

T-Ball Coaching Guidelines

Hello Coaches! **By no means is this an official T-Ball coaching manual** but a collection of things I learned growing up playing baseball and a couple years of coaching t-ballers. I hope this helps you a little bit with the structure of the game and what you are expected to coach at this level.

T-Ball is not very technical and the players aren't expected to come out of it ready to try out for the national team but it is to teach the players some basic skills and have plenty of fun doing it. Make sure they have fun! Make sure all of the kids are involved!

****TIP** On the first day of practice talk to the parents and get them involved immediately! The more help you have running your players through drills during practice means the less standing around they will do, the more they will learn, the better they will get and of course the more FUN they will have.**

In the next few pages I will go over how I expect the games to be run and the core skills you should be coaching your players at every practice. Please read through this and let me know if this helps. If not, let me know what I can do to help. My objective is to help you to be better coaches and hopefully in-turn grow the sport in our area.

Games

- ½ hr practice & ½ game play
- Two innings – each player will get the opportunity to bat each inning

(**First 3 Games** – ALL players hit off the tee, **Next 7 Games** – ALL players hit off the tee in the first inning and have a coach pitch to them in the second inning, **Final 3 Games** – ALL players have a coach pitch to them. ****Some players may struggle to hit a pitched ball. Please first attempt to pitch 3-4 balls and then if they are still unable to hit, bring out the tee to maintain their confidence****)

- No strike outs
- Batters will advance to first base once they hit the ball. Once on base they will then advance one base each batter. The final batter in the line-up will get to hit a “home run” and will advance all the way around the bases.
- Player fielding the hit ball will throw to first base and then to the batting teams coach
- While fielding, make sure to rotate players (or call out players names) to ensure they all have the opportunity to field the ball.

Practice

Catching:

For someone new to baseball, catching a ball in a glove is normally a very difficult task. The main thing that needs to be taught at this age is

- How to hold the glove vertically and at shoulder level (vs. how their parents taught them to hold it like a pan handler with a cap in hand)



- To always maintain eye contact with the ball. Nobody wants to get hit in the face and teaching them how to hold the glove properly will help protect them. Fortunately, the majority of the balls you receive are very soft and will not hurt a player if it is lightly tossed to them.

From my experience, there are a couple great drills to practice.

- 1) The first is to help them maintain eye contact with the ball. Stand in-front of the player and with a ball in your hand hold it out for the player to see. Move the ball in different directions and have the player reach out and try to grab it in every direction you change to (Like trying to catch a butterfly). Once you are confident the player is watching where the ball is going, try and toss it to them and see if they can grab it out of the air.
- 2) I have found that when tossing a ball to new players they will stand there with their glove up and assume the ball will magically find its way in there or cower and possibly get hit with it. However, if they take their glove off they will try to catch it with two hands. Essentially what they need to do with the glove. Basically, have them remove their gloves and have them toss the ball in the air back and forth to each other. Once you feel a little more confident in them have them put their gloves back on and do the same thing. Keep going back and forth with this.

Throwing:

At this level they really don't need to know how to hold the laces properly but they can be helped in making their throws more accurate.

- Make sure they are maintaining eye contact with their target (helps them release the ball in the desired direction and also makes sure the person they are throwing to knows the ball is coming)
- They must take a step forward (with their toe pointed towards their desired target) with the foot opposite to the throwing arm.

There really are no particular drills that I can think of for throwing in particular but make sure to correct them when they are throwing the ball back to you and praise them if they are doing it correctly. (Look me in the eyes and step forward with your toe pointed at me)

Batting:

Hitting the ball and running the bases. It is very important to teach the players to have great stance/grip, a straight swing and eye contact with the ball. Lots of players will have great success hitting off the tee but the ones with a wonky swing will have troubles hitting once they are pitched to. The more awkward motions a player makes with a bat means the slower the bat will come around to hit a moving object causing the player to miss.

- **Stance**



- **Grip**



- **Running bases** is not hard to teach but important none the less. Make sure to coach them where each base is located, what to do when they hit the ball (drop the bat – not throw it), and to hustle to every base. Teach them the importance of paying attention to where the ball is all the time.

Fielding:

Fielding the ball is straight forward but coach the small things like maintaining a good ready stance while the batter is in the batter's box, running towards the ball immediately after the ball makes contact with a bat, getting behind the ball with the glove properly positioned to stop a ground ball from getting by, and knowing where to throw the ball after the ball is fielded.

- **Stance**



- **Fielding a ground ball**



There are plenty of drills you can make up to help coach fielding the ball. Throwing grounders to a player in multiple directions, throwing the ball past them and having them chase it down to throw it back as quickly as possible, etc. Maybe combine your drills and have a batter hit the ball, a fielder out to field the ball and a first basemen for the fielder to throw the ball to.