

# GUIDELINES FOR T-BALL COACHES

## Initial Contact with Parents

Once you have obtained your team roster, you should contact the parents of all team players.

1. Introduce yourself as the coach of their child
2. Relay information on the date and time of your first practice (when, where, and for how long)
3. Remind them that players should have a glove and a water bottle at all practices.
4. Solicit parents for help if you need it.

## First Team Meeting

1. Welcome letter/email
  - a. Give parents a handshake on paper. Lay the groundwork.
  - b. Describe the season's routine, and eliminate potential surprises.
  - c. Practice frequency and duration
  - d. Team roster and phone list
  - e. Your personal philosophy
2. Introduce assistant(s)
3. Identify "team parent" and any other volunteer.
4. Explain policy for communication of changes, cancellations, etc.
5. Solicit questions
6. Be positive and enthusiastic

## Practice

Plan ahead!

1. Involve the parents and solicit help when needed.
2. There will be times when you do activities in one large group, and other times when it will make more sense to divide the team up into smaller groups... hitting station fielding station, batting station, etc.
3. Keep the kids occupied and moving.
4. Repetition is important, but try not to allow the repetition become monotony.
5. Make a game out of as many things as you can.
6. Try to have players compete in teams.
7. Practice the way you want to play.

Warm Up

1. Have players form a circle around the coach for stretches/exercise
2. Run a group lap

Activities/Drills

1. Review T-ball Basics
  - a. Each team has to work together to get their runners around the bases when it is their turn to bat.
  - b. Each team has to work together to catch the ball and get it back to home plate when it is their turn in the field.
  - c. Each player gets a turn to hit and run the bases
2. Review safety rules
  - a. Always wear a batting helmet when it is your turn to bat.
  - b. Only one player in the batting box at a time. The batter needs plenty of room.
  - c. The next player to bat should be waiting off to the side with a helmet on and ready to go.
  - d. After you hit the ball, drop the bat and run to first base. Do not THROW the bat.
3. Base Running
  - a. Have children line up at home plate. Explain that this is home plate: it is where you stop and start.
  - b. Walk the bases, identifying each base as you go.
  - c. Explain that it is very important that the players touch each base as they work their way around the circle. This is called "tagging" the base.
  - d. Starting at home again, tell the children to run to second base and stop third base and stop, etc. so that they learn where the bases are.
  - e. Explain that when we play, they will move one base at a time
  - f. Have children practice running the bases one at a time.
  - g. See drill examples

4. Hitting
  - a. Set up tee with 2/3 balls, a bat and a helmet at each tee.
  - b. Have children take turns practicing hitting.
  - c. Make sure everyone wears a helmet.
  - d. Be sure to keep batting area clear: no one should be walking close to the batters.
  - e. See drill examples.
5. Catching and Throwing
  - a. Have children work with their parents in small groups of 2 or 3 to practice catching and throwing the ball.
  - b. Have children spread out in a line facing coaches and parents. Have parents throw ground balls to kids for fielding. Have kids throw balls back.
  - c. Have children form a circle around coach. Coach throws out ground balls for players to field. Explain to players that they have to get the balls before they roll out of the circle. Have them throw the balls back to the coach.
  - d. If and when they are able, the children can practice throwing to one another.
  - e. Children can practice catching balls in the air and fielding ground balls.
  - f. See drill examples

### **Game Preparation**

The goal the week before the games begin is to continue to work on skill development and to introduce the fundamentals of game as well. When we play games, the children will run just one base at a time, waiting to go to the next base when the next batter hits the ball. Also, there will be no outs; we will play until everyone has a turn. When fielding the ball, the children will not try to get each other out. They will throw the ball to the coach (on the pitcher's mound) as quickly as they can. The last batter will hit a homerun, and each player already on base will run all of the bases until home. (Review KinderClinic Rules)

1. Hitting
  - a. Have children take turns practicing hitting and running the bases.
  - b. Tee at home plate, one batter at a time.
  - c. Show children how to hit the ball, drop the bat and run to first base. Explain that they want to do this as quickly as possible.
  - d. Have children run just one base at a time.
  - e. Make sure everyone wears a helmet.
  - f. Have children who are waiting to bat stand back so the batter has plenty of room.
  - g. Be careful to keep batting area clear: no one should be walking close to the batters.
2. Catching and Throwing
  - a. Have children take positions on the field for fielding balls.
  - b. Coach stands on pitcher's mound to throw balls out to children. He or she can also gently hit balls off the tee to children in the field to demonstrate game situation.
  - c. Have children throw the balls back to the coach in the center. Explain that they want to get the ball back to the pitcher as fast as possible.
  - d. Have children change positions after a few turns.
3. Identified Areas for parental help
  - a. Parent at each base to help players know where and when to run.
  - b. Parent stationed at home plate to set the balls on the tee.
  - c. Parent with children waiting to bat to help them stay in line, get the batting helmet on and stay clear of the batter.
  - d. Parents can be in the field to help the fielding team know where to throw the balls.

### **End of Practice**

1. Form circle around coach for stretching.
2. Ask for help with clean up.
3. Summarize team's activity... specifics, not generalities. Recognize progress. Note any humorous thing that happened. No public criticism; as necessary, take player aside. What's next (practice at home, next team practice and game schedule, etc); Parent reminders. Other comments, as appropriate. Remind everyone of snack if there is one.
4. Team Cheer

## **EQUIPMENT INVENTORY**

Each baseball bag should contain the following items:

**(1) Tee**

**(1) Set rubber throw down bases**

**(4) Batting helmets**

**(3-4) Bats**

**(1) First Aid kit**

**(1) Ice pack**

**(10) Tennis balls**

**(4-6) Game balls**

**(10-12) Practice balls**

## **COACHING TEE BALL TEAMS - A CHECKLIST**

The following checklist outlines instructional actions by position that should be repeated in practice sessions during the tee ball season.

### **First base**

Show where 1st baseperson is to stand when no runner is on base and when one is on the base. Practice fielding plays; ball thrown to 1B by infielders.

### **Second base**

Show position player in place, anticipating action. Practice fielding plays; such as, tagging a runner out.

### **Shortstops**

Show positions: one between 1B and 2B; the other between 2B and 3B. Practice action; such as, fielding balls and throwing to 1B or 2B for an out.

### **Third base**

Show position, anticipating action. Practice action; such as, player diving to knock down ball.

### **Pitcher**

[Stands in pitcher's area but acts as an infielder.] Practice action; such as, fielding ball and throwing to 1B.

### **Catcher**

[Stands behind and away from home plate until ball is hit] Demonstrate: after ball is hit, adult removes tee and bat; catcher moves up to cover plate. Practice actions: catcher tagging base runner out, catcher throwing to 1B.

### **General infield activity**

Staying behind Playing Line until the ball is hit. Catching short fly balls. Field balls and throwing to a base or to home plate. Tagging runners on the base path. Relaying a ball from an outfielder to a base; to the catcher at home plate

### **Outfielders [there may be five or more]**

Position players. Practice catching fly balls in a crowd. "I've got it" Practice catching ground balls and throwing to infield. Have one outfielder receive relay from another and throwing to an infielder.

### **Batter**

Give basic hitting instructions. Practice hitting ball, then dropping bat properly and running to first.

### **Base Runners**

Instruct actions at 1B [Coach at 1B signals to run past base or to turn and go on to 2B] Instruct that forced runner on base must advance. non-forced runner can hold position on base. player on base watch what next batter does; where the ball goes. Instruct sliding.

### **Bench**

Team sits in batting order, encouraging the batter. Coach talks to team: Listen for instructions. Play fair; follow the rules. Have fun.

### **Coach talking to team, after the game**

Summarize team's activity. Specifics, not generalities. Recognize progress. Note any humorous thing that happened. No public criticism; as necessary, take player aside. What's next? [practice at home, next team practice and game schedule; tell parents] Other comment, as appropriate.

# COACHING TEE BALL SKILLS - A CHECKLIST

## HITTING

### **Batting -- the stance, swing and follow-through**

- Adjust the tee with ball set even to the hitter's waist.
- Face tee with feet spread shoulder-width apart.
- Bend knees, body in slight crouch.
- Weight on balls of feet.
- Grip bat; hands together above knob.
- Hold bat firmly; don't squeeze.
- Bring bat up and away from the body.
- Keep shoulders level; bat and head steady.
- Eyes on the ball.
- Short step with the front foot at start of swing.
- Swing level and bring the bat through the center of the ball.
- Watch bat hit ball; keep head down.
- Weight shifts to front foot; back foot stays on the ground.
- Extend arms and follow through; swing around.
- Drop the bat; do not throw it

#### **Key points:**

- Eyes on the ball
- No cross-handed hold
- Position of feet
- Stride [weight shift]
- Rotation
- The swing

## FIELDING

Eyes on the ball... Watch the ball go into the glove... Cover the ball with the other hand

### **Ground Ball**

Stand legs apart, shoulder-width or wider. Bend knees. Get low. Lean forward. Run to the ball. Keep body in front of ball. Glove low to the ground. Scoop or catch the ball and cover it.

### **Fly Ball**

Run to where the ball is going. Call for the ball: "I've got it." Stop and wait for the ball. Hands together, fingers up, shoulder high or over the head. Watch ball into the glove and cover.

### **Thrown Ball**

Bend knees slightly. Watch the ball. On a ball thrown to player above the waist: Hands together facing out; thumbs up. Catch and cover. On a ball thrown below the waist: Hands together facing down; little fingers touching. Catch and cover.

## THROWING

### **Grip and motion**

Thumb under the ball. Two or three fingers on top. Don't worry about the seams. Eyes on the target. Legs apart; foot on throwing arm side behind the body. Arm back and up, front shoulder turned toward target. Step toward target with foot opposite the throwing arm. Right-hander with left foot; left-hander with right foot. Push off on back foot as throw begins; end with weight on forward foot. Release the ball in front of body and follow through.

## **COACHING TEE BALL SKILLS - A CHECKLIST (con't)**

### **RUNNING**

#### **Base running**

Run on the balls of the feet. Pump arms back and forth. After the ball is hit, run behind the tee, unless left-handed. Look at first base, not where the ball has gone. Run outside the foul line. Run straight through first base; don't jump on it or slow down. Watch and listen to coach for instructions. When on base keep one foot touching the base until the next batter hits the ball. Lean forward; when ball is hit, push off base. Know where the ball is. When passing a base, try to touch it on the side without stopping.

#### **Sliding**

[Not recommended for the youngest players] Start about four to five feet from the base. Arms up, fingers bent, chin down. Bend one leg under the other. Lower leg hits the ground, then the butt and back. Top leg [the extended one] touches the base. No headfirst sliding.

# DRILLS AND GAMES

T•BALL USA has gathered effective drills from successful programs around the country. Given the ages and attention spans of the participants, it is important that these activities also have fun content. Here are 15 to consider. They cover defense [catching, fielding ground and fly balls, throwing] and running. The best drill for hitting is batting practice, practice, practice.

**Bounce to the Bucket** - Large basket or cooler put on a base. Outfielders try to throw and bounce the ball into the open container. This can be done as a game with 10 points for getting the ball in, 5 for hitting the bucket and 1 point for the nearest bounce, no matter where the ball ends up. This drill/game teaches throwing from the outfield to a base.

**Catch** - Two or more players play catch. Keep score of the number of successful catches.

**Catching Contest** - Players are in pairs and throw the ball back and forth between each other. Last pair that has not dropped a ball wins.

**Catching Flies** - Hit or throw fly balls to fielders by using a soft baseball, rubber ball or tennis ball. Repetition and practice are the keys to success.

**Catch the Coach** - Coach runs from home plate to first base. After a few steps, coach shouts "tag me" to a player holding a ball, who runs after the coach and tries to tag him out. Coach to decide where/when/if the runner is successful.

**Catch the Players** - Coach starts four or more players about 10 seconds apart from home plate to circle the bases. Coach starts last, trying to tag the players [alternate: snatch off their caps.]

**Crab Drill** - Player is in basic fielding set position stance, crouched forward with glove open and down. Player takes three or four steps as coach rolls the ball.

**Crow Hop** - Classic throwing drill. Player takes a short step and a hop in the direction of the intended throw.

**Distraction** - Coach rolls the ball to a fielder, but another player runs in front of the fielder and tries to break the fielder's concentration on catching the ball.

**Dive** - Coach throws or hits ball to one side or the other of a fielder, who has to dive to make the catch. Then, throw to 1st base.

**Just Block It** - Coach hits ball directly to a fielder. Emphasis is on stopping the ball from getting through to the outfield. OK to just block the ball; [better, of course, to catch it.] Can be a game with a point scored from every block, two for a catch and zero if the ball is not stopped

**One and Two** - Two players play catch. Thrower scores 2 points if ball is caught at or above the shoulders. 1 point if caught between waist and shoulders. No points if caught below the waist or not caught. First player to score 10 points wins.

**Run Down** - Two fielders and a runner, who tries to run from one base to another without getting tagged out. Participants rotate positions.

**Scoop or Pick-up** - Two players [or two rows of players] line up about 10 feet apart. From kneeling position, one player rolls the ball to the other. Repeat 10 to 15 times.

**Track Meet** - Two players at home plate. At the "start", one runs to 3rd base, the other to 1st base. They continue running [in opposite directions] around the bases. First one to return to home plate wins.

**Note:** to avoid collisions, instruct the runner that begins via 1st base to touch 2nd base from the outside corner; the other runner, coming from 3rd base, touches the inside corner of 2nd base.