

Clinic Plan: Learn to Play

Time: 1.5 hrs

Participants: up to 20

Equipment list:

Bucket of balls

As many bats as available

Dowels (provided)

Bases (optional but recommended for infield visualization purposes)

Whiteboard or similar, marker (optional but recommended)

Goals

- Gain confidence in the fundamental movements of the game.
- Gain understanding of the rules of the game.

“Classroom” Session (30 mins):

Folks can get comfortable and gather around the instructor for a classroom style session about the game. Questions are encouraged!

1. The layout of the field
 - a. Infield
 - b. Outfield
 - c. Foul territory
 - d. Out of play
 - e. Unique field characteristics that might make a ball “dead” (trees, etc.)
2. Structure of the game
 - a. 7 innings maximum.
 - i. Mercy rule ends the game if either team is up by 15 runs after 3 innings, or 10 runs after 5 innings.
 - ii. The ump will call “no new inning” or call an “open inning” to note the last inning of a game. A game never ends in the middle of an inning.
 - iii. Time limit for a game is 1.5 hours (*this is a Mabel rule).
 - b. Each inning is divided in half, with a top and a bottom;
 - c. In the top of an inning, the home team plays defense, in the bottom of an inning, the home team bats;
 - d. Each half inning is over when either:
 - i. Defensive team gets 3 outs, or
 - ii. Offensive team scores 5 runs (*this is a Mabel rule)
 - e. The exception is when the ump has called an open inning. In that case the defensive team must get 3 outs for the half inning to end.
 - f. The offensive team has 9 players on the field. The defensive team has a

set batting order wherein batters come to the plate in that order, continuous across innings.

3. How to get an out

- a. The pitcher gets 3 strikes on a batter;
- b. The batter hits a ball in the air and it is caught before it hits the ground or goes 'dead';
- c. The batter hits a ball on the ground and it is thrown to 1st base and caught before the batter reaches the bag;
- d. A ball is hit into play and thrown/caught at a bag where there is a 'force' play;
- e. A ball is hit in the air, caught, and thrown to a bag that had a runner before the runner gets back to that bag;
- f. Any runner is tagged with the ball when they are not on a bag.

4. How "force" and no force (also called "tag plays") plays work.

- a. Only 1 runner can be on a base at a time.
- b. Base running occurs in order: you're a batter, then go to first, then second, then third, then home. As long as the play is live, you can be attempting to advance to the next bag.
- c. A force play is a situation in which a base-runner is compelled (or forced) to vacate their starting base and attempt to advance to the next base. When a runner is forced to advance to a base, they are forced out if an opponent with possession of the ball reaches that base before they do.
- d. For example, if there is a runner on first and you are on second, and a ball is hit into play, you are being 'forced' to run to third, so there is a force play on at third.
- e. For example, if there is no runner on first and you are on second, and a ball is hit into play, you are not being forced to vacate your base, so you will only get out if someone tags you with the ball when you are not on the bag.

5. How an at-bat works

- a. A batter comes to the plate, as soon as both feet are in the batter's box the pitcher may begin their pitch;
- b. A batter can swing or not swing at any pitch;
- c. The strike zone of a batter is the width of home plate and generally the height between their knees and mid-torso. This height is noted *before* the batter crouches or gets into their batting stance.
- d. The ump calls a pitch a strike if
 - i. It crosses the plate through the strike zone; or
 - ii. The batter swings and misses; or
 - iii. The batter swings and hits the ball foul
- e. The ump calls a pitch a ball if
 - i. It doesn't cross the plate through the strike zone AND

- ii. The batter doesn't swing
- f. An at bat is over when
 - i. The batter gets 3 strikes before they get 4 balls. This is called a strike out.
 - ii. The batter gets 4 balls before they get 3 strikes. This is called a walk and the batter is awarded first base.
 - iii. The batter gets hit with a pitch. This is called 'hit by pitch' and the batter is awarded first base.
 - iv. NOTE: Foul balls. A batter cannot strike out on a foul ball. The at-bat continues with as many foul balls as required.
 - v. NOTE: Dropped third strike rule. If a third strike is dropped by the catcher, the batter may run to first base and is safe unless the ball is thrown and caught at first base before they get there. If first base is already occupied with a runner, this option is not open to the batter.
- 6. How to score a run
 - a. If a batter successfully gets on base, they become a runner. They must progress around the bases in order without getting out, and they score a run when they cross home plate.
- 7. How to progress around the bases
 - a. Steal a base: as soon as a pitcher releases a pitch, a runner can run to the next base.
 - b. Advance on a hit: if you are on base and a batter hits a ball on the ground, you must run if you are forced, and you have the option to run if you are not forced.
 - c. Tag on a caught ball: if the ball is hit in the air and caught before hitting the ground, you have a few outcomes:
 - i. If you left your bag on contact, you need to get back to that bag before an opponent gets to it with the ball. If they do, you're out.
 - ii. As soon as the ball is caught, you can 'tag your bag' that you were on (step on it) and then progress. In that case you need to be tagged with the ball when not on a bag to be out.

Positioning Session (20 mins):

Instructors walk through the entire defensive set-up using the field and bases. Focus on:

1. Where each position starts before a pitch
2. Where each position goes to cover a bag or receive a throw at a bag
 - a. At first base, note the role of the safety base
3. Where each position goes when a ball is hit into the outfield
 - a. "Ball on a string" idea: ball travels to outfield and "pulls" the closer middle infielder out toward the fielding player, while the farther middle infielder is

- “pulled” toward 2nd base.
 - b. Pitcher covers behind 3rd base in case of an overthrow with no runners on base; covers behind home with runner(s) on base.
 - c. 1B stays on 1st when the ball is hit to RF - can still throw the runner out sometimes!
4. Where each outfield position goes when a ball is hit into the infield
- a. RF covers behind 1B
 - b. With runners on:
 - i. CF covers behind 2B, especially on throws from catcher
 - ii. LF covers behind 3B

Throwing Session (20 mins):

Instructors demo and talk through proper throwing technique. Folks pair up and toss, practicing proper technique. Instructors walk around and give feedback.

Throwing technique:

1. Glove-side foot strides forward as throwing hand is held cocked back, elbow at 90 degrees.
2. Bring the ball over (don't shotput it from the shoulder), and release
3. Throwing arm comes over the top and finishes down across the chest and hand finishes at the opposite hip (roughly).

Catching technique:

1. Keep feet mobile, moving toward where the ball is going.
2. Secure the ball in glove with throwing hand.
3. Aim to receive the ball square to the body, not off to the side.
4. Rotate the glove based on location of ball (i.e., the “clock” idea for pointing glove down, using backhand, etc.)

Batting Session (20 mins):

Instructors walk through how to hold a bat, stand in the batter's box, and swing. Folks grab a dowel and practice. Instructors walk around and give feedback.

Technique:

1. Grip - firm but relaxed, hands together
2. Lower body - feet firmly on the ground, engage biggest muscles to drive “hips toward the ball”
3. Upper body - trunk twists toward pitcher, arms being “pulled” then explode through the ball
4. Eyes - goal is to be watching contact between bat and ball

Wrap-Up

Final questions from the group and a big THANK YOU for being part of Mabel.