



9U (Rookie)

Recommended Program

**As developed by The Lacombe Minor Baseball Association
and Darcy Warawa. Further program development
generated from the Baseball Alberta AGM 9U Workshop**

Dodgers

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Season Focus

- Participant safety
- Best effort by coaches, parents / guardians and players
- Engaged participants resulting in a desire to return next season
- Continual physical skill development as athletes not just baseball players
- Life skills development (patience, respect, cooperation, communication, leadership, etc.)

Volunteer Coach Role

Thank you to the individuals that have volunteered to be a coach this season. Each team has a Head Coach and an Assistant Coach that will be responsible for aspects such as the equipment bag, participant safety, coordinating skill development activities (practice plan), cancellations due to weather, teaching basic rules and ensuring the participants are engaged.

Parent Helper Role

Parent helpers are essential to the success of the Rookie program and are really appreciated by the coaches. This is not considered to be a drop off program and encourages parents / guardians to be involved on the field to assist the coaches. **No baseball experience is required.** This assistance may include setting up the bases, organizing / picking-up equipment, ensuring a participant gets to a portable toilet and back, helping a participant find their glove / bat / helmet / water bottle, assisting players in rotating positions, directing base runners, etc. It is not the expectation that parent helpers are responsible for coordinating any of the skill development activities, they are there to just assist the coaches with these activities. It's also an opportunity for parents / guardians to learn along with their child.

of Teams & Players / Team, T-shirts & Hats

Teams will consist of 8 – 9 players per team. Each team name will be based on their t-shirt colour. Participants and coaches will each receive a t-shirt and a hat that they will wear to each practice / game. These will be provided to each player on the first night.

Participant & Team Equipment

Participants need to have their own helmet, glove, protective cup and water bottle **(please write their name on these)**. Each team's equipment bag will have balls (various types), bats, cones, hoola hoops, a batting T, a set of bases, a set of catcher's gear and a first aid kit.

Poor Weather / Cancelling a Practice / Game

Coaches from each team will be responsible for contacting each other and deciding if a practice / game is going to be cancelled due to poor weather or diamond playability. If they do decide to cancel, they will contact (phone, email, etc.) their team. With starting at 6:15pm it is preferred that coaches try to make a decision by 5:30pm but this is not always possible. Thunder / lightening = cancel.

Practice / Games Format

Listed below is the format that the coaches are expected to follow for the season. It allows for a balance of skill development and the opportunity to use those skills in a game setting.

| | |
|----------------|--|
| 6:00 - 6:15pm: | Players Arrive / Equipment set-up (bases, etc.) |
| 6:15 - 6:20pm: | Welcome participants and parent helpers, introductions, safety / rule reminders, etc. |
| 6:20 - 6:25pm: | Warm-up activities (versions of tag, valley and volcanoes, sharks vs. minnows, stretching, etc.) |
| 6:25 - 7:00pm: | Defensive (throwing, fielding, catching, how to get outs, etc.) & offensive (base running, hitting, etc.) skill development |
| 7:00 - 7:45pm | Game (set bases 15 - 16 walking steps apart, use cones on the field for position indicators, hoola hoops for the on-deck batter and catcher positions, have a batting T near home plate, 5 Easton Soft Stitch Incredi-balls) |

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Blue Jays In 30 Analogy

The LMBA Rookie Division has had excellent success the past 4 seasons with implementing modifications to the “traditional” game format to ensure players are more engaged and having fun. Baseball traditionalists may not agree with the modifications, but the number one reason children stop playing a sport is because it’s not fun and / or they’re bored. There tends to be a lot of standing around both offensively and defensively in baseball, so for young players it’s necessary to modify the game while still teaching them the fundamentals to ensure they are ready to move up to the Mosquito division.

There is a show called **Blue Jays in 30** that shows you the highlights / action only from a Blue Jays game earlier that day. To emphasize the amount of downtime in the game of baseball, consider the fact that most Blue Jays games last 3 hours (180 minutes) yet they’re able to summarize the actual action from a 3 hour game to just 30 minutes. Now take out the commercial breaks during the 30 minute episode and you’ll probably only watch about 20 minutes of action from a 3 hour game.....that’s 160 minutes (89%) of waiting / downtime. Using this same ratio for a 45 minute Rookie ball game **without any modifications**, that means there is only about 5 - 6 minutes of total player engagement as most action lasts 5 – 10 seconds within the game (eg. players hits a ground ball and runs to first base = approx. 5 seconds)

Game Modifications / Rules

1. Home / Visitor & Scorekeeping:

Home and visitor can be decided by a glove flip / coin toss. Score will not be kept, this is introduced in Mosquito.

2. Defensive Positions:

Players will be placed in the following defensive positions LF, CF, RF, 1st, 2nd, SS, 3rd, catcher and pitcher (5 steps behind the coach that is throwing to the hitters) for a total of 9 positions. If a team prefers, they can play with a 4th outfielder instead of having the pitcher position in the rotation.

3. Rotate Positions:

Participants will rotate one defensive position after every 2 batters, with the exception of the catcher. This position will not rotate every 2 batters, the participant will be the catcher for the complete half of their defensive inning.

4. Bases Loaded:

The team that is batting will start with the bases loaded (one runner on each base). Same concept as if the first 3 batters of the game got walked and it instantly engages 3 extra players beyond just the hitter and on-deck hitter.

5. Extra Base Hits:

If a player hits the ball far enough and can get a double, triple or homerun they are encouraged / allowed to, with the base runners in front of them also advancing. Once the play stops, celebrate / acknowledge the great hit by the batter and reload the bases with the batter that just hit going to 1st base and the 2 base runners in front of them returning to 2nd and 3rd. This will also result in all 3 of them getting additional base running experience, physical activity and keeps more players engaged.

6. Outs:

“Outs” will be called (eg. thrown ball beats the runner to first base, runner is tagged when not on a base, etc.). The participant that is “out” will just return to their bench and this baserunner position will remain empty.

7. Advancing on Overthrows / Ball Returned to the Infield / Stealing & Lead-offs

For balls that are hit / overthrown to the outfield or overthrown into foul territory (eg. shortstop overthrows 1st base), all baserunners may run / advance **UNTIL the ball reaches the infield (controlled or uncontrolled by an infielder)**. At the end of the play all baserunners will return to the necessary base to load the bases. Participants are not allowed to steal bases or lead-off.

8. Everyone Bats:

The offensive team will bat every participant, there is not 3 “outs”. Once each participant has hit, the teams will switch.

9. Helmets:

Helmets are mandatory for all hitters, on-deck batters and base runners.

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Game Modifications / Rules (con't)

10. Maximum # of Pitches Per Batter:

In order to keep the game moving along, each batter will receive a maximum of 5 pitches (May) / 4 pitches (June) from their coach, either underhand or overhand at the coach's discretion based on the participant's ability. If they have not made contact after 5 swings (May) / 4 pitches (June), a ball will be placed on a batting T for them to hit.

11. Game Balls:

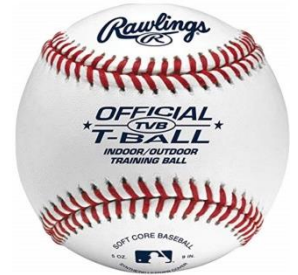
A soft stitch indoor ball will be utilized as the game ball (see picture below). As the coaches pitch to their batters from such close proximity, using these balls provides a safety factor when coaches get hit with a line drive / hard ground ball. This also encourages players to get in front of the ball and not just hold their glove out to the side of their body when attempting to field or catch a ball.

12. Base Distance

Thrown down bases will be set up 15 - 16 regular walking steps (approx. 45 - 50 feet) apart.

13. On-deck & Catcher Circles

To ensure the on-deck batters and catchers remain a safe proximity to the batter, a hoola hoop can be used to represent the on-deck circle and the catcher's area.



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Program Odds and Ends:

A couple aspects that aren't in the package but are discussed at our 9U (Rookie) Division pre-season coaches meeting are:

Equipment:

- Equipment bag, set of throw down bases & home plate, bucket of balls (6 soft stitch, 20 whiffle balls, 10 tennis balls, 10 incredi-balls), 10 cones, 8 hoola hoops, 3 bats (24", 25" & 26"), set of catcher's gear, first aid kit.

Pitching:

- Coaches pitch from being on one knee, essentially throwing darts, as an adult standing and throwing results in way too high of an arm angle that the ball comes from to home plate. They place a regular plastic baseball bucket in front of themselves and use a glove as added protection. They are encouraged to move closer / further away depending on the hitter's ability and if they are throwing overhand or underhand to the hitter. We use Easton Soft Stitch Incredi-balls, they're essentially an indoor nylon ball, but they work great for this program and are a lot better than the typically plastic covered incredi-balls. There is a picture of them in the attached package.
- Coaches are encouraged to throw underhand to all of the batters for the first week, however, after the first week they can throw overhand or underhand based on the player's ability. The goal is to eventually get everyone hitting overhand pitching.

Catchers:

- **The catcher for the next inning should be the first batter so they have time to get the gear on.** Catchers do not throw each ball back to the coach / pitcher. If they miss it, they leave it and get ready for the next pitch. If they catch it they just roll it behind their back or flip it up to the coach at the home plate area that is helping out (making sure catchers don't get too close to hitters, hitter's stand properly, etc.).

Position Cones:

- Short, very flimsy soccer cones are placed at each position for the first week to assist the players with where each position typically plays / positions themselves. It helps to avoid someone rotating to play second base and just standing on the base. It also gives the young players a visual of where to rotate to. In the 2nd week the cones are removed halfway through the game, players are encouraged to help each other with where they need to rotate to after every 2 batters. In the 3rd week the coaches can continue with the cones for half the game or not use them at all. An email reminder will be sent out at the start of each week to the coaches about the progression.

Maximum Swings:

- This is just a reminder.....players get 5 swings in May and 4 in June. If they swing 5 / 4 times and do not make contact, there will be a batting T approx. 6 feet from home plate that is placed at home plate and the struggling hitter hits off the batting T.

Roster Size:

- Roster size preference is 8 players / team but 9 is the maximum and is not exceeded for any reason. The concept behind this is that **as quantity goes up, quality often goes down**. This also assists inexperienced coaches with not getting overwhelmed.