

Technical / Tactical / Learning Curriculum & Play to Stay Values

Foundation is about enjoyment, and the mastering of basic softball skills. The Foundation Matrix supports coaches by outlining the necessary skills young players should be developing at this age.

The environments and experiences youth are exposed to will influence their ongoing choices to engage in physical activity and sport. Variety, enjoyment, and skill development are crucial, along with a positive, supportive, empathetic environment will enable boys and girls to learn and be challenged at their own individual pace.

Technical Skills

I-Introduce D-Develop C-Consolidate R-Refine M-Maintain

Bold text – skill/tactic is a priority at this stage

Offensive Skills

| SKILL | SUB-SKILL | I | D | C | R | M |
|----------------|-----------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Hitting | Hitting Mechanics | | D | | | |
| | Avoiding Pitch | I | D | C | R | |
| | Pitch Recognition | | D | | | |
| | Mental Preparedness | | D | | | |
| | Protecting runner on steals | I | | | | |
| Bunting | Sacrifice | I | | | | |

| SKILL | SUB-SKILL | I | D | C | R | M |
|----------------------|--|-----------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Baserunning | Getting out of Batter's Box | I | D | C | | |
| | Running to 1st Base | | D | C | | |
| | Rounding Base | | D | C | | |
| | Lead-off | | D | | | |
| | Tagging Up | | D | | | |
| | <i>Stealing</i> | | | C | | |
| | <i>Rundowns</i> | | D | | | |
| | <i>Reading & Reacting to pass ball</i> | | D | | | |
| | <i>Reading & Reacting to Coach's Signals</i> | | D | | | |
| | Sliding | Bent Leg Slide | | D | C | |
| Retreat Slide | | | D | | | |
| <i>Pop Up Slide</i> | | | D | | | |

Defensive Skills

| SKILL | SUB-TACTIC | I | D | C | R | M |
|------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Throwing | Overhand Throwing | | D | C | | |
| | <i>Side Arm Throwing</i> | I | D | | | |
| | Flips | | D | | | |
| | <i>Fake Throw</i> | | D | | | |
| | Transition Footwork | | D | | | |
| Receiving | Soft hands | | D | | | |
| | <i>Exchange</i> | | D | | | |
| Fielding | Ready Position - Position specific | | D | C | | |
| | Tracking ball and predicting ball path | | D | | | |
| | Ground ball fielding mechanics | | D | C | | |
| | Fly Ball fielding mechanics | | D | C | | |
| | Footwork | | D | | | |
| | Communication with teammates | | D | | | |
| | <i>Fielding at Fence</i> | | D | | | |
| | <i>Playing the sun</i> | | D | | | |
| Positional Play | Backing up and coverage | | D | | | |
| | Force Plays | | D | C | | |
| | Tag Plays | | D | | | |
| | <i>Continuation Plays</i> | | D | | | |
| | <i>Cut-offs</i> | | D | | | |
| | <i>Relays</i> | | D | | | |

| SKILL | SUB-TACTIC | I | D | C | R | M |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pitcher | Pitching Technique | | D | | | |
| | Zone Management | | D | | | |
| | Fastball | | D | | | |
| | <i>Change</i> | | D | | | |
| | <i>Game Management (Personal)</i> | | D | | | |
| Battery (Pitcher / Catcher) | <i>Game Management (Strategy)</i> | | D | | | |
| | <i>Count Management</i> | | D | | | |
| | <i>Pass ball at fence</i> | | D | | | |
| Catcher | Receiving Position | | D | | | |
| | Blocking Balls | | D | | | |
| | <i>Framing</i> | | D | | | |
| | Throwing – Around batter | | D | | | |
| | <i>Throwing – From Knees</i> | | D | | | |
| | Fielding Pop-ups | | D | | | |
| | <i>Giving Signals</i> | | D | | | |
| 2nd Base | <i>Double Play Footwork</i> | | D | | | |
| | <i>Double Play Footwork</i> | | D | | | |
| Short Stop | <i>Double Play Footwork</i> | | D | | | |
| Outfield | Safety Catch | | D | | | |
| | <i>Do or Die Play</i> | | D | | | |



TECHNICAL SKILLS

I-Introduce D-Develop C-Consolidate R-Refine M-Maintain

Bold text – skill/tactic is a priority at this stage

Offensive Tactics

| TACTIC | SUB-TACTIC | I | D | C | R | M |
|--------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Offensive Plays | <i>Sacrifice Bunt</i> | I | | | | |
| | <i>Steal</i> | I | | | | |
| | <i>Hit & Run</i> | I | | | | |
| | <i>Run & Hit</i> | I | | | | |
| | <i>Push Bunt</i> | I | | | | |
| | <i>Bunt & Run</i> | I | | | | |
| | <i>Double Steal</i> | I | | | | |
| | <i>Run on Contact</i> | I | | | | |
| Reading Signals | Baserunning Signals | I | D | | | |
| | Offensive Coach Signals | I | D | | | |
| Situational Baserunning | <i>Run & Hit</i> | I | | | | |
| | <i>1st & 3rd Straight Steal</i> | I | | | | |
| | <i>Rundowns</i> | I | D | | | |
| | <i>Drawing Throws</i> | I | | | | |
| Hitting Tactics | <i>Fake Bunt</i> | I | | | | |
| | Taking the extra base | I | D | | | |

Defensive Tactics

| TACTIC | SUB-TACTIC | I | D | C | R | M |
|--------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Defensive Jurisdiction | Ground Ball | I | D | | | |
| | Fly ball | I | D | | | |
| | <i>Fly ball (gap hits)</i> | I | | | | |
| Double Play Coverage | Pop Up & non-tagging runner | I | D | C | | |
| | <i>2nd Base to 1st Base</i> | I | | | | |
| | <i>3rd Base to 1st Base</i> | I | | | | |
| | <i>Home to 1st Base</i> | I | | | | |
| Steal Coverage | <i>Straight steal</i> | I | | | | |
| Short Game Defence | <i>Bunt Coverage - Sacrifice</i> | I | | | | |
| | <i>Bunt for base hit</i> | I | | | | |
| | <i>Positioning – hitter's tendencies</i> | I | | | | |
| Team Defensive Strategy | <i>Positioning - # of outs</i> | I | | | | |
| | <i>Positioning – runners on base</i> | I | | | | |
| | <i>Positioning - environmental conditions</i> | I | | | | |
| | <i>Playing lead runner</i> | I | | | | |
| | <i>Defending – winning run/tying run</i> | I | | | | |
| | <i>Pass Ball Coverage</i> | I | | | | |
| | <i>Relays</i> | I | | | | |
| | <i>Cut-Offs</i> | I | | | | |
| | <i>Rundowns</i> | I | | | | |
| | <i>1st & 3rd Plays</i> | I | | | | |

Learning Curriculum

| STAGE | LEARN |
|----------------------------|--|
| Focus | Fun and mastery of basic softball skills |
| Physical (fitness) | Introduce general physical conditioning |
| | Importance of warm-up/cool down |
| Cognitive | Introduce elements of decision-making |
| | Rules and ethics |
| Game modifications | Teach all players to pitch |
| | Rotate positions |
| | Equal playing time |
| | Use 11/12 inch flexi ball |
| | Large home plate and strike zone |
| Session planning | Limit the number of innings pitched |
| | Up to 60 minutes |
| | Appropriate modifications to suit level of players |
| | Appropriate skill progressions |
| | High levels of activity |
| | Positive environment |
| | Emphasis on learning through play |
| Players learn 2+ positions | |

Play to Stay Values

The Play to Stay Values were derived from a review of best practice initiatives from around the world for youth sport. Research identified the following values had a positive influence on youth engagement in sport. The review determined that when the Play to Stay Values were delivered successfully there was a decrease in youth dropout. The values were proven to positively impact players, coaches and parents promoting inclusiveness, growth, motivation, friendship, and commitment.

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|---|--------------------------|--|
| 1 | Positive Feedback | All communication is positive and promotes growth |
| 2 | Belonging | Every player feels connected to the game |
| 3 | Effort | Greater effort and physical fitness are promoted |
| 4 | Respect | Everyone has due regard for each other's feelings and rights |
| 5 | Enjoyment | Players have fun |