

Instructional Materials for Teaching “Tagging Up” in Little League Baseball

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Team Triple-A Instruction

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Dear Little League Coach,

Thanks for choosing Team Triple-A for your Instructional Design needs. The focus of this instruction is to teach your players the concept of “tagging up,” as best applied during Little League games. As we’re sure you know, many young baseball players don’t have complete knowledge of the rules of the game—the basics may be mastered, but the finer points of baseball may not be completely solidified. This instruction will help your players to better understand what to do in baserunning situations where tagging up is an option.

This instruction has three components: an initial on-the-field practice that serves to introduce your players to tagging up, a computer simulation which your players can use on their own time at home, and a final on-the-field practice that reinforces the concepts related to tagging up, and gives your players a chance to practice tagging up scenarios in a “real” situation.

The initial on-the-field practice is mostly a demonstration of the basics of tagging up (e.g. what tagging up involves and when tagging up takes place) with a few basic practice activities. This practice will take approximately one hour of your two hour practice.

The computer simulation is freely available at the following website:

<http://tinyurl.com/tagging-up>. It uses a popular and very safe computer technology called Flash that most of your players will have on their computer (if they don’t, the simulation will prompt the player to install the plugin that allows him or her to run the simulation). You’ll receive a note in your e-mail whenever one of your students completes the simulation. For more information about Flash, visit their website at <http://www.adobe.com/products/flashplayer/>.

The last practice session is an on-the-field practice that brings all of the concepts related to tagging up together. After a review of concepts, you’ll divide your players into three squads (outfield, infield, runners) and have your players practice what to do in various tagging up scenarios. You’ll rotate your players around so they have a chance to experience a tagging up situation from each position on the field. This practice will take up the entire two hour practice.

We wish you and your Little League team the best of luck in the upcoming season! Please feel free to contact us through our website if you have any questions.

Regards,

Team Triple-A Instruction

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ON THE FIELD PRACTICE #1 (FIRST PRACTICE SESSION)

Coach: use this set of materials during the first on-the-field practice, to give the learner a preliminary understanding of the tagging up process.

SUMMARY OF PRACTICE SESSION

- Two hour practice, half of which is devoted to tagging up concepts
- 10 minutes for introduction to the concept of tagging up
- 15 minutes watching video clips
- 30 minutes small on-the-field practice
- 45 minutes for other practice activities
- 20 minute cool-down

INTRODUCTION AND MOTIVATION (10 MINUTES)

- Ask the learners about what is their reaction when they are the fielders and they see a deep fly ball to left field and there are less than two outs. Allow the students to express their idea freely and if there are disagreements, you should encourage them to debate and explore why they feel the way they do.
- The instructor should now show Image 1 (provided in additional materials) which is a picture of a baseball field, with players at their appropriate positions. Review the basic terms and rules in baseball that are related to tagging up, such as:
 - Fly ball
 - Force out
 - Tag
 - Sacrifice
 - Deep/Shallow Fly
 - Wait (with regard to advancing toward a base when a fly ball is in the air)
- Tell the learner that tagging up is an important skill which helps them to become advanced players.

WATCHING VIDEO CLIPS (15 MINUTES)

- **Video clip of bad example (Video 1, provided in Additional Materials):**

“A batter hits a high fly ball to right field with one out. A runner on 3rd base advances immediately without any observation of the fly ball, as soon as the batter hits the high fly ball. He reaches home and thought that he has scored. However, he is easily thrown out by the right fielder, who throws to third for the out.”

 - *Word for the instructor: “This is a typical mistake for novice baseball players. Observation and thinking is very important in a baseball game. In such a situation, the advance towards home base is totally useless. Always remember, you can never score if you advance before the fielder has caught the ball!”*
- **Video clip of good example (Video 1, provided in Additional Materials):**

“A batter hits a high fly ball to right field with one out. A runner on 3rd base goes back to 3rd base immediately after the ball is hit and waits until the fielder catches the ball. Then the player can tag up and advance immediately to the home base, where he scores successfully!”

- *Word for the instructor:* “This is a very smart decision made by the runner. He goes back immediately after the deep fly ball is hit and waits to advance until the fielder catches the ball. Then, he can advance to home base and score easily!”

SMALL SIZE FIELD PRACTICE: (30 MINUTES)

- Call out 3 learners out of all the learners. Choose players you’re confident in. They will be serving as examples for the rest of your team. Since this is only a preliminary practice, the coach does not need to ask the learners to practice on a real field. The learners only stand on a small sized field (perhaps use the area between the dugout and 1st or 3rd base) so all the learners can easily see the demonstration. One player should play the outfielder fielding the fly ball, one learner should play the fielder on the “base,” and one learner should play the runner. You (the coach) can be the batter.
- First, demonstrate the right pose (the position of the feet and rotating the body) of tagging up and ask the learner on the 3rd base to imitate. All of the players (not just the three on-field players) can practice this as well.
- Next, throw a ball by hand to imitate a high fly ball. As soon as the ball leaves your hand, instruct the runner to “tag up!” The player who is supposed to be the baserunner should go back to his base and then advance when the fielder gets the ball.
- The outfielder should throw the ball back into the infield. If the runner leaves the base before they catch the ball, they should throw to the infielder. Otherwise, they should throw to the base where the runner is headed.
- Repeat this process 3 times, rotating positions so that each learner has a chance to be the baserunner.
- Divide the rest of the learners into groups (4 learners a group, one of them plays a batter each time) and ask them to practice what you just did. The coach walks around and helps them to have a correct understanding of the tagging up process.

REMAINDER OF PRACTICE (60 MINUTES)

The rest of the practice should be devoted to other practice activities of your choice. At the end of practice, gather all your players together and discuss the tagging up computer simulation.

TRANSITION TO THE FLASH SIMULATION PRACTICE

Tell the learner that if they are at home and still want to practice the tagging up by themselves, they do not necessarily have to gather a batch of players to play it on the field. Other than the normal practice activities you usually have, tell your players that you also have an amusing and simple computer game for them to practice and review tagging up.

FLASH SIMULATION OF TAGGING UP (2ND PRACTICE SESSION)

Coach: give the following URL to each of your players. The URL is a link to a computer game, which is a simulation (using Adobe Flash) of various tagging up situations. When one of your players complete the simulation, you’ll receive an email (at the address you provided to us) confirming that that player completed the simulation.

The URL to the computer simulation is: <http://tinyurl.com/tagging-up> (@Dr. Haynes: this is currently a partially functional prototype, the final simulation will have significant additional functionality)

ON-THE-FIELD PRACTICE #2 (THIRD PRACTICE SESSION)

Coach: use this set of materials during the second on-the-field practice, to reinforce the concepts of tagging up first learned in the first on-the-field practice, and during the computer simulations that complement these instructions.

SUMMARY OF PRACTICE SESSION

- Two hour practice
- 20 minutes for warm-up
- 15 minute dugout review of “tagging up” concepts
 - Two outs
 - Less than two outs and runners on first base, second base, third base, multiple baserunners
- 65 minutes of on-the-field practice of tagging up
- 20 minutes of cool-down

WARM-UP (20 MINUTES)

- Your choice of activities
- Incorporate running/fielding exercises

DUGOUT REVIEW OF TAGGING UP CONCEPTS (15 MINUTES)

- Gather players in dugout
- Review topics learned in simulation:
 - ***Always listen to your base coach and, regardless of what we teach you today, do what they tell you during the game.***
 - **When there are two outs, always advance on any batted ball in fair territory.**
 - **When the batter hits a ground ball:**
 - If you are forced to run due to a force situation (you are on first base, or there are runners behind you all the way to first base):
 - You **MUST** advance to the next base.
 - If you are not forced to run and an infielder fields the ball:
 - Use your judgment and watch for signals from the base coach. You will usually want to try to advance, unless the ground ball is hit hard, and near the base you would want to advance to. Remember always to advance to the next base if there are two outs.
 - If you are not forced to run and an infielder does not field the ball:
 - Advance to the next base.
 - **Otherwise, when the batter hits a fly ball out of the infield and there are less than two outs:**
 - Runner on First:
 - Any fly ball: advance halfway to the next base and wait to see if the ball is caught. If it is caught, retreat to first base. If it is not caught, you **MUST** advance to second base.
 - Runner on Second:
 - A **deep** fly ball to center OR any fly ball to right field: tag up and wait to see if the ball is caught. Whether or not it is caught, advance to third base once the fielder fields it.

- Any other fly ball: advance halfway to third base and wait to see if the ball is caught. If it is caught, retreat to second base. If it is not caught, advance to third base.
- Runner on Third:
 - Any fly ball: tag up and wait to see if the ball is caught. Whether or not it is caught, advance to home once the fielder fields it.
- Multiple runners on base:
 - Do what you would do if you were the only runner on base EXCEPT:
 - If there is a runner on third and less than two outs, tag up and wait to see if the ball is caught.
 - If, for some reason, the runner ahead of you decides not to advance to the next base and you want to advance, too bad. You can't advance to the next base unless the runner ahead of you advances as well. Retreat to the base you came from.

ON-THE-FIELD PRACTICE OF TAGGING UP (65 MINUTES)

- Split the team into three squads:
 - Outfielders (3 on field, 3 in reserve)
 - Infielders (1 on base that runner leaves from, 1 on base that runner runs to, 1 mock pitcher, 1 catcher, 3 in reserve)
 - Runners (1, 2, 3 on field, 4,3,2 in reserve)
- Grab your bat and some balls. You'll be hitting fly balls (and some grounders) to the outfield.
- Run the following drills:
 - Assign a runner or runners to a base or bases (start with one runner on first base, then have one runner on second, then third, then do exercises with multiple runners on base).
 - Instruct the pitcher to throw to the catcher.
 - Once catcher catches the ball, You (the coach), who is standing at home plate, should throw up and hit a ball to the field. Try to hit mostly fly balls, but hit some ground balls later in the practice as well.
 - Instruct the players to take their standard leadoff as soon as the pitched ball crosses home plate.
 - Once the ball you hit is in play, fielders and runners should take the appropriate actions:
 - Outfielders should try to field the fly balls and then pick off/throw out runners
 - Fielders should be ready to receive throws from the outfield
 - Runners should tag up, advance, or advance halfway depending on what base they're on and where/how hard/etc you hit the ball in the field.
 - Rotate players frequently, giving each player a chance to practice every role (except for maybe pitching/catching).

COOL-DOWN (20 MINUTES)

- Your choice of activities
- Easy running/fielding