

Coaching

Basic Skills

Granite Falls Little League Coaching Manual

GFL approach to Teaching Basic
Skills by level of Play

Coaching Principles

These are just a few guiding principles that will keep the focus on the children learning and enjoying the game.

1. Emphasize safety, fun, and learning.
2. Concentrate on a few skills at the T-ball, Farm, levels so that everyone will learn the basics. Trying to teach too many skills at these levels dilutes the basics.
3. Introduce skills beyond the basics after most players seem to have the basics down, perhaps in the second half of the season.
4. Have a written plan of every practice. Break the practice down into stations or smaller groups, so that focused learning can take place and children aren't standing around getting bored. Remember to work with all your players. Move them around to different positions within each drill.
5. Reinforce the basics every practice and every game. Repetition, repetition, repetition!!!
6. Remember that the games at the T-ball, Rookie levels in particular are for instruction, not to allow the players to keep repeating the same mistakes game after game. There are no wins or losses at these levels.
7. The idea of each level, T-ball, Rookie is to prepare for the next level. Teach the principles that will work all the way through majors and beyond.
8. Have the players play real positions, not just wandering anywhere.
9. Let every player play any position they can safely play, then later in the season, focus the players that will be moving to the next level on positions where they seem to be more comfortable.
10. Attend coach's clinics and players clinics. You will learn an enormous amount about teaching the proper techniques.

Building Block Skill Matrix

The following matrix lists the “basic skills” to be emphasized at each level of play. Each level builds upon the prior. Items taught at the previous level must be reinforced at the next level in order to properly introduce the next concept/skill (i.e. Building Block Method).

Bad habits are tough to break, especially as they get older. It is much easier to get them to change bad habits at a younger age. If these basic skills are taught correctly at each level, then we can build upon them at the next level. For example, if time is spent in Minors teaching skills that should have been taught earlier, then the players fall behind and are not ready for Majors.

Level Skill	T-Ball	Rookie BB, SB	Minors BB, SB	Minors BB,SB	Majors BB,SB
Hitting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Grip 2. Stance 3. Swing 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus on the ball 2. Stride 3. Rotate 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Watch the ball leave the hand 2. Know the strike zone 3. Be aggressive 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus 2. Know the count 3. Bunting 4. Two strike hitting 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Situational bunting 2. Pitch location 3. Two strike hitting
Baserunning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Which way is first base? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hit each base 2. Stance 3. Proper way to run to 1st base 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sliding 2. Stealing 3. Extra base hits 4. Proper way to slide 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lead off 2. Rounding first 3. Pick up the base coach 4. Proper way to slide 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Alertness on the bases 2. Taking the extra base 3. Dive back into the back
Throwing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Grip 2. “T” Stance 3. Step 4. Follow-through 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Grip 2. “T” Point stance 3. Step 4. Follow-through 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Grip 2. “T” Stance 3. Step 4. Follow-through 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Relay 2. Cutoff 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cutoff/relay 2. Run downs 3. Long throws
Fielding	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Two hands 2. “Alligator” 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “ready position” 2. Catch the ball out front 3. Infield/outfield positions 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fly balls 2. Who Covers? 3. Force vs. Tag 4. Follow your throw 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Backhand 2. Backup 3. Lead runner 4. Outfield 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cross over 2. Outfield footwork 3. Backhand
Pitching			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Grip 2. Stance 3. Mechanics 4. Pitch ahead 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Grip (s) 2. Stance 3. Mechanics 4. Quick rhythm 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Off-speed 2. Location 3. Know the hitter 4. Quick rhythm
Catching		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stance/hand location 2. Throw the ball back to pitcher 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Set a target 2. Block the ball 3. Throwing to a base 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Set a target 2. Block the ball 3. Throw to 2nd 4. Passed balls recovery 5. 1st and 3rd situationals 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pickoff 2. Location 3. Framing 4. Blocking 5. 1st and 3rd situationals

Coaching**T-Ball Division****Basic Skills**

Skill Area	Specific Skill	What to Teach	Drills to reinforce
Hitting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Grip Stance Swing 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Grip the bat with two hands together toward the knob of the bat. Stand with front foot at back of corner of Plate, back foot in line with front foot, feet about shoulder width apart, and hands even with back shoulder. Determine distance from the plate by lining the middle of the bat up with the ball. Eyes focused on the ball, swing level through the ball; hands come through first, follow through. Eyes stay on the tee where the ball was to emphasize keeping the head on the ball and not spinning the head with the swing. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Batting T station. 5 correct swings each, then rotate players. Have multiple stations Fence swing stations
Base-running	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Which way is first? 	Run hard from base to base. Emphasize touching each base. Stress staying in the baseline and avoiding running into fielders.	<p>Run to first base properly</p> <p>Run to second base</p> <p>Run around all the bases for a homerun</p>
Throwing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Grip "T" Stance Step Follow through 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2 or 3 finger grip depending on hand size Glove side of the body faces the target feet, hips and shoulder perpendicular to target line; glove arm elbow is bent and pointed at the target (use this arm as a "gun sight" to help the player stay perpendicular); throwing arm is extended back in the opposite direct of the target in a slightly expanded "L" with the elbow shoulder high with hand positioned so that the fingers are on top of the ball and the thumb on the bottom. Eyes on the target; glove side foot strides toward the target, as the throwing arm comes forward, pivoting on the back foot. The throwing elbow comes up to shoulder height with the arm in an L shape, ball now facing the target with the wrist cocked, chest now facing the target with the glove side elbow still tucked. The ball is released out in front of the head, when the nose is over the toes. 	<p>Two lines, players facing each other in pairs if uneven number, have a parent play with a player</p> <p>Take them through each part of the motion step by step-i.e. "Grip", "T", "Step", "Follow-through".</p>
Fielding	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2 hands Body in front of Ball 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Always emphasize that two hands must be used to catch a fly ball or ground ball. Get in position in front of the ball. If the ball is close enough, move the feet without crossing them to get in position. Once in front of a ground ball, head up, knees bent, rear end down. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ground balls-soft Hands drill. Coach rolls a ball on the ground to a player emphasizing hand Positions and body in front of ball. 10 rolls then rotate players.

**Coaching
Skills**

Rookie Division

Basic

Skill Area	Specific Skill	What to teach	Drills to Reinforce
Hitting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus on the ball 2. Stride 3. Rotate 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Eyes focused on the ball. Eyes stay focused at the point of contact to emphasize keeping the head on the ball and not spinning the head with the swing. 2. A small stride with the front foot at the ball approaches the plate. Emphasize the front foot moves only, swing level through the ball; hands come through first, slight stride with front foot sliding toward the pitcher. 3. Rotate, or turn on the ball. After the hands come through, the bat continues over the front shoulder, the back foot pivots in place. It is very important to not pick up the back foot. By pivoting the back foot, the hips will turn creating power. 	4-5 stations, batting, "T", "Soft Toss", whiffle ball, hip rotate, fence swing drills. A coach at each station; 10 correct swings each; rotate players to another station every 10 minutes.
Baserunning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hit each base 2. Stance 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Player should be taught to hit the inside corner of a base when running to the next base. Players should hit the front corner of first base when instructed to run through first. 2. Baseball stance- Left foot resting against the outside edge of base (not on top), right foot away from base, feet shoulder width apart, knees bent, hands off knees. 	Run through first base Run out a double Run from 1 st to 3 rd Run from 2 nd to home Relay race drill Use a base coach at 1 st and 3 rd base. Emphasize touching The proper portion of the bases
Throwing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Grip 2. "T" Stance 3. Step 4. Follow through 	Same as T-Ball	Same as T-ball (note, many coach's do these same drills all the way through Majors) Repetition, repetition, repetition!
Fielding	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ready position 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Eyes on the ball at all times; glove open toward the ball, throwing hand open with palm towards the glove. 2. On a ground ball, once the body is in position, the glove is on the ground open toward the ball with the throwing hand ready to clamp the ball in the glove (i.e. pinkie to pinkie). Key: Triangle position, glove centered between both feet and glove hand extended out in front of feet. 3. Demonstrate where to play each position before the ball is pitched. 	Cross fire. Line of players at 2 nd base and line at short stop. Two Coaches each between 3 rd and home (hitting to 2 nd base) and home and 1 st (hitting to short stop). 2 nd base fields ground balls and throw to coach between 3 rd and home (then rotates to back of line. (repeat at 2 nd base). Fast moving drill with lots of repetition.
Catching	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stance and hand Position. 2. Throw the ball back to the pitcher. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make them throw back. They will eventually get tired of chasing! Always use a catchers glove. 	

Coaching Basic Skills

Rookie Division (Cont.)

Skill Area	Specific Skill	What to Teach	Drills to Reinforce
Hitting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Watch the ball leave the hand 2. Know the strike zone 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Concentrate on the pitcher. Watch the ball leave the pitchers hand to contact with the bat. 2. Know the strike zone. Bottom of the knees to the bottom of the armpits and one ball on either side of the plate. 	<p>Stations. Station 1: Hitting Tee-10 correct swings each: Emphasize proper mechanics. Station 2: Soft Toss-10 correct swings each. Station 3: Whiffle Ball batting. Coach throws golf ball size whiffle balls to the batter. Emphasize mechanics and eye concentration. Station 4: Strike zone. Coach throws pitches to the batter against a net/fence. No swinging, simply have the batter watch the ball and call out ball or strike.</p>
Baserunning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sliding 2. Stealing 3. Extra base hits 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Slide into 2nd, 3rd and home. 2. Steal on ball passed the catcher. 3. Run out a double 	<p>Sliding. Use a grassy area. Players slide into a throw down base. Emphasize throwing hands back and staying low. Also slide away from the tag, usually towards the back of the base. Base coaching. Players start at home plate. Base coaches at 1b and 3b. 1b coach signals runner to run through first or go to second base. Third base coach advance runners.</p>
Throwing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Grip 2. "T" Stance 3. Step 4. Follow through 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Same as T-ball/Rookie 	<p>Same as T-ball/Rookie</p>
Fielding	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fly balls 2. Who covers? 3. Force vs. Tag 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. On any fly ball, outfielders should take their first step backwards. Fly balls are one of the most difficult skills for the young player to Master. No where is repetition as important as fly balls so as to learn to judge height and distance. Incorporate fly balls into every practice as much as possible. 2. Emphasize Teamwork! Players cover different bases depending upon situation. Key area to emphasize: Shortstop covers 2b on any ball to pitcher, 2b or 1b. The second baseman covers 2b on any ball hit to SS or 3b. 3b should go after any ball to their left (shortstop will back them up). 1b should go after any ball to their right (2b and pitcher will help them out). 3. Players will begin to develop an understanding of when to apply tag vs. tagging the base (i.e. force). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cone to Cone. Place two cones or batting helmets about 30' apart. Have the player set up at the left cone and throw (or hit) a fly ball to their left forcing them to run left to catch. Then, have them line up on the right cone and repeat going the other direction. 2. Situation. Set up an infield (i.e. players at first base, 2nd base, SS and 3rd base). Have all remaining players be runners at 1st base. First, work the left side of the infield on ground balls to 3rd and SS with plays going to 2nd base only. Repeat On the right side.
Pitching	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Grip 2. Stance 3. Throw 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Four seam grip on ball in glove, back of glove hand toward plate. 2. Stretch. For right handed pitcher, right foot resting against Rubber, left foot next to right foot, but slightly ahead. Knees bent. 3. 3 steps-start with throwing side foot resting against the rubber and feet together. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Balance: glove side knee up with top of leg parallel to ground, 	<p>Break down each of the 3 steps until players can do it correctly, going through each step with a ball in hand without actually throwing. These are the "mechanics" you so often hear about when watching a</p>

	lower leg at right angle	professional game. It is very
Pitching cont-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. Stride: move to the "T" stance: throwing hand comes down out of the glove, circle arm back, with ball facing 2nd base. Glove arm points towards home plate and is "pulled back" to side as throwing arm comes forward. c. Follow through with the throwing hand reaching towards the ground, allowing the back to become parallel with the ground. 	<p>important that the mechanics are correct and consistent before actually even throwing a ball.</p> <p>Only when players can demonstrate some consistency with mechanics should they begin throwing live.</p>
Catching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Set a target 2. Block the ball 3. Throwing to a base 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Set a target over the center of plate. Glove wide open. 2. Emphasize blocking the ball-drop to their knees, glove hand with back of glove on the ground. 3. Feet are spread wider with base runners on. Do not take the catchers helmet off to throw as it just slows you down.

Coaching Skills

Minor Division AAA

Basic

Skill Area	Specific Skill	What to Teach	Drills to Reinforce
Hitting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus 2. Know the count 3. Bunting 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Concentrate on the pitcher. Watch the ball leave the pitchers hand to contact with the bat. 2. Know your pitch count. With two strikes, choke up on the bat and foul off any pitch that is close. 3. Bunting, as the pitcher picks up their leg "square To bunt" (twist feet so toes are pointed towards the mound, left hand on the handle, bat resting on the right hand (thumb and index finger) on the barrel. Bat at an angle and extended across and in front of home plate. Let the ball hit the bat! 	<p>Station 1: Hitting Tee-10 correct swings each; Emphasize proper mechanics. Station 2: Soft Toss 10 correct swings each.</p> <p>Station 3: Bunting Station: coach underhand throws baseballs from 15-20'. Emphasize proper stance and not lunging at the ball.</p> <p>Station 4: Whiffle Ball batting. Coach throws golf ball size whiffle balls to the batter. Emphasize mechanics and eye concentration.</p>
Baserunning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Leadoff 2. Rounding first 3. Pick up the 3rd base coach 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bounce off the base (i.e. Little League Leadoff) 2. Run through first on hit in outfield, round the bag on hit to outfield, looking to advance. 3. Watch the coach and not the ball. 	<p>Steal contest. Have the players steal against the catcher to 2nd and 3rd. use a SS/3b to cover each base, coach to pitch a ball to the catcher. First team to steal 10 bases/record 10 outs win!</p> <p>Passed ball contest; Use three players as pitchers and 2-3 catchers rotating on each pitch. All other players are base runners at 3rd base. Pitcher will throw a pitch to a coach located on the first base line. Another coach stands behind the catcher and throws a passed ball. First team to record 10 outs/10 runs wins!</p>
Throwing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Relay 2. Cutoff 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Emphasize outfielders getting to the ball quickly and getting the ball into the infield Quickly. Emphasize infielder's proper footwork to receive a relay: Relay man should stand with glove side foot towards the infield and glove below glove side shoulder. Always catch the ball on the glove side with two hands. Catch and relay to base. 2. Emphasize the use of a cutoff anytime the ball gets Passed the outfielders normal position. Shortstop is cutoff for balls hit from straight centerfield to left field. Second baseman is cutoff for balls hit to RF 	<p>Relay drill- Multiple lines of three players or more players; first player throws to middle player; middle player has to catch the ball, rotate and throw to third player. Repeat the other way. Rotate players into middle, spread players out as they get more accurate. Emphasize proper footwork on the relay and accurate throws.</p>
Fielding	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Backhand 2. Back up 3. Lead runner 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Backhand: Position glove with the thumb facing down, fingers pointing outward, glove open toward ball. Forehand: Position glove with the thumb facing up, fingers pointing outward, glove open toward ball. 2. Emphasize that every player on the field Has a responsibility on every pitched ball If not fielding a hit ball, or catching a thrown Ball, every should be covering a base or backing up a base. Emphasize Teamwork 3. Emphasize that the objective should be to retire the lead runner with less than 2 outs. Set up situations to work on getting the lead runner out. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cross-fire, Hit balls to the back hand side of the player. 2. Situations- Runner on 1st less than two outs, runners on 2nd and 3rd, less than 2 outs, runners on 3rd less than 2 outs, etc.



Minors

Pitching	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Grip 2. Stance 3. Mechanics 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Four or two seam grip on ball in glove, back of glove hand toward home plate. 2. Stretch. For right handed pitcher, right foot Resting against rubber, left foot next to right foot, but slightly ahead of right foot. 3. 3 steps-start with throwing side foot resting against the rubber and feet together. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Balance; glove side knee up with top of Leg parallel to ground, lower leg at right angle. B. Stride- move to the "T" stance: throwing Hand comes down out of the glove, circle arm back, with ball facing 2nd base. Glove arm points towards home plate and is "pulled back" to side as throwing arm comes forward. C. Follow through with the throwing hand. 	<p>Towel drill-place a ball on a batting tee and have the player hold a towel in their throwing hand. Using proper mechanics have them "snap the towel" onto the ball so to achieve the ball rolling off the tee back at the pitcher.</p> <p>Balance Drill- Have the pitcher Get in the stretch position and pick up their knee and balance for 10 seconds. Make it a contest among two or more pitchers.</p>
Catching	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Set a target 2. Block the ball 3. Throw to 2nd base 4. Passed balls 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Set target in different parts of the strike zone. 2. Emphasize blocking the ball, drop to their knees, glove hand with back of glove on the ground. 3. Turn, toss helmet, stay low and quick to the ball. 	Passed ball drill

Coaching**Majors Division****Basic Skills**

Skill Area	Specific Skill	What to Teach	Drills to Reinforce
Hitting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Situational Bunting 2. Pitch location & speed 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Emphasize the psychological part of the hitting game. When is a good time to bunt? Less than 2 outs? Third base man/first baseman playing behind the base? Slow catcher? 2. Majors pitchers are the best in Little League division. They will typically not throw two pitches to the same location (intentionally) two times in a row. They know how to change speeds. Emphasize the mental aspect of hitting. Know your count with two strikes will the pitcher Throw down the middle or out of the zone? Fastball or change/curve? Outside or inside? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bunting. Set up cones in front of home plate. 10 bunts to 3rd base/10 to first base. Make it competitive and divide the players into teams. 2. Five pitch drill. This drill emphasizes hitting with two strikes. The players get five pitches from the coach, all over the zone and at various speeds. Emphasizes making contact on a variety of pitches.
Baserunning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Alertness on the base paths 2. Taking the Extra base 3. Diving back Into base 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Watch your base coach on every ball pitched and hit. Did the ball get by the catcher? Is the catcher slow getting the ball back to the pitcher? 2. Get a two step bounce off the base after every pitch. Anticipate a hit or passed ball –you want to get to the next base! Force the fielder to make a perfect throw! 3. Base runners may dive back into any Base head first. To do so, runner should Be taught to reach with their right hand and turn their head away from the direction of the thrown ball. They should aim their hand towards the outside corner of the base. 4. Runners should freeze on line drives with less than two outs and run regardless when there are two outs. 	
Throws	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cutoffs and Relays 2. Run Downs 3. Long Throws 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Accuracy and speed. The game is much faster at the major league level. 2. Run the runner back to the base they came from, make only 1 throw if possible. 3. Accuracy and arm strength. Make this part of every warm up during practice. (i.e. long toss). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. See AAA 2. Work the three scenarios (1st and 2nd, 2nd and 3rd, 3rd and home) 3. Play 21-the first pair during warm ups to complete 21 Accurate throws without a drop wins!
Fielding	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cross over step 2. Outfield foot work 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To gain momentum for an accurate throw. Upon catching a fly ball/ground ball, the throwing foot crosses behind the glove side 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Emphasize as part of practice game throwing warm ups.

		foot before striding with the glove side foot. 2. First step back on all fly balls. On all ground	2. Outfield cross fire-Have a line of players in left-center and right center, respectively.
Fielding Cont-		balls, fly balls, the player wants to be moving towards the infield as they catch the ball and into the cross-over step.	Have one player each at SS and 2b. One coach is located on the 3b line and one on 1b line. The coach on the 3b line hits ground balls and fly balls to RF (vice versa for coach on 1b line). Outfield catches and throws to their respective relay man (emphasize relay man footwork). Outfield replaces relay man who joins the outfield line.
Pitching	1. Off-speed 2. Location	1. Teach a change up grip 2. Teach pitchers that they should throw their pitches to a variety of locations. Most little leaguers can hit a fastball down the middle-do not throw that pitch. Work with a catcher in every practice.	1. Throw 40 pitches. 10 Low and inside, 10 Low and outside, 10 high and outside, 10 change ups.
Catching	1. Pickoff 2. Location 3. Framing	1. Snap throws to 1b/3b. Develop a signal from catcher to 1b/3b and OF to back up. 2. Emphasize moving the target. What pitch did he hit last time? 3. Hold the catch to help the umpire!	1. Place runners at 1b have coach throw a pitch to the catcher who throws to 1b to Try an pick off the runners Who is "leading off" on the pitch. Make it a contest of two teams. First team to 10 outs/10 return to base safely-wins. 2. Catchers to work with pitchers.

