

# Chesterfield Little League



## Skills and Drills

TBall 1 and TBall 2 Divisions

Updated: Spring 2008

### **LITTLE LEAGUE PLEDGE**

I trust in God  
I love my country  
And will respect its laws  
I will play fair  
And strive to win  
But win or lose  
I will always do my best

### **VOLUNTEER PLEDGE**

I will teach all children to play fair  
and do their best.  
I will positively support all managers,  
coaches and players.  
I will respect the decisions of the umpires.  
I will praise a good effort  
despite the outcome of the game.

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## How to Use This Guide

The purpose of the skills and corresponding drills in this document are meant to help standardize the instruction the players receive season to season, regardless of which teams they play on during their CLL experience.

Each of the skills listed in this document are the basic baseball skills that CLL requires its Managers and Coaches to teach their players throughout the course of the season. The skills are taken directly from the CLL Skills Map and are tailored to each Division.

The list of skills is not exhaustive however, and Managers and Coaches are encouraged to introduce additional advanced skills as appropriate based on player abilities, and in accordance with official Little League rules.

Although the specific drills for each skill are strongly recommended by CLL, they are not mandated. As long as Managers and Coaches teach the respective skills with their players, they will not be penalized if the specific drill techniques differ from what is outlined in this document.

If you have specific questions about a skill or drill, please do not hesitate to contact your Division Director and/or CLL's Director of Coach/Player Development.

**TBall 1 and TBall 2 Division Baseball** – This is the age where kids get their first organized baseball experience – and many cases this is true for the parents as well. Players and parents are starting to understand the basic concepts of the game and the basic fundamentals.

Kids have very short attention spans, thus the practices and games are much shorter than the other divisions. As a result, Managers must be well prepared for practices to get the most out of the kids as possible while not exceeding the kids' physical abilities (even A Rod was not A Rod at 5 or 6!).

More than anything you are trying to make baseball fun for them to encourage their participation for many more years to come.

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## Throwing

**It is the single most important defensive skill.**

1. Throwing errors are two base or more errors.
2. If an infielder doesn't field the ball cleanly the runner gets one base - but, if the infielder fields the ball and then overthrows any base the runner usually gets two bases.
3. Failure to throw the ball accurately to the relay man or cutoff man results in the runners advancing an extra base.
4. Inaccurate throws result in a breakdown of the team alignment system.
5. There is no known method of giving a player a great arm; but, if your players have an understanding of the mechanics of throwing and drills are practiced daily to implement these mechanics, a coach should come close to developing each player to his fullest throwing potential.
6. Successful coaching of throwing uses a variety of word pictures.

## Warm-up

Match infielders to infielders and outfielders to outfielders

### "Crossed leg" drill

1. Sit crossed legged
2. Point throwing elbow and forearm towards partner and rest in glove
3. Push the forearm forward, flip the wrist and roll the baseball off the end of the fingers to partner
4. Always a two hand catch by partner

### "One Knee" drill

1. Glove knee at 90 degree angle, throwing knee on the ground, back straight
2. Drag ball on ground, swing up to goal post
3. Pause and look back at ball to ensure throwing elbow above shoulder and correct hand position (ball and palm facing away from player)
4. Rotate, release, follow through

## Full throw technique (Grip, Shoulders, Footwork, Delivery, Follow through)

1. Hold the ball softly like an egg, at the end of the fingers, not back in the palm, not a tight grip; 2 seam grip for infielders, 4 seam grip for outfielders
2. Keep on balls of feet, knees bent, not flat footed
3. When coming to goal post position, ensure shoulders are in a straight line to partner
4. Ensure elbow is slightly higher than shoulder and ball is facing away from player
5. Deliver with throwing elbow above shoulder, step glove foot toward target, just slightly to the left of center of the target (for RHT, opposite for LHT)
6. As player delivers, glove should pull in towards body to help rotate the body/shoulders
7. Thumb should be down and fingers at the top of the ball
8. Release and 'pick the pocket' by slapping the glove side hip on follow through
9. Bring throwing foot around to square with the glove foot, square shoulders towards the target/partner ready to field the ball

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# Hitting

## Swing Technique

Starts with proper mechanics...grip, stance, head position, hitting position, swing

### Grip and Stance

- Must be relaxed...grip with fingers, not the palm of the hand. The top hand is lying on the bat TENSION FREE!
- Weight is on the balls of the feet...not the heels. Bend the knees..player in athletic position with feet. Bat is placed on shoulder [relaxed] then raised. Hands are next to shoulder and cheek. Keep elbows down. Raising elbow creates tension.

### Head Position

- Eyes must be level, not slanted. Do NOT let player slant their head.
- Start of swing - Chin should be close to front shoulder
- End of swing – Chin should be close to back shoulder with eyes looking down at the point of contact

### Swing

- The swing should be a short powerful swing. Arms should not be extended over the plate.
- The swing starts with front heel pressure and the hips...hips lead the hands.
- As your weight moves forward from your back leg to your front leg, your back foot will pivot towards the pitcher and your knee will turn in. The front foot will not pivot and you will want to keep that leg stiff.
- While you pivot on your back foot, you also will open up your hips.
- Your legs and hips are going to drive your swing and provide power. Work hard on both of these and you will see a difference in the batting cage and on the field.
- Swing should be a short powerful swing, thus a “short” swing.
- Example:
  - When the hands are in the pre-pitch position that is “A” position.
    - If the hands extend out over the plate, that is known as “B” position.
    - When the hands are just in front of body and lower, that is the “C” position.
    - Ideally: Hands should go from A to C!! Thus a short, fast, powerful swing.
    - If the hands go A to B to C it is a long slower swing.

### Short Swing Drill

- Place player against a fence. Put one end of bat on player’s chest and the other on the fence. Have him swing...if he hits fence he has long swing. Work on taking hands from load position to hitting position and stay inside. He will not hit fence. Hands go from A to C!

### Soft toss drill (TBall 2)

- To move toward hitting a thrown ball; Want player to drive ball, not hit pop ups  
Note: Throwing soft toss correctly is important. Throw the ball in front of the player, not at him! A player never hits the ball on top of plate. Also allow player to “load” before tossing.

## Batting Grip / Where to Stand in the Batters Box

- Bat held in the fingers, loose in the hands
- Bat Holding Pressure: Top Hand – top finger between large knuckles; Bottom Hand – bottom three fingers
- Relaxed hands and arms
- Bat must be able to ‘travel’, must be able to ‘chop wood’
- Take stance, lay end of bat on plate, place hands on bat (like grabbing a golf club but with a baseball grip, pick straight up into baseball stance
- It is important that you are relaxed and tension-free as possible
- Feet shoulder width apart, Foot closest pitcher lined up near front of home plate
- Should be able to tap outside of plate with end of bat, feet parallel, feet pointing toward home plate, knees slightly bent, waist slightly bent, handle of bat near back shoulder, barrel of bat above and behind head

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## Fielding

### Glove Positions and Watching the Ball

- Explain the "ready position"...every player should be in that position before ball is thrown
- Every player is moving when the ball is pitched. If the ball is hit NO player should be standing still

### Calling for the Ball, Backups, Calling Outs

#### Calling for the ball

- Should be three different calls; one for the infielders, one for outfielders and an acknowledgment call from all others. The reason for this they all sound different and hard to mis-understand
- Infielders- ball – ball – ball
- Outfields - mine – mine – mine
- Acknowledgment - take it – take it- take it

#### Backing up

- Outfielders should back up the closest infielder
- Consider teaching right fielder to back up throws to first, left fielder to back up throws to third, right center and left center fielders to back up throws to second
- Teach the pitcher to back up throws coming in from the outfield

#### Calling Outs (sometimes a rarity in a TBall game)

- After each put out and before each batter - catcher calls outs to pitcher and infield; infield calls to the outfield

### Playing Infield (including ready position; aardvark, alligator, belly button, position number and priority)

#### Ground balls basics

- Ready position with weight on toes, knees bent, step forward
- As ball approaches – Aardvark (glove in front and out), Alligator (throwing hand covers ball in glove), Belly Button (glove and throwing hand raise to waist to establish grip and prepare for throw)
- Drill – Two players 20' apart, one rolls a grounder, other performs A, A, BB, with a crow-hop throw back to partner, then switch after 5 mins

### Playing Outfield (including set/ready position; crosswalk and crow hop, position number and priority)

#### Outfield Basics

- The mechanics of catching a pop up...use both hands
- Catch ball, crow hop...and throw. No side arm. Show how overhand techniques from the throwing section are better.
- Keep the ball in front of you at all costs (grounder or pop-up)
- Throw practice flies, do not hit practice flies. This allows better control, more repetitions per player. (Anything a kid does a thousand times he will become proficient at)
- Teach player to look for cut-off man. Throw to the cut-off man's chest...

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## Base Running

### Run the Bases

- Always look at the base and look at/listen to your base coaches, do not watch the ball
- For a run through first, hit the front third of the base with your toes/ball of feet, run through and curl off to the left. Check over your right shoulder to see if the ball has passed...listen for your coach
- For extra base hits, approach the base by swinging out to the right (like a banana, not a backwards C) and touch the base with your right foot (if possible, but do not change your stride to do so) so that you create a straight line to the next base.

### Sliding

#### When to Slide

1. To avoid a tag.
2. To stop at the base.
3. To get back to base.
4. Always when play is close.

#### Length of Slide

15' or two body lengths from base.

#### Landing

On buttocks, head up, arms out for balance and toes upward

#### Grass Sliding Drills

Remove shoe and have a throw down base in the outfield or level grassy area

1. All players sit on the grass and alternate placing one leg straight and the other in the bent-leg tucked position (Caution: remember, have them remove shoes and have pads on over pants).
  - a. By putting hands behind themselves while in the sitting position, they push their body forward on floor or grass.
  - b. Here they are getting used to the position and finding out which side is comfortable. Sliders can be left or right so far as which side is more comfortable in the sliding position.
2. All players from a standing position practice the fall into the bent-leg slide (Caution: We use no steps, as yet). Player should concentrate on his landing and direction and getting the bent-leg tucked in underneath.
3. All players practice from a standing position with three walking steps. Players that are comfortable on either side should practice both; however, others should perfect their best side first.
4. All players practice drill from a standing position with a running four-to-five step start.
5. During drills, coaches can correct faults by checking landing position, hands out, body extended with head up, bent leg and tucked underneath and toes up. Buttocks and calf of bent leg should show the wear of absorbing the force of the slide; otherwise, the person is landing incorrectly.

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## Teamwork & Conditioning

### Supporting your Teammates, Staying Alert and Hustling

- Always be positive to your teammates...you'll need that same support from them at least once a game
- Baseball is as much mental as physical, if not more so. Some of the best plays are not necessarily the most athletic plays, but those that required heads up, quick thinking and reaction and situation knowledge. Being alert to your role on every play/situation is key to being ready to perform
- No team wins and no player achieves success without hustle. Assume nothing is routine, nothing is simple, nothing is over until the ump calls time or the game is over. Every time you choose not to hustle you are giving the other team a chance to make a play against your team...don't give them that gift.

### Conditioning and developing balance

- Warm and cool down is essential for baseball players. Because it is not a constant motion sport, but rather a burst after many minutes of waiting, players must be well conditioned, and take care of their bodies after the games and practices
- 10-15 minutes of warm up of all parts of the body is very important. Any number of calisthenics will suffice, but the key is to develop a light sweat prior to throwing, infield, batting, etc.
- Consider mini-competitions for jumping jacks, foot races, one foot balances, etc. with a reward of leading warm-ups next time
- So many baseball motions rely on balance that developing balance is very important to the players being able to execute properly. Hopping down the line, hopping side to side of the line, one foot crane stands, etc. are great for building balance

## General Baseball Knowledge

### History and How It's Played

- Read as much as you can about the game and encourage the kids to read as well
- Encourage them to watch a meaningless game on TV (so as to not root for any one team) and tell them to pay attention to how each player approaches their defensive and offensive opportunities
- Encourage them to watch high school games and watch for the strategy, make mental notes of what was done correctly and incorrectly
- Talk to your players before and after practices and games about the finer points, the joy of the game and the experiences you've had
- Baseball cards are a great way to get the kids engaged, showing technique (varies by player) and impressing them with stats
- Make sure they know that not every MLB player's form is the best for young developing players, and that focusing on basic fundamentals are more important than flare and flash

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