

Core Skills for Junior League Players

Players here should know what to do in most game situations, but have new rules to learn. Physically and technically they have to relearn a few skills as well due to the larger field. The game will include harder hitting, faster running and more action, but the bigger field will slow that down – techniques become more detailed and a higher level of focus is required. What you know about which players are great or average can change between the Majors and Juniors.

Fielding Skills

- The bigger field requires different range and reaction time – learn that reaction time
- Throws are longer, so release points need to be adjusted and relearned
- Infielders should be able to turn double plays quickly
- Backing up and cut-off support should be natural
- Learn pick-off plays and covering the steal

Hitting Skills

- The longer pitching distance can provide longer reaction time – learn that reaction time
- Learn to watch for and hit the curve ball
- Fine tune their swing and stance – work on preventing bad habits
- Improve power in the swing
- Perfect the bunt to either left or right side
- Improve their decisions about when to swing or not

Running Skills

- Learn lead offs and stealing with the pitch
- Learn different slides and sliding locations
- Runners should be very aggressive about advancing to the next base

Pitching Skills

- Learn the new rules of pitching
- Learn to hold runners, pick off moves, balks, changing pitch timing
- Learn to position the ball and strategies for throwing to different hitters
- Longer distance requires learning new release points
- Improve changing speeds and location

Practice Skills

- Continue to work on core fundamental skills – repetition is vital
- Strengthen the arm and improve speed
- Work on the new rules and strategies that differ from the Majors
- Provide plenty of practice to relearn timing and release points for the bigger field
- Concentrate on “one fix at a time” so players do not get overwhelmed
- Always recognize something that was done right before trying to make a correction

Game Skills

- Applaud and recognize something done right twice as often as mistakes
- Realize that stress and nervousness are natural and will affect the way they play
- Mistakes are inevitable but should be quickly forgotten “that play is over”