

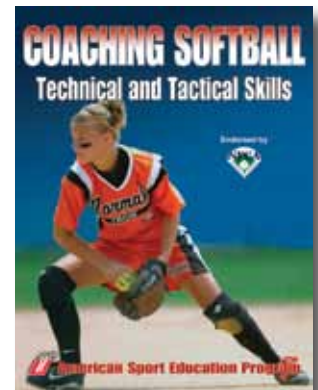
**Excerpts from:**

***Coaching Baseball Technical and Tactical Skills***

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***Coaching Softball Technical and Tactical Skills***

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## **IDENTIFYING AND EVALUATING SKILLS FOR BASEBALL AND SOFTBALL**

To help athletes become excellent baseball and softball players, you need to know what skills players need to play these sports. Athletes must master many technical skills and know how to apply those skills in tactical situations. In addition to technical and tactical skills, a vast array of nonphysical talents—mental capacity, communication skills and character training—overlay athletic performance, affect its development and should be considered (Rainer Martens, *Successful Coaching, Third Edition*). Even though every skill is important, not all of them will be within the reach of your players, so you must filter the all-encompassing list of skills. First, you need to identify the skills your team needs to be successful. Here are some suggestions about how to identify the specific skills your players need.

### **Technical Skills**

First identify the basic or core skills that every player must possess to play baseball/softball at your level of competition. Your athletes will likely possess these core skills to varying degrees. Because all sports require that athletes perform the fundamentals well, you'll want to help your athletes develop these skills further and keep them sharp throughout the season. Consider the skills of each position and for various situations in the contest.



## Tactical Skills

Information is not always readily available on which tactical skills to teach and how to teach them. I encourage you to identify the significant tactical decisions in your sport, to describe the knowledge needed to make the appropriate tactical decision, and to determine a way to have your athletes practice these decision-making skills. To do so, as with technical skills, I recommended observing and consulting with other coaches and experienced athletes and working with a mentor coach if possible.



## Physical Skills

In sharp contrast to tactical skills, an overwhelming amount of information is available on physical training (e.g., strength, speed, power, and endurance as well as nutrition and weight control). Due to the abundance of available information, you should have no difficulty identifying the physical training skills your athletes will need for your sport.

## Mental Skills

You probably recognize the importance of self-confidence, mental toughness, concentration, and attention skills along with anxiety and anger control, but you may feel ill equipped to teach these mental skills. If you're like many other coaches, you simply ignore these skills, hoping your athletes will acquire them by playing the sport or perhaps through divine intervention. On a day-to-day basis you are the mental skills coach, whether or not you recognize or accept the role. How you demonstrate these mental skills, how you respond under pressure, and how you motivate and provide feedback to your athletes will influence their development of mental skills. To be a successful coach, you must become a student of sport psychology so you will know how to teach the basic mental skills needed for your sport.

## Communication Skills

In order to perform well, players need to be good communicators. Communication with teammates during a contest is often vital to facilitate team play – for example, verbal commands, nonverbal signals, and these almost imperceptible movements of the body, face, and eyes that communicate direction to a player. Most coaches just hope these communication skills develop within their teams, but better coaches direct it.

## Character Development

Let's not forget about teaching character development, which should be a part of your instructional plan. Although athletes certainly don't need to be good characters to win in sports, they do need to be good characters to win in life. You can help them achieve this much-needed life skill.



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The Identifying and Evaluating Skills worksheet shown below provides an overview of the basic to intermediate skills needed in baseball. This figure provides an excellent framework for outlining the skills your athletes should master to play baseball successfully.



To view a **softball-specific** list of skills, click on this worksheet icon.

## Identifying and Evaluating Skills

STEP 1 Skills identified	STEP 4							
	Teaching priorities			Readiness to learn		Priority rating		
	Must	Should	Could	Yes	No	A	B	C
<b>Offensive technical skills</b>								
Preparing to Hit	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Swing and Follow-Through	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Bunting Basics	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Sacrifice Bunting	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Drag Bunting	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Running Basics	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Running to First Base	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Rounding the Bases	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Stealing Second Base	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Stealing Third Base	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Bent-Leg Slide	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Headfirst Slide	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
<b>Defensive technical skills</b>								
Throwing Basics	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Catching a Throw	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Catcher Basics	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Catcher Throwing	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Catcher Blocking	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Reacting As a Catcher	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Pitcher Basics	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Pitcher Stretch Mechanics	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Throwing a Fastball	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Throwing a Curveball	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Throwing a Changeup	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Outfield Basics	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Challenging Outfield Plays	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Infield Basics	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Fielding Ground Balls	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Double Plays	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Fielding Pop-Ups in the Infield	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
<b>Offensive tactical skills</b>								
Aggressive Baserunning	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Baserunning From Second	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Scoring From Third	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
First-and-Third Play	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Using the Bunt	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Knowing When to Steal Second	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Knowing When to Steal Third	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Hit and Run	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Situational Hitting	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Getting Out of a Rundown	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C

(continued)

## Identifying and Evaluating Skills *(continued)*

STEP 1	STEP 4							
Skills identified	Teaching priorities			Readiness to learn		Priority rating		
	Must	Should	Could	Yes	No	A	B	C
<b>Defensive tactical skills</b>								
Defensive Positioning	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Defending the First-and-Third Double Steal	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Defending Bunt Situations	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Pitcher Pickoffs	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Catcher Pickoffs	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Double-Play Defenses	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Determining the Best Pitching Options	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Rundowns	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Wild Pitches	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
<b>Physical training skills</b>								
Strength	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Speed	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Power	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Endurance	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Flexibility	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Quickness	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Balance	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Agility	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Other	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
<b>Mental skills</b>								
Emotional control—anxiety	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Emotional control—anger	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Self-confidence	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Motivation to achieve	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Ability to concentrate	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Other	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
<b>Communication skills</b>								
Sends positive messages	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Sends accurate messages	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Listens to messages	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Understands messages	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Receives constructive criticism	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Receives praise and recognition	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Credibility with teammates	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Credibility with coaches	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
<b>Character skills</b>								
Trustworthiness	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Respect	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Responsibility	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Fairness	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Caring	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C
Citizenship	M	S	C	Yes	No	A	B	C

Adapted, by permission, from R. Martens, 2004, *Successful Coaching*, 3rd ed. (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics), 250-251.

Athletes  
need Mental  
Skills too.

Develop  
the core  
skills!

Character  
is a necessity!

## About the Authors

*Coaching Baseball Technical and Tactical Skills* was written by the American Sport Education Program (ASEP) with the assistance of Tom O'Connell, 2004 American Baseball Coaches Association (ABCA) Coach of the Year.

The first high school coach ever elected to lead the ABCA, **Tom O'Connell** has spent 32 years coaching at the prep level. From 1974 to 2000, he guided the teams at Pulaski High School in Milwaukee, Wisconsin where he was the winningest coach in any sport in the school's history. Long involved in the ABCA, O'Connell represented the Midwestern states (Region IV) on the High School Division Committee of the organization from 1984 to 1998. He was elected chair of the group in 1993 and became the first prep coach to serve on the Board of Directors that same year.

*Coaching Softball Technical and Tactical Skills* was written by the American Sport Education Program (ASEP) in conjunction with softball coaching legends Kirk Walker and Mona Stevens.

**Kirk Walker** has become Oregon State's all-time winningest softball coach with a 462-347-3 career record. His team has had eight seasons of winning 40-plus games. In 2005 Walker earned his second Pacific-10 Conference Coach of the Year Award after winning the Pac-10 title for the first time. Walker also coached in the Amateur Softball Association, where he led his team to four consecutive women's major fastpitch national titles. Currently he is coaching in the Pro Fastpitch Xtreme Tour.

**Mona Stevens** was a University of Utah softball stalwart, coaching from 1996 - 2005. She led her team to three NCAA Tournament appearances, three Mountain West Conference Tournament titles, and one regular-season championship. Throughout her coaching career, Stevens amassed a 281-239-1 (.540) record. In addition to coaching at the collegiate level, she has served as a coach for national and international competitions. Stevens is the author of *The Fastpitch Softball Drill Book: A Coaches' Guide to Common Problems and Corrections*.

To order a copy of either *Coaching Baseball Technical and Tactical Skills* or *Coaching Softball Technical and Tactical Skills* click [here](#) or call toll-free at 800-747-5698.

The *Coaching Baseball Technical and Tactical Skills* and *Coaching Softball Technical and Tactical Skills* online courses will help you learn how to teach the skills and strategies and techniques and tactics of baseball/softball. You'll learn about approaches to coaching, including the games approach (an alternative to drills-based coaching); you'll develop a season plan and a series of practice plans; and you'll improve your ability to coach during games. For more information on registering for one of these online courses, visit the ASEP web site at [www.ASEP.com](http://www.ASEP.com).



The American Sport Education Program (ASEP) is the leading provider of youth, high school, and elite-level sport education programs in the USA. Rooted in the philosophy of "Athletes first, winning second," ASEP has educated more than one and a half million coaches, officials, sport administrators, parents, and athletes. For more than 25 years, local, state, and national sport organizations have partnered with ASEP to lead the way in making sport a safe, successful, and enjoyable experience for all involved. For more information on ASEP sport education courses and resources, call 800-747-5698, e-mail [ASEP@hkusa.com](mailto:ASEP@hkusa.com), or visit [www.ASEP.com](http://www.ASEP.com).