

YOUTH BASEBALL COACHING MANUAL



Parks and Recreation

Youth Baseball

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JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Under the direction and supervision of the Recreation Program Supervisor and/or the Youth Baseball Youth Baseball Program Coordinator, assigned summer coaches will organize and direct players during games and practices.

Examples of Duties

- Understanding and explaining rules to players.
- Demonstrating and teaching the fundamental methods of play.
- Contacting and communicating with players and parents concerning issues that may arise, game or practice changes and other areas of communication as assigned by the Youth Baseball Program Coordinator.
- Must organize and supervise all players during games and practices.
- Must supervise assigned teams.
- Must attend all staff meetings.
- Must participate in pre-season meetings.
- The coach must exhibit and encourage enthusiasm and drive to the team members.
- You may coach one or more teams according to the hours specified on the schedule. You will not be allowed to have a substitute worker for your team. The Youth Baseball Program Coordinator will have the final say on scheduling and will publish a work schedule for the program staff.

Knowledge, Abilities and Skills

Must have a thorough knowledge of the sport and must be able to demonstrate and teach various aspects of play. Must be able to supervise effectively and maintain order at all times. Must be able to relate to and work with children. Must be able to communicate well and must be personable at all times. Must be able to keep adequate records.

Must be sincerely interested in the sport and the communities youth recreation program. Must be willing to help promote youth baseball in the community.

Goal

The goal of the youth leagues is to provide an opportunity for participation in an enjoyable recreation-orientated program which fosters the development of good sportsmanship, attitudes and conduct, skills and friendly competition, as well as other values attributed to sports participation.

General Objectives

- A. The best leadership possible is provided in guiding and coaching the youth in the program.
- B. That there is much to be said about the saying, "It is not so much of importance who wins the game but how they played the game."

- C. That no player be cut from the program and that all be given a chance to play, not being just a member of the team.

Registration

- A. To participate in the youth baseball program, each child must be properly registered and have paid fees with the Moorhead Parks and Recreation Department.
- B. Upon registration, participants are put on teams by a lottery system.
- C. Any youth who is not properly registered by the designated registration cut off date, loses his/her identity within his/her home area and is subject to assignment by the Recreation Program Supervisor.
- D. If a youth's parents move from one area to another after the season has begun, the participant will play with the same team unless moved at the discretion of the Moorhead Parks and Recreation Department.

Alcoholic Beverages

Employees/Volunteers are expressly forbidden to possess or drink alcoholic beverages or to have the odor of alcoholic beverages on their breath while on duty. Violation of this rule is cause for immediate dismissal.

Foul or Abusive Language

Employees/Volunteers are expressly forbidden to use foul or abusive language while on duty. Violation of this rule is cause for immediate dismissal.

Termination of Employment

The Youth Baseball Program Coordinator will have a conference with those employees/volunteers who are not meeting their responsibilities and duties. If satisfactory improvements are not made, their services shall be terminated.

Attendance

You are to complete the Participation Report Forms in full. Make sure all categories are completed. These forms will be available at the coaches meeting.

Hours of Duty

Coaches are expected to be at his/her designated site 15 minutes before scheduled time to allow proper amount of time for preparation.

Dress

All coaches are expected to be clean, neat and dress appropriately for their responsibilities. No frayed or ragged shirts, gym shorts are allowed. Athletic shoes must be worn.

Smoking

Employees/Volunteers are not permitted to smoke while on the job.

JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

Supervision

All program staff/volunteers shall be responsible to the Youth Baseball Program Coordinator in all matters pertaining to their job.

Staff Meeting

There may be staff/volunteer meetings scheduled periodical throughout the program. You will be required to attend these meetings.

Recreation Leader

- A. Is prompt.
- B. Is neat personally and also in his/her work.
- C. Hands in complete report on time.
- D. Is constantly alert to the person who needs attention and encouragement.
- E. Is able to run their schedule and not be defeated by it.
- F. Develops original ideas and puts them into practice.
- G. Is able to get along with his/her co-workers.
- H. Would rather do a little too much than too little.
- I. Is conscious of the safety factor in all activities.
- J. Recognizes the need for good public relations.
- K. Recognizes that sportsmanship is more important than winning.

As a volunteer with the Moorhead Parks and Recreation Department, you are expected to give the public the most efficient service possible. The public will scrutinize your conduct, comments, appearance, organization and ability. Remember, the public, especially the children, look to you for guidance and follow your example. Display a proper and friendly attitude at all times.

Discipline

The best way to avoid discipline problems is to keep everyone busy. Maintain an amiable but firm discipline. If a child is displaying a disruptive attitude, the following successive levels of action may become necessary:

- A. Ask the child to stop.
- B. Ask the child to go to the side and sit out part of the practice or game until the attitude improves.
- C. If a child is continuously disruptive, you can address the issue with the parent(s). Notify the Recreation Program Supervisor if this becomes necessary.

Coaching Objectives and Goals

- A. The primary objective should be to provide an atmosphere in which the players will enjoy learning and want to participate.
- B. Teach the players the necessary skills for enjoyment of the game (beginning players learn most from doing, not watching or listening.)

Goals

- A. Teach the rules of the game.
- B. Teach the fundamentals: batting, fielding and base running.
- C. Teach the basic strategy of the game.
Note: Coach must be familiar with these areas themselves. Demonstrations at the beginning of practice should be short and to the point (actual playing develops beginning players faster than any other method).
- D. Instill honesty, sportsmanship, self-reliance and teamwork in players. Set an example by displaying these characteristics at all times. The emphasis should not be on winning but on the job of playing and self-improvement.
- E. Encourage the players to develop the necessary skills and knowledge of the sport and to enjoy it to its fullest.

Coaching Suggestions

- A. Be aware of the stage of physical and mental development of each of the players.
- B. Plan practice sessions according to players' ages and abilities.
- C. Keep competition into perspective to the players' ages, their accomplishments and abilities.
- D. Do not talk down to players, but communicate as part of the team by knowing what their interests are.
- E. Be firm and supportive, never negative.
- F. Be open, friendly and cheerful to parents, players and opponents.
- G. Go out of your way to keep both players and parents informed. If you have to make a call, make it. Parents are very receptive to their children's involvement.
- H. You should contact every child's parents before the first game and point out something positive their child has done and encourage them to attend the first game.
- I. Most important, be organized. Know what you are going to do every day. Never be late or miss practice.

RULES AND REGULATIONS

Eligibility

- A. Big Bopper (youth age 5 as of the start of the program - Kindergarten)
- B. T-Ball (youth just completing 1st Grade)
- C. Rookie (youth just completing 2nd & 3rd Grade)
- D. Pop-Up (youth just completing 4th and 5th grade)

Team Rosters

Each coach will be given a roster listing each person's name that has registered for the program. Only the Youth Baseball Program Coordinator, with permission from the Recreation Program Supervisor, can make additions to the roster. Only those listed on a roster may play in games or practices. Any withdrawals from the program should be reported to the Youth Baseball Program Coordinator as soon as possible.

Equipment

The Moorhead Parks and Recreation Department will provide balls, bats, batting tee's and helmets for each team. The coach is responsible for all equipment issued to the teams. The coach should check all equipment periodically for safety purposes and return any deficient equipment to the Youth Baseball Program Coordinator. However, any team member may use his/her own baseball bat. All players will be issued a youth baseball t-shirt.

Practice Periods and Games

Each team will meet two days a week for one hour per day. Big Bopper will be 45 minutes. For the remainder of the season all levels will play games on both days each week.

Participation

In order to start a game, a person must have attended the previous practice. Coaches will see that all players play a minimum of two innings, including batting a minimum of twice in each game.

Player Conduct

Players are urged to conduct themselves on a high level of sportsmanship. Profanity and abusive language will not be tolerated and continued use may result in ejection from the game or league.

Number of Players

A team may play with less than nine players if necessary at the discretion of the coaches. At no time should any team more than nine players.

Exception: If ten players show up at a game, the coach may use a rover position. If eleven or more players show up at a game, only nine players will be allowed on the field and the additional players will remain on the bench.

Instruction for Coaches

- A. Coaches will advise their players from the first day of practice that they will be referred to as “Mr., Ms., Mrs. or Coach” and not by first names or nicknames.
- B. Practice sessions are to be held for each team at the same time each day, not at the convenience of the coach. It is understood that practices will be affected by rain, league play and emergencies.
 - 1. Practice sessions are to be at least one hour in length for each team in the T-Ball, Rookie, and Pop-Up levels and 45 minutes in the Big Bopper level.
 - 2. Coaches will follow the rules set by the Parks and Recreation Department for practice and enforce them.
- C. In case of inclement weather, the Youth Baseball Program Coordinator will inspect the fields. If a decision to cancel is made prior to 4:30pm we will send out a mass email from the office, update our facebook page and update the weather hotline 218-236-0627. If the decision is made after 4:30 we will contact the coaches and the coaches will notify their team.
- D. Each coach will be issued batting tee’s, bats and balls. This equipment will be used for both practices and games. After the season starts, the supply of balls will be supplemented by game balls. Coaches are responsible for equipment issued to them and will take good care of it. An equipment checklist will be used for inventory control.
 - 1. Players will be instructed that there will not be any throwing of bats, helmets, mitts or gloves.
 - 2. Coaches will take appropriate action to discourage such occurrences.
- E. Coaches and teams should be at the field 15 minutes before game time. Line-ups will be made beforehand. Also substitutes will be listed in line-ups by game time.
 - 1. Those who show up late should not start the game.
- F. There will be no questioning of an umpire’s decision or judgment. A coach may, in a polite manner, question the interpretation of a rule, but in no case is a player to do so.
 - 1. There will be no harassment from the bench. Coaches will be the spokesperson and keep players quiet.
- G. Both players and coaches will conduct themselves appropriately and exhibit good sportsmanship at all times.
 - 1. There will be absolutely no name calling, catcalling or razzing of any teams or players.
 - a. It is the Coaches responsibility to see that this never happens. The coaches are setting the examples for the players.

- H. No base runner is allowed to address the pitcher. Base runners will be taught never to run into or over an infielder or catcher. If this happens, the player will be ruled out at the discretion of the umpire.
 - 1. We don't uphold the principle of "Winning at Any Cost"
 - a. There will be no throwing of the ball around the infield in any of the leagues after an out. It has been found to be too time-consuming.
- I. Make-up Games
 - 1. There is one week set aside for rained out games for T-Ball and Pop-Up levels, no make ups in the Big Bopper level.
 - 2. In case of dispute between coaches, the Youth Baseball Program Coordinator will be the judge of whether or not a game will be played.
- J. Coaches will never enter the playing field to reprimand a player who has made a mistake. The player should be called aside and spoken to privately after the inning or after he/she has been replaced in the line-up.
 - 1. However, if a player gets out of hand emotionally, he/she should be reprimanded immediately using the best judgment on how to do so. No physical handling of an individual is allowed.

Umpiring

Coaches umpire their own games. This is an instructional level.

Spectator Control

- A. At all times be courteous to spectators. The supervisor and the umpire have the authority to forfeit the game because of uncontrollable conduct by spectators. To do so the following steps must be taken:
 - 1. Politely, but firmly, warn the individual(s) causing problems.
 - 2. Warn the coach of the actions and possible forfeit. Ask him/her to talk to offender(s).
 - 3. After warnings have been made, eject offender(s) from the complex.
 - 4. If offender(s) won't leave, forfeit game.

YOUTH BIG BOPPER, T-BALL ROOKIE, & POP-UP SKILLS

The following is a list of skills that are to be taught to Moorhead Youth Big Bopper, T-Ball, Rookie, and Pop-Up players during the season. Those marked with an asterisk (*) are definitely to be covered during the first week. The coach determines the methodology or technique of teaching as long as it is within the guidelines of the youth program.

A. Batting*

1. Stance
2. Bat position
3. Eye on the ball
4. Head down
5. Step toward the pitcher
6. Roll the wrist and snap
7. Follow through
8. Watch the ball into the catcher's glove if you miss it
9. Hit and run
10. Sacrifice

B. Fielding*

1. Ready Position
2. Glove down
3. Down low
4. Get in front of ball, if possible
5. Two hands, if possible
6. Glove to ground
7. Come up with the bounce
8. Knock the ball down (especially first base)
 - a. Fly Ball
 - i. Judgment and calling other players off
 - Can you catch it
 - Play the bounce
 - Cut it off from the gap
 - ii. Get in front of it
 - iii. Catch with two hands, if possible
 - iv. Position yourself so that you can be coming ahead to catch the ball so you can throw out a tagging runner
 - v. Try to catch ball above your normal throw action
 - vi. Shading the sun with the free hand or glove.
 - b. Line Drives
 - i. Get in front of them
 - ii. Two hands, if possible
 - iii. Watch ball into glove
 - c. Bunts
 - i. Charge hard

- ii. Glove pickup
- iii. Bare hand pickup

C. Base Running

1. Run past first
2. Rounding first on a single
3. Extra base hits
4. Sliding
 - a. Feet first
 - b. Head first
5. Tagging up on a fly ball
 - a. Tag on all deep fly balls to opposite field where the throw has to go
 - b. Tag on all foul fly balls
6. Go halfway on fly balls when on first base
7. Lead off 3rd base in foul territory, go back to base if fair

D. Playing Position (All Positions)

1. Where to play during pitch
2. Where to play to take the throw
 - a. Routine ground balls
 - b. Base hits
 - c. Extra base hits
3. Second base and shortstop should step forward during the pitch to transfer weight forward
4. Cut off man
 - a. Right field or fly ball
 - b. Left field or fly ball
5. Pitcher backing up throws to 3rd base and home
6. 1st baseman lining up the throw from right field and center field also possible cut off
7. 1st baseman backing up the throws to 2nd base from left field and center field
8. Catcher Play
 - a. Squat position
 - b. Stay in front of the ball
 - c. Keep the ball in front of you
 - Block the wild pitch
 - Jump out and knock down inside and outside pitches
 - d. Back up 1st base on ground balls to infield
 - e. Quick release to second base on a steal
 - f. Pitch out

| RULES | BIG BOPPER | T-BALL | ROOKIE & POP-UP |
|------------------------------|--|--|--|
| STARTING | All players will start an equal number of games | All players will start an equal number of games | All players will start an equal number of games |
| PLAYING TIME | All players will have equal playing time | All players will have equal playing time | All players will have equal playing time |
| SCORING | No Keeping Score | No Keeping Score | No Keeping Score |
| BATS | Big Red Plastic Bats | Aluminum Bats | Aluminum Bats |
| BALLS | Foam Balls | Low Compression Baseball | Low Compression Baseball |
| BASE RUNNING | No Stealing/leadoffs | No Stealing/leadoffs | No Stealing/leadoffs |
| STEEL SPIKES | Not allowed | Not allowed | Not allowed |
| TIME LIMIT (games) | No new inning may begin after 40 minutes | No new inning may begin after 50 minutes | No new inning may begin after 50 minutes |
| STRIKE ZONE | Hit off T-stand | Hit off T-stand | coaches pitching, if no hit they hit off T-stands |
| BENCH RULES | Players not in the field or at bat or coaching bases, shall be on the bench or in the playing area | Players not in the field or at bat or coaching bases, shall be on the bench or in the playing area | Players not in the field or at bat or coaching bases, shall be on the bench or in the playing area |
| PITCHERS | T-stand | T-stand | Coaches |
| NUMBER OF PITCHES | Not applicable | Not applicable | No more than five |
| STRIKE OUT | None | None | None (Pop-Up Only: out after 5 pitches and one attempt with t-stand) |
| HELMETS | Not applicable | On Batters & Catchers | On Batters & Catchers |
| INFIELD FLY RULE | No | No | No |
| DROPPED 3 RD RULE | No | No | No |
| GAME LENGTH | 45 Minutes | 60 minutes | 60 minutes |
| WALKS | None | None | None |
| CALLING PLAYERS OUT | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| BATTING | Bat everyone in batting order | Bat everyone in batting order | Bat everyone in batting order (Pop-Up Only: Innings will be after 3 outs or one time through the batting order) |
| PINCH RUNNER | For injured player | For injured player | For injured player |
| PLAYER ROTATIONS | Pitcher, Catcher, 1 st , 2 nd , Short, 3 rd , Outfield | Pitcher, Catcher, 1 st , 2 nd , Short, 3 rd , Outfield | Pitcher, Catcher, 1 st , 2 nd , Short, 3 rd , Outfield |
| COACHING BOXES | Not Applicable | Players cannot be in coaches box without a helmet | Players cannot be in coaches box without a helmet |
| BASE LENGTH | 50-55' | 50-55' | 50-55' |

PHONE LISTINGS

Contact the Recreation Program Supervisor if the Youth Baseball Program Coordinator is not available.

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

| | |
|-----------|-----|
| Police | 911 |
| Fire | 911 |
| Ambulance | 911 |

NON-EMERGENCY NUMBERS

| | |
|---|---------------------|
| Police | 218-299-5111 |
| Fire | 218-299-5354 |
| Moorhead Parks and Recreation Office | 218-299-5340 |
| Weather Hotline | 218-236-0627 |
| Jordan Clementson, Recreation Program Supervisor (Cell Phone) | 701-318-3551 |
| (Office Phone) | 218-299-5078 |
| Heather Sauve, Baseball Coordinator (Cell Phone) | 651-231-3298 |
| Landon Dallmann, Baseball Coordinator (Cell Phone) | 701-320-2534 |

Landon not starting until June 3rd

*Call Youth Baseball Coordinator or Recreation Program Supervisor in the event of an emergency

WEEKLY PRACTICE FORMAT

Practice sessions, your relationship with the team as coach/manager and your personal example sets the tone for the entire season. Weekly lesson plans are suggested for practice sessions. Additional resources are available from the Parks and Recreation Office. Teams should not hold more than one practice session per week. Each practice session should include four elements:

Warm-up (Mental and Physical)

- Do exercise to warm-up.
- Share leadership by having each child pick an exercise or take a week to lead.
- Warm-up attitudes by reminding everyone of a couple of house rules.
- Suggest positive thoughts during exercise like “jog one lap and think about the best thing that happened today”.

Skill Focus

- Introduce a new skill every practice.
- Reinforce skills previously covered.
- Use the field to have more than one thing going on at a time – to involve more children and allow for more personal attention.
- Ask children to set their own goals related to a skill or exercise and evaluate themselves.
- Ask the children what skills they need to work on based on the last game, thus developing self-evaluation and direction.

Play/Scrimmage

- Play simplifications of the game/activity.
- Play for specific period, not score.
- Play focusing on one or two rules at a time.
- Play focusing on one or two skills at a time.
- Foster teamwork in playtime.
- Make play exciting and increase chance of “success” by structure of the game/activity.

Fair Play Discussion

- Coach asks questions.
- Divide team into pairs or threes for more discussion at the same time
- Share feeling, ideas with not “right or wrong” answers
- Use trigger stories to introduce situations real to the game
- Share leadership with the children

PRACTICE #1 RULES/POSITIONS

Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Start with your team lined up behind home base and have them run the bases trying to turn on each base. Repeat this drill a couple of times. Next pair up your players and have them play catch.

Skill Focus

A. Rules and Positions (5 minutes)

Who can name the nine positions?

What is special about the outfielder's job?

What is special about the baseman's job?

What is special about the pitcher, catcher, and shortstop?

1. Outfielders (5 minutes)

Discussion on:

- Stop ground balls
- Catch short fly balls
- Tag runners
- Throw to the bases

2. Infielders – 1st, 2nd, 3rd, Shortstop, Pitcher (5 minutes)

Discussion on:

- Stop ground balls
- Catch short fly balls
- Tag runners
- Throw to the bases

3. Catcher (5 minutes)

Discussion on:

- Makes plays at home base

4. Rules (5 minutes)

After the discussion, set the children up around the diamond and run through some plays taking the time to instruct the children on where to throw the ball and why. The coach should throw or hit the ball to different fielders pointing out their job.

Emphasize:

- That the children know the name of the position
- Where do they throw the ball to get a runner out

PRACTICE #2 THROWING

Warm-up (5 minutes)

Tell your players that every practice begins with a WARM-UP TIME, a brief and fun session to prepare them to practice and play their best. Discuss with them the importance of warming up. A good illustration is that on a cold morning, a car needs to warm up before it runs properly. A cold car runs rough and stalls. Our bodies are somewhat the same way.

Have your team form a circle and do quick repetitions of stretching and conditioning exercises – run circles, jumping jacks, toe touches, etc. Be enthusiastic and loose so that your team will accept the warm up time as a fun part of your practice. Share the leadership too...your players can take turns leading exercises.

Skill Focus (30 minutes)

Explain to your players that the first couple of practices will be spent on the two most important skills any ball player needs to know: THROWING AND CATCHING.

TODAY – THROWING!

- Divide the children into groups of two and give each pair a ball. Have them stand about 12 inches apart and throw the ball back and forth. Use a rubber ball in this exercise! Give the children simple instructions: “Throw the ball so that your partner doesn’t have to move to catch it”.
- Next work on developing distance and accuracy in throwing. Put a set of bases in small diamond (about 20’ between bases) and divide the team into groups of four. With each group put the players on the bases and practice throwing the ball around the diamond. Emphasize:
 1. Stepping toward the target when you throw.
 2. Keep your eye on the target.
 3. Aim for the chest – it is easy to catch that way.
 4. STEP ON THE BASE before you throw the ball.

Let each group throw the ball around the diamond a couple of times and rotate groups.

- **DISTANCE** – Give each child a ball and have them throw it without moving their feet – now have them get the ball counting their steps along the way. Next let them run up to the line and throw the ball, again counting their steps as they retrieve it. Which one went farther? How would you throw a ball from the outfield to the infield? After a couple of plays pull the team together and explain how to throw a runner out at first base and where to throw the ball when there is a runner on first.

Fair play discussion (5 minutes)

Pull your team together and discuss the progress your players have made thus far. Each player has been through a series of skills measurements testing their throwing, catching and hitting ability. How did they do? Explain that people set goals for themselves to help them improve in sports and other things as well. Go around the circle and let each player share a T-Ball/Pop-Up goal and how they hope to improve. Share some other goals as well – not related to T-Ball/Pop-Up (help out more around home, etc...).

Scrimmage (25 minutes)

Have a full team scrimmage rotating positions frequently.

PRACTICE #3 CATCHING

Warm up (5 minutes)

Have your players form a straight line and run alternately forward and backward with their hands up over their head, their thumbs together (like they are going to catch a fly ball and their eyes up on the ball).

Next, have them jump up in the air hands overhead and come down touching their palms to the ground. Throw in some quick stretching exercises as well and let one player teach the other new exercise.

Skill Focus (30 minutes)

A. Catching

Demonstrate the proper hand position for catching a ball above the chest, and below the chest. Have them copy your actions.

Above the chest – hands overhead, thumbs together, fingers pointed up, glove open.

Below the chest – hands and fingers pointed downward, little fingers together, glove open.

Emphasize:

1. Trying to catch the ball “in the pocket”.
2. Trap the ball in the glove right after it hits.
3. Keeping your eyes on the ball at all times.

Divide the players into groups of two and have them throw the ball back and forth.

Have the players throw to their partner below the chest a few times, then above the chest.

THE BALL DOESN'T ALWAYS COME TO YOU!

Have your players form a half circle around you and explain that you are going to toss some balls in front of them and behind them – after all, not all balls are hit directly to you.

Emphasize:

1. Keeping their eyes on the ball.
2. Run forward or backward, whichever way the ball is going, get to the place where the ball is going to fall.
3. Call for the ball “I got it” so two players don't bump into each other.

Fair Play Discussion (5 minutes)

Discussion on the importance of throwing and catching and the basic element of the game.

Scrimmage (20 minutes)

The end of each session will be some type of scrimmage using different types of games concentrating on the skills they have been working on during the practice.

Play one inning of Beat Ball. This game emphasizes THROWING, HITTING AND BASE RUNNING. Form two teams and let everyone on each team bat once. There are no singles, doubles or triples. Once a player hits the ball, he/she must run all the bases. The fielding team in turn must get the ball from first to second, to third, to home plate before the batter can run around. If the batter beats the ball around the diamond, he/she scores one run. Keep everything positive and encourage your players to cheer for each other. Don't keep a team score – no winners and losers in these scrimmages.

PRACTICE #4

FIELDING

Warm-up (5 minutes)

Have your team form a half circle. Have them take an imaginary bat in hand. Swing it in a circle with one arm then the other, swing the bat overhead with both hands, swing the bat as if hitting the ball.

Next have the player line up on a line. Explain the need for speed and a fast start in running the bases. Have them touch the line with one foot (as if the base). When you say “go” have them run and stop at another line keeping one foot on that line when they stop. Repeat several times.

Skill Focus

A. Fielding (30 minutes)

Demonstrate the proper fielding position.

- Relaxed
- Arms loose – slightly crouched
- Ready to move in either direction
- Face the batter – watch the ball

When the ball is hit toward you:

- Move your body in front of the ball – go to it quickly.
- Fingers pointed down – put your glove all the way to the ground.
- Watch the ball until it gets into your glove then immediately trap the ball with your opposite hand.

Exercise – divide the children up into groups of two. One player throws grounders. The other player fields the grounders and throws the ball back to his/her partner. After a couple of throws, switch jobs.

Next have the team form three lines. The first player in each line steps out and the coach rolls grounders to each of them, some straight out and others slightly to either side so the players must move to field it. Instruct the children to hold the balls until you call for them.

Fair Play (5 minutes)

Discuss teamwork with your players. Ask questions such as:

- How can we help each other play better?
- How do you feel when someone on your team doesn't play like a team member?

Go from one end of the half circle tossing balls slightly in front and in back of the players. Have the players throw the ball back to you each time.

Talk about why rules are needed to make the game fair for all players. Discuss the importance of umpires and their job. Ask thought provoking questions such as “How

can players help the umpires do a better job? How does an umpire feel when people are shouting at him? Whose job is it to follow the rules?"

Scrimmage (20 minutes)

Divide the players into two teams and have a one base game. The object is to hit the ball and beat the throw to first base. Each batter, after having run to first, umpires the next runner and calls him safe or out.

PRACTICE #5 HITTING

Warm-up (5 minutes)

Form a circle with your team and explain to your players that exercise should be fun. When people don't enjoy exercising...they don't do it. Many games that are fun are also good for you because they make you stretch, run, and use many different muscles that otherwise are not used.

Some discussion questions:

- What happens to people that do not exercise?
- What kind of games do children play that are good exercises?
- What kind of games do adults play that are good exercises?

Skill Focus

- A. Hitting: With your team sitting in a circle discuss and demonstrate the proper grip, stand and swing a hitter should have.

Grip: The bat should be held firmly with the hands 3 to 4 inches above the knob. The "choke up" gives younger players better control of the bat. The right hand should be over the left (reverse for left handed batters) and the knuckles of each hand forming a line.

Stand: The player's feet should be spread comfortably for balance, about shoulder width apart, parallel to each other. The bat is in the correct position in relation to the tee when ball contact is made with the bat directly in front of the batter (half way through the swing).

The bat does not rest on the shoulder but is held straight up.

The Swing (30 minutes)

To start the swing, step forward with the front foot for added weight, thus more power. The swing should be level and the batter should follow through with his/her swing until the bat is over the opposite shoulder...at this point the bat is dropped.

AT ALL TIMES WATCH THE BALL

Exercises

1. Form a circle with your team allowing plenty of room for each player to swing freely. Each child should be given a bat (or dowel, rod, baton, etc...) to practice with. Again go over the skills that were just discussed this time having each player model the correct grip, stand and swing.
2. Put all but two of your players into the field, let each player hit 5 times off the tee. Stress good solid contact and proper techniques at the plate and good fielding and throwing by the players in the field.

Fair Play Discussion (5 minutes)

What is fair play? There are really no right or wrong answers. Everyone has different ideas as to what “fair play” means. Read your team this trigger story and ask the children what they would do in this situation.

You are the coach. Your team has lost every game this season but everyone has had fun and played well. It is the last game of the season and you are behind by one run. There are outs and two players on base. The next batter is Timmy, a nice guy, but pretty slow. Timmy doesn't get many hits. You realize that chances are you will lose this game too if Timmy bats next. What do you do?

Scrimmage (20 Minutes)

Full team scrimmage but don't keep track of outs. Let 7 players bat and switch hitters to fielders. Repeat so that all players bat once.

PRACTICE #6 BASE RUNNING

Warm-up

Discussion – warm-ups help keep your muscles in shape. Some muscles we can see. Have everyone make an arm muscle. “Show me your leg muscles.” These muscles are important but so are other muscles that we cannot see. “Who knows a muscle that we cannot see?” The heart is a very important muscle even though we can’t see it like all of the others. Running, jogging and swimming are all good exercises for the heart because they help it work hard.

“Let’s exercise our hearts” – we have everyone jog all the way around the field. Explain that it is OK to walk when you get tired.

Skill Focus (30 minutes)

A. Base Running

RUNNING TO FIRST BASE – Tips after you hit the ball and have dropped your bat. You run as fast as you can to first base. If you think the ball will be thrown to first base, run to first, TOUCH THE BASE, and continue in a straight line past the base. Don’t slow down until you’ve touched the base. If the ball is in the outfield, and your coach is telling you to keep going, then touch first base and round the corner for the second base.

B. Drills

1. Line up all of your players behind home plate and on your command have them run to first base. First: as if the ball is being thrown to first. Second: As if they are going to try for a double or triple.
2. Divide the team in half and let each player hit from the tee and run the base concentrating on listening to the coach while he/she runs. The coach will instruct runners to “go ahead” or “stay” on a base.

For discussion, make up some different situation and test the player’s knowledge of base running. When to run...when not to run...when to return to base...etc...

Fair Play Discussion

Brainstorm as a group such questions as:

- What is fun?
- What has your team done so far that was fun?
- What skills are the most fun to work on?
- How can we have more fun?

Scrimmage (20 minutes)

Full team scrimmage. Let each player take a turn coaching the bases, telling runners when to stay or to go ahead.

PRACTICE #7 PLAYING THE BASES

Warm-up (5 minutes)

Tell your players that you would like everybody to think of an exercise that they would like to teach the group. Show them “funny” types of exercises as an example and move quickly through the group giving all of those that want to the chance to lead an exercise of their own creation. Keep the pace lively and participate with the children.

Skill Focus

Discuss with your group the special nature of the jobs of the second baseman, first baseman and catcher.

- They are responsible for getting most of the outs.
- They must catch well and throw well.
- They must stay close to the base in order to make a play.
- They must be able to stretch to catch a ball while still keeping their foot on the plate.
- They must not interfere with the runners.

Drills (30 minutes)

One: Divide your team up into groups of two...give every group some type of base for practice. One child in each group plays the base, concentrating on catching the throw and tagging the base. The second child in each group is the fielder...he/she takes grounders and pop-ups from the partner and concentrates on an accurate throw to the base.

Two: Round the bases. Divide your team into groups of four assigning each player to a base. Starting at first base relay the ball around the bases having each player catch the ball, step on the base and throw to the next base.

Make up some different situations to test the children’s knowledge of where to throw the ball. Other question – When do you tag a runner?, When do you tag the base?

Fair Play Discussion (5 minutes)

Let your discussion center around winning and losing. They mean different things to different people. Let the children discuss their ideas – remember there are no right or wrong answers.

Some questions that might help set the mood for discussion:

- What makes someone a winner?
- Can you lose a game and still be a winner?
- Who makes you a winner?

Scrimmages (20 minutes)

Full team scrimmage. Repeat the best ball game played earlier in the season. With every hit, the runner must run all of the bases and the fielder must throw from first to

second to third to home. Concentrate on the basement touching the base after the catch. Don't keep track of outs. Let seven players bat and switch sides. Also rotate the fielders so that all children get a chance to play the bases.

**PRACTICE #8
PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER
(T-BALL LEVEL)**

Warm-up (5 minutes)

Start some stretching and conditioning exercises. Have each team member take a turn at leading the others in a short exercise.

Ask team members how they know when they are warmed-up? How does their body tell them it is ready to go? What signals do they get when they are beginning to get tired?

Skill Training (15 minutes)

Review the basic skills you have learned and practiced in your last seven practice sessions and ask a team member to demonstrate the skill by leading the other team members in a short practice of that particular skill. It is a good idea to select the demonstrators in advance of the session and suggest what skill they could demonstrate:

| | |
|-----------------|--------------|
| Throwing | Fielding |
| Catching | Hitting |
| Rules/Positions | Base Running |
| | Playing Base |

Encourage the members to give the demonstrators a lot of positive support and encouragement (i.e. good job, nice hit, etc...)

Fair Play Discussion

Lead the group in sharing experience that will help them identify how much progress they have made over the last 6-7 weeks. (Remember it is always OK to pass)

- Take a quick turn around the circle and have each player say the skill he/she is proudest of.
- Take a quick turn around the circle and ask each player to say something about the game he/she knows now that they didn't when the season started.
- Take a quick turn around the circle and ask each player to say what they like most about the Family Huddles.
- Ask each player to select a fellow teammate and set toe-to-toe with that person. Then ask them to tell each other one thing they like, appreciate, admire about the other person.
- Stand in a close, tight circle (including coach, manager and any parents that are present) at any given signal (all at once) everyone pats the team member to his/her right on the back and says in a loud voice **YOU'RE A WINNER!!!!**

Scrimmage (25 minutes)

Play a fun game with a lot of verbal and non-verbal support for all players given by coach, manager and fellow players. The coach, manager and parents should stress how much individual players and the team as a whole has improved from the start of the season.

PRACTICE #9
REVIEW ALL SKILLS

Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Start with some stretching exercises. Have each team member take a turn at leading the others in a short exercise.

Skill Training

Review the basic skills you have learned and practiced in you last nine practice sessions and ask a team member to demonstrate the skill by leading the other team members in a short practice of that particular skill. It's a good idea to select the "demonstrators" in advance of the session and suggest what skill they could demonstrate:

| | | | |
|-----------------|--------------|--------------|----------|
| Throwing | Fielding | Catching | Hitting |
| Rules/Positions | Base Running | Playing Base | Pitching |

Encourage team members to add positive support to the demonstration (i.e. good job, nice hit, etc...)

REMEMBER

Winning is important. It's basic to the idea of playing against an opponent in sports and in competition in many phases of life. Winning is not the only thing that is important. We hope that you as coach/manager will try to keep winning in the perspective of "fair play".

- Respect for the opponent. You cannot have good competition without good competitors.
- Respect for the rules and officials. The rules are agreed upon by everyone who plays. They defined the game and the officials simply enforce the rules to make sure neither team gains an unfair advantage.
- Respect for yourself. Good athletes have great respect for the mind, body and spirit-all of which must be in tune for the best competition.

COACH/MANAGER- Your leadership is the single most important factor. It's success, as well as the personal experience of each participant to an extent, rests in your hands.

Thank you for your interest, concerns and commitment. What you do today will have a strong impact on future generations.

Good Luck!

PARTICIPATION REPORT FORM

Team Name: _____ Date: _____ Practice#: _____
 Opponents Name: _____ Game#: _____

| BATTING ORDER | NAME | POSITION# | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|---------------|------|-----------|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | | | BATTING | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | FIELDING | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. | | | BATTING | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | FIELDING | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. | | | BATTING | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | FIELDING | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. | | | BATTING | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | FIELDING | | | | | | | | | |
| 5. | | | BATTING | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | FIELDING | | | | | | | | | |
| 6. | | | BATTING | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | FIELDING | | | | | | | | | |
| 7. | | | BATTING | | | | | | | | | |
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| 8. | | | BATTING | | | | | | | | | |
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| 9. | | | BATTING | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | FIELDING | | | | | | | | | |
| 10. | | | BATTING | | | | | | | | | |
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| 11. | | | BATTING | | | | | | | | | |
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| 12. | | | BATTING | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | FIELDING | | | | | | | | | |
| 13. | | | BATTING | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | FIELDING | | | | | | | | | |
| 14. | | | BATTING | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | FIELDING | | | | | | | | | |
| 15. | | | BATTING | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | FIELDING | | | | | | | | | |
| 16. | | | BATTING | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | FIELDING | | | | | | | | | |
| 17. | | | BATTING | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | FIELDING | | | | | | | | | |

POSITION NUMBERS:

1. Pitcher 2. Catcher 3. First Base 4. Second Base 5. Third Base
 6. Short Stop 7. Left Field 8. Center Base 9. Right Field 10. Rover

This sheet is used to record the attendance, practice, and playing time of each player.