

# AIRDRIE GIRLS SOFTBALL ASSOCIATION:

AIRDRIE **ANGELS** FASTPITCH  
COACHES HANDBOOK



AIRDRIE GIRLS SOFTBALL ASSOCIATION:

[www.airdriegirlssoftball.com](http://www.airdriegirlssoftball.com)

# AGSA COACHES HANDBOOK

**January 2019**

## Introduction:

The Airdrie Angels Fastpitch program offers membership to all children aged 7-19 who reside North of Highway 1 (to the Wheatland County border) and west of Highway 9. This includes the city of Airdrie, the towns of Crossfield, Carstairs, and Didsbury and the hamlet of Balzac. Our program is focused on skills and development but also teamwork, friendship and fun. Children between 5 and 7 can also become members of our **Learn to Play** team.

## Our Purpose

Our program, above all else, wants to offer a quality softball program to the youth of our community, and as a result, cultivate a life long love of the game with our members.

## Coaches Handbook Index

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## VOLUNTEERING PROCEDURE

### Purpose

**AGSA** wants to ensure the sustained success of our Fastpitch program. Volunteering can also be a great way to meet new people, learn new skills and gain valuable experience.

### Procedure

The **Airdrie Angels Fastpitch** program has many positions to volunteer for both at the Association Level and the Team Level. No experience is required or necessary to become a volunteer and most opportunities require little or no training. We will provide you with any necessary training with plenty of support!

Examples of Volunteer positions at the Association Level positions are; *President, Vice President, Treasurer, Equipment Manager, Coach and Player Coordinator, Learn to Play Coordinator, Registrar, Fundraising Coordinator, Team Wear Coordinator, Media Coordinator, or Tournament Coordinator*. Team level positions examples are; *Coach, Assistant Coach, Team Manager, Bench Mom, Scorekeeper and Umpire*.

If you are interested in volunteering please review and fill out the **AGSA Volunteer Application Form** found in the **Forms Section** of the **AGSA** website. Coaches and Assistant coaches should read and follow the **Coaching Policy and Procedure** section of this document.

Anyone who wishes to volunteer with AGSA as a Coach or Assistant Coach must complete a criminal record check that is available through the local RCMP detachment in Airdrie. Criminal record checks must be completed every three years.

- Most Criminal Record Checks in Airdrie are processed the same day, but it may take up to four weeks.
- You will be required to bring two forms of Valid Identification (ID) (one photo ID with a local address and one other).
- The cost of a criminal record check is \$15 with a letter that AGSA will provide. \*\* They will not start the process without the letter.
- For more information, please go to <https://www.airdrie.ca/index.cfm?serviceID=842>

## COACHING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

### Purpose

**AGSA** wants to thank you for choosing to coach! The **Airdrie Angels Fastpitch** program is committed to helping you succeed in your role.

### Policy

Coaches are the core of the **Airdrie Angels Fastpitch** program. Our club wants to provide our coaches with all of the resources and training they may require in order to competently train our athletes in; proper technical skills, drills and game play, all of which will help keep them healthy, fit and able to compete and have fun.

Potential coaches or assistant coaches should fill out an **AGSA Coaching Application Form** which can be found on the **AGSA** website, these can be filled out and emailed to [president@airdriegirlssoftball.com](mailto:president@airdriegirlssoftball.com).

### Procedure

The **AGSA** has 3 requirements for ALL coaches AND assistant coaches:

- Calgary Minor Softball Coaches Orientation **OR** Level 1 NCCP (Community On-Going Sport)
- A complete and Current Criminal Record Check (see [Volunteering Procedure](#))
- The Coaches Respect in Sport Certification.

If a team (U12 to U19) would like to go to provincials, that team will require at least one coach to have MED (Making Ethical Decisions) and NCCP Certification (Level 1 or 2).

**AGSA** will pay for NCCP Certification training for Coaches but the coach will be required to pay for the training up front. Once the training is completed and you forward your certificate of achievement to [admin@airdriegirlssoftball.com](mailto:admin@airdriegirlssoftball.com) and you finish 1 season of coaching for **AGSA** you will be reimbursed for the expense.

We have many different resources to help you succeed as a coach in our association.

- The AGSA Coaches Handbook can be found on our [Coaches Page](#)
- Drills and Practice plans can be found on our [Coaches Page](#)
- CMSA Rule Book ([http://calgaryminorsoftball.com/files/2018\\_calgary\\_minor\\_softball\\_rulebook.pdf](http://calgaryminorsoftball.com/files/2018_calgary_minor_softball_rulebook.pdf))

Check on our **AGSA** contacts page and reach out to the board members if you need some help with the Coach or Assistant coach position, or if you have any questions about any aspect of the position.

# FAIR PLAY PLEDGE

## Purpose

**AGSA** in part with **Calgary Minor Softball** want to ensure that all association members have a safe, fun and rewarding season in the Airdrie Angels Fastpitch program.

## FAIR PLAY CODES

### **AGSA (Via: Calgary Minor Softball Association)**

#### **.....for COACHES**

1. I will be reasonable when re-scheduling games and practices, remembering that players have other interests and obligations.
2. I will teach my players to play fairly and to respect the rules, officials, and opponents
3. I will ensure that all players get instruction, support and playing time in an equitable manner
4. I will not ridicule or yell at my players for making mistakes or for performing badly.
5. I will remember that players play to have fun and must be encouraged to have confidence in themselves
6. I will make sure that equipment and playing fields are safe and match players ages and abilities
7. I will remember that participants need a coach they can respect. I will be generous with praise and set a good example
8. I will obtain proper training and continue to upgrade my coaching skills
9. I will work in cooperation with officials for the benefit of the game
10. I will respect and inspire respect from my players for the playing facilities provided for my team and our opponents

#### **.....for PLAYERS**

1. I will play softball because I want to, not because others or coaches want me to
2. I will play by the rules of CMSA and in the spirit of the game
3. I will control my temper – fighting or 'mouthing off' can spoil the activity for everyone
4. I will respect my opponents
5. I will do my best to be a true team player
6. I will remember that winning isn't everything – that having fun, improving my skills, making friends and doing my best are also important
7. I will acknowledge all good plays and performances - those of my team and of my opponents
8. I will remember that coaches and officials are there to help me. I will accept their decisions and show them respect
9. I will respect the playing facilities provided for me team and my opponent

### .....for PARENTS

1. I will not force my child to participate in softball
2. I will remember that my child plays sports for his or her enjoyment, not mine
3. I will encourage my child to play by the rules and to resolve conflict without resorting to hostility or violence
4. I will teach my child that doing one's best is as important as winning so that my child will never feel defeated by the outcome of the game
5. I will make my child feel like a winner every time by offering praise for competing fairly and trying hard
6. I will never ridicule or yell at my child for making a mistake or losing a competition.
7. I will remember that children learn best by example. I will applaud good plays/performance by both my child's team and their opponents.
8. I will never question the officials' judgment or honesty in public.
9. I will support all efforts to remove verbal and physical abuse from children's sporting activities
10. I will respect and show appreciation for the volunteer coaches who give their time to provide sport activities for my child.

### .....FAIR PLAY ATHLETE – COACH AGREEMENT

#### **ATHLETE**

I agree to:

- Always play by the rules
- Never argue with an official. When a call is disputed, I'll let the coach or team captain handle it.
- Remember that I'm playing because I enjoy the sport. Winning is fun, but so are many other things about the sport.
- Work at achieving my personal best and to not get discouraged if it's not the best.
- Show appreciation for good plays/performance, even by opponents.
- Control my temper and not be a show-off.

#### **COACH**

I agree to:

- Remind my athletes that winning a game or trophy isn't the only measure of success.
- Encourage my athletes and offer constructive criticism.
- Instruct my athletes to follow both the letter and the spirit of the rules.
- Teach my athletes that officials are an important part of the game. They should be respected at all times, as should their decisions.
- Encourage my athletes to be good sports.
- Give every participant a chance to play and learn the skills.
- Remember that my actions speak louder than my words.

# INTRODUCTION TO COACHING

## Introduction

Welcome to the Airdrie Girls Softball Association and Thank you for volunteering your time to coach.

Whether you have played baseball or softball before or even if you've coached before this handbook contains fundamental skills along with examples of drills you can run to create a practice scheme or plan. These videos and drill sheets will not only prepare you to teach and correct your team's fundamental skills but also keep them engaged in the practice and prepared for every aspect of the game.

**Section one** of this handbook is dedicated to educating new coaches about proper fundamental skill techniques. They also lay the foundation of a player's skill set. The Airdrie Angels Fastpitch program strives for every coach to be teaching their players, at every level, the proper techniques. Not only will this keep a consistent message to all our players throughout their club membership, it also will improve the overall safety for our players and eliminate injuries related to improper fundamental skill techniques.

**Section two** of this handbook is printable reminders of Drills that can be run for all the different Skills that are used in Fastpitch; Fielding, Hitting, Base Running, Pitching and Catching.

**Section three** of this handbook helps with the other stuff coaches are asked to do during a season. It includes a pre-season coaches (parents) meeting, information to pass on to your team managers, as well as links on where to find rules and more information.

\*Remember that practices and pre-game warm ups should be fun for the players so ask them at the end of a practice what they like and what they did not like and tailor the practice with those comments in mind.

- Airdrie Girls Softball Association

## SECTION ONE

### Player Position Descriptions

#### **Pitcher:**

Throws the softball from the pitcher's mound to the catcher. The pitcher uses an underarm motion to pitch the ball toward the "strike zone". After making a pitch, the pitcher gets ready to field balls hit up the middle and be prepared to cover the other bases. When a runner is on 3<sup>rd</sup> and the catcher has missed the ball, the pitcher follows their pitch to home plate, so they are ready to help get the runner out.

#### **Catcher:**

Plays in a semi-crouched position behind home plate and receives pitches thrown by the pitcher. The catcher uses their glove and body to block pitches. When runners are on base the catcher is ready to throw to 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> base to get the runner out. The catcher also receives throws from fielders attempting to make outs at home plate.

**1<sup>st</sup> Base:**

Positioned just to the left of the first base. Her main role is to make fielding plays on balls hit towards 1st base. If the ball is not coming in the direction of 1<sup>st</sup> base, the player gets in position on the base, ready to receive the ball. For safety of both players, the player can only touch the white part of the base.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Base:**

Plays in the gap between the bag at second and the first baseman. She fields "grounders" and "pop ups" hit to this side of the infield. When the ball is not hit in her directions she goes to the base ready to receive throws from fielders attempting to make outs at 2nd base. When there is a runner on 1<sup>st</sup> the player is ready to get to her base between pitches to stop a steal at 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Short Stop:**

Fields the balls hit to the infield between second and third base. She covers 2<sup>nd</sup> base (along with the second baseman) and is often involved in force plays and "double plays" with the second baseman. Also covers 3<sup>rd</sup> base when 2<sup>nd</sup> base is fielding the ball.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Base:**

Plays to the left of third base and covers any plays there. Receives throws from other fielders attempting to make outs at 3rd base. When there is a runner on 2<sup>nd</sup> the player is ready to get to her base between pitches to stop a steal at 3<sup>rd</sup>. When there is a runner on 3<sup>rd</sup>, player is always ready to make and receive throws from the catcher, especially between pitches.

**Outfielder:**

Positioned beyond the infield in Left, Right or centre, they catch and field "fly balls," line drives, and ground balls hit into the outfield. The players also throw the balls in to make a play.

**Batter:**

Positioned in the batter's box at home plate. Between pitches they must move out of the batter's box for safety and to get out the field of play. If the batter hits the ball into the field of play they run to 1<sup>st</sup> base. The batter then becomes the runner. At 1<sup>st</sup> base the runner must decide to run through or make a turn to 2<sup>nd</sup> base. If they run through the MUST touch the orange half of 1<sup>st</sup> base only. If a runner wants to steal a base they can run as soon as the pitch leaves the pitchers hand, or they can wait and decide once the ball is not caught by the catcher.

## Fundamental and Position Training (How to Videos)

This section is going to include brief descriptions of the major fundamental skills that are required for players to be a well-rounded Fastpitch player. These may be a little too in depth for beginner players, but these skills are something our program should be striving for as the players progress.

### Fielding:

#### **Throwing:**

Coaches should be focussing on proper throwing techniques at all ages and skill levels. Ensuring proper technique will not only promote faster and more accurate throws but will also prevent injury.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fB6-rRxMVE>

#### **Catching (Receiving):**

Coaches should also pay close attention to players in their ready position for catching and fielding. Ready position basics are a building block of many of the Fielding skills and promote faster reaction times and thereby reduce the likelihood of being struck by the ball or missing it completely.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKwgYM3Nzo8>

#### **Fielding (Infield and Outfield):**

Fielding techniques for both infield and outfield.

<https://youtu.be/yV0Cljuiz4o?t=1s>

#### **Ground Balls:**

Ground Ball fundamentals.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TM6hnPz8-uo>

#### **Fly Balls:**

Fly Ball Fundamentals.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QZ4lrNN5Pv8>

## Hitting:

### **How to Hit a Softball:**

Teaching the proper Fastpitch swing is imperative at all ages and skill level of players. Breaking down the swing and being able to diagnose swing problems will be key in your teams hitting success.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pUa2OEo8HSI>

## Throughout Practice:

There are several items that need to be stressed throughout the entire practice and through any drills of any kind. These should be enforced in every situation:

### **Calling for the Ball:**

One of the simplest things a player can do is calling for the ball. Shouting, "mine" when fielding prevents:

- a) No-one going for the ball – because they all thought someone else was going for it.
- b) Kids running into each other.

### **Two-Hand Catching:**

Proper catching technique while fielding is so important. It allows the player to:

- a) Ensures the ball is secured in your glove

Reduces transfer time from glove to throw

## SECTION TWO

### Introduction

Team practices are recommended but not mandatory. Every coach will need to arrange their own practice time. AGSA has use of the four Airdrie diamonds from Monday through Friday 6pm to 9pm as well as Saturday and Sunday 10am – 2pm and 5pm – 9pm starting on the last week of April. To find and book practice time please consult the AGSA website's calendar to find free time then check the [CMSA game schedules](#) to ensure there are no conflicts with league games. Then you can email the club Vice President at [vicepresident@airdriegirlssoftball.com](mailto:vicepresident@airdriegirlssoftball.com) to book the practice time that works for you.

\* Keep in mind the warm up time before each game is NOT considered practice time. \*

### Team Practice Breakdown

This section is going to provide some basic drills that you can perform with your team. Please see an Index of Drills below, we have divided them into 6 sections; Warm up, Fielding, Hitting, Running the Bases, Pitching and Catching.

### Index of Drills

- Fastpitch Warm Up
- Pitching Warm Up
- Fielding Drills
- Hitting Drills
- Coverages
- Video Links
- Practice Plans

# FASTPITCH WARM UP

## Introduction

The Fastpitch Warm Up is done before each practice and each game!

## Muscle Warm Up

Jogging:

- Light run/jog around the field (half field for U10 and under)
- Line up at the foul line facing the field for Dynamic Stretching

Dynamic Stretching

Dynamic Warm Up

- Butt Kicks
- High Knees
- Mini Skips
- Power Skips

Get Loose (stationary) (Pick 4 or 5 from this list)

- Arm Circles
- Lateral Arm Swings
- Giant Mixer
- External Rotations
- Trunk Rotation
- Leg Swings (Forwards/Backwards)
- Stationary Lateral Lunges
- Iron Cross
- Scorpion

Get Loose (move across the field) (pick 3 and go back and forth with each)

- Knee Hug to Front Lunge and twist
- Quad stretch and toe touch
- Glute stretch and calf raise
- Backward Lunge and overhead reach
- Inch worm

Get Fired Up (2 – 3 minutes)

- Lateral Shuffle (3 forward / 1 back, repeat)
- Lateral Cross-Overs (3 forward / 1 back, repeat)
- Jump then 75% max speed sprint

Form a circle to complete the Stretching

- 10 ankle/wrist rolls both directions each side (40 total)
- Sitting on the ground in splits, reach and hold each foot for a few seconds, one foot at a time. (3 each side, 6 total)
- Standing, pull right foot up to the butt with right hand, then repeat with left foot and hand. (3 each side, 6 total)

## Throwing Warm Up

Pair up the players in two rows facing each other about 10 feet apart

- Start on knees (glove knee up) 10 wrist flicks each. (focus the girls on keeping elbow high – around shoulder level)
- One of the rows can now step back 2 strides, (still on knees, glove knee up) start with hand back, ball facing away, throw and follow through, throwing hand should finish by thigh, 10 throws
- The same row can now step another 2 strides back, stationary feet parallel to your partner, hand back (ball facing away) full follow through, 10 throws
- Change to full throws, watching foot work, step with throwing hand foot sideways, plant glove foot pointing at target, thumb to thigh, elbows high (ball facing away), then throw and follow through, 10 throws.
- Same side can take 2 more strides back, longer throws, same technique but with more arc on the throw, ensure you are hitting your partner in the chest, 10 throws.
- Same side can take 2 more strides back, ensure the players are adjusting the arc to match the distance, 10 throws.

# PITCHING WARM UP

## Introduction

**It is very important for a pitcher to get a warm up completed before going in, at any age group**, this will avoid most injuries that can happen. As a coach, you will be given resources to make sure you can warm up your pitchers with at least nets and a ball. However, this is a great opportunity to engage a parent to act as your “bull pen” manager and catch for them.

\*Anyone catching for pitchers (parents, coaches or otherwise) are required by CMSA to wear an approved mask at any time during the warm up or game. Failure to do so could result in forfeiting the game. This should also be enforced at practice to protect the catchers as well as reinforce the rule.

\*\*There are also rules for pitchers, for age groups U10 to U14, with regards to innings allowed to pitch in any game. Make sure you are aware of those before the start of the season. These rules are in place for player safety.

## Warm Up

Please have pitchers run the Fastpitch Warm Up up to (but not including the throwing warm up) before they start the pitching warm up. Line pitchers up in pairs with catchers, coaches or parent volunteers.

- 10 Wrist Flicks from about 6 – 8 feet away from the catcher
- 10 throws from the 9 o'clock position (with no step) about 20 feet away
- 10 throws from the 9 o'clock position (with step) about 20 feet away
- 10 full windmill throws (with step), starting sideways to the catcher 25 feet away
- 10 – 15 throws, full windup, full distance (30, 35 or 38 feet)

Pitchers need to work on correct form throughout their windup and delivery. A quick arm and strong throws along with a full follow through. If a player can throw change ups they can mix them in.

Coaches need to be watching young pitchers during warm up to correct their form and give advice to correct any issues, like:

- Following Through
- Striding
- Looking at their Target (Catcher)
- Proper grip on the ball
- Proper spin (wrist flicks)
- Ball location during pitch (power line)
- Fast arm speed

Once identified, focus on the areas they need more help on to make them a better pitcher. As they get the feel for a solid pitch, ensure you encourage them with positive feedback, too!

# FEILDING DRILLS

## Introduction

Proper technique while making a play for the ball and then delivering the throw will greatly improve team defense while producing more outs, either on the bases or through catching fly balls. Teaching each player where to play the ball when they receive it along with how to cover other positions when the ball does not come to them is the second part of good team defense and will reduce the runs scored against you.

The increased technical skills coupled with an increased knowledge of the game/position comes with repetition and game experience. While game experience is tough to re-create fielding drills that show real game scenarios will give them confidence to deliver during a game. As we know confidence is key when it comes playing any sport at a high level.

The suggest times are only estimates to help coaches prepare a practice plan. The durations and frequency will ultimately be dictated by the needs of the team.

## Technical Skills

### Ready Position (Infield):

For an infielder the ready position starts with players standing at the correct position in the field, then their feet should be wider than shoulder width apart, butt should be down, with their glove should be out in front, thumbs on both hands pointed up, and they will be watching the batter. They should be on the balls of their feet ready to react with every pitch.

### Ready Position (Outfield):

For an outfielder the ready position starts with players standing at the correct position in the field, glove and throwing hand relaxed, moving themselves back and forth and watching the batter.

### Good throwing Position:

For fielders the throwing position for fielding includes keeping the elbows up, a proper grip on the ball, eyes on the target, step toward the target and ensure to follow through.

## Fielding Drills

### **Infield Ground Balls** (all infielders):

This drill will have the players receiving ground balls and then throwing them to either a coach or player. This drill is a common warm up drill in pre-game as well as a staple in regular practice.

There are multiple ways to do this drill, the players can lineup in small groups at each infield position or they can all just lineup in single file at one set location. If the players are in an infield scenario, then the drill is throwing to 1<sup>st</sup> base, if the players are just in a lineup, have them throw back to the hitter (home plate) where a catcher will receive the ball.

The coach is looking for good pick up techniques where the player moves to the ball and receives it on the inside of their front glove side foot for a forehand pickup. From there, the coach will look to ensure the player has good footwork on their throw, stepping toward the base and following through on their throw. The coach will also look to have the player's target the chest of the receiving player on the throw. This will prevent bad throws and reduce extra bases for the runner.

15 minutes

### **Backhand and Forehand** (hitter, catcher, regular balls 3 – 12 players):

Like the ground ball drills, this drill will help a player to pick up a ground ball, but it will specialize the technique for a ball that isn't hit directly to them.

Players can line up at one position in the infield or just in a straight line, if you have more coaches, try breaking up the players in two lines for increased repetition. There are 2 ways to run this drill:

- Ground Ball

This will be a standard ground ball rolled from the coach at about 20 feet away to either side of the player. The player should be able to reach the ball without having to move away from their starting position.

The player on the forehand pickup will step forward with their glove hand and make the pick up. Then transition to their throwing position by stepping and throwing back to the catcher. Move to the back of the line, do over on a miss.

The player on the backhand pickup will turn their body to the side of their throwing hand so their back is partially facing away from the hitter. Their glove will be open and facing the incoming ball and the player will attempt the pickup by moving their glove toward the ball. The player's elbow of their glove hand should be bent and the height of their body from the ground should be controlled with their legs. From there, the player will transition to their throwing position and throw back to the catcher.

- One-hop pick-ups

This will be a one bounce ball thrown by the coach at about 20 feet away to either side of the player. The player should be able to reach the ball without having to move away from their starting position.

The player on the forehand pickup will step forward with their glove hand and make the pick up. The player will attempt to time the bounce, so they can make a clean pickup, this could require additional steps forward if the throw is off. Then transition to their throwing position by stepping and throwing back to the catcher. Move to the back of the line, do over on a miss.

The player on the backhand pickup will turn their body to the side of their throwing hand so their back is partially facing away from the hitter. Their glove will be open and facing the incoming ball and the player will attempt the pickup by timing the bounce and moving their glove toward the ball. The player's elbow of their glove hand should be bent and the height of their body from the ground should be controlled with their legs. From there, the player will transition to their throwing position and throw back to the catcher.

For both drills, try and work the players out of stabbing at the ball. The idea is to create a confident pickup that leads to a smooth transition into a throw. The player will be balanced and less likely to make a throwing error.

15 minutes

### **Barehand Drill** (no gloves, regular balls 2 – 12 players):

The objective in this drill is to really work the players on the importance of two hand catches. This will lead to muscle memory when picking up ground balls and transitioning to throwing.

The players can pair up with one ball between the two of them. They players then roll the ball back and forth to each other making two hand ground ball pickups with a quick transition into their throwing position before rolling it back to their partner.

This is not a speed drill, coaches look for good pickups with two hands on the player's glove side foot and then a transition into a good throwing position.

10 minutes

### **Fly Ball Catches, 2 hand technique** (regular balls 3 – 12 players):

The objective of this drill is to work the players on getting a good position on making a catch on a fly ball and controlling the catch with 2 hands. This will lead to a good transition into a throw back to the infield to deter runners from advancing.

There can be different setups to this drill depending on how the players are doing. The players can line up in a straight line and the fly balls can be directed to their ready location. The other option is to have the players start in one location and send the fly ball

to another and have them run to make the catch. Throw the balls from 60-100 feet depending on the age group.

When the player runs for the ball, ensure they are drop stepping with the correct foot, a ball to the player's right will require them to step first with their right foot, left foot on the left side. This ensures that they will have a better chance to make the catch.

Two hands when making the catch will then ensure a smooth transition to their throwing position and then making a throw into the catcher. Have the player try again on a miss, correcting mistakes on movement or lack of hands.

15 minutes

### **Fly Ball Positioning** (tennis, tennis racket and helmets 3 – 12 players):

This drill is designed to have the player get under the fly ball, ensuring a good position for a catch.

Have the players don their batting helmets and have them out about 80 feet away from the coach. The coach will then hit fly balls into the air to the left or the right of the player, the player will attempt to run under the ball and have the tennis ball hit them in the helmet. This will help build the player's confidence in getting under the ball.

Ensure that the player is watching the ball all the way in and at the last second, letting it hit the helmet, some will get lucky but try and keep the player watching the whole time. The attempt here is to have the player get into position quickly and watch the ball into their glove. It's extremely fun for the players, so it can be a regular activity.

15 minutes

### **Relay throws** (regular balls 4 – 6 players in a row):

This drill is designed to train the players to accept a throw from another player and turn and relay the ball to another location quickly.

Have the players get in rows of 4 - 6 people and about 25 - 30 feet away from each other. Then start at one end and have the players throw to the next person down the row, when they reach the end, send it back down the row to the starting person. This is a fun relay for the players and making it a competition can help enhance the point of it.

Coaches should be looking for good two hand catches, good turns to the glove side of the player and good strong throws to the recipient's chest. Have the slower rows do a couple push ups or something to promote the competition.

15 minutes

## **Coverages** (team on the field, regular balls):

There are lots of different coverages out there, we will briefly cover the most common but for more detail, engage a senior coach for a practice or there are video resources available as well that will help in understanding who needs to be where during certain plays.

The most common are:

- **Bunt Coverage**

This is when the hitter has bunted the ball or has squared around to bunt, the first base person and the 3<sup>rd</sup> base person will charge the plate. From there, depending on who is on base, the other players have places to go to cover for those who are attempting to play the ball.

- **2<sup>nd</sup> base pick off**

This is when the catcher throws the ball down to 2<sup>nd</sup> base to throw out a runner stealing second. The shortstop will be receiving the ball at the base, the 2<sup>nd</sup> base person will circle in behind 2<sup>nd</sup> to cover the throw.

- **Outfield Coverages**

Outfielders need to help each other out on every hit to the outfield by running for a ball hit to their closest outfield teammate, this helps if one player falls or misses the ball, the other can get the ball and throw it in.

Outfielders also have the responsibility to help cover infield bases on throws as well. Those vary on the play, but outfielders will never just be standing around!

There are lots of videos on coverages, not all will necessarily be encountered or required at every age group, although, these should be worked on with every age group so their transition to the next age level doesn't come with a pile of new learning required. Please check the section on Coverages to see some more information.

Make it apart of every fielding practice plan to bring up and work on a couple coverages so that in time, the players will do them without thinking out there.

15 - 30 minutes

# HITTING DRILLS

## Introduction

Proper swing technique helps optimize power and achieves good contact on the ball. The hitting drills in this section will work on all aspects of a player's swing. They will work on hitting pitches all over the strike zone, and adapting to different pitches, as well as, hitting for power no matter where they make contact.

Hitting drills should be (if possible) set up as stations and having all the players work through the stations at the same time will make running these drills the most efficient.

## Technical Skills

Ready Position (Hitting):

A batter in the batter's box is in the ready position when the knees are slightly bent, the weight is on the balls of their feet, which are slightly wider than shoulder width apart with the front foot halfway up the plate. The player's knocking knuckles are lined up, hands are together, and their arms are away from their body about chin height, and the bat is off the shoulder.

## Hitting Drills (Tee)

**High, Low, Middle** (Tee required, 8 regular balls and a net, 3-4 per group):

This drill is designed to train the player how to adjust to hit balls at different heights of the strike zone.

The player will stand in their ready position in the batter's box and the coach or parent will set the tee height to either their knees, belt or chest. Give each player 5 swings at that height and then adjust or repeat as desired.

Ensure proper mechanics, small trigger step, correct weight transfer and good swing mechanics, correct where required.

10 Minutes

**Inside Pitch** (Tee Required, 8 regular balls, a Net and 3 - 4 per group):

This drill is designed to help the player adjust to hitting an inside pitch.

The player will stand in their ready position in the batter's box and the coach or parent will set the tee to belt height. Move the tee so the ball position would be on the inside edge of the plate. Give the player 5 swings, alternatively, raise and lower the tee to offer more challenge. Ensure proper mechanics, small trigger step out to adjust to pitch, correct weight transfer and good swing mechanics, correct where required.

10 Minutes

**Outside Pitch** (Tee Required, 8 regular balls, a Net and 3 - 4 per group):

This drill is designed to help the player adjust to hitting an outside pitch.

The player will stand in their ready position in the batter's box and the coach or parent will set the tee to belt height. Move the tee so the ball position would be on the outside edge of the plate. Give the player 5 swings, alternatively, raise and lower the tee to offer more challenge.

Ensure proper mechanics, small trigger step in to adjust to pitch, correct weight transfer and good swing mechanics, correct where required.

10 Minutes

**Keep Bat in the Zone** (Tee Required, 8 regular balls, a Net and 3 - 4 per group):

This drill is designed to keep the player's eye on the ball and their bat in the hitting zone to ensure quality hits.

The player will stand in their ready position in the batter's box and the coach or parent will set the tee to belt height. This drill can be done in three phases or it can just be a full hitting station.

The player, when swinging at the ball, needs to keep their eye on the tee straight through the swing, thus keeping their eyes and their bat in the hitting zone for as long as possible.

This can be done in three parts as well:

- Freeze at contact

Player swings and freezes just after hitting the ball, ensure their head stays down and watches the ball and remains fixed on the tee.

- Freeze at extension

Player swings and freezes at full extension, same thing as above, ensure their head stays down and watching the ball and eyes remain fixed on the tee.

- Full follow through

Player swings at full speed straight through, same thing as above, ensure their head stays down and watching the ball and eyes remain fixed on the tee.

15 minutes

### **One Arm Drills** (Tee Required, 8 regular balls, a Net, small bat and 3 - 4 per group):

These drills are designed to keep a player's hands in the correct position and the correct arm position at contact. It will also help players who drop their shoulder and "dip" at contact.

The player will position themselves in the batter's box on one knee, their forward leg up. The ball will be slightly forward of their raised knee on the lowered tee. Using just their forehand or their backhand to swing the small bat. Forehand swings; have the player stop the bat just after contact. You are looking to see if their palm is facing upwards when they hit the ball, this ensures good hand position.

Backhand swings; have the player stop at full extension after they hit the ball, their palm should be face down.

In addition, on the backhand, if the player is not making good contact, break down the backhand and have the players run through this process:

- Elbow pointing at the ball
- Knob of the bat at the ball
- Swing

These drills will enable the coach to really break down a player's swing and help to ensure good contact and good technique for hitting.

15 minutes

### **Hitting Drills (Whiffle Ball Toss)**

#### **Multi Coloured Balls** (Whiffle Balls and a net, 3-4 per group):

This drill will help the players to really focus on the ball when it is being pitched to them. This will increase the chance of good contact based on the player's focus.

Set a net up and have 5 to 10 of the multi coloured balls, have the player setup in their ready position about 8 feet away from the net, they will hit into the net.

The coach will kneel at 45 degrees from the player at the corner of the net, depending on the side the player hits from. The coach will then toss the balls one at a time for the player to hit. The play must call out the colour they see hit their bat at contact. Do this for each pitch.

10 minutes

**Multiple Balls** (Different colours and sizes of whiffle balls, a net 3 - 4 players):

This drill will help the players to really focus on the ball when it is being pitched to them. This will increase the chance of good contact based on the player's focus.

Set a net up and have 10 to 20 whiffle balls in different colours, have the player setup in their ready position about 8 feet away from the net, they will hit into the net.

The coach will kneel at 45 degrees from the player at the corner of the net, depending on the side the player hits from. The coach will then toss 2 different coloured balls and call out one of the colours. The player must hit the chosen colour, ignoring the other ball. Coaches can use balls of different sizes as well to increase the challenge. 5 - 10 pitches each.

10 minutes

**Hitting Drills (Soft Toss)**

(Net and 10 regular balls, 3 – 4 players):

This drill will help the player to adapt to various pitch locations as well as hand eye coordination. This is an excellent station to have setup before games as part of a pre-game warmup. This should also be a station used at every batting practice.

Set a net up and have 10 regular balls, have the player setup in their ready position about 8 feet away from the net, they will hit into the net. This drill can also just be done using the whole field, have the other players out catching fly balls and throwing them back in to the pitcher as they get them.

The coach will kneel at 45 degrees from the player at the corner of the net, depending on the side the player hits from. The coach will then toss balls for the player to hit. Try to throw the ball to the same spot each time if possible. To challenge hitters, the coach can vary the location of the pitch. 10 pitches each rapid fire.

Ensure the player resets their ready position each time and correct swing issues as required.

10 minutes

## Hitting Drills (Bunting)

(Pitcher or pitching machine, regular balls, a net and a plate, 3 – 4 players):

This drill is designed to work on a player's bunting.

Setup a net or pick a section of fence to backstop the player. Have the player setup in ready position, try and use a plate or a glove to simulate a plate so the player sets up properly in the batter's box. Pitch from about 20 - 30 feet away from the hitter and have them bunt the ball.

Call out bunt locations (1<sup>st</sup> base, 3<sup>rd</sup> base) to help challenge the player. Work on the player not revealing the bunt too early to increase the muscle memory of adapting from ready position to bunt position quickly.

Look for the player to have a good balanced stance when they move into bunt position, it may require that a new player be setup in their bunt position to receive pitches at first. Work to have the player then change from ready position to bunt position as the pitch is coming. The player should not be moving the bat to hit a ball at different heights, the player should be adjusting using their legs.

15 minutes

## Hitting Drills (Live Pitch)

(Pitcher and regular balls, on the field 11+ players):

This is just a standard game formation drill where the whole team participates. Often it is beneficial if you have a consistent pitcher who can pitch strikes regularly, to have them pitch in a game style hitting practice. The objective here is to incorporate hitting with infield and outfield plays as well, having base runners trying to make things happen on base.

20 - 25 minutes

# COVERAGES

## Introduction

There are a lot of different coverages out there, we will cover a few of the basic ones here. For more detail you can either ask a more senior coach to attend a practice or check the video links for something that could help in understanding who needs to be where during certain plays.

## Basic Coverages

### **Bunt Coverage:**

This is when the hitter has bunted the ball or has squared around to bunt, the 1<sup>st</sup> base person and the 3<sup>rd</sup> base person will charge the plate. From there, depending on who is on base, the other players have places to go to cover for those who are attempting to play the ball.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Base Pick Off:**

This is when the catcher throws the ball down to 2<sup>nd</sup> base to throw out a runner stealing second. The shortstop will be receiving the ball at the base, the 2<sup>nd</sup> base person will circle in behind 2<sup>nd</sup> to cover the throw.

### **Outfield Coverages:**

Outfielders need to help each other out on every hit to the outfield by running for a ball hit to their closest outfield teammate, this helps if one player falls or misses the ball, the other can get the ball and throw it in.

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There are lots of videos on coverages, not all will necessarily be encountered or required at every age group, although, these should be worked on with every age group so their transition to the next age level doesn't come with a pile of new learning required.

Make it a part of every fielding practice plan to bring up and work on a couple coverages so that in time, the players will do them without thinking out there.

15 - 30 minutes

## VIDEO LINKS

### Introduction

In the introduction to coaching section there were some links on throwing and catching, fielding and hitting. These are included in this list of Video Links, but we have added many more links for many aspects of the game.

### Basic Drills (Intro to Coaching)

Throwing:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fB6-rRxMVE>

Catching:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKwgYM3Nzo8>

Fielding:

<https://youtu.be/yV0Cljuiz4o?t=1s>

Ground Balls:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TM6hnPz8-uo>

Fly Balls:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QZ4lrNN5Pv8>

Hitting a Softball:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pUa2OEo8HSI>

## Hitting Drills

Player keeping their head and eyes in the hitting zone through contact:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Re0wqzVPk4>

Player dipping during their swing:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wWifRMGH2-o>

Swing Mechanics:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Jqyx8mDwkY>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l73XZlQeyAA>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HFXIONfyjek>

Preparing to hit at each at bat:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ON-hx6SuiEU>

One Arm Drill:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9xJVg9hXI6I>

Inside Pitch Drill off tee:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ntloXM7f5A>

Sacrifice Bunt:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uAEMboJHkKY>

Bunting to specific areas:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pWsaNbPU2LI>

Slap Hitting (Left Handed Hitter):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S1Ka4pfZqTM>

## Infield Drills

Good infield drills back to back:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XDwFdR4gluQ>

Catcher Position:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qwdeRteH3es>

Quick Hands Drill:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wjzrSDYzd2Q>

Soft Hands Drill:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-BgiappeTZk>

Ready Position to picking up grounder:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ccta-HWnXis>

## Base Running

How to Slide:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=65GBpY6Cjno>

Running to First Base:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EqcDG9\\_oni0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EqcDG9_oni0)

Rounding a base:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hy5eE4Ac2mk>

More Base Running:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=awBfD3Fm-y4>

Leadoffs:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fDGW8yymfiE>

## Other Resources

Youtube.com – search for specific drills or position specific drills or training.

# PRACTICE PLANS

## Introduction

Having written practice plans prepared before practices will help you focus on and accomplish your practice goals. It will also allow you to do this in the most efficient manner without players getting frustrated with time spent standing around waiting.

We are going to offer links to a few different practice plans as well as a link to a blank template for a practice plan.

## Practice Plans

The printed version of this handbook will have some example Practice Plans and Pre-Game warm up plans. They can be used as is or as an example, or to help make your own practice plans using the template found below.

### **Practice Plan (Blank)**

[https://gw.itsportsnet.com/leagues/13188/documents/AGSA%20Practice%20Plan%20\(Blank\).pdf](https://gw.itsportsnet.com/leagues/13188/documents/AGSA%20Practice%20Plan%20(Blank).pdf)

## SECTION THREE

### Introduction

Being a coach entails more than just teaching their players and managing during the games. There is work that needs to be done ahead of the season as well as things that could come up during a season or game that needs to be handled. This section is going to briefly explain some of these things. Most of the areas in this section have either a policy or a procedure in the [AGSA Policy and Procedure](#) manual.

### “Other” Coaches Duties

#### Parent Meetings

At the start of every season you will need to have a Parent Meeting to set expectations for the season; to your players, but more importantly, to their parents.

- Creating a Meeting agenda:

Before the Parent Meeting you should have an agenda set up to make sure you cover everything required and you have something to go back to if questions follow post meeting.

We have a sample meeting agenda that is available on our [Coaches Handbook webpage](#).

#### Parent Volunteer Requests

As part of the Parent meeting you will be requesting parent volunteers. There are a few must have parent positions (those with a (s) should have a backup (or more) if possible):

- Bench Mom(s)
- Team Manager
- Score Keeper(s)
- First Aid Coordinator *\*This role could be shared with one of the others\**

Also depending on the age group that you are coaching there are some other parent positions you could need:

- Parent Umpire(s) *\*Parent managers will be offered basic umpire training\**
- Parent “Bull-Pen Manager(s)” aka. Back catchers to warm up pitchers.

You should try your best to fill these positions at the parent meeting, waiting for volunteers after this meeting could prove difficult.

## Medical Form and Injury Reporting

You will need to collect some information for each player related to their medical information. Please see the [Athlete Medical Form](#) in our [AGSA Policy and Procedure](#) manual. If something does happen to one of your players during the season you will need to fill out an [Injury Report form](#).

## Player Evaluations

All coaches are expected to participate in Player Evaluations, **AGSA's** Coach and Player coordinator will contact coaches with information on when and how this will happen each year.

## Indoor Practices (Before Teams are formed)

### Clinics

During the Winter months AGSA offers various clinics for our athletes. To reduce the cost to the club, we try to get coaches out to assist during these clinics. The number of volunteers required depends on the clinic. Please consider assisting at these clinics if you can, especially if you have a son or daughter participating.

### Indoor Practices

Before the outdoor season begins and when teams are formed, each age group is assigned gym time for indoor practices. These practices to require coaches out to run the practice and teach the skills. Please consider assisting at these clinics for your age group. For age groups requiring coaches this is also a time to get parents involved in helping (which could lead to them deciding to coach).

## AGSA Policies and Procedures

Please take the time to go over the AGSA Policies and Procedures manual. If all of our coaches and volunteers, follow these procedures and adhere to these policies we can avoid most of the conflicts that we see in any given year.

# FINDING HELP

## Where to find help when you need it

As a coach, especially a new coach, sometimes there are things we just do not know, or things we need help with. If you are having trouble with anything, please reach out to the AGSA board and ask. You can email us at [president@airdriegirlssoftball.com](mailto:president@airdriegirlssoftball.com) or ask us through a direct message on our Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/Airdrie-Girls-Softball-1029407953776037/>

There are a lot of things that you need to deal with as a coach. Please do not feel like you are in this alone, ask one of us for some advice, or to clarify that rule, or whatever you need help with.

Airdrie Girls Softball Association:

Airdrie **Angels** Fastpitch program

January 2019