure the ball
- Let hands and arms give to soften the impact as the catch is made
- Bring the glove to the throwing shoulder ready to throw



HITTING

BAT GRIP

Hold the bat in the fingers and not the palms. Grip the bat firmly enough that the player can control the bat but loose enough to maintain wrist mobility. Align the middle knuckles (the door knocking knuckles) which will pull the wrist in a more efficient position to apply leverage. A good way for young children to test that the correct knuckles are aligned is to have them lift up both pointer fingers (cricket antennae) the antennae should be parallel to each other.



BATTER'S STANCE



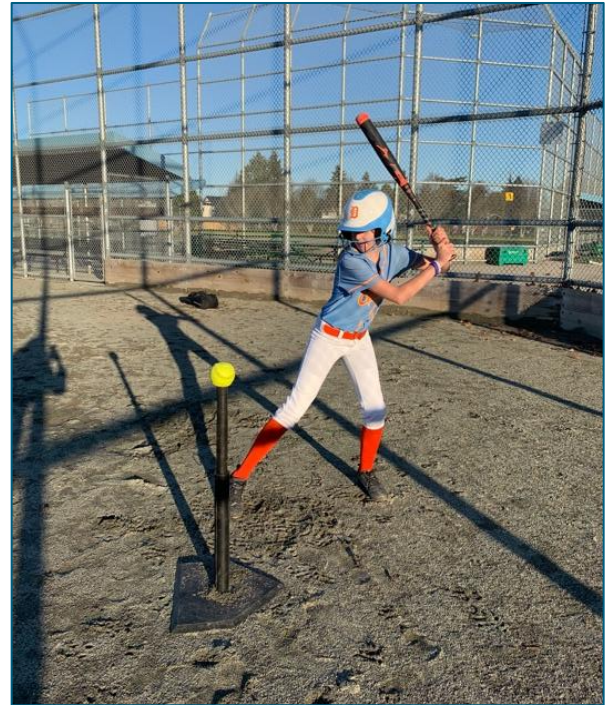
Both feet point towards plate or slightly toed in. Feet are outside the shoulders, knees slightly bent. Comfortable and balanced. Slight bend forward in hips. Shoulders and arms are relaxed. 3 power "V's" front arm and back arm make a power V and between below the grip is an inverted power V. ***No elbow up*** Knuckles should be close to ear so you can hear the cricket.

HITTING

(continued)

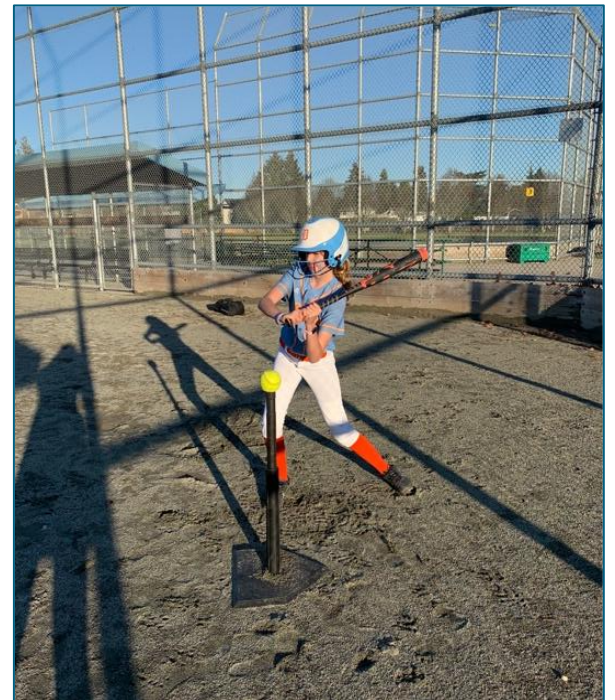
BATTER'S LOAD

The goal is to have a powerful load for more power. Shift the weight to the back foot. As the weight is shifted the front heel will slightly lift. Back knee stays flexed. The hips, shoulders and head should remain level to their original starting position. Eyes focus on the ball. There should be no shoulder turn with this move. Elbows should remain relaxed and remain the power V position.



BATTER'S LAUNCH

Previously referred to as the stride it may no longer involve a stride but rather a front foot heel drop. There are 2 approaches. First is a short stride 2-4 inches towards the pitcher or back and replace where you move the front foot back or straight up and return to original position. Regardless of the approach, the feet should be about one and a half shoulder widths apart prior to initiating the trigger and swing. The head may move slightly forward with the stride but must not change height. The hands and bat should remain back and relatively still in this phase.



HITTING

(continued)

BATTER'S SWING

This is the time period of the swing that **starts** immediately after the trigger (front heel down). It involves transferring weight from back to front foot while moving the bat from a stationary position to make contact with the ball. Back knee turns inward and drives toward the pitcher. Hips slide linearly towards the pitcher but do not initially rotate (they stay closed). Hands (bat continue to stay up and back in their original launch position. Back hip followed by torso will rotate to start the swing. The batter's elbow will remain flexed at the beginning of swing, only extending to and through the point of contact. The last action before contact is wrist extension.



SWING – Contact

The top hand will be facing up and the bottom hand will be facing down. Batters head, back shoulder, hip and knee line up when viewed from the side. Arms have not yet fully extended. Majority of batters weight should be on a unlocked front leg with an upright solid core.



SWING – Extension

After contact the swing continues out to point at the pitcher. The full wrist and arm extension will have the top hand still facing up.



SWING – Follow Through

Following extension swing should still continue to go all the way back. A poor follow through can indicate that a hitter failed to fully generate enough power in their swing and most likely did not extend their arms through contact.

BASE RUNNING

RUNNING THROUGH FIRST BASE

- Take the first step with the back foot (the one farthest from the pitcher)
- Initially take short wide steps to gain power and momentum
- Lengthen the stride and pump the arms to maximise speed for running to 1st Base
- Run in foul territory between the baseline and the three-foot line
- Continue running straight down the line and contact the base at top speed
- Don't break stride when contacting the base
- Focus on the base (do not watch the ball)
- Run all the way through the base, **DO NOT STOP** at contact
- As speed is reduced glance left and/or right to look for the outcome of the play
- Once coming to a stop, pivot towards the infield to the left, toward the field of play, without making any attempt to go to 2nd Base
- Go directly back to the base in fair territory **NOT** the safety base
- Never slide into 1st Base



BASE RUNNING

(continued)

ROUNDING FIRST BASE

- Run just outside of an imaginary line directly between the two bases
- Make a short bubble out to the right before reaching the base (you can use a cone to help players)
- Maintain an even stride and try to contact the inside corner of the base with your outside (right) foot
- Lean into the infield and turn the shoulders as the base is touched to achieve a sharp turn to the next base



ROLLING START

When getting ready to run have player start with their left foot against the edge of the base and their right foot behind. Knees are bent and body is low with a forward lean, body is facing directly towards the next base. Once the ball is hit the players can then leave the base (lead offs not allowed until U12)



PITCHING

PRE- MOTIONS AND START

- Pitchers must walk to the rubber with the ball visible to the batter.
- Once on the rubber the pitcher must then hold the ball in the glove before delivery. This is good time to take 1-2 deep breaths.
- While the ball is in the glove pitchers should grip the ball properly (same as throwing).
- One foot must be in contact with the rubber at the start of the pitch.



PUMP

- Weight is transferred back on to the stride leg.
- Glove and pitching hand extend down as the body moves over the front leg and into a sprint position.
- In this position the weight is loaded onto the front leg.
- Glove and pitching arm can both swing back or pull into the middle of the body or slightly towards the throwing side.



PITCHING

(continued)

STRIDE

- Take an explosive stride straight towards the catcher by driving the stride leg up and out with the glove arm and pitching arm.
- Accompany the stride with a hard push off the plate by the back (pivot) foot .
- During the stride the pitching arm reaches the top of the arm circle (above your head) and the back foot pivots allowing the hips and shoulders to rotate away from the batter.
- Point the toes of the stride foot almost towards the catcher (45 degree tolerance).
- The back leg continues to maintain weight as it drives forward off the rubber.
- The body moves from a forward lean (pump) to an upright or very slightly back.
- Arm must stay in front of the pitcher with the ball facing the batter.
- Glove should be pointing at target and parallel to the ground.



WINDMILL

- At this stage the pitching arm has come from above the head and is well on the way down with the ball still facing the batter and the wrist cocked, it should be pulled tight into the body.
- At this point ensure that the shoulders are back in line with the hips. This is achieved by ensuring the glove arm remains at shoulder height and out in front of the body while pointing to the target.
- The hips and the shoulders remain open with the glove arm coming down, snap the wrist alongside the thigh region to release the ball.
- It is important to keep the pitching shoulder back during release.



PITCHING

(continued)

RELEASE

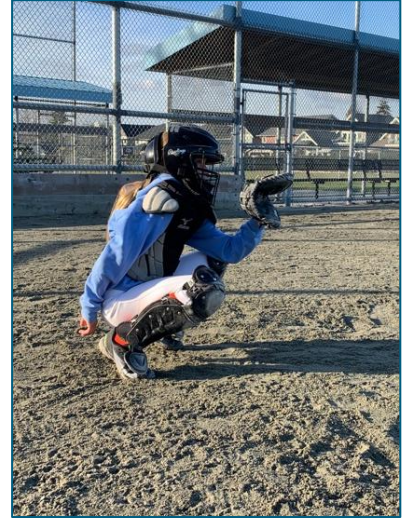
- Allow the pitching arm to continue forward naturally, batter should see the back of your hand.
- Allow the back (pivot) foot to come forward naturally to a position parallel with the stride foot.
- The body should be well forward with the weight over the toes and distributed evenly on both feet.



CATCHER

STANCE

- Wait for the batter to set up
- Set up about one bat length behind the back foot of the batter and directly behind home plate
- Squat like a frog
- Trunk is forward
- Weight is on the inside part of the balls of the feet
- Glove is in front of the body
- Throwing hand is hidden behind the back (experienced players) or behind the glove (beginners).



RECEIVING THE BALL

- Knees and shoulders are square to the pitcher
- Do not reach for the ball
- Catch the ball in the centre of the body
- Catch the ball out in front of the body
- Watch the ball into the glove
- 'Give' with the arms on impact
- Stay low so not in way of umpire

CATCHER

(continued)

BLOCKING

- Keep the eyes on the ball
- Directly face the ball
- Bend the upper body slightly over the ball
- Place the glove between the knees
- Drop the knees to the ground as the ball is about to reach the glove



THROWING THE BALL

- Pop up and move the feet to turn the shoulders in line with the pitcher with the weight shifted to the inside of the back or throwing side foot.
- Move the glove hand (with ball) back to the throwing side shoulder while reaching into the glove with the throwing hand to grip the ball.
- Then continue as a normal throw.

SLIDING

- Players should start the slide about one and a half body lengths from the base, depending on their weight, running speed and ground conditions
- Have players sit down from a standing position
- They will naturally tuck one leg underneath the other
- The leg that is tucked under is their natural sliding leg
- Emphasise to players that sliding is a natural motion
- The sliding leg is bent at about 90° and tucked under the other leg, which is extended over the top
- Weight is well back and on the side of the sliding leg
- Chin is tucked to the chest
- Hands and arms are raised above the head to prevent the head hitting the ground. (Hands should stay clean)
- The extended leg is slightly bent and foot is kept off the ground approximately 10-15cm with toe pointed up (although not vertical)
- Base is contacted with the extended leg
- As the base is contacted with the extended leg, the upper body lays back
- The back and side of the player's uniform should get dirty
- Players should stay alert for the outcome of play and pop back up on their feet ready to run



TEE PLACEMENT

TEE PLACEMENT

The Tee should be placed slightly ahead of home plate to allow the batter to make contact with the ball in front. The batter should set up so that their front foot is slightly behind the Tee. The Tee should be at belly button height.



PITCHING MACHINE SET UP AND PLACEMENT

- Place pitching machine on the mound so that where the ball is placed is at a 30-foot distance.
- Ensure the three different settings are set at *Power Pedal 3, Release Arm 4 + Micro Adjustment 3* (this may have to be adjusted depending on the balls in use, start with the micro adjustment first).
- Aim the pitching machine in small adjustments (small movements can make large changes at the plate).
- Have a few of the same ball that will be used.
- Pull Throwing Arm back and pull the release lever back to engage.
- Place ball on the Throwing Arm, see the “C” with the seams.
- Press the foot peddle down with even weight across the peddle.



- Put your left hand up in the air as an indicator as to when you will be releasing the ball using the release lever with your right hand.
- Lower your hand as you pull the release handle with a smooth motion, do not jerk.

U9 PLAYER EVALUATION CARD

Player's Full Name:			
First Year or Second Year Player:			
Positions Played:			
Fundamental Skills (check score that applies for each skill)	1	2	3
Throw accurately to a 3 foot diameter target			
Play something that resembles catch with an adult			
Hit off a coaches' pitch 3 out of 5 pitches			
Demonstrate how to catch a fly ball			
Identify all positions on the field and where to position themselves defensively			
Understand and demonstrate when to run through 1st and when to round 1st			
Understand calls on a batter (strikes, balls, foul)			
Understand how outs are made			
Understands and demonstrates where to throw the ball to get lead runner out			
Understand the difference of force and tag			
General understanding of pitching and catching roles			

Scores:

- 1 – Player has not mastered this skill
- 2 – Player has somewhat mastered this skill
- 3 – Player has mastered this skill

Notes/Comments:

JAMBOREE PRACTICE PLANS

U9 Jamboee Practice Plan 1 - April 19

U9 Jamboee Practice Plan 2 - April 26

U9 Jamboee Practice Plan 3 - May 3

U9 Jamboee Practice Plan 4 - May 10

U9 Jamboee Practice Plan 5 - May 17