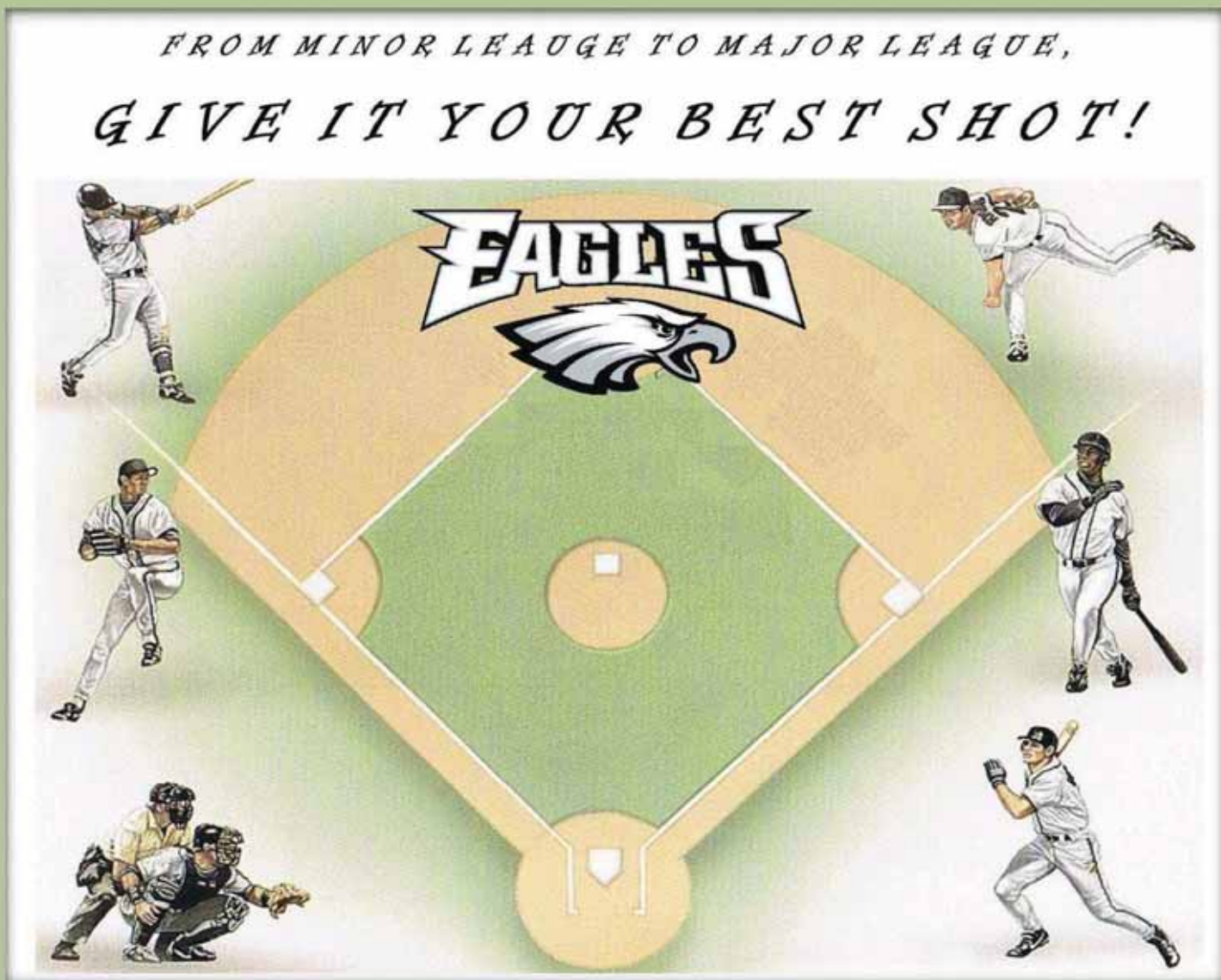




JUNIOR PLAYER WORKBOOK

*FROM MINOR LEAGUE TO MAJOR LEAGUE,
GIVE IT YOUR BEST SHOT!*



EAGLES JUNIOR BASEBALL WORKBOOK

The Eagles Junior Baseball Workbook has been produced to assist our junior players to learn the rules and the basic fundamental skills required to play baseball. From grass roots (Tee Ball), right through to senior baseball, players never stop developing their baseball brains and skills. In regards to juniors, if you work on the basic fundamentals of baseball and master them, you will be well on your way to a successful baseball career and a lifelong love of the sport.

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

The primary focus of the Sunshine Baseball Club is player development. We believe in developing fundamentally sound baseball players which will not only translate to success on the field, but will also prepare each player to compete in higher level baseball and beyond, if they so desire.

We believe there are three main areas of player development :

1. Each player must have a personal desire to improve.
2. Each player must be given ample opportunity in both practice and competitive game settings.
3. Each player must show dedication beyond regular practice and games sessions and be held to a high standard to improve in their individual skill level.

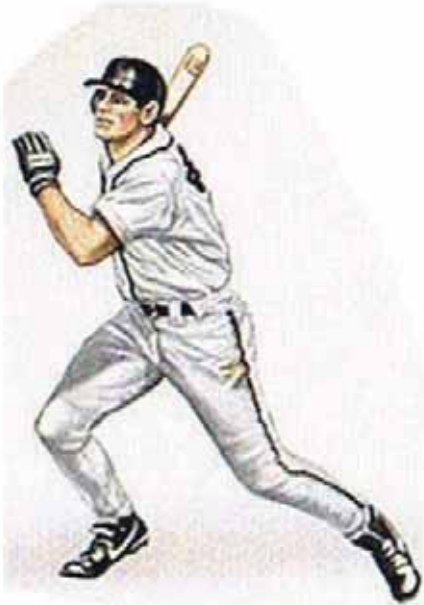
Our club places great emphasis on the development of a positive environment in each and every situation. Each player will be taught and expected to exhibit character traits including, but not limited to respect, teamwork, sportsmanship, perseverance, discipline and hard work.





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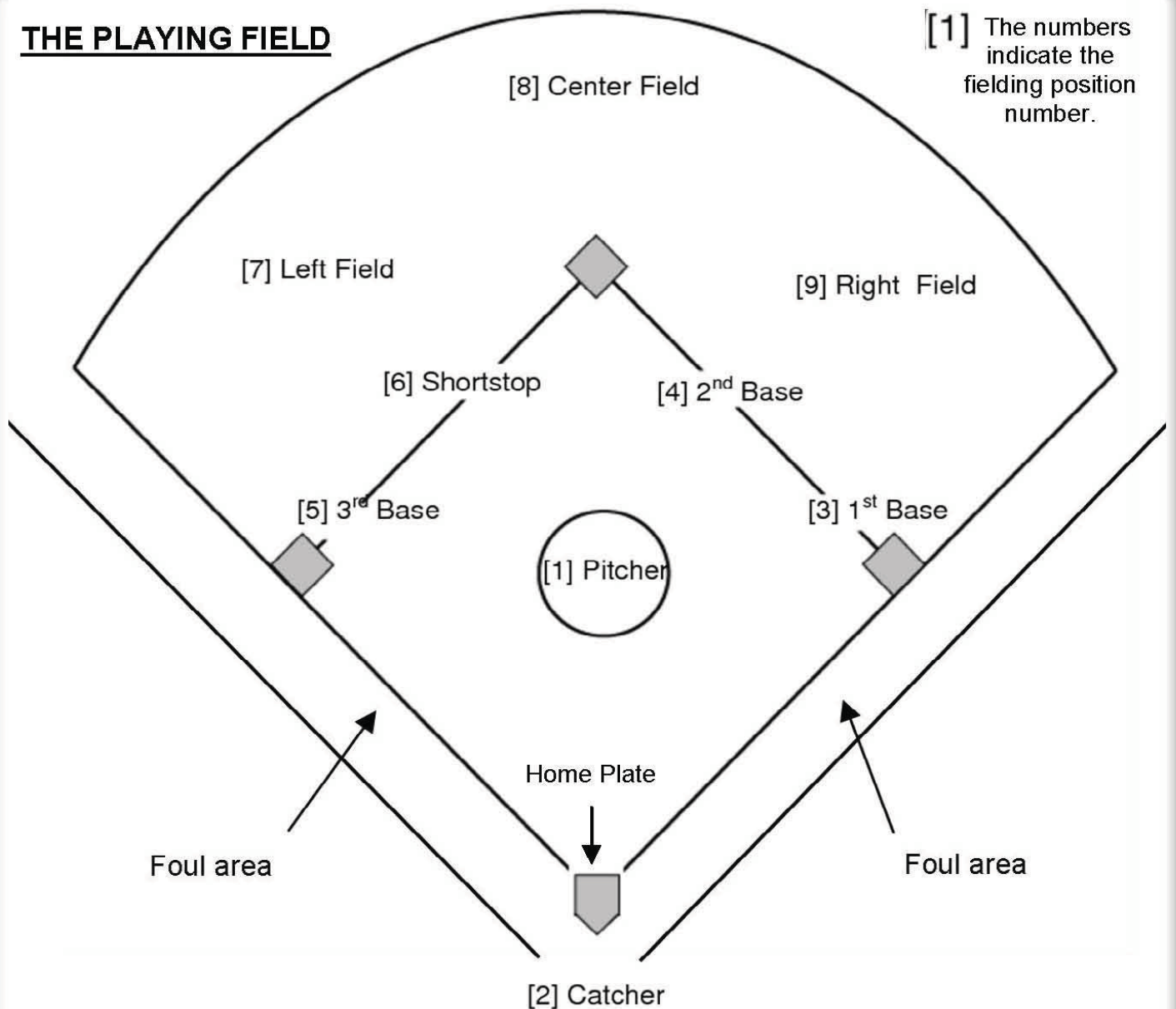
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GIVE IT YOUR BEST SHOT!



THE PLAYING FIELD



THE RULES of baseball can be quite complex. They can be divided up into four sections:

1) The playing field 2) Game structure 3) Pitching and hitting 4) Getting an out.

1) Baseball Playing Field

The playing field in baseball is made of an infield and an outfield. The infield is defined by 4 bases that form a square. This square is called the baseball diamond. The bases are called home plate (this is where the batter stands), first base, second base, and third base. The runners advance to each base in order. In the middle of the infield is the pitcher's mound. The pitcher's must have one foot on the pitcher's rubber when throwing a pitch. In a standard baseball field the distance between each base is 90 feet. The distance from the pitcher's mound to home plate is 60 feet and 6 inches. The lines that are formed between home plate and first base as well as home plate and third base are the foul lines. These lines extend out to the outfield and, together with the home run fence, define baseball's outfield.

2) Baseball Game Structure

A baseball game is defined by outs and innings. A game is usually made up of 9 innings, but may be less innings at many levels of play. During each inning each baseball team gets a turn at bat. The home team bats at the bottom of the inning. During a teams turn at bat they get to keep batting as long as they don't have three outs. Upon getting a third out, either the inning is over or the other team takes their turn. A run is scored for each player who safely crosses home plate. The winner of the baseball game is the team with the most runs at the end of the final inning or when the allotted time is up. Keep in mind kids, it is not important whether you win or lose, the most important thing is that you have fun, play as a team, and to learn as many skills as you can along the way.

3) Baseball Pitching and Hitting

Each "at bat" in a game starts with a pitch. The pitcher throws the ball over home plate in an effort to get a strike. A strike is when the baseball is pitched over the area of home plate, above the batter's knees, and below the batter's belt. This "strike zone", however, is up to the interpretation of the umpire calling the game. A strike also takes place when the batter swings at the baseball and misses it entirely, regardless of the location of the pitch. A strike also is called when a batter hits the ball foul. A foul ball only counts as a first or second strike. Any fouls after the second strike, do not count as balls or strikes. A pitch that is not a strike and is not swung at by the batter is called a ball. If the pitcher throws 4 balls, the batter gets to advance to first base. This is called a walk. If the pitcher throws 3 strikes, the batter is out.

If the batter hits the baseball within the field of play, he/she then tries to advance on the bases.

4) Getting an Out

Once the batter hits the baseball in play, the batter becomes a base runner. The defensive team, or fielders, try to get the base runner out before he/she can get to the safety of a base. The first goal is to catch the baseball before it hits the ground. If the fielders do this, the batter is out and all other base runners must return to their original base before they are tagged, or they will be out. Once the ball touches the ground in play, then the fielders must get the baseball and try to tag base runners or "force" them out. A force out is when the base runner has nowhere else to go but to the next base. This is always the case with the batter and first base. In the case of a force out, the defenders do not have to tag the runner, but just have a foot on the base and control of the ball prior to the base runner touching the base.

To tag a runner out, the defensive player must tag the runner with the baseball or with the glove that is holding the baseball.

An out can be achieved at any time there is a base runner. If a base runner tries to steal a base or has a big lead off of the base, the pitcher or catcher may be able to throw them out. In this case, they need to tag the runner.

Fair Ball

When a batter hits the ball, it will either go into fair territory or foul territory. Fair territory is the area between the foul lines. The foul lines are formed between home plate and first base and home plate and third base. They extend all the way to the outfield. The lines themselves are considered fair territory.

Foul Ball

If a ball is foul and the batter has less than two strikes, then he/she will be given a strike. If the batter has two strikes, he/she is not given a third strike and the "at bat" continues. It doesn't matter how many foul balls the batter hits, he/she cannot get a third strike from a foul ball.

Once a ball is called foul, the play is dead. The batter returns to home plate and any base runners return to their original bases.

Infield Foul Balls

Determining a foul ball in the infield is slightly different than in the outfield. In the infield a ball is not ruled to be fair or foul until it comes to a complete stop, until a player touches it, or it goes into the outfield.

A ball in the infield may start out fair and then roll foul. For this reason some defensive players may decide to let the ball roll foul if they think they can't get the batter out. They may also try to field the ball quickly and get the batter out before the ball can roll foul. Even if the ball goes back and forth between being fair and foul, it will not be ruled as fair and foul until it stops or a player touches it.

Outfield Foul Balls

In the outfield a ball is determined to be foul by its relationship to the line when it first touches the ground or is touched by a player. So if a ball hit in the outfield lands in fair territory and then rolls foul, it is a fair ball. This is different than with the infield.

If an outfield ball is touched by a player, it doesn't matter the position of the player. The only thing that matters is the position of the ball to the foul line at the moment the player touches it.

Catching Foul Balls

If the defence catches a foul ball, the batter will be called out.

Home Plate

Home plate is considered part of the field and is fair territory.



MAKING AN OUT

The offensive team gets to keep batting until they make three outs in an inning. Here are some ways that outs are made:

- **Striking out** - If you get three strikes before you get a hit or get four balls, you are out.
- **Flying out** - If you hit the ball in the air and the defence catches it, you are out.
- **Force out** - If the player is forced to run to a base (like the hitter to first base or when another player is running to the base behind him/her), then you can get a force out by touching the base while holding the ball before the base runner does.
- **Tag out** - Anytime the ball is live and the runner is not on the base, he/she may be tagged out by touching the player with the ball or with the hand or glove holding the ball.
- **Running outside the baseline** - You may not run outside the baseline to avoid a tag. You must stay within the first base lane when running to first base.

Interference - when a base runner purposely disrupts the defensive play. Like running in the way of a throw or bumping into a player.

Running the Bases

Overrunning first base - When running to first base, a player can overrun first base and still be safe. They must not make an attempt to run to second. Once they make the attempt to run to second, they can be tagged upon returning to first base. This is to be determined by the umpire.

Touching the bases

A player must touch each of the bases. If a base is missed and the player has to go back to touch a base, the player must touch each of the bases on the way back as well. So if you missed second and had already touched third, you need to retouch third on your way back to second base.

Only one runner per base - Two runners may not be on the same base at the same time. If they are tagged then the lead runner is safe and the other runner is out.

Tagging up - After a ball is caught, the base runner may advance, however, they need to have contact with their current base after the ball is caught. This is called tagging up because runners often run back to their base and tag it right when the ball is caught. Then they take off for the next base. It is often used to score from third base on a pop up to the outfield. If they score, the hit is called a sacrifice fly and the batter is credited with an RBI (run batted in).

What is a strike?

During each at bat in baseball the batter gets up to three strikes to hit the ball. A strike is anytime the hitter swings at a pitch and misses or any pitch that is in the strike zone (whether the hitter swings or not). Three strikes and the batter is out!

Foul Ball

The batter is also given a strike when they hit a foul ball and they have less than two strikes. You can't get a third strike when hitting foul ball. A foul ball that is hit with two strikes doesn't count as a strike or a ball.

Walks or Bases on Balls

Any pitch that is outside the strike zone and the hitter doesn't swing is called a ball. If the batter gets four balls, then he/she gets a free pass to first base.

What is "The Count"?

The count in baseball is the current number of balls and strikes on the batter. For example, if the batter has 1 ball and 2 strikes, the count is 1-2 or "one and two". A "full count" (as pictured in the illustration on the right) is when there are 3 balls and 2 strikes, or a 3-2 count.



THE STRIKE ZONE

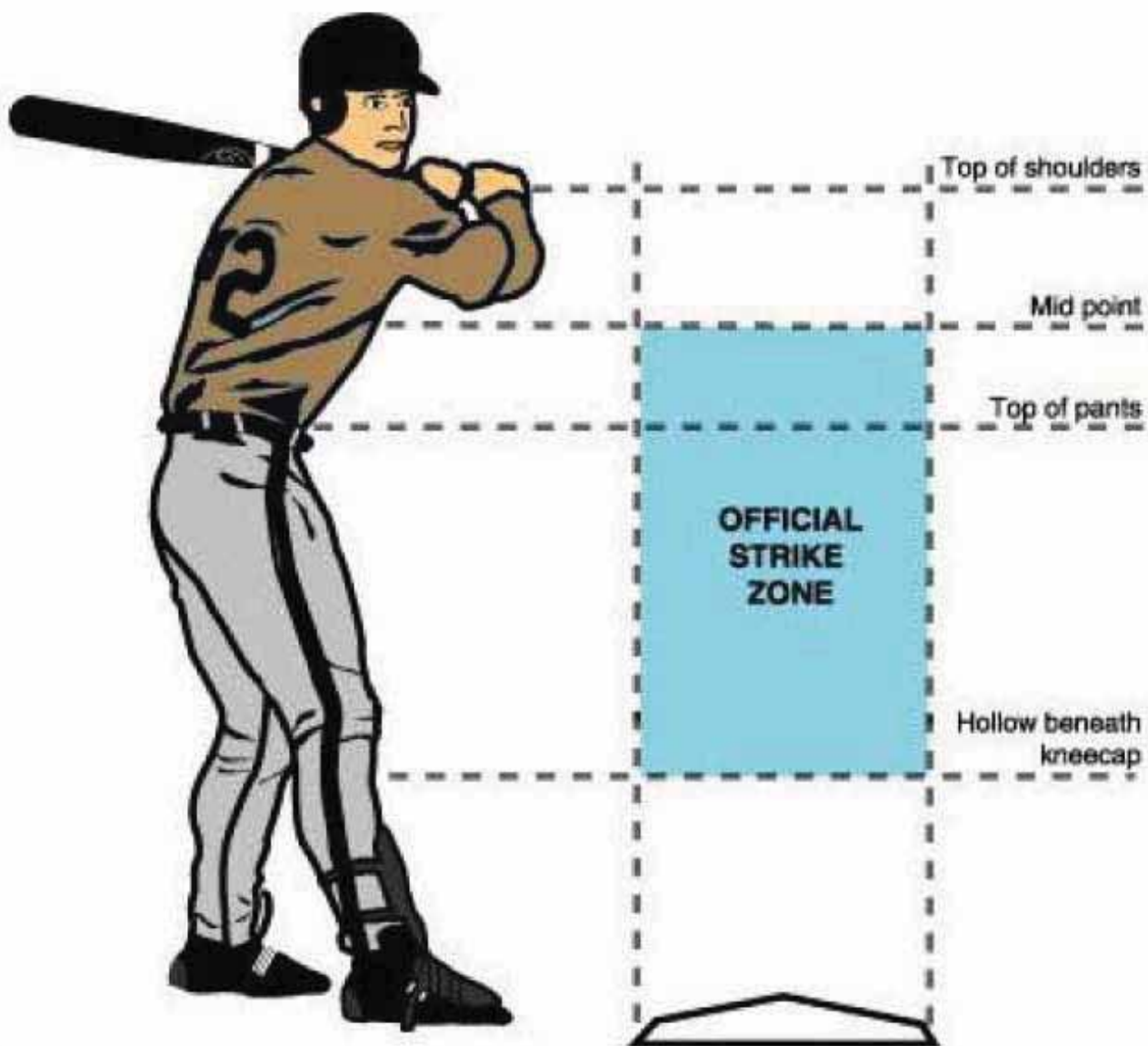
When determining whether a pitch is a ball or a strike, the umpire uses a strike zone. The ball must be within the strike zone to be called a strike.

The strike zone has changed over time. The current strike zone in the major leagues is the area above home plate between the bottom of the batter's knees to the midpoint between the top of the batter's shoulders and the top of his pants.

In youth leagues the strike zone may be different. Often the top of the strike zone is at the armpits, to make it slightly larger as well as easier for the umpires to call.

Reality vs. The Rules

The reality is that different umpires will have different strike zones. Some may call strikes when the ball is actually a bit wide of the plate. Some umpires may have a smaller strike zone, while others will have a large strike zone. The important thing for baseball players to do is to recognize this and understand that the strike zone may not always be exactly the same. Watch how the umpire is calling strikes and try to take advantage of this during the game. **DO NOT** argue with the umpire over balls and strikes.



PLAYER POSITIONS

The positions in baseball are primarily defensive. On the offensive side all the players become hitters when it's their turn at bat.

There are nine players on the defensive team and each has an important role in helping to get outs and to prevent the other team from scoring runs. The nine players are pitcher, catcher, first base, second base, shortstop, third base, right field, centre field, and left field. Of these nine defensive baseball players, only two have locations that are defined by the rules. These are the pitcher and the catcher. The rest of the players can be located most anywhere on the field, however, there are typical locations and names for each position that have become standard over the years. Players will shift or move around depending on the batter, the pitcher's style, and the game situation.

The Baseball Battery

The pitcher and the catcher are the two baseball players that make up the battery. The pitcher is located on the pitching mound in the centre of the baseball infield. The pitcher throws or pitches the ball over or near home plate to the catcher. The batter stands in the batters box and tries to hit the baseball. Play starts with the pitcher. Pitchers are the most important player on the defence. All play starts with how well the pitcher can get the batter to miss the baseball. Pitchers try to throw strikes, but also try to throw the baseball where the batter cannot hit it. Pitchers typically have a certain style or type of pitch that they have mastered. Some pitchers try to overpower the batter with fast balls. Other pitchers throw baseballs that curve or drop as to make the batter swing at the baseball in the wrong place. Either way, good pitching is always the best defence. Pitchers also play defence around the mound when a baseball is hit.

The catcher is located behind home plate. The catcher's main role is to catch the baseball when the batter misses or doesn't swing at it. The catcher usually squats down and puts the glove right where the pitcher is trying to throw as to give the pitcher a good target. Catchers usually give signals to the pitcher on where to pitch the ball and the type of pitch to make. Catchers also play defence around home



THE BASEBALL INFIELDER'S

There are four players that make up the baseball infield: 1) first baseman 2) second baseman 3) shortstop 4) third baseman. These players shift positions quite often depending on the situation, but in general, the first baseman covers first base and plays just inside first base and a metre or so. The third baseman covers third base and plays just inside third base and a metre or so. The second baseman plays between first and second base usually more towards second base. The shortstop plays between second and third base usually more towards second base. Both the shortstop and second baseman share the roles of covering second base depending on the situation and where the ball is hit.

Each infielder typically has specific skills that help them excel at their specific position. The first baseman needs to be able to stretch out and make catches to get force outs as there are a lot of throws to first base during a baseball game. The second baseman and the shortstop need to be expert fielders as lots of ground balls are usually hit to them during a baseball game. The third baseman needs to have a strong arm as it's a good distance from first to third base.



BASEBALL OUTFIELDERS

The three positions that make up the baseball outfield are the right fielder, centre fielder, and left fielder. These players are responsible for catching fly balls as well as running down baseballs that make it through the infield. Any of these positions will benefit from good speed, but typically the centre fielder needs to be the fastest runner as they have more area of the field they need to cover. The left fielder needs to be a strong defensive player as a lot of hits go to left field. The right fielder needs a strong arm as they often need to throw out runners going to third base or home plate.



THE CATCHER

The catcher is a position in baseball that plays behind home plate. The catcher has many responsibilities and is part of the "battery" with the pitcher. The main job of the catcher is to catch pitches and to help call the game. The catcher is one of the most important players on defense as they are involved in every play.

Catching a Pitch

As the name of the position implies, the main job of the catcher is to catch the pitch. Many catchers are experts at catching the pitch so that it is more likely to be called for a strike. Here are some catching tips:

- Keep your hands soft, but your arm and wrist firm.
- Don't reach for the ball, let it come to you
- If the pitch is in the strike zone, keep your mitt as still as possible. Don't drop your mitt, especially if the pitch is low.
- Move your glove to the spot before the ball gets there. This way you can hold the mitt still which can help get a strike called.
- Keep your glove up and in the location where the pitch should be in order to give the pitcher a good target.
- Young catchers may want to try keeping the glove low. It is easier to reach up for a high pitch than down for a low pitch.

Catcher's Stance

The catcher's stance is crouched down with your feet about shoulder width. Your throwing arm should be behind your back so it doesn't get hit by the ball. If there are no players on base and less than two strikes, you can use a relaxed stance. When there are players on base, you need to be in a ready stance. In the ready stance you should be balanced on the balls of your feet, prepared to make a play or throw at any moment.

Blocking Pitches

Having a good catcher that can block wild pitches is one of the most important jobs of the catcher in youth leagues. In the case of a pitch in the dirt, the most important thing is to stop the ball from getting past you, not catching the ball. The following steps are how you can prevent the ball from getting past you: Move in front of the ball. As soon as you see the pitch is going to be wild, get in front of the ball.

* Drop to your knees and put your mitt between your legs, then lean forward to keep the ball from bouncing too far away after it rebounds.

Throwing

Catchers must have a strong throwing arm. They need to be able to catch a pitch, rise quickly, and make a strong throw to second base or third. This is to keep base runners from stealing a base.

THE PITCHER

The pitcher is the most important person in the game and will have the most impact on whether a team wins or loses. The pitcher, along with the catcher, is involved in every play. To be a good pitcher you need to have a strong arm and be able to throw the ball accurately. If you can't throw strikes, you will have a tough time pitching.

Pitching Strategy and Tips

The main pitching strategy when you first start pitching is to throw strikes. Walking players and past balls will generally hurt you more than giving up hits. If you can throw strikes you will have a good chance at success in youth baseball.

Once you can throw strikes, here are some other things to work on:

- Focus on the catcher's glove. Don't worry about anything else but that glove. Concentrate on the glove throughout your pitch.
- Don't get fancy on the first pitch. Try to throw it for a strike and get ahead in the count.
- Pitch at your own pace. Take your time and get into a rhythm.
- Be consistent with your motion. Each time you pitch, your motion, landing, and follow through should look exactly the same.
- Work on throwing over the top and not sidearm. This will give you more power and reduce the chance of injury.

Protecting Your Arm

It is important to not pitch too much when you are young. You can ruin your arm. Often the top youth pitchers will feel pressure to pitch a lot because their team needs them. They may even play on multiple teams. Parents need to protect their children by making sure they are not pitching too often and for too long.

Mentally Tough

Pitchers need to be mentally tough. Even the best pitchers go through tough times, but the mentally tough ones will be able to forget about it, keep their concentration, and continue to pitch their best. This is definitely not as easy as it sounds. Many pitchers in the major leagues fall apart when they are rocked for a grand slam or walk in a run. However, if you can learn to forget about that last bad pitch and focus on the next good one, you will be a much better pitcher.

PLAYING FIRST BASE

Playing first base can be a lot of fun because you get to be involved in a lot of plays during the game. It is an especially important position in youth baseball as the throws to first base will not always be accurate and the infield is only as good as the first baseman.

Skills Needed

The number one skill needed by a first baseman is the ability to catch the ball. It also helps to be tall, a decent fielder, and a good hitter. You don't have to be fast to play first base.

Catching the Ball

The most important job the first baseman will need to do is catch the ball on a force out at first base. However, catching the ball at first base isn't quite the same as just playing catch with your friends. You need to learn other skills like getting your foot on the bag, keeping your foot on the bag, snagging a short hop, and more. If you want to be a good first baseman you need to practice these skills.

Covering the Bag

When an infield ground ball is hit to any player other than the first baseman, the first baseman must:

- **Quickly get to first base** - Don't watch the ball to see what happens. Your first job is to get to first base.
- **Foot on the bag** - Next get one foot on the bag. It should be the foot opposite your glove hand. This will give you the longest stretch for the ball. The ball of your foot should be on the outside edge of the bag.
- **Make a target** - Hold your glove up around chest high. Make a good target for the thrower to aim at.
- **The stretch** - Once the ball is on its way, you can step, or stretch, towards the ball, keeping the one foot on the bag. The stretch will allow the ball to hit your glove that much faster, helping to get the out.

Tip: Do not stretch for the ball before it is on the way. This is a common mistake for many youth baseball players.



Stopping the Ball

One thing especially important in youth baseball is that the first baseman stops the ball. While you definitely want to get the out, you don't want to allow for extra bases either. A good first baseman will learn when to come off the bag to catch an errant throw.

The Short Hop

The most difficult play to make at first base is the short hop. This is when the ball is short and the player must dig the ball out of the dirt. This is a tough play anyway, but doing it while keeping one foot on the bag is especially difficult. Have your coach or a friend throw short hops to you while practicing as well. The more you practice the better you will get at making this tough play.

Where to Stand

Runner on first - When there is a runner on first base, you need to stand with one foot on the bag and your glove up and ready to catch the ball. This way the pitcher always has a good target if he/she decides to try to pick off the runner at first. You can't stand in the base path or in the way of the runner. One foot is on the edge of the bag while the other is toward the catcher, just inside the baseline. As soon as the pitcher throws a pitch, shuffle towards second base and get ready to field any ball hit your way.

Empty first base - If first base is empty, the first baseman will generally stand a metre or two behind first base and away from the baseline. This positioning depends on the batter. Your coach can help you with where to set up.

Tip: If the ball is hit on the side of the second baseman, but within your range, you should try to field it. In this case, the pitcher should cover first base.

Tip: Always position yourself outside of the base runner's path. Not doing so can cause a collision and you or the base runner could get hurt.



PLAYING SECOND BASE

Second base can be a fun and active position to play. You don't need a strong arm, but you need to be quick and a good fielder.

Skills Needed

To be a good second baseman you need to be a good fielder. In youth baseball the second baseman often fields the most balls, even more than the short stop or pitcher. However, you don't need a strong arm as you are close to first base. It is also best to be right handed. There are very few left handed second basemen in the major leagues.

Covering the Bag

As second baseman, you share the responsibility for covering second base with the shortstop. Generally on balls hit between second base and the left foul line, you should cover the bag. Good communication is required with the shortstop to be sure someone is covering the bag and that only one player is covering the bag at a time.

Turning the Double Play

If there is a base runner on first base, you need to be ready to make a double play.

Fielding the Ball - If the ball is hit to you at second base, then the shortstop will be covering the bag. You should field the ball and throw it to the shortstop at second. The most important thing is to get the runner from first out. If you field the ball close to second it may make more sense to tag second yourself and then throw the ball to first. If you are close to second, but not close enough to run, throw the ball underhand so it will be easy for the shortstop to handle and make a quick throw to first.

Ball Hit to Third or Shortstop - If the ball is hit to the left side of the field, you need to cover second. This is one of the more difficult plays in baseball. You have to catch the ball, be sure you are touching the bag, and then turn, or pivot, and throw to first. Remember that the important thing is to get the out at second. Don't rush. Be sure to catch the ball, tag the base, and then make the throw to first. Also, don't try to be fancy. Take your time and make a good throw to first. If you try to be fancy, you could end up with a wild throw to first.

With a runner on first - With a runner on first, the priority is on the double play. The second baseman should move a few steps toward second base and home plate.

Other Responsibilities

- 1 - Back up plays at first base.
- 2 - Act as the cut off for balls hit into right field.
- 3 - If the runner from first is attempting to steal second, back up the shortstop on the throw from the catcher.

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PLAYING SHORTSTOP

The shortstop covers the area between the second baseman and the third baseman. He is often the best defensive player on the team. Many major league teams choose their shortstop primarily for defence. A good hitting shortstop is a bonus. In youth baseball the shortstop is often the best athlete on the team and team leader.

Skills Needed

If you want to play shortstop, you need to be a strong well-rounded defensive player. You must field well, have good speed and range, and have a strong arm.

Where does the shortstop play?

The shortstop is positioned between the third baseman and the second baseman. How deep you can play depends on the strength of your arm and your speed. By playing deeper you will be able to get to more balls, but you want to play shallow enough where you can get to the ball and still throw the runner out at first base.

Covering Second Base

The shortstop covers second base when the ball is hit to the right side of the field (between first and second).

The Double Play

The shortstop needs to cover second base on double plays where the ball is hit to the right side of the infield. They should catch the ball, drag their foot across the base, and throw to first. It is important that youth players focus on catching the ball and getting the lead player out. They should take their time and make an accurate throw, just like when fielding the ball.

When the shortstop fields the ball on a double play, they need to make the decision whether to run to second and make the throw or throw to the second baseman. If they are very close to the bag, it is safer to take a few quick steps to the bag, tag it, and make the throw. If the ball is fielded between 3 - 5 metres away from the bag, then the shortstop should toss the ball underhanded to the second baseman. If further than 5 metres, they can make an overhand throw.

The Stolen Base Attempt

Generally the shortstop is responsible for covering second base on a steal attempt when the batter is left-handed. On some teams the coach may want the shortstop to cover all stolen base attempts. Either way, be sure to communicate with the second baseman as to who is covering the base and who is backing up.

Other Responsibilities

- 1 - Backing up the second baseman when they are covering a steal attempt.
- 2 - Act as the cut-off player for plays at third base and home plate on balls hit to left field and centre field.
- 3 - Cover second base on pickoff attempts.
- 4 - Responsible for all pop-ups on the left side of the infield and shallow outfield

PLAYING THIRD BASE

Third base is often called the "hot corner" in baseball. This is because right handed hitters tend to hit a lot of grounders down the third base line and there is little time for the third baseman to react. In youth baseball, this is generally not the case as batters don't have the bat speed and most right hand hitters will hit to the right side of the field.

Skills Needed

If you want to play third base, you need to be a good fielder. You have to have quick reflexes, but don't need the speed of a shortstop or second baseman. You need to have a strong arm as you will need to make the long throw to first base.

Where does the third baseman play?

For most of the game, the third baseman will stand a few feet behind the bag and four to six steps towards second base. During a bunt situation you can move up to be even with the bag or even a step or two in front of the bag.

Covering the Bag

The third baseman needs to guard third base. While there aren't a lot of plays at third base during a game, in youth league guarding the bag during an attempted stolen base is an important skill. You need to be able to catch the ball from the catcher and apply the tag.

Catching the ball on a play at third base is especially important. If you miss the catch, the base runner is likely going to score. Your first priority should always be to catch the ball first.

Other Responsibilities

- Back up plays at second base when the throw is made from the right side of the field.
- Start the double play ball by throwing the ball to second base. If there is a force at third, then step on third and then throw to second or first for the force out. Note: You should always go for the sure out. If you don't think you can make the out at second, go for the sure out at first base.
- Charge the plate and cover bunts hit down the third base line. Note: In youth baseball the coach may want the pitcher to field these bunts and the third baseman to stay at the bag

OUTFIELDERS

The outfield is covered by three players, the centre fielder, right fielder, and left fielder. These players are responsible for catching fly balls, running down hits to the outfield, and getting the ball back to the infield as quickly as possible.

Skills Needed

Outfielders need to be fast and have a strong arm. Typically centre fielders need the most speed and right fielders need the strongest arm (so they can make the throw to third base). Of course, outfielders need to be able to consistently catch fly balls on the run.

Catching a Fly Ball in the Outfield

When the pitch is thrown, the outfielder should be in the ready position. As soon as the ball is hit, the player should run at full speed to where the ball is going. Don't try to time it so you arrive with the ball, try to beat the ball to the spot. This will give you more time to make adjustments and set up for the catch.

Set up for the catch a bit behind where the ball is coming down. Catch the ball while stepping forward toward the infield. This will give you momentum to make a strong and quick throw.

Where to Throw the Ball

Once you have the ball in the outfield, it is important not to hold it or try to run it back in. You need to throw it to the cutoff player immediately!

Always have a plan of where you need to throw the ball before the pitch is thrown. Here are some ideas on where to throw depending on the base runners:

- **No base runner or person on third:** Throw the ball to the cut-off player at second base. This will either be the second baseman or the shortstop.
- **Person on First:** Throw the ball to the cut-off player for third base (generally the shortstop). If there is also a player on third, you still throw the ball to third in order to keep the runner from first advancing to third.
- **Person on Second, two people on base, or bases loaded:** Throw the ball to the cut-off covering the infield. This is generally the pitcher. You need to keep the player on second from scoring.

Backing Up

A good way to stay in the game and to show your coach you are hustling is to back up plays whenever possible. Centre fielders can charge towards second to back up throws there. Likewise, right fielders can back up first base and left fielders can back up third. In youth baseball backing up can be important as errant throws are common and hustle by the outfielders can save bases and runs.

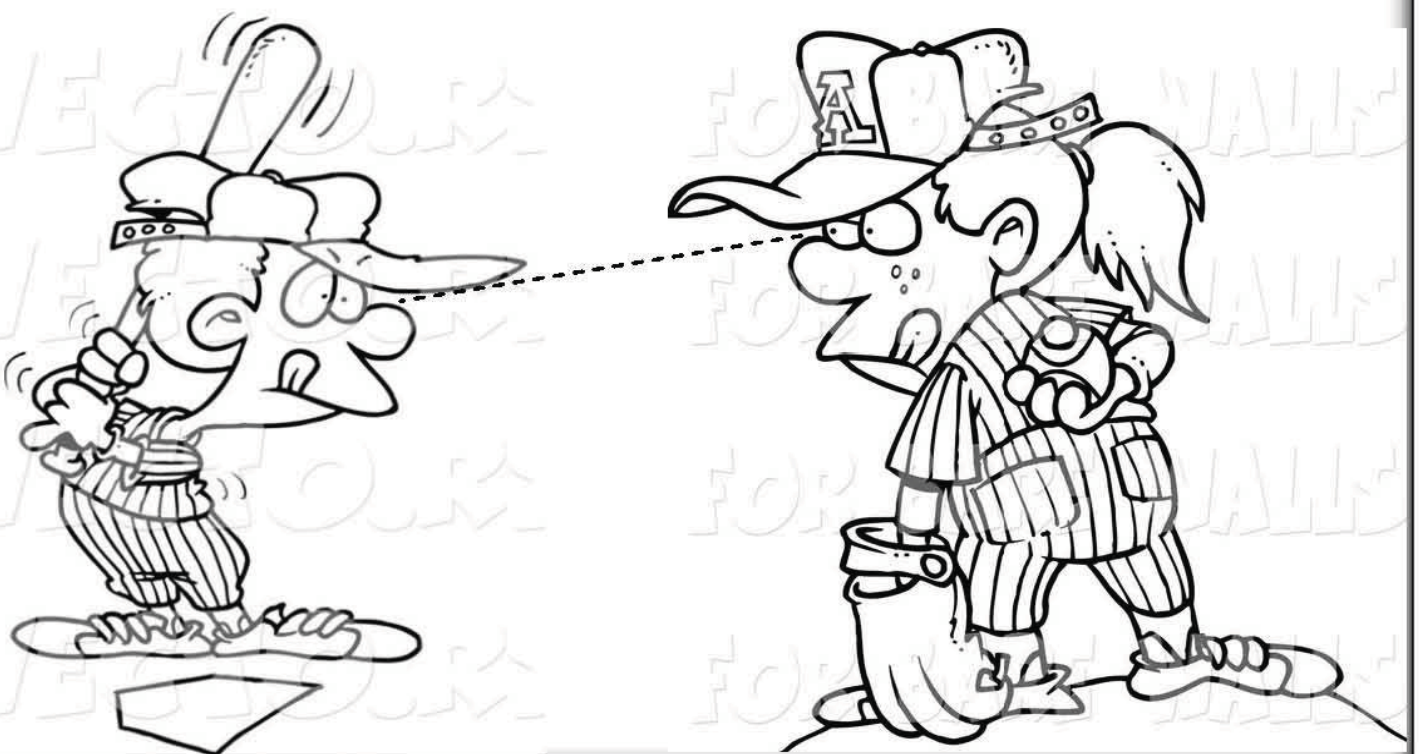
BASEBALL DEFENSIVE STRATEGY

Pitching

Any baseball team's defensive strategy will be centred around the pitcher. The pitcher is the primary defence and how the rest of the defence sets up and plays will depend on the type of pitcher. Some pitchers throw pitches that will cause lots of fly balls. As a result the rest of the defence is positioned and skilled at flagging down fly balls. Other pitches throw pitches that dip and cause lots of ground balls. In this case, a strong infield is necessary.

The pitcher themselves will build up their own unique strategy. Over the years they will work on specialised pitches like the fast ball, curveball, change-up, and slider. Most pitchers will have a couple of pitches that they excel at. Then they will work these pitches to fool the batter. For example, a pitcher may throw a fast ball that whizzes by the batter. When the batter get ready for the next fastball, then the pitcher throws a change-up. The arm motion of the pitcher looks like a fastball to the hitter, but, in fact, the baseball is traveling much slower. The batter often swings too early anticipating the fast ball and completely misses the slower pitch. Pitchers also work the baseball to different areas of the plate. They may pitch a number of high fast balls and then throw a curve ball into the dirt that completely fools the batter. In the end, it's each pitcher's unique strategy that makes them the most effective.

At some professional baseball levels, pitchers will study film of batters and discover their weaknesses. Maybe a batter does not hit an outside fastball well after getting a close in curve ball. The pitcher will then use this knowledge to plan a strategy for getting a particular batter out.



BASEBALL FIELDING STRATEGY

Fielding strategy is important in getting batters out as well. Often the outfield or infield will shift to the left or to the right depending on the batter. It may be because the batter is left handed or right handed or maybe because the batter typically pulls the ball. They may also shift because they know the pitcher is going to throw the ball inside or outside, so they can predict where the ball is likely to be hit. This positioning gives the fielders a better chance of getting to a hit ball.

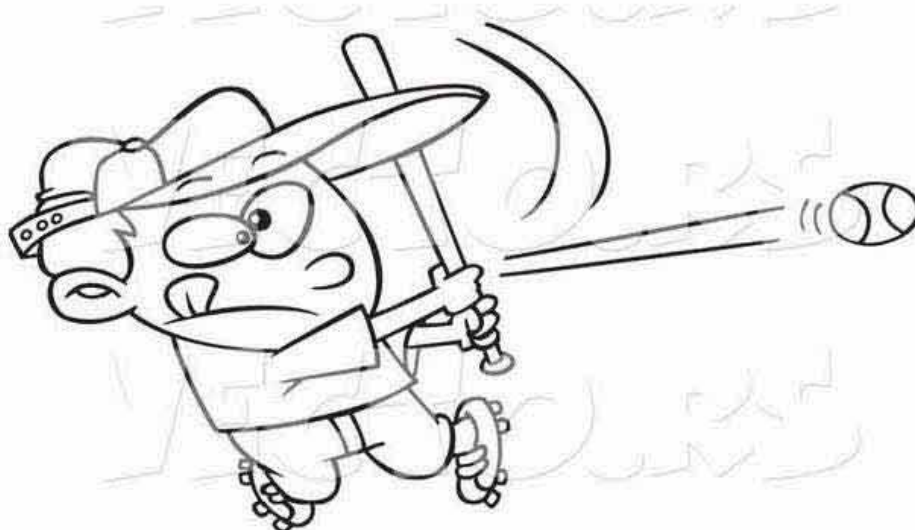
Other special positioning in the field is due to the situation of the game. It may be that they are expecting the batter to bunt, so, in this case, the infield would play closer to home plate ready to charge if the batter bunts.

OFFENSIVE BASEBALL STRATEGY

There is both an individual offensive baseball strategy and a team offensive baseball strategy.

The batter will usually have their own strategy on how to hit a particular pitcher. This usually involves trying to guess the type of pitch that is coming. Knowing the type of pitch can make a big difference on the success of the batter. Batters may study pitchers to know what type of pitches a pitcher prefers on certain counts. They may also study the pitcher's movements to see if they have a specific release or action that tips off what kind of pitch they are throwing. Batters will also try to read the pitch from the catcher's movements or the spin of the ball coming out of the pitcher's hand.

In team offensive strategy, the baseball coach or manager may make certain calls based on the game situation. One play is called hit-and-run. This is where a base runner starts running as soon as the pitcher throws the pitch. The batter is then supposed to try and make contact with the ball. This puts the batter at a bit of a disadvantage, but gives the base runner a much better chance at advancing. Another example is the sacrifice where the batter intentionally gets an out in order to advance the base runner one base or to home plate for a run.



THROWING A BASEBALL

Making a good accurate throw is an important part of playing baseball. The best way to learn to throw is to practice. The more you throw the better you will get.

Stance

Anytime you make a throw in baseball it is important to be set and balanced. Don't try throwing off of one foot or while you are running, this will just result in a bad throw and the runner will not only be safe, but will likely get to advance another base.

Gripping the Ball

The ball should be gripped with two fingers and the thumb. Some young players with smaller hands may need to use three fingers. Try to hold the ball out on your fingertips and not back in the palm of your hand.

The Throwing Motion

The throwing motion is complex and the best way to learn it is to practice. Here are some of the steps to a good throw for a right handed thrower (reverse for left handed):

- Get a good grip on the ball using two fingers and your thumb.
- Stand sideways with your left shoulder pointed toward your target.
- Plant your right foot solidly on the ground.
- Step forward with your left foot, pushing off with your right foot.
- Focus your eyes on your target.
- Throw the ball overhand using your entire arm and your wrist.
- Follow through with your arm always pointed toward the target.

Overhand Not Sidearm

Many young players tend to throw the ball sidearm. This takes away power, accuracy, and can strain the arm. When you practice work on throwing overhand.

Your Whole Body

Your entire body should be a part of your throw. Don't just throw with your arm. Your shoulders, legs, torso, should all work together with your arm to throw the ball.

Aiming the Ball

One thing you should never do is "aim" the ball. You "throw" the ball. With enough practice throwing an accurate ball come naturally. Once you start trying to "aim" the ball you are sure to miss your target.

Where to Target the Ball

When you throw the ball you throw it directly at the other player's glove or chest. You should throw through their glove. Don't try to get the ball to land on their glove. You want to throw a straight line-drive ball right through their glove. If you are very close to the other player, then throw the ball underhand.

FIELDING A BASEBALL

Although hitters get a lot of the hype in the major leagues, defence is a very important part of winning baseball games. This is especially true in youth baseball where a wild throw or a missed grounder can lead to several runs.

Catching a Baseball

One of the first skills you need to learn for baseball is catching the ball. The best way to learn to catch is to go out in the yard with a parent or friend and practice. Start close and then move back as you get better. The more you practice the better you will get at catching.

While playing catch you can work on some basic fundamentals to improve your game:

Glove up and ready- Hold your glove up and out at about chest height. This will make a good target for the thrower.

Stand ready - Don't stand back on your heels. Stand on the balls of your feet and be ready to move if the throw is off a bit.

Move to the ball - If the throw is not directly to you, move to the ball. Don't just stand there and reach. Move in front of the ball where you can make the best play on it.

Eyes on the ball - Always keep your eyes on the ball. Watch it all the way into your mitt.

Glove position - Most catches above your belt are made with your fingers up and thumb down. You can learn to bend your knees a bit to catch lower balls as well. However, when the ball is low or outside your catching hand, you will need to flip your glove and catch the ball fingers down. Be sure to practice this when you are playing catch.



FLY BALLS

Everyone in the field needs to be able to catch pop fly balls. You can practice this with your team or have a parent toss you some high balls during catch so you can practice your footwork and glove position.

Run to the ball - The first thing to do is to run to where the ball is going. Run as fast as you can and try to beat the ball to the spot. This way you will have time to set up and make a good catch.

Eye on the ball - Even though you may be running to the ball, always keep your eye on the ball.

Glove position - Hold the glove above your head with your fingers up and your palm out. If you try to catch the ball at your waist or your side, it will be much more difficult.

Use two hands - Use your throwing hand to secure the ball in your mitt. This will keep the ball from popping out and will have your throwing hand close to the mitt and ready to grab the ball for a quick throw.

GROUND BALLS

One of the toughest skills in youth baseball is fielding a grounder.

Ready stance - When playing the infield you should always be in your ready stance when the pitch is thrown: knees bent, feet apart, balanced on the balls of your feet, and ready to move in any direction.

Get in front of the ball - When the ball is hit, get in front of the ball. Your first goal is to keep the ball in the infield. Move to the ball and between the ball and the infield.

Fielding position - When preparing to field the ball, bend your knees and get low. Keep your feet apart and your backside low.

Glove position - Keep your glove low and wide open with your fingers down.

Catch ball out in front - Catch the ball out in front of you. Don't let the ball get under you or to the side, this will make it much more difficult to field.

Practice - Practice fielding grounders to each side of you. There will be times when you can't get into perfect position and need to use a backhand grab. This should be the exception and not the rule.

HITTING THE BALL

One of the most fun parts of playing baseball is hitting. To become a good hitter, you need to practice, but you also need to practice the correct fundamentals. These include keeping your eye on the ball, using the proper stance, and making a good swing.

Eye on the Ball

In order to hit the ball, you need to see the ball. This sounds simple, but with all the distractions going on in a game, it's not always easy. Try to watch the ball all the way from the pitcher's hand to your bat. Focus entirely on the ball. Try and see if you can tell which way the ball is spinning.

Hitting Stance (for right handed hitter)

There is no perfect stance for hitting a baseball. If you watch professional baseball players, you will see a number of different batting stances. However, there are some good general rules that should help young players have more success at the plate:

- **Stand sideways** - your feet should be lined up with the plate with your left shoulder pointing at the pitcher.
- **Bend your knees** - Bend your knees slightly so you aren't standing stiff. Put your weight on the balls of your feet.
- **Feet apart** - Your feet should be apart, about as wide as your shoulders.
- **Hands up** - Keep your hands up and even with your shoulders.
- **Hands together** - Grip the bat with your hands right next to each other, not spread apart. The left hand is on the bottom and should be about an inch from the end of the bat.
- **Elbow up** - To help keep your back shoulder from dropping, try and keep your right elbow up and even with your shoulders.
- **Relax** - You should be balanced and relaxed with a bit more of your weight on your back foot than your front.

The Swing Stride - As the ball approaches you need to step into the pitch. This is a small step, around 15cms or so, towards the pitcher with your left foot. This step will give you power. Be sure to step towards the pitcher and not to third base. Your left foot should slide forward as your right foot pivots.

- **Level swing** - When you swing the bat it should stay level and parallel to the ground. This will give you a much better chance to hit the ball than a swing that swings up as if you were hitting a golf ball.
- **Extend your arms** - Extend your arms as you swing through the ball. Don't keep your arms all bent as you swing.
- **Follow through** - Swing all the way through the ball. Don't slap or chop at the ball. You won't have any power if you don't make a full swing.

Run! Once you have hit the ball run as fast as you can toward first base. Don't watch the ball. Run!

RUNNING THE BASES

Run Hard

When running the bases you should always run hard. Even if it appears you will be out by a mile, you never know when a defensive player will make an error. If you run hard, eventually it will pay off. Plus, coaches are always watching and will notice you if you hustle.

Run Smart

Every run and out are important in baseball. When you are on base you need to be paying attention to the game and your coaches. Losing your concentration and getting picked off at first can change the entire outcome of the game.

Sliding

Sliding is an important skill in base running. On close plays you will need to slide (except for first base). Sliding is a skill. You need to do it the right way and practice it. Here are some steps to making a good slide:

- Lead with your left foot.
- Bend your right leg as you start to slide.
- Slide on your backside, not your side. Sliding on your side can lead to more cuts and scrapes.
- Keep your hands up. Don't use your hands to stop, use your legs and backside. If you put your hands on the ground, you may end up with a sprained wrist or scratched up hands.

****Always wear long pants when practicing your sliding.

Note: We don't recommend that young players ever slide head first. This can lead to injuries.

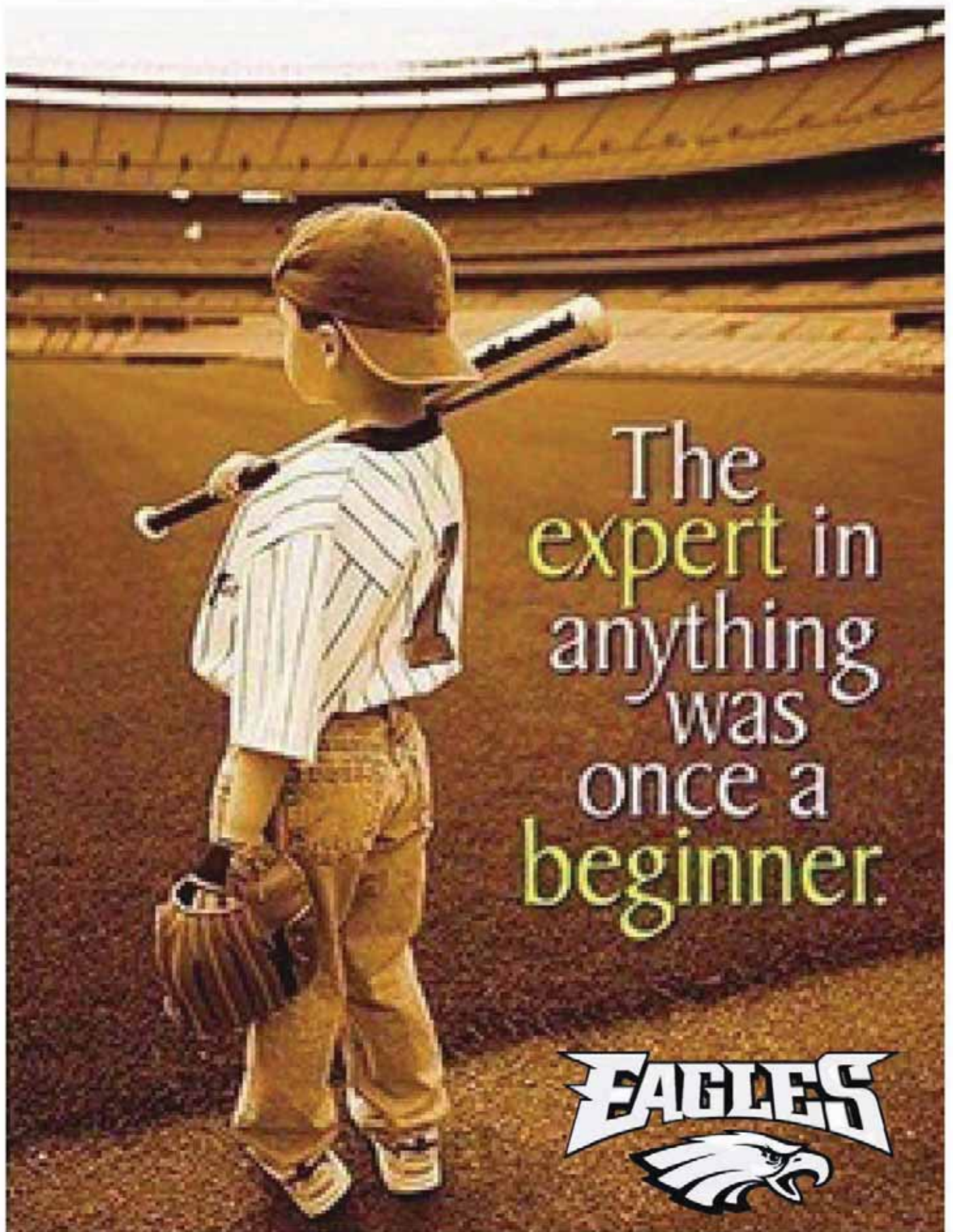
Base Stealing

The rules for base stealing are different from league to league. The best thing to do here is to learn the rules (for example, can you lead off or not?) and then listen to the instructions of your coaches. To be a good base stealer you need to be fast, but you also need to know how to slide. If you plan on stealing bases, be sure to practice your sliding techniques.

Wild Pitches and Passed Balls

Wild pitches and passed balls are common in youth baseball. As a base runner you need to always be paying attention and ready to move if the opportunity arises. Watch the ball, pay attention to your coach's instructions, and always be ready to run!

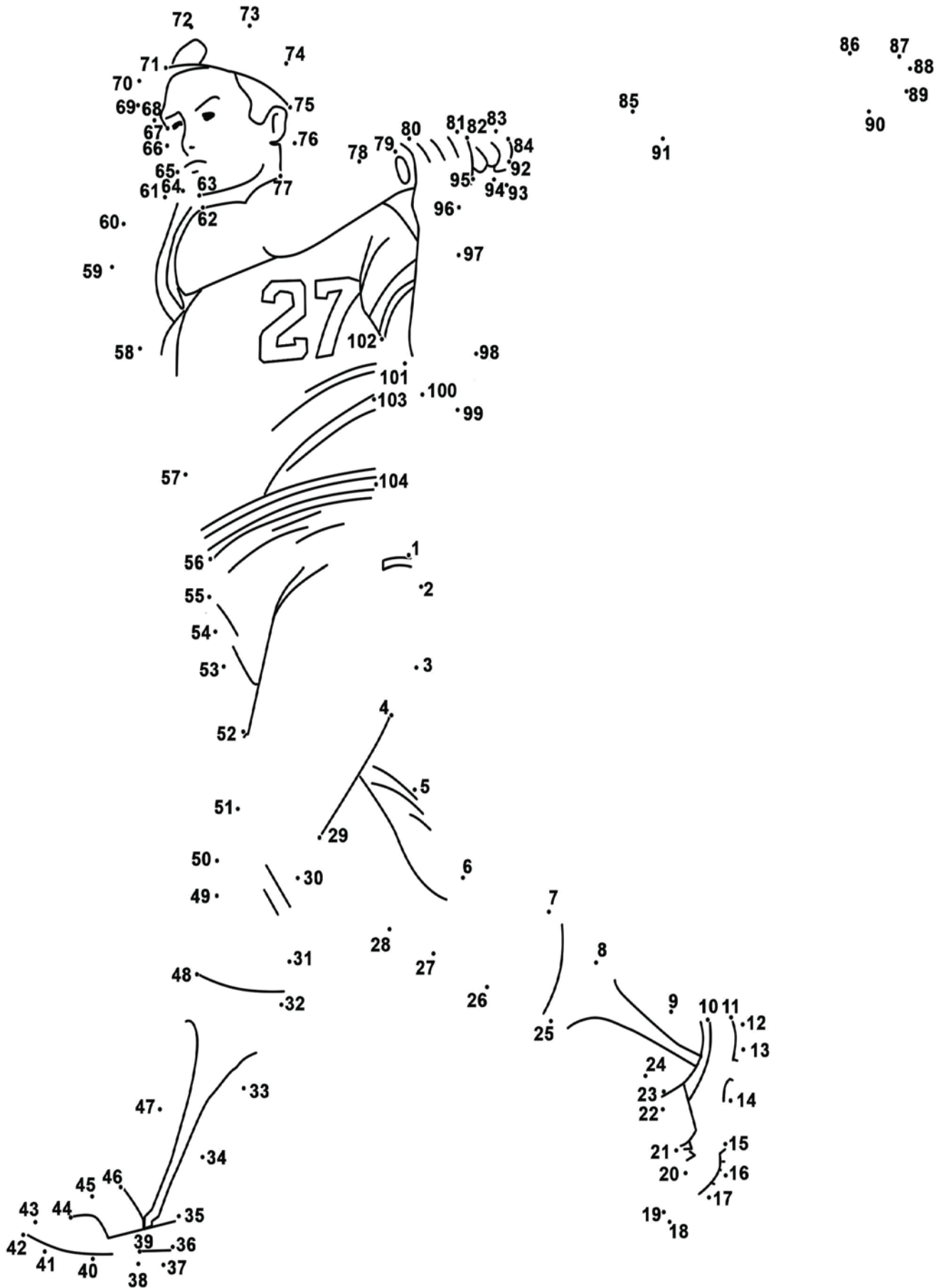
*FROM MINOR LEAGUE TO MAJOR LEAGUE,
GIVE IT YOUR BEST SHOT!*



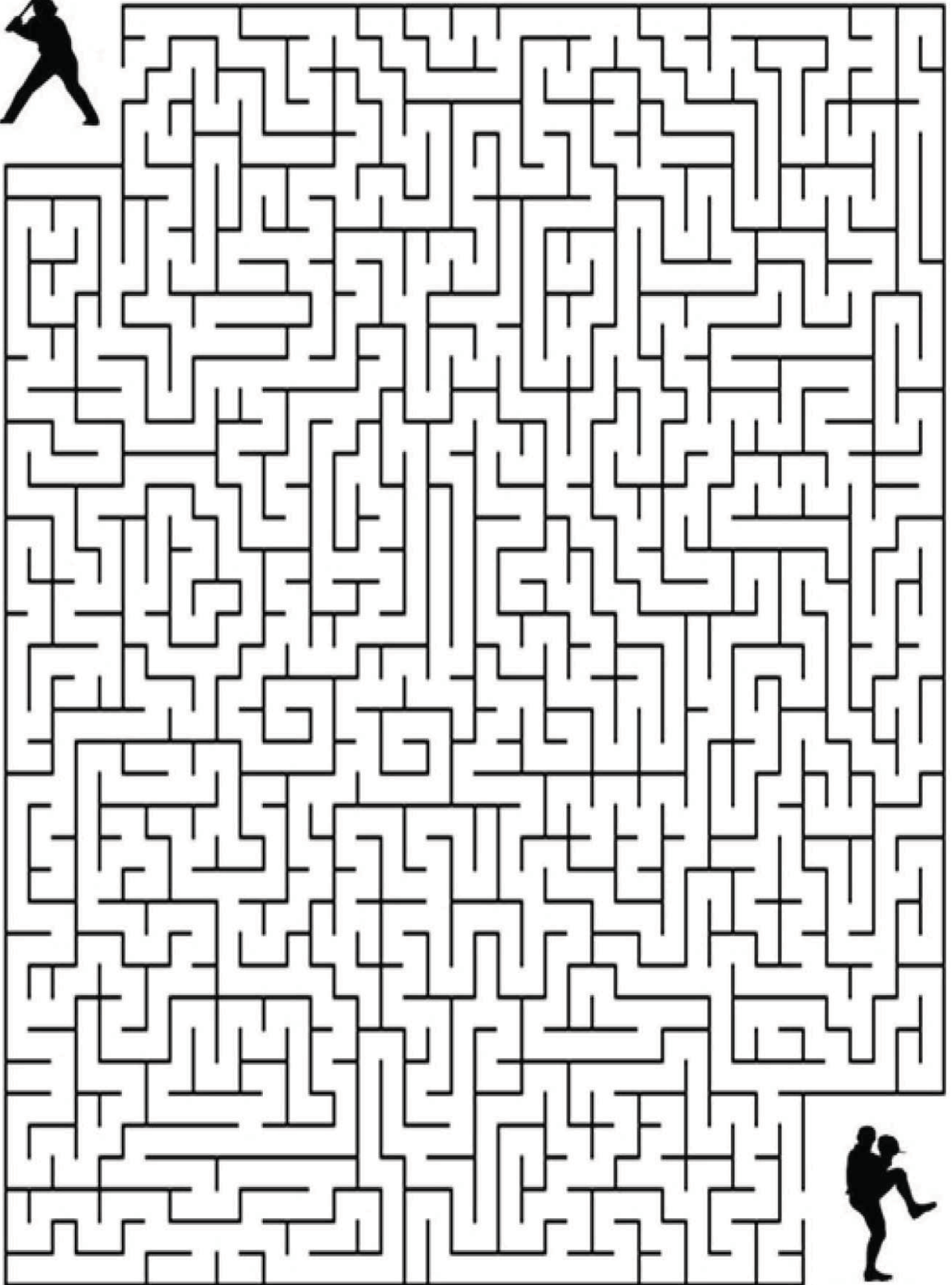
The
expert in
anything
was
once a
beginner.



EAGLES DOT TO DOT PUZZLE



EAGLES BATTER TO PITCHER MAZE



EAGLES BASEBALL JOKES

Q: How do baseball players stay cool?

A: By sitting next to the fans.

Q: What has 18 legs and catches flies?

A: A baseball team

Q: How is a baseball team similar to a pancake?

A: They both need a good batter.

Q: Which animal is best at hitting a baseball?

A: The bat.

Q: Where does a baseball player go when he needs a new uniform?

A: New Jersey.

Q: Why is a baseball umpire like an angry chicken?

A: They both have fowl mouths.

Q: Where shouldn't a baseball player ever wear red?

A: In the bull pen.

Q: What do baseball players put their food on?

A: Home plates.

Q: Does it take longer to run from 1st base to 2nd base, or from 2nd base to 3rd base?

A: 2nd to 3rd because there is a short stop in the middle.

Q: When should baseball players wear armour?

A: When they play knight games.

Q: What do you get when you cross a tree with a baseball player?

A: Babe Root.

Q: Why are baseball players so rich?

A: Because they play on diamonds.



EAGLES WORDFIND

H	I	N	N	I	N	G	S	B	T	R	I	P	L	E
O	O	S	T	O	N	S	A	C	R	I	F	I	C	E
M	B	E	A	T	P	I	U	T	L	A	E	T	S	S
E	S	A	B	T	S	R	I	F	T	S	B	C	U	T
R	O	R	R	E	V	R	G	C	A	T	C	H	E	R
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U	H	O	M	E	P	L	A	T	E	G	O	O	N	T
O	S	C	A	P	M	B	O	U	T	O	U	N	A	A
D	Y	E	F	I	U	V	E	O	T	U	L	D	R	B
O	T	S	T	A	D	I	U	M	H	T	R	E	G	E

BALL

BASE HIT

BATTER

BUNT

CAP

CATCHER

CURVE BALL

DIAMOND

DOUBLE

DUGOUT

ERROR

FIELDER

FIRST BASE

FOUL

GRAND SLAM

HOME PLATE

HOME RUN

INNINGS

OUT

OUTFIELD

PITCHER

SACRIFICE

SECOND BASE

SLIDING

STADIUM

STEAL

STRIKE

THIRD BASE

TRIPLE

UMPIRE

SUNSHINE BASEBALL CLUB

EAGLES



*FROM MINOR LEAGUE TO MAJOR LEAGUE,
GIVE IT YOUR BEST SHOT!*

