

9U DEVELOPMENT GAME GUIDELINES

PURPOSE

The goal of the 9U Development Game Format is to maximize:

- Repetitions
- Decision making
- Defensive movement
- Base running awareness
- Confidence
- Player engagement

The format is designed to create game-like learning opportunities without requiring advanced coaching systems or complex instruction.

GAME FORMAT

Offensive Rules

Continuous Batting Order

- All players bat every inning regardless of outs.
 - No player sits offensively.
 - The inning ends after all batters in the lineup have hit once.
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Mandatory Situational Base Runner Starts

To increase defensive learning opportunities, the following situational starts are mandatory during development games.

Inning 1

- Bases empty
- Standard game play

Inning 2

- Start with a runner on 1st base
- Development Focus:
 - Force plays at 2nd base
 - Defensive communication
 - Understanding force situations

Inning 3

- Start with runners on 1st and 2nd
- Development Focus:
 - Force plays at 3rd base
 - Defensive priorities
 - Decision making

Inning 4

- Start with bases loaded
- Development Focus:
 - Force plays at home
 - Communication under pressure
 - Understanding defensive responsibilities

Inning 5

- Start with a runner on 2nd base
- Development Focus:
 - Cut-offs and relays
 - Outfield awareness
 - Defensive positioning

Defensive Rules

Defensive Rotation System

All players must rotate through defensive positions during the game. The system is designed to ensure:

- Equal opportunities
- Exposure to multiple positions
- Better overall athletic development
- Balanced infield and outfield experience

Defensive Rotation Line Up Card - Standard

12 Players / 10 Defensive Positions / 5 Innings

Player	Inning 1	Inning 2	Inning 3	Inning 4	Inning 5
Player 1	P	LF	Bench	2B	RCF
Player 2	1B	RF	Bench	SS	LCF
Player 3	2B	Bench	LF	P	RF
Player 4	SS	Bench	RF	1B	LF
Player 5	3B	LCF	Bench	C	2B
Player 6	C	RCF	Bench	3B	SS
Player 7	LF	P	2B	Bench	C
Player 8	LCF	1B	SS	Bench	3B
Player 9	RCF	3B	C	LF	Bench
Player 10	RF	C	3B	RCF	Bench
Player 11	Bench	2B	P	LCF	1B
Player 12	Bench	SS	1B	RF	P

Rotation Goals

- Players rotate between infield, outfield, and bench
 - Players should not remain in the infield repeatedly
 - Every player experiences multiple defensive roles
 - Coaches may adjust for safety and confidence
 - This rotation card is to be used by each team and handed in to umpires or convenor at the end of each game.
 - Coaches may only write in names in the line up, not change position assignments.
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First Base Safety Rule

For safety purposes:

- Coaches should not place players at 1st base who:
 - Are unable to catch consistently
 - Are fearful of the ball
 - Cannot safely receive throws

First base requires increased awareness and glove confidence due to the volume of throws received.

Coach Involvement Rules

Defensive Coach Support

The defensive coach is permitted to:

- Instruct players during live play
- Freeze or stop the play briefly for teaching moments
- Reposition defenders
- Reinforce game situations in real time
- Support player engagement for infielders and outfielders by rolling or throwing a ball to play catch with players who would otherwise sit down or become disengaged when the ball is not hit to their position

The purpose is development and learning — not competitive advantage.

Development Priorities

The focus of this format should be:

- Learning over winning
- Repetitions over standings
- Confidence over outcomes
- Decision-making over perfection

Players should leave games having:

- Fielded multiple balls
 - Made multiple decisions
 - Run bases repeatedly
 - Experienced multiple defensive positions
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RECOMMENDED GAME LENGTH

- 5 innings
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RECOMMENDED COACH APPROACH

Coaches are encouraged to:

- Keep the pace moving
- Prioritize encouragement
- Allow mistakes
- Use quick corrections
- Rotate players frequently
- Avoid over-specialization at 9U

The objective is long-term player development and enjoyment of the game.

