

Offensive Checklist for Parents and Youth Coaches

Dave Gasser: Jugs Sports

Helping players develop as hitters and baserunners is a tall order. What are the essential teaching points that need to be addressed to help players improve? To be honest, my first year coaching I was looking at a group of 7th graders at Canby Middle School. Oh my! Coming as I did from Madison High School, Little League programs in every part of our community helped any 8-12 year old get practice and experience. Then, all these leagues fed into a 12 team Babe Ruth league filled with kids. This was our junior high training program. I was not quite ready to teach kids that ranged from trouble putting on their mitts to decently good. From the very beginning, I started to "break down" the game to meet kids where they were and try to help them improve. That is what teachers do.

What follows is a break down of offensive skills. This list is pretty extensive. Don't worry if you don't understand every specific term on the list. You are in good company. I found that many of my players did not know some of the words I used to coach them. I had to learn and grow communicate better to do a good job. This list came as a result of learning from others and being a student of the game my whole career. Make a check by the things on the list you understand, and an x by the things that need clarification. A video will accompany this checklist for all those who really want to learn and improve.

OFFENSIVE CHECKLIST

Base running: Out of the batters box

1. Back leg out and bat drop
2. Home to first: get outside / eyes on front of bag / foot hits front edge / thru it & eyes
3. Ground ball through infield: start turn 1/2 way / eyes & foot inside corner / crossover
4. Sure single or dapper: start turn out of box / eyes & foot inside corner / cross over

Runner on 1B:

1. Primary lead: right/left/square/replace-replace / eyes locked on pitcher
2. Secondary lead: 3 slides landing when the ball hits the hitting area / eyes layered
3. Reactions: ground ball / line drive. / fly ball. / reading dirt balls
4. Stealing second: regular (read pitcher) / and delay (secondary and break
5. 1st and 3rd reactions: get picked/ delay / force balk early break / lefty double steal

Runner on 2B:

1. Primary lead: same as 1B
2. Secondary lead: first step is front crossover to get further off the bag
3. Reactions: Grounders in front/behind / line drive / fly ball & depth / read dirt
4. Stealing third: Go on looks / timing start

Runner on 3rd:

1. Primary: same as 1B one step in foul territory
2. Secondary lead: Same as 1B last step to line if not hit / eyes pitcher to catcher
3. Reactions: ground ball (depends on outs) / line drives and fly balls start back to bag
4. Reading for passed balls: know when to go or not go

Hitting:

1. Grip and stance: grip light through callus line) and get relaxed and balanced
2. Load to Land: Need to get the foot down on time
3. Swing basics: load to land to trigger to swing to finish
4. Approach to hitting to all fields: learn the swing plane
5. Small ball skills: bunting and slap bunting
6. 2-Strike Approach. Expect hard away and short stroke at anything close
7. See the ball out of the hand: hat to release point laser focus
8. Develop hitting stations for daily work on essentials
9. On field BP: Runners on every base / Defenders every spot / Vary situations

Bunt Offense:

1. Bunt runner on 1B: Make first baseman field the ball
2. Bunt runner on 2B: Make third baseman field the ball
3. Bunt runner on 3B: Safety squeeze (on contact) suicide squeeze (foot lands).

1st and 3rd Offenses (Young players do not need to learn these!):

1. Get Picked Off First: score during run down

2. Break Early: Try to force a balk and score during the effort to stop the runner
3. Delay Steal: Go when catcher releases to second or during the run down
4. Little League: Break late... Stop short as ball arrives / break on catchers release
5. Safety squeeze: Break when bunt is down toward the first baseman

Situations:

1. Toss and Tee and BP Scrimmages: Teams of 4: 8 on D, 4 hit and baser
 - No one on, no one out
 - Runner on 1B... vary outs
 - Runners on 1b and 3B... Vary outs
 - Pick One: Bases Loaded or 1st and 2nd or 2nd and 3rd

Some coaches are more than happy to roll out the ball and let kids develop on their own. They don't have the time or energy needed to teach baseball skills and use a checklist like this. Thank you for your time and effort to volunteer. I had some wonderful youth coaches who let me learn on my own organically. They treated me well and I had a good experience. It made me want to keep playing. I'm thankful for them.

Some youth coaches are actively trying to change a players habits. They are confident that the way they learned is the way they will teach the game. They don't have the time or desire to learn from others. If so, please take a moment. How confident are you that you are teaching good habits? Please consider this Far Side Cartoon. A posse is following two bloodhounds. One is looking at the other saying "I can't smell a dang thing". The other responds "Neither can I". If all we do as coaches is repeat what somebody taught us when we were young, you might be following a bloodhound that can't smell. If that is the case, please check out the video that goes with this checklist and see if anything makes sense. It really takes a long time to correct muscle memory that is not fundamentally sound. Maybe this is your chance to teach the game in a way that helps kids more. Please give the video a look.

2D BARCODE

