



Aston Valley Baseball League Coaches Handbook

Introduction

Congratulations on being selected as a coach or manager of Aston Valley Baseball League! AVBL is one of the premier baseball programs in Delaware County as well as in Pennsylvania. If you are a new coach or manager, welcome! If you are a veteran coach, you are already aware of the dedication required to manage a team and teach children the game of baseball.

The goal of this handbook is to share information with all the coaches throughout the AVBL organization. By doing this, we hope to assist new coaches to become more comfortable and confident in their abilities to teach and deal with team needs as well as to help the veteran coaches improve their skills and make all their kids better baseball players and better citizens.

For this handbook to be a success, we ask that you give us your input as to what should be present in this manual. If you have new drills or a better lineup sheet or plans to make a teaching aid, we can add it to the book for the benefit of everyone in the organization. By making this handbook able to grow and expand, we can continue to give all the coaches the tools they need to do their jobs and allow all 700 boys and girls in AVBL to benefit from their coaching knowledge. By sharing information with other coaches, you not only help them to become better teachers, but you can also benefit from others' knowledge about how to better your team and better yourself.

This handbook is a compilation of drills gathered from various sources. Coaches have submitted drills and some were taken from several sites on the Internet. In the back of the book is a sample of the site called WebBall, which deals with all aspects of baseball. Some information throughout the book can be used for kids young and old alike, while other information is for older players alone. Let us know what you think about the drills and different sections of this book so we can make it better.

Part 1 – The League

AVBL is part of Babe Ruth Baseball. Children are divided into divisions based on age. Divisions include T-Ball for ages 5-6, Rookie for ages 7-8, Minor for ages 9-10, Major for ages 11-12, Teener for ages 13-15, and Senior Babe Ruth for ages 16-18. As a sanctioned Babe Ruth League, AVBL follows Babe Ruth rules, but also has its own set of rules which are included in this handbook. As a manager, you are expected to know the rules of your division and follow them accordingly.

The lower leagues of AVBL play their games at Weir Park, located on Weir Road in Aston. There are four fields at Weir; the T-Ball field, Rick Owsley Field (where the Rookie League plays their games), the Minor League Field and Cage Field for the Major League. One of the biggest duties the league has is the upkeep and continual improvements of the fields. As managers, you should expect to give some time and encourage all parents on your team to give some of their time to improving the fields our children play on. Only with everyone's help will our field complex continue to be one of the best in Delaware County.

The motto of AVBL is simply "Making Better Citizens". A simple motto to follow but very complicated when you try to put it into practice. AVBL is a baseball organization, but if given the proper guidance and example, the 700+ children will take something else with them after their playing days are over. As coaches, you can be a great influence on the kids from your team as well as children on other teams. If we teach them how to win well, lose well, and use their heads well, we will have accomplished much more than winning games or championships, or just being a great coach.

Aston Valley Baseball League, in its rules has a coaches code of conduct. This is here to inform us that we are role models for our kids and should behave as such. By being a coach, we have the task not only of teaching baseball but also proper behavior and good sportsmanship. We have to balance these things with coaching and playing to win. The playoff system has been changed to allow more teams to make the playoffs every year, thus taking the pressure off each manager to make sure he wins as many games as possible. This will enable more coaches to teach more and develop players throughout the year and get their teams ready for the playoffs.

Section 2 contains the Aston Valley Baseball League Rule Book. Each coach should become familiar with the rules in his/her particular league so each team will be better prepared when it comes game time. The rule book will continue to change every year as rules are added or amended.

The Coaching Primer:

The new coach at AVBL may start out with the knowledge that he played youth league baseball, maybe played a little in high school or college, or maybe just played sandlot ball in the neighborhood. He may also think that he has watched baseball for years on TV and has a good understanding of the game. You may also think how much more you know than the other coaches you saw until you sit down and actually realize that now you have to be the coach and teach others how to play. You may then question how much you really know about the game and whether the knowledge you have is correct. Many first time coaches may feel intimidated because he may not know all there is to know about baseball.

This is where the AVBL Coach's Handbook comes in handy. While you will probably not find a Yogi Berra or Tom Lasorda coaching at Weir Park, you will find a

large group of people dedicated to making their children's baseball experience both educational and fun. AVBL has coaches and managers that have played in the majors, in college, in high school, in youth league, and on the sandlot. Just by committing to be the coach, you are as valuable as Lasorda was to the Dodgers. It may take a while to become comfortable with your knowledge of baseball, but remember, you are teaching kids who have not been around the game as much as you have.

Growing up playing baseball and listening to others tell you how the game is played has created some confusion on some rules of the game. Many times during games there are always questions as to what the proper rule is. When the discussion starts, each person may have a different view based on how they used to play growing up. While this is not the official rule book of Babe Ruth Baseball, Major League Baseball, or Aston Valley Baseball, it does contain some valuable information. Of course, the umpire should only be informed of the rules, never challenged on a judgment call during a game.

Many of these statements may sound familiar to you. You may have heard them growing up playing ball. You may have been told them by a coach. All of the statements contain many fallacies which all of have heard at some point in our lives. The list below followed by the official rule explanations point out some of those fallacies.

ALL of the following statements are **FALSE**.

1. The hands are considered part of the bat.
The hands are part of a person's body. If a pitch hits the batter's hands the ball is dead; if he swung at the pitch, a strike is called (NOT a foul). If he was avoiding the pitch, he is awarded first base.
2. The batter-runner must turn to his right after over-running first base.
The batter-runner may turn left or right, provided that if he turns left he does not make an attempt to advance. An attempt is a judgment made by the umpire. The requirement is that the runner must immediately return to first after overrunning or over-sliding it.
3. If the batter breaks his wrists when swinging, it's a strike.
A strike is a judgment by the umpire as to whether the batter attempted to strike the ball. Breaking the wrists, or the barrel of the bat crossing the plate are simply guides to making the judgment of an attempt, these are not rules.
4. If a batted ball hits the plate first it's a foul ball.
The plate is in fair territory. There is nothing special about it. If a batted ball hits it, it is treated like any other batted ball.

5. The batter cannot be called out for interference if he is in the batter's box.
The batter's box is not a safety zone. A batter could be called out for interference if the umpire judges that interference could or should have been avoided.
6. The ball is dead on a foul-tip.
There is nothing foul about a foul-tip. If the ball nicks the bat and goes sharp and direct to the catcher's hand or glove and is caught, this is a foul-tip by definition. A foul-tip is a strike and the ball is alive. It is the same as a swing-and-miss. If the ball is not caught, it is a foul ball. If the nicked pitch first hits the catcher somewhere other than the hand or glove, it is not a foul-tip, it is a foul ball.
7. The batter may not switch batter's boxes after two strikes.
The batter can switch boxes at any time, provided he does not do it after the pitcher is ready to pitch.
8. The batter who batted out of order is the person declared out.
The PROPER batter is the one called out. Any hit or advance made by the batter or runners due to the hit, walk, error or other reason is nullified. The next batter is the one who follows the proper batter who was called out.
9. The batter may not overrun first base when he gets a base-on-balls.
A batter-runner must immediately return after overrunning first base. It doesn't state any exceptions as to how the player became a runner. It could be a hit, walk, error or dropped third strike.
10. The batter is out if he starts for the dugout before going to first after a dropped third strike.
The batter may attempt first base anytime prior to entering the dugout or a dead ball area.
11. If the batter does not pull the bat out of the strike zone while in the bunting position, it's an automatic strike.
A strike is an attempt to hit the ball. Simply holding the bat over the plate is not an attempt. This is umpire judgment.
12. The batter is out if a bunted ball hits the ground and bounces back up and hits the bat while the batter is holding the bat.
The rule says the BAT cannot hit the ball a second time. When the BAL hits the bat, it is not an out.
13. The batter is out if his foot touches the plate.
To be out the batter's foot must be ENTIRELY outside the box when he contacts the pitch. There is no statement about touching the plate. The toe could be on the plate and the heel could be touching the line of the box, which means the foot is not entirely outside the box.

14. The batter-runner is always out if he runs outside the running lane after a bunted ball.
The runner must be out of the box AND cause interference. He is not out simply for being outside the lane. He could be called for interference even while in the lane. This is a judgment call.
15. A runner is out if he slaps hands or high-fives other players, after a homerun is hit over the fence.
The ball is dead on a homerun over the fence. You can't be put out while the ball is dead except when you pass another runner.
16. Tie goes to the runner.
There is no such thing in the world of umpiring. The runner is either out or safe.
17. The runner gets the base he's going to, plus one on a ball thrown out-of-play.
When a fielder other than the pitcher throws the ball into dead ball area, the award is 2 bases. The award is from where the runners were at the time of the pitch if it is the first play by an infielder before all runners have advanced or from where each runner was physically positioned at the time the ball left the throwers hand on all other plays.
18. Anytime a coach touches a runner, the runner is out.
The runner is out if the coach PHYSICALLY ASSISTS the runner. Hand slaps, back pats or simple touches are not physical assists.
19. Runners may never run the bases in reverse order.
In order to correct a base running mistake, the runner MUST retrace his steps and retouch the bases in reverse order. The only time a runner is out for running in reverse, is when he is making a travesty of the game or tries to confuse the defense.
20. The runner must always slide when the play is close.
There is no "must slide" rule. When the fielder has the ball in possession, the runner has two choices; slide OR attempt to get around the fielder. He may NOT deliberately or maliciously contact the fielder, but he is NOT required to slide.
21. The runner is always safe when hit by a batted ball while touching a base.
The bases are in fair territory. A runner is out when hit by a fair batted ball, except an infield-fly.
22. A runner may not steal on a foul-tip.
There is nothing foul about a foul-tip. If the ball nicks the bat and goes to the catcher's glove and is caught, this is a foul-tip by definition. A foul-tip is a strike and the ball is alive. It is the same as a swing-and-miss. If the ball is not caught, it is a foul ball.

23. It is a force out when a runner is called out for not tagging up on a fly ball.
A force play is when a runner is forced to advance because the batter became a runner. When the batter is out on a caught fly, all forces are removed. An out on a failure to tag-up, is NOT a force out. Any runs that cross the plate before this out will count.
24. An appeal on a runner who missed a base cannot be a force out.
A runner must touch all the bases. If the runner misses a base to which he was forced because the batter became a runner and is put out before touching that base, the out is still a force play. If this is the third out, no runs may score. The base can be touched or the runner can be touched, either way it's a force out.
25. A runner is out if he runs out of the baseline to avoid a fielder who is fielding a batted ball.
The runner MUST avoid a fielder attempting to field a BATTED ball. A runner is out for running out of the baseline, only when attempting to avoid a tag.
26. Runners may not advance when an infield fly is called.
An Infield-fly is no different than any other fly ball in regard to the runners. The only difference is that they are never forced to advance because the batter is out whether the ball is caught or not.
27. No run can score when a runner is called out for the third out for not tagging up.
Yes it can. This is not a force play. A force play is when a runner is forced to advance because the batter became a runner. When the batter is out on a caught fly, all forces are removed. An out on a failure to tag-up, is NOT a force out. Any runs that cross the plate before this out will count.
28. A pitch that bounces to the plate cannot be hit.
A pitch is a ball delivered to the batter by the pitcher. It doesn't matter how it gets to the batter. The batter may hit any pitch that is thrown.
29. The batter does not get first base if hit by a pitch after it bounces.
A pitch is a ball delivered to the batter by the pitcher. It doesn't matter how it gets to the batter. If the batter is hit by a pitch while attempting to avoid it, he is awarded first base.
30. If a fielder holds a fly ball for 2 seconds it's a catch.
A catch is legal when the umpire judges that the fielder has COMPLETE control of the ball. The release of the ball must be voluntary and intentional.
31. You must tag the base with your foot on a force out or appeal.
You can tag a base with ANY part of the body.

32. The ball is always immediately dead on a balk.
In Federation rules it is, not in any others. If a throw or pitch is made after the balk call, the ball is delayed dead. At the end of the play the balk may be enforced or not depending on what happened. On a throw; if ALL runners advance on the play, the balk is ignored. If not, the balk award is enforced from the time of pitch. On a pitch; if ALL runners INCLUDING the batter, advance on the play, the balk is ignored. Otherwise, it is no-pitch and the balk award is made from the time of the pitch.
33. If a player's feet are in fair territory when the ball is touched, it is a fair ball.
The position of the player's feet or any other part of the body is irrelevant. A ball is judged fair or foul based on the relationship between the ball and the ground at the time the ball is touched.
34. The ball must always be returned to the pitcher before an appeal can be made.
An appeal may be made anytime the ball is alive. The only time the ball must go to the pitcher, is when time is out. The ball cannot be made live until the pitcher has the ball while on the rubber and the umpire says "Play". If time is not out, the appeal can be made immediately.
35. With no runners on base, it is a ball if the pitcher starts his windup and then stops.
A pitch is a ball delivered to the batter by the pitcher. If the ball is not delivered, it is not a pitch. If this happens with runners on base it is a balk.
36. The pitcher must come to a set position before a pick-off throw.
The pitcher is required to come to a complete stop in the Set position before delivering the pitch, not before making a throw.
37. The pitcher must step off the rubber before a pick-off throw.
If the pitcher steps off the rubber he is no longer the pitcher, he is a fielder. He can throw to a base from the rubber.
38. If a fielder catches a fly ball and then falls over the fence it is a homerun.
As long as the fielder is not touching the ground in dead ball territory when he catches the ball, it is a legal catch if he holds onto the ball and meets the definition of a catch. If the catch is not the third out and the fielder falls down in dead ball territory, all runners are awarded one base. If the fielder remains on his feet in dead ball territory after the catch, the ball is alive and he may make a play.
39. The ball is dead anytime an umpire is hit by the ball.
If an umpire is hit by a batted ball before it passes a fielder, the ball is dead. On any other batted or thrown ball, the ball is alive when the umpire is hit with the ball. Umpire interference also occurs when the plate umpire interferes with the catcher's attempt to prevent a stolen base.

40. The home plate umpire can overrule the other umps at anytime.
The umpire who made a call or ruling may ask for help if he wishes. No umpire may overrule another umpire's call.

The Baseball Primer - Objectives of the Game

Baseball is a game between two teams of nine players each, played on an enclosed field.

THE PLAYING FIELD The field shall be laid out according to the instructions below;

The infield shall be a 90-foot square. (Youth leagues use a 60-foot square.) The outfield shall be the area between two foul lines formed by extending two sides of the square from home plate. The distance from home base to the nearest fence, stand or other obstruction on fair territory shall be 250 feet or more. A distance of 320 feet or more along the foul lines, and 400 feet or more to center field is preferable. The infield shall be graded so that the base lines and home plate are level. The pitcher's plate shall be 10 inches above the level of home plate and 60 feet 6 inches from home plate (Youth leagues use 46 feet.) The degree of slope from a point 6 inches in front of the pitcher's plate to a point 6 feet toward home plate shall be 1 inch to 1 foot, and such degree of slope shall be uniform. The infield and outfield, including the boundary lines, are fair territory and all other area is foul territory.

The ball is a sphere formed by yarn wound around a small core of cork, rubber or similar material, covered with two stripes of white horsehide or cowhide, tightly stitched together. It weighs 5 1/4 ounces avoirdupois and is 9 1/4 inches in circumference.

The bat is a smooth, round stick not more than 2 3/4 inches in diameter at the thickest part and not more than 42 inches in length. The most common length used is 35 inches.

Each fielder, may use or wear a leather glove. A FIELDER is any defensive player.

The objective of each team is to win by scoring more runs than the opponent.

A RUN (or SCORE) is the score made by an offensive player who advances from batter to runner and touches first, second, third and home bases in that order. The order of the bases is in a counter-clockwise direction around the square from home to first, etc.

A BATTER is an offensive player who takes his position in the batter's box and attempts to hit a ball thrown to him by the pitcher.

A PITCHER is the fielder designated to deliver the pitch to the batter. The pitcher pitches the ball to the batter and the batter attempts to hit the pitch and become a runner. The defense attempts to catch the ball after it is hit and put the batter and/or runners out.

PITCH is a ball delivered to the batter by the pitcher.

The CATCHER is the fielder who takes his position back of the home base and catches the pitcher's pitch when the batter does not hit the pitch.

A RUNNER is an offensive player who is advancing toward, or touching, or returning to any base.

The winner of the game shall be that team which shall have scored, in accordance with these rules, the greater number of runs at the conclusion of a regulation game.

A regulation game consists of nine INNINGS, unless extended because of a tie score, or shortened (1) because the home team needs none of its half of the ninth inning or only a fraction of it.

If the score is tied after nine completed INNINGS play shall continue until (1) the visiting team has scored more total runs than the home team at the end of a completed inning, or (2) the home team scores the winning run in an uncompleted inning.

- ⊖ An INNING is that portion of a game within which the teams alternate on offense and defense and in which there are three OUTS for each team. Each team's time at bat is a half-inning.
- ⊖ An OUT is one of the three required retirements of an offensive team during its time at bat.

When three offensive players are legally put out, that team takes the field and the opposing team becomes the offensive team.

HOW A TEAM SCORES

One run shall be scored each time a runner legally advances to and touches first, second, third and home base before three men are put out to end the inning.

EXCEPTION: A run is not scored if the runner advances to home base during a play in which the third out is made:

1. by the batter-runner before he touches first base
2. by any runner being forced out

3. by a preceding runner who is declared out because he failed to touch one of the bases.

HOW THE GAME IS PLAYED

The players of the home team shall take their defensive positions, the first batter of the visiting team shall take his position in the batter's box, the umpire shall call "Play" and the game shall start

When the ball is put in play at the start of or during a game, all fielders other than the catcher shall be on fair territory.

The batting order shall be followed throughout the game unless a player is substituted for another. In that case the substitute shall take the place of the replaced player in the batting order.

Each player of the offensive team shall bat in the order that his name appears in his team's batting order.

The first batter in each inning after the first inning shall be the player whose name follows that of the last player who legally completed his time at bat in the preceding inning.

A batter has legally completed his time at bat when he is put out or becomes a runner.

A batter may be put out in any of the following ways:

1. His fair or foul FLY BALL is legally caught by a fielder (catch)
 - ⊖ A FLY BALL is a batted ball that goes high in the air in-flight straight from the bat without first touching the ground.
 - ⊖ A CATCH is the act of a fielder in getting secure possession in his hand or glove of a ball in flight and firmly holding it; providing he does not use his cap, protector, pocket or any other part of his uniform in getting possession.
2. After he hits a fair ball, he or first base is tagged before he touches first base
 - ⊖ A TAG is the action of a fielder in touching a base with his body while holding the ball securely and firmly in his hand or glove; or touching a runner with the ball, or with his hand or glove holding the ball, while holding the ball securely and firmly in his hand or glove.

3. A third strike is legally caught by the catcher
 - ⊖ A STRIKE is a legal pitch when so called by the umpire, which:
 1. Is struck at by the batter and is missed
 2. Is not struck at, but any part of the ball passes through any part of the STRIKE ZONE
 - a. The STRIKE ZONE is that area over home plate the upper limit of which is a horizontal line at the midpoint between the top of the shoulders and the top of the uniform pants, and the lower level is a line at the top of the knees. The Strike Zone shall be determined from the batter's stance as the batter is prepared to swing at a pitched ball.

The batter becomes a runner and is entitled to first base without liability to be put out when:

1. Four "balls" have been called by the umpire
 - ⊖ A BALL is a pitch which does not enter the strike zone in flight and is not struck at by the batter.
 - ⊖ A BASE ON BALLS is an award of first base granted to a batter who, during his time at bat, receives four pitches outside the strike zone.
2. He is touched by a pitched ball which he is not attempting to hit unless
 - (1) The ball is in the strike zone when it touches the batter, or (2) The batter makes no attempt to avoid being touched by the ball

The batter becomes a runner and is liable to be put out when:

1. He hits a FAIR BALL
 - ⊖ A FAIR BALL is a batted ball that settles on fair ground between home and first base, or between home and third base, or that is on or over fair territory when bounding to the outfield past first or third base, or that touches first, second or third base, or that first falls on fair territory on or beyond first base or third base, or that, while on or over fair territory touches the person of an umpire or player, or that, while over fair territory, passes out of the playing field in flight.
 - ⊖ A fair fly shall be judged according to the relative position of the ball and the foul line, including the foul pole, and not as to whether the fielder is on fair or foul territory at the time he touches the ball.

- ⊘ If a fly ball lands in the infield between home and first base, or home and third base, and then bounces to foul territory without touching a player or umpire and before passing first or third base, it is a foul ball; or if the ball settles on foul territory or is touched by a player on foul territory, it is a foul ball. If a fly ball lands on or beyond first or third base and then bounces to foul territory, it is a fair hit.
- ⊘ FAIR TERRITORY is that part of the playing field within, and including the first base and third base lines, from home base to the bottom of the playing field fence and perpendicularly upwards. All foul lines are in fair territory.

The Runner

A runner acquires the right to an unoccupied base when he touches it before he is put out. He is then entitled to it until he is put out, or forced to vacate it for another runner legally entitled to that base.

In advancing, a runner shall touch first, second, third and home base in order. If forced to return, he shall retouch all bases in reverse order, unless the ball is dead under any provision of Rule 5.09. In such cases, the runner may go directly to his original base.

Two runners may not occupy a base, but if, while the ball is alive, two runners are touching a base, the following runner shall be out when tagged. The preceding runner is entitled to the base.

Each runner including the batter-runner may, without liability to be put out, advance.

To home base, scoring a run, if a fair ball goes out of the playing field in flight and he touched all bases legally; This is called a HOMERUN.

Any runner is out when:

1. He is tagged, when the ball is alive, while off his base. **EXCEPTION:** A batter-runner cannot be tagged out after overrunning or oversliding first base if he returns immediately to the base.
 - ⊘ A TAG is the action of a fielder in touching a base with his body while holding the ball securely and firmly in his hand or glove; or touching a runner with the ball, or with his hand or glove holding the ball, while holding the ball securely and firmly in his hand or glove.
2. He fails to retouch his base after a fair or foul fly ball is legally caught before he, or his base, is tagged by a fielder. He shall not be called out

for failure to retouch his base after the first following pitch, or any play or attempted play. This is an appeal play

3. He fails to reach the next base before a fielder tags him or the base, after he has been forced to advance by reason of the batter becoming a runner. However, if a following runner is put out on a force play, the force is removed and the runner must be tagged to be put out. The force is removed as soon as the runner touches the base to which he is forced to advance, and if he overslides or overruns the base, the runner must be tagged to be put out. However, if the forced runner, after touching the next base, retreats for any reason towards the base he had last occupied, the force play is reinstated, and he can again be put out if the defense tags the base to which he is forced

Ξ EXAMPLE of when a runner is forced to run: When the batter hits a fair ball he must run to first base. If a runner is on first base, that runner is forced to run to second. If a runner is on second and no runner is on first, the runner at second is NOT forced to run when the batter hits a fair ball, because first base is vacant

4. He is touched by a fair ball in fair territory before the ball has touched or passed an infielder. The ball is dead and no runner may score, nor runners advance, except runners forced to advance.
5. He passes a preceding runner before such runner is out
6. He fails to return at once to first base after overrunning or oversliding that base. If he attempts to run to second he is out when tagged. If, after overrunning or oversliding first base he starts toward the dugout, or toward his position, and fails to return to first base at once, he is out, on appeal, when he or the base is tagged
7. In running or sliding for home base, he fails to touch home base and makes no attempt to return to the base, when a fielder holds the ball in his hand, while touching home base, and appeals to the umpire for the decision.

First base and home may be overrun, second and third may not.

THOSE ARE THE BASICS OF THE GAME. FOLLOWING ARE SOME ADDITIONAL DEFINITIONS AND OTHER INFORMATION:

Ξ The BATTER'S BOX is the area within which the batter shall stand during his time at bat.

- ⊖ The BATTERY is the pitcher and catcher.
- ⊖ A DEAD BALL is a ball out of play because of a legally created temporary suspension of play
- ⊖ The DEFENSE (or DEFENSIVE) is the team, or any player of the team, in the field.
- ⊖ A FORCE PLAY is a play in which a runner legally loses his right to occupy a base by reason of the batter becoming a runner.
- ⊖ A GROUND BALL is a batted ball that rolls or bounces close to the ground.
- ⊖ An INFIELDER is a fielder who occupies a position in the infield.
- ⊖ IN FLIGHT describes a batted, thrown, or pitched ball which has not yet touched the ground or some object other than a fielder.
- ⊖ OFFENSE is the team, or any player of the team, at bat.
- ⊖ An OUTFIELDER is a fielder who occupies a position in the outfield, which is the area of the playing field most distant from home base.
- ⊖ “SAFE” is a declaration by the umpire that a runner is entitled to the base for which he was trying.
- ⊖ After the ball is dead, play shall be resumed when the pitcher takes his place on the pitcher's plate with a new ball or the same ball in his possession and the plate umpire calls “Play”. The plate umpire shall call “Play” as soon as the pitcher takes his place on his plate with the ball in his possession.

Legal pitching delivery

There are two legal pitching positions, the Windup Position and the Set Position, and either position may be used at any time.

1. The Windup Position.

The pitcher shall stand facing the batter, his entire pivot foot on, or in front of and touching and not off the end of the pitcher's plate, and the other foot free. From this position any natural movement associated with his delivery of the ball to the batter commits him to the pitch without interruption or alteration. He shall not raise either foot from the ground, except that in his actual delivery of the ball to the batter, he may take one step backward, and one step forward with his free foot.

2. The Set Position.

Set Position shall be indicated by the pitcher when he stands facing the batter with his entire pivot foot on, or in front of, and in contact with, and not off the end of the pitcher's plate, and his other foot in front of the pitcher's plate, holding the ball in both hands in front of his body and coming to a complete stop. From such Set Position he may deliver the ball to the batter, throw to a base or step backward off the pitcher's plate with his pivot foot. Before assuming Set Position, the pitcher may elect to make any natural preliminary motion such as that known as "the stretch". But if he so elects, he shall come to Set Position before delivering the ball to the batter. After assuming Set Position, any natural motion associated with his delivery of the ball to the batter commits him to the pitch without alteration or interruption.

Coaching Styles and Theories

If there are 75 coaches in Aston Valley Baseball League, so will there be 75 different coaching styles. Each coach and manager will put his own mark on a team. He may also change strategies based on his team makeup, etc. As an AVBL Coach, your goal is to "Make Better Citizens" , but there could be many different roads to get to that point.

The first thing to remember is that the children we are coaching are just learning the game. They will take from this season only what you put into it. Putting the kids above your desire to be the next Yogi Bera will allow the children to have more fun, learn more baseball, and most likely, will make them want to come back next year.

In this section, we will try to give some pointers of what has worked for some coaches in the past. Again, if there is a section that you think might be of more use to other coaches, or if you have another way of handling a situation covered in the next section, please submit the ideas so this handbook can grow and help others.

Parents

One thing that you may hear from others that have coached in other leagues is that parents are difficult to deal with. There are always some situations involving parents that must be dealt with by you, the manager. Most managers will tell you that communication is the most important part of dealing with parents on your team. If you tell them at the beginning of the year what your goals are and what your policies are, and ask for input, you will find that most problems can be averted. Each parent wants to make sure that his or her child has fun and is treated fairly. If they feel they are not being treated fairly, there will be a complaint.

There are also going to be problems that you may not know how to deal with. That is why your league commissioner is available to you to or, if needed, the league president. See the contact/phone number list in this section.

Batting Drills

To overcome fear of being hit by a pitch - Ages 9 & 10

Fear of the baseball is often one of the biggest obstacles to good hitting. It can lead to “stepping in the bucket”, poor balance and “pulling the head” (or pulling off the ball). Although it's normal to have a healthy respect for the baseball, abnormal fear of being hit by the ball can cripple an otherwise good hitter. Any player who has trouble rolling away from a pitch thrown at him (i.e., turning toward the catcher so the ball will hit him on the backside) needs to practice this drill until it becomes natural. Here's how it goes: First explain the importance of rolling away from a pitched ball. Ask the players if they would rather be hit in the face, throat, stomach, groin or back. Most will say back, others can take a lap. Demonstrate how to roll away by stressing that any ball that looks as though it will hit the player, the player should turn his head and body towards the catcher to first protect his chest. While the player is turning towards the catcher, he should also fall to the ground in a ‘push-up’ position. Next, proceed with the drill. Find a fence or backstop the hitter can stand behind. It must be high and wide enough so he cannot be hit with a ball thrown from the other side. The hitter stands behind the fence with a bat. The pitcher stands pitching distance away on the other side of the fence (the fence separates the 2). Place a glove or portable base down (on the batter's side) to act as home plate while making sure to leave enough room for the batter to take a full swing. The pitcher throws to the plate and the batter swings normally (if the pitch is a strike). Of course he won't make contact with the ball because it will be stopped by the fence before it reaches him. Throw a few strikes initially then randomly throw directly at the fence in front of the hitter. Don't let up, let it fly. Vary the location and be sure to mix it up so the hitter doesn't get into a habit of turning away every time (make sure he continues to swing at strikes). Throw at different parts of the body (including just behind the head) and watch for proper reaction. Repeat this drill until the hitter's natural reaction is to turn away. Good Luck!

This drill can go hand in hand with the Roll Away – Fence Drill. The theory is the same except the coach actually throws the tennis balls at the player, hitting him in the process. Teach the player how to turn his head and body toward the catcher, while at the same time dropping to the ground away from the pitch. This enables the player to protect his face and chest areas to reduce the risk of injury. This is another technique to teach the player how to ‘roll away’ from the pitch. Throw some strikes and some balls away to make sure the player does not roll away when he is not supposed to. The player will not be hurt because you are using tennis balls, but he will feel the contact of the ball. These drills are good for younger players just learning how to hit, especially those who are afraid of being hit by the ball but will work well with older player who are developing the same fear.

To teach a short, compact swing – age 5 & up

The player stands with a bat facing a fence. He should then take the bat and put the end against the fence lightly. The end of the handle should make slight contact with the player's mid-section. He can now take his normal batting stance at that

distance from the fence and take about ten or fifteen swings. If the bat is making more than light contact with the fence, the batter is not bringing his hands through the hitting zone first, which he should be. The player who hits the wall regularly may have a round-house swing which slows his swing down. To get a player to bring his hands first, have him take his normal step as if to swing, only have him "throw" the end of the handle towards the ball. This will force the player to rely on his wrists more, which should provide more bat speed as well as more power. This drill also teaches the batter to utilize his wrists more by bringing the butt of the bat through the hitting zone first and snapping the wrists to bring the bat around.

To improve the batter's bat speed – age 7 & up

Put a weighted donut on your regular baseball bat (or use a heavier bat) and hit eight baseballs (overload) Hit eight baseballs with a fungo bat.(underload) Hit eight baseballs with your regular bat. The soft toss portion of the drill should consist of a coach kneeling to the side of the batter and tossing the balls to the front of the strike zone. Make sure the batter is given enough time to set up for each swing as 'machine-gunning' the balls to the batter could actually be detrimental to his swing. Conduct this drill in a soft toss situation and do 2 sets 2-3 times a week. Over the course of 4 to 6 weeks you should see a positive increase in bat speed.

To improve batter's concentration & hand/eye coordination – ages 7-10

Make a couple of bats from broomsticks about 30" for youth league. Purchase practice plastic golf balls at any sporting goods store (It is best to get the heavier duty waffle type balls). Have players break up into two groups of four, one player pitching, one hitting and two others for retrieval. Have the pitcher pitch the golf balls to the batter. At first, players will have difficulty making contact but with concentration on point of contact, they will begin hitting consistently. Pitch 10-12 balls to each batter then rotate around. Done over time, concentration should improve.

To practice proper bunting 'square-up' technique – ages 9-12

Since bunting can be such an important part of the game, proper technique is essential to teach players early. First, stress to the players to square up at the front of the batter's box. This is important because it gives the batter more fair territory with which to work, making it easier to get the ball in play. When you are up in front of the box, the bat head will be in fair territory, which gives the batter a better chance of keeping the ball in fair territory. The head of the bat should also be at the top of the strike zone which tells the batter that anything over the bat will be a ball. The batter needs to adjust the ball and make contact on the top of the ball for the bunt to be successful keeping the bat at the top of the strike zone also improves his chances for contact.

Once the batter masters the proper square up position, he will be able to move on to different types of bunts like drag bunting, push bunting, and sacrifice bunting.

To improve batter's bunting technique – ages 9 & up

The purpose of this drill is to teach proper bunting technique. When a player is going to bunt the baseball, he needs to learn to turn so he is facing the pitcher. A right handed hitter holds the bat with the left hand at the butt of the bat and the right hand in the middle of the bat, being careful not to expose fingers to the pitch. The top of the bat should be at the top of the strike zone. This will teach the player not to move the bat upwards to bunt the ball. If the ball is over the bat, the hitter should pull the bat away from bunting position. Player should advance to practice push bunts (up first base for right handed hitters) and drag bunts (up third base for right handed hitters). This drill is also beneficial as a pre-game warm-up drill that enables the batter to practice seeing the pitched ball and actually make contact with the ball.

To improve batter's bunting technique and placement – Ages 9 & up

Make a box about 10-15 feet up the third base line with several bats. Object of drill is to get the batter to bunt the ball inside the box. Make sure the batter is using the proper technique as described in the bunting drill. Assign points to placement of bunted balls, e.g. 5 points for inside the box, 3 points for over the box, 1 point for any ball in fair territory.

One Hand Bunting Drill – ages 11 & up

One Handed Bunting- Players get into groups of 3 or 4 for max bunts. The drill is to grip the bat with the top hand at the balance point of the bat and bunt without the assistance of the bottom hand. All the things you try to teach such as grip, bat angle, & catch the ball with the bat' happen naturally just by bunting one handed. It is a simple finishing job to add the bottom hand to steer the ball, and leads easily into drag and push bunts. A few minutes of practice gives lots of skill and leaves that much more time to HIT.

Soft Toss Drill – Ages 5 & up

One of the best drills to improve hitting. The key is just to get the player swinging the bat properly. Make sure the batter is not swinging too hard, just concentrate on a proper swing. Watch to make sure that the batter is not moving his back foot, make sure the batter is striding correctly toward the ball, make sure the swing is relaxed and fluid and there is no unnecessary movement in the swing. Have the batter take the time to get set for the pitch, just like at the plate during a game. Sits/kneels to the side and tosses balls into the front of the batter's strike zone. Emphasize proper batting motion with a comfortable swing. The player should be in a comfortable stride with each swing, and the swing itself should be smooth and not too hard. The coach should emphasize that the balls be hit in lines drives and discourage kids from trying to hit over the fence. The repetition will translate into better bat control and confidence at the plate.

To improve batter's batting technique – Ages 5 & up

Another ideal drill to improve hitting technique. Have player take proper batting stance and go through typical pre-at-bat ritual. Place ball on tee for batter. Stress proper batting technique, do not 'swing for the fence'. Move tee around in the strike zone (higher/lower, inside/outside) for best effect.

This drill can also be modified to correct batting flaws. Place two tees in a line with the balls laying about 8 inches apart. To correct a problem with the player dropping his shoulder, make the hitter hit the second ball without hitting the first ball.

To correct swinging up on the ball, place the two tees in a row and hit the first ball into the second ball. If the player swings up on the ball, he will not be able to hit through the first.

Strike Zone Drill – Ages 8 & up

Break players into groups of four: Pitcher, catcher, batter, umpire. Batter does not have a bat, and there is no swinging. Pitcher pitches the ball to the catcher and all players call out whether the pitch is a ball or a strike. Coach should make sure the strike zone is well defined to players beforehand and check their strike zone definition. This should help players realize what the strike zone is from several different perspectives. The players should be encouraged to discuss differences of opinion and adjust for other people's strike zone.

Pepper Ball Drill – Ages 9 & up

Break players into groups of four: Pitcher, batter and fielders. Pitcher softly pitches ball to batter who takes a half swing only to make contact with the ball. Allow each player 10-15 hits then rotate. Drill should move quickly, stressing batter is only to make contact, not swing away to drive the ball. The fielders should pitch the ball from where they fielded it. Drill is good to use before a game to warm up the batter.

Fielding Drills

Fly Ball Drill – Ages 8 & up

Teach players how to catch fly balls with glove fingers pointing upward, not catching like a basket. Teach players that it is easier to get 'behind' the ball and come up on it when catching than to catch it while moving backwards. Many times, the player wants to stand as close to the infield as possible, but can not make the play when the ball is hit deep. Many young players also find it very difficult to backpedal. Coach can start by tossing short fly balls to kids, progressing to throwing deep fly balls, then hitting fly balls. See Tennis Racket Drill and Football Toss Drill for other fly ball teaching techniques. Teach players to call the ball LOUDLY when fielding it. Make sure players only call for it when they can actually make a play on the ball. Player should YELL, "I GOT IT" or "MINE" to call the ball. Some coaches prefer 'Mine' because it is only one word as opposed to three and there is less doubt as to what the player is saying.

Tennis Racket Drill – Ages 8 & up

Hit tennis balls to fielders with a tennis racket to teach player to field fly balls. The tennis racket gives the ball good height and distance while allowing the coach to place the ball well to the fielders. Make sure players call the ball with a loud “I GOT IT” or “MINE” when fielding. When advancing, work with the infield and outfield together with the theory that the ball always belongs to the infielder unless the outfielder calls for the ball. Teach the infielders to go past the infield line into the outfield until they are called off. Make sure the infielder knows that the outfielder has priority when he calls it.

Football Toss Drill – Ages 8 & up

Players start in a line and run a ‘post’ pattern on the coach’s command. Coach throws a ball to the fielder, leading him in the process so he has to make the catch on the run. Once the fielder makes the catch, send the next child in line and keep all players running. Player’s run back and bring the ball with them, which also improves their conditioning. Drill should move quickly and there should be at least four children all moving at once. Coach can also throw ball over players head to make player turn and make the catch. The coach can also place a cone on the field which the player must run around before turning to catch the ball.

Ground Ball Drill – Ages 5 & up

Teach players proper technique on how to field a ground ball. Player MUST move to get in front of the ball. Player should receive ball with arms well out in front to allow for quick arm movement on hops. Player should be bent at the knees with butt down and use two hands to field the ball. First priority is to make sure ball does not go under the player’s glove, as so often happens at a young age. When the player is in front of the ball and is crouched low with his arms out front, the glove should get dirty. If the ball hops over the glove, chances are that it will hit the player in the body, still allowing him to make the play, or at least keep the ball in the infield. Catching the ball using two hands is very important. It gives the player added security to make the catch, and it also puts the throwing hand in a better position to get the ball out of the glove and make a quick throw. Proper fielding is something that always needs to be practiced. Start slowly by tossing grounders to the fielders then progress by hitting the ball to them and integrate the fielding with batting and throwing drills to continually reinforce the proper techniques.

Optional Motivation: Some coaches find that giving some motivation works well to teach children to keep their gloves on the ground. Try having the kids kiss the ground if they are guilty of letting the ball go under their glove. This will quickly make them remember what the proper technique is. Remember to only do this in a fun way to teach a lesson not to embarrass anyone.

Paddle Drill – Ages 8 & up

Using a fielder’s paddle, or making one out of a piece of wood with a rubber band on the back, throw or hit grounders to players. Using the proper technique outlined in the Ground Ball Drill, the players are forced to use two hands to catch the ball. This

drill can also be used with fly balls. The players will be thrilled to find out that they can catch the ball using a paddle when using the proper technique.

Infield Drill – Ages 8 & up

Teach players how to properly play the 2 Short positions. Have three lines of players, one at Shortstop, one at Second Base, and one at First Base, with one player at catcher. Coach hit ground ball either to short or second base (alternates). When hitting to Short, second base covers second, shortstop tosses the ball to the second baseman, who tags second and throws to first base. The first baseman throws the ball to the catcher who drops it in the ball bucket. Each player then moves to the next line with shortstop going to the second base line, second baseman going to the first base line, and the first baseman going to the catcher and the catcher going to the shortstop line. This drill teaches fielding grounders, throwing, and catching and can involve the whole team. Ball can either be hit to short all the time, second all the time, or one to each side with the players taking two turns per rotation.

Involve the third baseman as well and make sure ball goes to all bases. Ball can even be thrown another time 'around the horn'. Make sure players are tagging the imaginary runner when they accept the ball at second, third, and home.

Relay Drill – Ages 8 & up

Place players in a straight line about 30-40 feet apart. Players throw the ball up and down the line making the catch in the pivot position, and turning and throwing to the next in line. Player catching the ball must be facing thrower with his throwing hand closest to the thrower, thus catching the ball with the glove toward the back of the body. This enables him to pivot on his back foot (glove side) and make the throw without turning body completely around. This is a good drill for teaching the proper way for the cutoff man to catch the ball and get it into the infield quickly. Drill can be turned into a competition with each line in a relay race against each other. Stress that the throws must be accurate, you do not want the fielder have to reach to far for the throw as that will throw him off balance and slow down the line.

Hockey Drill – Ages 8 & up

Players use the fielder's paddles and stand about 10-15 feet apart, separating in pairs. One player throws the ball underhand to the other, trying to get the ball between his legs. If the player uses two hands to catch the ball, he can keep the ball out in front. Turn this drill into a competition with the winner advancing to the next round. This drill reinforces proper fielding technique and is a lot of fun for the kids. The most athletic players are not always the winners in this drill, as those with the best technique usually finish first.

Throw to Base Drill Ages – 6 & up

This drill works well when hitting ground balls to players at second base or shortstop and having them throw to first. Place a target at first base for the players to throw to. A tire placed on a can or just a trash can on its side can act as the target.

This forces the players to throw to a fixed spot. Hit ground balls to players at second or short and have them field the ball and throw to first. This can be turned into a competition by awarding point to each player who either hits the target, and added point to those who can make it through the tire. Make sure players are not aiming the ball at the target but using a smooth fluid throwing motion.

Short Hop Drill – Ages 8 & up

Separate players into pairs about 15 feet apart. Players get on knees and throw short hops to each other. Make sure players throw to the other players glove side. As the players get better, move them back until they are at 30 feet apart.

Circle Drill – Ages 8 & up

This is a fast paced drill in which you use all the principles in the Ground Ball Drill. Place 4-6 players in a big circle and have them throw ground balls to each other. The object is not to throw hard grounders, but to throw accurate ground balls to allow the fielder to get in front of the ball and make a good play on the ball with his hands out front and crouched low, using two hands to field the ball. Once he fields the ball, he must immediately turn and get set to make a throw, then throw a grounder accurately to any person in the circle. Fielder should charge the ball.

Third Base Drill – Ages 7 & up

Put three balls on the line between third and home about 4 yards apart. On the first two balls, the player charges the balls and 'fields' them using both hands to field ball and throw to first. On the third ball, the player fields the ball with one hand/fingers and throws to first base. After a couple of rounds, the coach can slowly roll balls to the player as they charge the balls.

Situational Fielding Drills Ages 8 & up

No fielding drill can be complete without teaching the players what to do when there are players on base. Start with a runner at first and hit the ball to the second/short positions to teach the double play. Progress to the force at second or third when players at first and second or bases loaded. Teach the infield fly rule to them and have them understand what to do in these situations. Make sure the players know that each player has a job to do on each ball that is hit. For example, on a ball hit to right field, RF goes after the ball, CF runs to back up the play in right, LF backs up third base, 1B plays first, 2B runs to right to be the cutoff, SS covers second and backs up the cutoff, 3B covers third, P goes between third and home and backs up the base where the ball is thrown, and C covers home.

Pick Up Drill – Ages 5 & up

Throw up to 25 balls to each player. Pair players up and have the roll a ball to the fielder's right, then to his left, and keep the player moving to catch the ball while moving side to side.

Throwing Drills

One Knee Drill Ages 5 & up

This drill should teach proper body rotation and follow through technique. Players break up into pairs and face each other from 15-20 feet apart. It may be better to lace younger players with coach until they are able to throw more accurately. Players kneel on throwing hand knee and the other leg is stretched out in front. Players reach back, turn at the hip with the shoulder facing target (other player). Ball is thrown to other player and the throwing arm should follow through completely. Once the players get the hang of it, they should spread out as far as possible. Players will be surprised at how far they can throw on their knee. This drill will also improve arm strength.

Machine Gun Throwing – Ages 11 & up

This is an adaptation of an old basketball drill called, “machine gun passing”.

DRILL SET UP: Put 7 players in a straight line approximately 3 to 4 feet apart with the player at the far right holding a baseball. Put 1 player facing the line of 7 approximately 15 feet away from the center player in the line of 7. The player facing the line of 7 also has a baseball.

Coach will say, Player 1 throws his ball to player 3. At the same time player 2 throws his ball to player 1. As soon as player 3 catches the ball he throws it back to player 1. As soon as player 1 catches the ball from player 2 he throws it to player 4, and so on down the line. Player 1 works his way down the line to player 8 and then back up the line to player 2. At this point player 1 flips his ball to player 3, player 2 replaces player 1 (player 1 then goes to the end of the line) and everyone rotates up one spot and the drill starts over again.

This is an excellent drill for developing quick hands and quick feet. It forces the players to catch the ball with two hands. If he catches it with one hand he can't get rid of it in time before the next ball is coming at him. It also teaches our players the importance of stepping at your target because you have to shift your feet in a different direction before throwing to the next person in line. A player who is lax or sloppy with his glove or feet is easily spotted in this drill.

Eight Ball Drill – Ages 6 & up

1. Player stands shoulder width apart, puts throwing arm up at 90 degree angle, holds elbow with glove, throws ball to partner just using his wrist action.
2. Player sits with legs spread and has arm in same position only this time he can use from his elbow up and throws the ball to his partner.

3. Player remains sitting, only now he can rotate his hips and turn his upper torso to throw the ball. Follow through is not necessary yet. There is an emphasis on using the glove arm or elbow to direct throw.
4. Player now goes to one knee. He rotates his hips and upper torso and throws the ball, only now he puts the emphasis on following through across his knee which is raised.
5. Player now stands with glove arm closest to partner, and feet shoulder width apart. Using all of the above steps, he throws the ball concentrating on follow through, only he cannot move his feet.
6. Player now goes to the post position as in pitching, and throws the ball using the above steps. Emphasis in this step is balance at the post position.
7. Player now uses all the steps above and crow hops and throws the ball to his partner. Emphasis in this step is proper technique of the crow hop.
8. Finally, the last step is long toss. And we also have added to the last step, playing quick toss, which is for the infielders. They stand about 10 feet apart and toss the ball to each other as quickly as they can for one minute and they keep track for a contest. Emphasis here is on a quick release and concentrating on the ball entering and leaving the glove (transferring).

Balance Drill – Ages 8 & up

Pitcher goes through the wind up delivery and stops at the balance point (when knee is bent up toward third base, for right handers). Hold this position for at least 2 seconds before continuing. Front leg should be at the waist or higher. This improves the pitchers motions toward home.

Baserunning Drills

Second Base Steal Drill – Ages 9 & up

Set up defense with a pitcher, catcher, and second baseman. You can add up to two temporary bases at first and second to add extra baserunners. Have the pitcher pitch the ball to the catcher and have the baserunners try to steal the base. This drill not only helps the baserunners, but the pitcher, catcher and second baseman.

To help teach baserunning combined with conditioning – Ages 9 & up

Split the team into groups of three starting at home, first, and second base. The hitter starts the drill by swinging, and each player advances two bases. Once they go two, the runners from home and first return to the previous base and the player at home stay there to become the hitter. Perform three times, then switch groups.

The following is a reprint from the Babe Ruth Bullpen of January 1997
The Fine Art of Bunting

Any player with practice can learn to bunt reasonably well. One of the chief criticisms baseball players of the past have of modern-day players is their inability to bunt. When one considers the number of times present-day players fail to sacrifice a runner into scoring position, such censure seems justified.

Mainly responsible for the shortage of good bunters is an intense desire of managers and coaches to go for the long ball. Consequently, little time is devoted to bunting practice.

SACRIFICE BUNT

This type of bunt is used to advance a base runner with the assumption that the batter probably will be thrown out. The batter should do everything he can to bunt the ball sagely in the proper spot. He will bunt only strikes. He should shift his position from the normal batting stance to the bunting stance just as the pitcher's arm starts backward.

Several shifts are used by the batter to accomplish the sacrifice bunt. In the most common, the batter turns and brings his rear foot forward to a point parallel with his front foot just inside the batter's box.

The second shift, and the one recommended, varies in that the batter, in his regular stance, merely pivots on the balls of his feet so that he faces the pitcher. This type of shift does not reveal the batter's intentions until the last split second. There is also less movement of the body, which is an asset to the bunter. Too many young players shift their position in the batter's box when the pitch is made and they are unable to follow the flight of the ball. There is also a danger of the bunter stepping on home plate while moving his rear foot forward.

As the batter pivots, the upper hand slides along the bat to a position close to the trade mark. The upper hand grips the bat very lightly, merely holding it for balance, the fingers underneath and the thumb on top. Some batters feel they have better control of the bat if they slide both hands close to the sweet part of the bat. In this case, the upper hand is held the same as before, while the lower hand controls the bat.

After the batter squares around, the bat should be held well out in front of the body and at the top of the strike zone. If the bat is held at the top of the strike zone it does not have to be raised to bunt the ball. If the bat has to be raised, the pitch is a ball. The movement of the bat should always be down. If this were always done, fewer bunts would be popped up. The body is slightly crouched and the weight is on the balls of the feet and slightly forward. The bat is held parallel to the ground with the arms relaxed and slightly bent at the elbows. The bat should be allowed to give when it meets the ball. The impact of the ball should make the bat move a bit. The bunter should not push the ball but rather allow the ball to hit the bat. Pulling the bat

back as the ball approaches the plate is not the correct way to bunt. It often results in a foul ball. The ball is bunted by raising or lowering the body from the waist and knees with as little movement of the arms as possible. The batter should keep in mind that he is trying to catch the ball on the bat. The left hand on the handle guides the angle of the bat for a right handed bunter. The opposite is true for a left handed bunter. A good bunter can place the ball toward third or first base by shifting the bat with the near hand, so that the bat points at right angles to the appropriate line.

Placement of sacrifice bunts is dependent on the type of pitch, which bases are occupied, the defensive position of the opposition and its ability to field bunts. Unless the batter is a good bunter, he should bunt the ball according to the pitch. A right handed batter should bunt an inside pitch toward the third base side of the diamond; a left handed batter, toward the first base side.

When first base is occupied it is a good baseball to bunt down the first base line. The first baseman must hold the runner on first base and will, therefore, not be in good position to field the ball since he will not leave the base until the pitcher delivers. The ball should be bunted to a spot about 30 feet from home plate.

When first and second bases are occupied the fielding ability of the pitcher and first baseman should be considered. If the pitcher is the poorer fielder, the ball should be bunted down the third base line. If the first baseman is the poorer fielder, the ball should be bunted along the first base line.

A left handed first baseman has an advantage over a right handed one in throwing to third base. In this situation the defensive team usually will be instructed to play for a force out at third base. This bunt is also directed to a spot about 30 feet from home plate. If the pitcher does not break for the third base line immediately after he delivers the ball, the bunt should be tapped close to the third base line. Sometimes the first baseman will charge straight in; if he does, a push bunt past him may be successfully executed by a right handed batter.

When second base only is occupied the batter should try to bunt the ball toward the third baseman. He will have to come in to field the ball and third base will be uncovered. If it is an outside pitch, the ball may be bunted down the first base line. A throw from the first baseman to third base would necessitate the tagging of the runner advancing from second base.

Pitchers are usually advised to pitch high and inside if a bunt is expected. The batter should, therefore, be in a fairly upright position, so that he will be above the ball with his bat as he bunts the pitch, thus decreasing the danger of bunting the ball in the air.

Normally, the sacrifice bunt should not be used unless the runner or runners who are to be advanced could tie the score or put the offensive team ahead or a poor hitter is at the plate.

SQUEEZE BUNT

There are two types of squeeze plays, the suicide and the safety. The suicide squeeze is one of baseball's most exciting plays. It is an "all or nothing" play. The logical time to use it is a runner on third and one out in a close game. With a good bunter at the plate, the chances of executing a successful suicide squeeze are excellent, unless the opposition guesses the intention and calls for a pitchout. The runner must not tip off the play by being overanxious. This is usually what happens in high school or college baseball. There is no reason for more than a normal lead and the runner should not start for the plate until the pitcher's throwing hand reaches his shoulder on the forward delivery. If he starts for the plate at that moment, he will have no difficulty scoring on almost any bunt in fair territory. If the batter squares around too soon or the runner breaks too soon, the pitcher can adjust and throw an unbuntable pitch. It is very important that the batter hide his intention as long as possible. Therefore, he shouldn't assume bunting position until the pitcher actually starts to deliver the ball. The batter does not have to lay down a perfect bunt; all he has to do is to put the ball on the ground in fair territory.

The safety squeeze is used when the defense is not expecting a bunt. The runner waits until the ball is actually bunted before racing for the plate. The runner should move down the line on the pitch but not go so far that he can be caught off base if the pitch is not bunted. If the pitch is not a strike, the batter should take the pitch. The ball should not be bunted too hard and it should be kept close to the foul line. The safety squeeze requires a good bunt and a fast runner.

Bunting must be taught and it is very important that it be correctly taught. Bunting is a frame of mind. It is a skill that takes a great deal of practice. On cold and wet days the coach may have bunting practice indoors. A pitching machine may be used indoors as well as outside on such days. Canvas may be spread on the gymnasium floor or in the batting cage. It is very important that the coach supervise bunting sessions to make sure the proper techniques are used to keep the batters from becoming lackadaisical and careless in their attempts to bunt. The batting practice pitcher should throw from the stretch position and also put some speed on the ball. It is a mistake to lob the ball to a hitter when he is practicing bunting. It should be close to game speed so the batter gets worthwhile practice. If the coach will emphasize correct methods and praise good bunts, the skills of his players will improve.

COMMON FAULTS

1. Holding the bat too close to the body.
2. Pivoting around too late, therefore not having the body under control when the attempt to bunt is made.
3. Dropping the bat too soon
4. Lunging at the ball rather than waiting for the pitch.

5. Running to first base before the bunt is properly made.
6. Pushing the ball.
7. Gripping the bat too lightly.
8. Not holding the bat parallel to the ground
9. Bunting balls outside the strike zone.
10. Not starting with the bat at top of the strike zone.

POSITIVE POINTS

1. Hold the bat loosely.
2. Do not swing at the ball
3. Do not step back.
4. Do not push at the ball but allow the ball to hit the bat.
5. Bunt only good pitches.
6. Get the ball on the ground before starting to first base.
7. Keep the bat parallel with the ground.
8. Hold the bat out in front of the body and at the top of the strike zone
9. The head should be up with eyes on the ball.
10. The body should be slightly crouched.