

## **Development Progression: 10U**

### **Features of this age group:**

- Developing self concept.
- Learning social skills and how to interact with peers.
- Starting to understand the idea and unpredictableness of rules of a game/sport.
- Fine-muscle motor skills NOT developed.
- Limited ability to react quickly to stimulus.
- Primary method of learning physical skill is imitation.

### **Principles:**

- Focus on large muscles and simple motor skills.
- Emphasize development of confidence, self esteem, teamwork and cooperation.
- Emphasize having fun and making 100% effort.
- Focus on major, fundamental skills.
- Simplify the rules.
- Focus on developing good practice/learning skills.

## **Softball Skills:**

### **Physical Skills:**

Focus on the most fundamental skills in softball: throwing and catching the ball, and running. Hitting should deal only with the basic technique, focusing on development of hand eye coordination and ensuring bad hitting habits are not developed (e.g. swinging up). Try to teach the whole motion of a skill. Break down components only to correct a specific problem.

### **Throwing:**

- Focus on “full motion” (body rotation, big “C” or “pet the dog” with the arm).
- Give players homework to watch softball/baseball players on tv and imitate their motions.
- Relays: outfield - cut off - home.
- Check the following:
  - Pivot step with correct foot.
  - Stride foot pointing to target.
  - Elbow higher than shoulder.
  - Eyes of target - throw at a specific target, not just towards it (e.g. at the receiver’s glove or chest).

### **Catching a thrown ball:**

- Facing the thrower (square up).
- Using both hands.

- Never point fingers at the ball (glove should always be perpendicular to path of the ball)
- Move to the ball, trying to catch it in the vertical center line of the body.

### **Fielding:**

- Demonstrate and practice the basic fielding “ready” position.
- Emphasize moving to the ball and cradling the ball up to the belly (practice without gloves as much as possible).
- Move quickly into the throwing position.
- Check the following:
  - Good throwing mechanics.
  - Eye following ball into glove (or hands).
  - Ready to field on every pitch.

### **Pitching:**

At this level, the “real” pitchers of the future will not likely throw many strikes so coaches will probably have to use some temporary “pitchers” to keep the game moving.

- Emphasize the long term nature of learning to pitch, the necessity of constant practice. Encourage/require parental commitment to daily practice. Teach the parent the fundamentals.
- Focus on teaching the full motion, breakdown components only to fix problems.
- Check the following:
  - Body rotation (open > close).
  - Pitching arm in correct plane (straight up and down - ear and hip).
  - Release point at hip: do not allow to lean forward on release (to aim the ball into the strike zone).

### **Running and base running:**

- Introduce “running start” or “leading off” from a base.
- Practice running for speed over short distances (e.g. home to first).
- Emphasize “fast feet” (feet touching ground for the least amount of time).
- Introduce sliding, stealing, and rounding bases.
- Check the following:
  - Running in a straight line to target.
  - Arms moving fore and aft (not to sides).
  - Arms in sync with legs (opposite limbs).
  - Push with your toes.

### **Hitting:**

- Focus on developing hand eye coordination (contact rather than power) - emphasize watching the ball all the way.
- Develop a desire to hit (no base on balls).
- Check the following:
  - Smooth swing directly to ball (no hitches or dropping of hands).

- “Level” swing to produce line drives (avoid swinging up).
- “Head down”, “shoulder to shoulder” (follow ball all the way to the bat).

**Bunting:**

- Introduce the basic sacrifice bunt.

**Fitness:**

- Develop flexibility skills (how to stretch).

**Mental Skills:**

- Expand on the basic rules of the game.
- Introduce the role and positioning of different positions (3rd base plays up to cover bunt).
- Focus on the importance of teamwork (usually takes two players to get an out).
- Focus on sportsmanship.
  - Appreciation of opponents and officials (cheers and handshakes with opponents and umpires).
  - Support of teammates (no put downs).
- Teach why and how to practice.
- Introduce and practice the concept of focus.
- Introduce importance and techniques of warming up, general fitness, and nutrition.
- Develop the ability to give 100%.

**Rules:**

- Double plays
- Bunting
- Sliding
- Relay throws
- Tags
- Stealing