

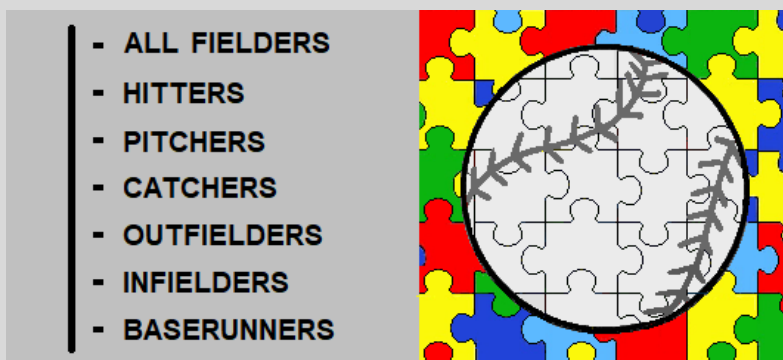
COACHING COMMENTS and RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The recommendations listed on the following pages address the Mudcats Rec. 11-12U Majors level of play. They are limited to only the most common, basic situations that we have been practicing so far this season. They appear here for the purpose of review.

We have talked about, practiced, and will continue to practice all of these concepts and skills. You have each heard all of them before – probably many times more than you would prefer - and here they are again - for you to review at your convenience.

Please note that this list is in no way complete. It is not about the finer, more “accurate” points of the game. The ideas have been worded to describe, in broad strokes, the most simple version of several essential baseball fundamentals. They are intended to create a foundation, or required prerequisites - to be mastered (similar to the multiplication tables or spelling rules we all learn in school) - before we will be able to move forward.

SKILLS RECOMMENDATIONS ARE GROUPED BY POSITION:



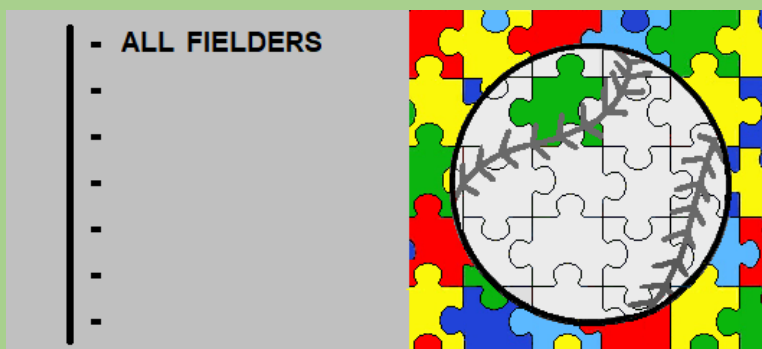
We will be adding to, changing and building in more complexity to most of these skills, but, for now, they are pieces of a very important puzzle that, when complete, will provide a map to future skill development this season, and at the next level of play.

Spend some time reading and thinking about these ideas – maybe one section at a time, or more than once until they start to become a natural part of your game.

ALL FIELDERS

DO NOT make unnecessary throws.

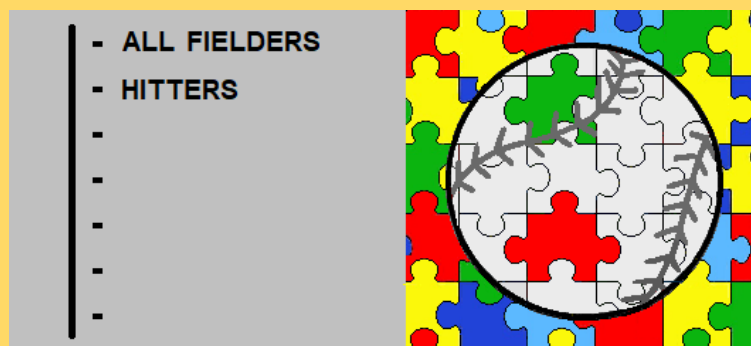
Only throw to get a runner out if you have A GOOD CHANCE to get the runner out. If not - "eat it" - an unneeded bad throw can turn into extra bases (and runs) for the other team.



HITTERS

Focus on MAKING CONTACT with the ball – no more – no less.

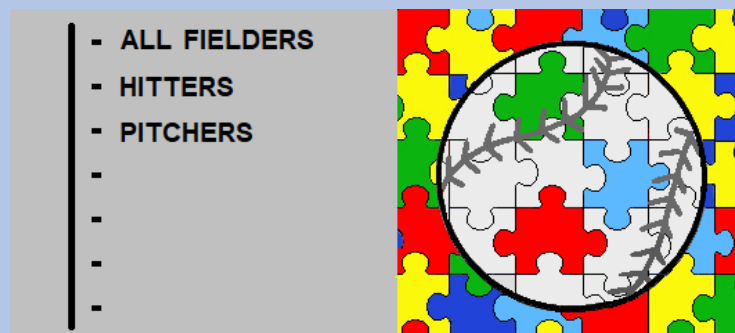
- If we put the ball "in play" by hitting it, we force the other team to be "perfect" - to get us out.
- Home runs are great – but rare. Getting on base **FREQUENTLY** scores more runs.
- Everyone will learn to bunt - it is an important part of the game.
- With two strikes on you, its ok to strike out if you swing at a strike. With two strikes, it is **NOT OK** to strike out on a called strike. A "called third strike" is a pitch that you **DO NOT** swing at, but the umpire thinks it was a strike - and calls out "STRIKE THREE".
- To avoid being hit by an inside pitch, remember to “turn away” from the pitch.
Rotate toward your right side for right handed hitters – exposing your back or butt, if necessary.
Rotate toward your left side for left handed hitters – exposing your back or butt, if necessary.



PITCHERS

The #1 job of the pitcher is to THROW STRIKES. FORGET ABOUT EVERYTHING ELSE - except ...

- With a runner on third, cover the plate on a ball that gets through the catcher - charge the plate, catch the toss from the catcher, and tag the sliding runner **ON THE FEET** and ...
- Cover first on a ground ball that the first baseman is fielding
(so that he can toss the ball to you so **YOU** can touch first to get the runner out.)
- On a ground ball to the pitcher - don't hurry your throw to first - you probably have more time to get the runner out than you think.

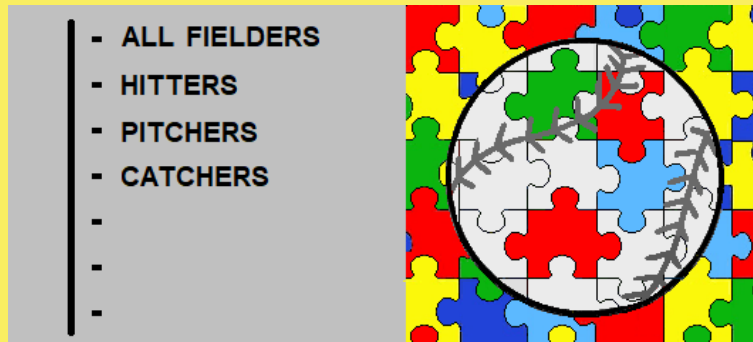


CATCHERS

The #1 job of the catcher is to catch the ball from the pitcher - OR TO BLOCK a low pitch ... from going through to the backstop (to prevent runners from going to (stealing) the next base.

The return the throw from the catcher to the pitcher should be accurate - on every pitch ...

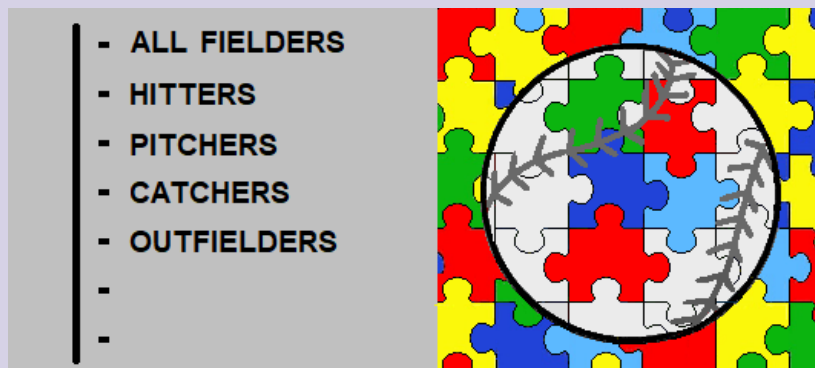
- to prevent baserunners from going to the next base – and ...
- so the pitcher can easily catch your throw and focus on pitching - instead of chasing after a bad throw.
- **REMEMBER:** the ball is "LIVE" - there is no "time-out" between pitches.
- A runner is free to run to the next base (or home) while the catcher is tossing the ball back to the pitcher.
- To control the runners better – and to be sure to get the ball back to the quickly and cleanly, you should move forward in front of the plate as far as needed to get the ball back to the pitcher cleanly.
- While waiting for the throw from a fielder for a play at the plate, stand **IN FRONT** of home plate. Do not stand in the runner's way if you don't already have the ball in your glove.



OUTFIELDERS

Don't let a ground ball get past you or go through your legs. If you can't catch it – BLOCK IT !
to prevent a single from turning into a double or triple.

- Always throw the ball to second base – OR to your cutoff, if necessary.
- It is better to throw a one-bounce line drive than a rainbow shaped throw...
to avoid wild throws or high overthrows - the infielder can control the low throw - and tag the runners feet more quickly and more easily.
- It is very easy to misjudge a fly ball by moving forward too soon - before you realize it is going over your head.
- Outfielders should backup each other, to prevent the runner from going to the next base.
- Outfielders should backup infielders - to prevent the runner from going to the next base on a bad throw.
 - Right fielder backs up throws to first.
 - Center fielder backs up throws to second.
 - Left fielder backs up throws to third.
- Backing up is not fancy, and often goes unnoticed, but a good backup play on an overthrow can save runs - and sometimes means the difference between a win and a loss.



INFIELDBERS

After a play is made, **"CONTROL THE BALL"**.

Once the play is "settled down," throw the ball back to the pitcher, but remember, the ball is almost always "LIVE" - and the runners can try to go to the next base - at ANY time.

You can run with the ball in your hand toward the runner - instead of making a short throw - to prevent them from going to the next base.

Almost always move forward toward the ground ball.

After fielding a ground ball, make the throw after you have both feet on the ground - don't hurry unless you have to. A "balanced" throw is almost always a good throw.

With a runner on third, the second baseman should back up the throw from the catcher to the pitcher – on EVERY throw back to the pitcher - to prevent the runner on third from going home in case the LIVE ball gets loose.

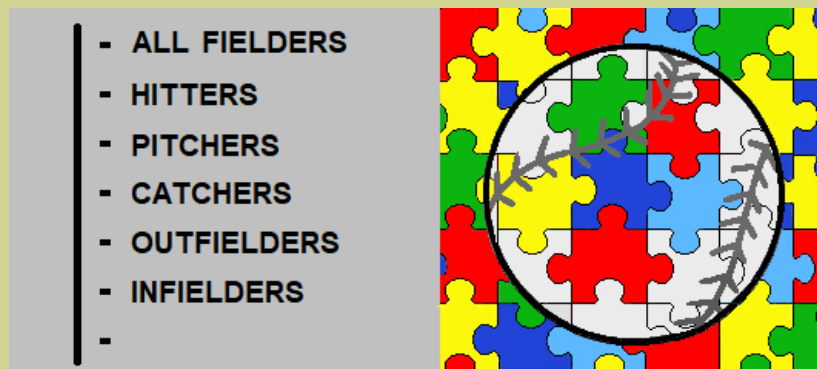
The rules state that the infielder who is NOT fielding or trying to catch a thrown ball, must not get in the runner's way.

First basemen must first, be ready to field a ground ball or pop fly - don't focus so much on getting back to first to take the throw from another infielder that you forget to field your own part of the infield.

On a ball hit to the outfield, an infielder usually needs to go out closer to the outfielder to take the throw from the outfielder (to take the "cut-off").

After taking the cutoff, the infielder can decide what to do next:

- throw to second
- throw to third, etc.
- run with the ball in hand to the middle of the infield
- run with the ball in hand toward the runner - OR
- just return the ball to the pitcher - under control - for the next batter.



BASERUNNERS

On the bases, always be ON FULL ALERT to go to the next base - because the play may not yet be over.

REMEMBER, just because you are safe at a base doesn't mean the play is over - always be alert - and be ready (be hungry - like for pizza) to go to the next base - if you think you can make it.

If the other team can't control ball, makes an unnecessary throw, or just isn't paying attention, you should be ready to take advantage of their mistake - and advance to second - (or even third.)

The ball is almost always "LIVE" - and you, the runner, can try to go to the next base - at ANY time (if you think its safe to go).

For example, on a walk, hustle to first – you are allowed to go to second if the other team, drops, bables, overthrows the ball, doesn't control the ball, or just isn't paying attention.

On a ground ball you are trying to beat the throw. Run hard - all the way until you touch first - and continue past ("run through") the base - don't slow down when you get close to the base - you do not need to stop.

After overrunning first base, you are allowed to look to your left, BUT, if you start to go to second (or make any movement that even looks like you intend to go) you can be tagged out.

If you are sure of a base hit and the ball is already in the outfield, run hard but don't run through first. Instead, curve out (like a banana) and "round" first, touching it as you continue to go a short way toward second - then - decide to continue to second or return to first.

On your way to first - or on your way to third, don't look behind you at the ball - look forward and pay attention to what your base coach wants you to do (stop, go, slide, etc.)

All runners **MUST SLIDE** at the plate if they are trying to tag you out.
If you don't slide, the umpire will call you out - whether you were safe or not.
This rule helps prevent injuries from "crashes" at the plate.

You are allowed to steal, but you can't leave the base until after the ball gets to the batter. So - on EVERY PITCH, leave the base and go about 10 feet toward the next base - so you are ready to steal.

... OR return to your base if its not safe to steal - you may dive head first back to first if necessary.

And, of course, if the ball is not caught or is not blocked by the catcher - run hard (steal) to the next base.

With no outs or with one out - for any **FORCE PLAY SITUATION** - on ANY GROUND BALL, you must run hard - immediately and without hesitation - to the next base to avoid being "forced out."
(No worries - we will continue to teach you the difference between a "force" play and a "tag out" play in the future)

If a runner touches, yells at, tries to block a fielder's view of the ball, or interferes with a fielder who is trying to field the ball, the runner is automatically out.

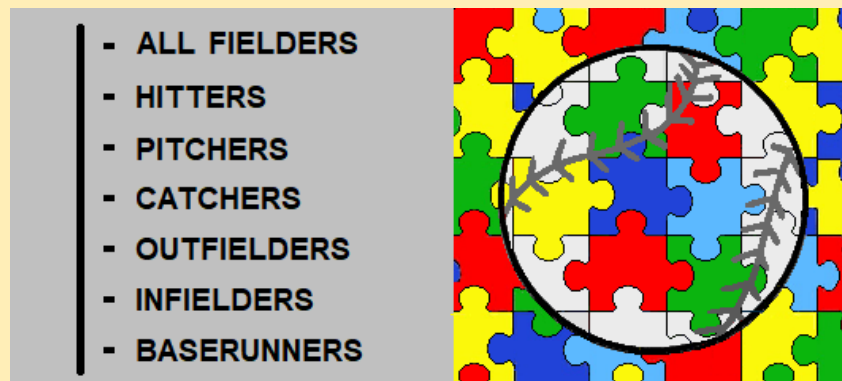
(continued)

BASERUNNERS (continued)

With no outs or with one out - on a fly ball - go part of the way to the next base and wait to see if the outfielder catches the ball. If the ball is caught you **MUST** return to your base. (We will discuss and practice "tagging up" on a fly ball later.)

With **TWO OUTS**, on both a ground ball **AND** a fly ball, you will usually, immediately and without hesitation, run hard to the next base.

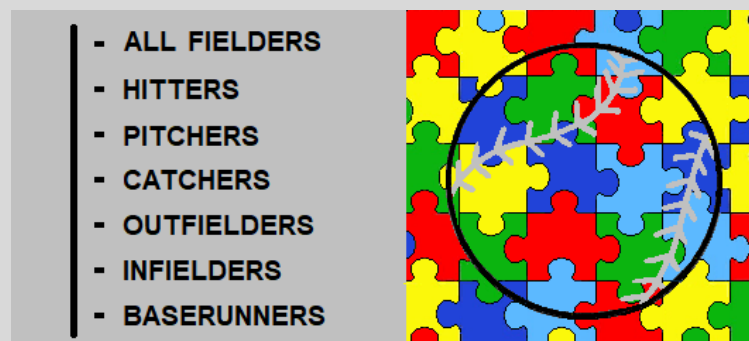
Again, don't worry too much - your first and third base coaches will be reminding you before each pitch and often telling you (loudly) what to do - after the ball is hit, but its always better if you already know yourself.



And finally, **COMMUNICATION** is the piece that completes the puzzle.

Examples:

- Calling for a pop fly
- Infielders telling outfielders the number of outs
- The pitcher calling to the catcher for the ball when the runner steals home
- The catcher encouraging or calming the pitcher down between pitches
- The shortstop and second baseman confirming who takes the throw on a steal
- The second baseman telling the shortstop where to throw the cutoff – and vice versa



GO MUDCATS !!!