



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUB  
OF THE REDWOODS**

**T-Ball Coach's Handbook  
2024**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Tips From Other Coaches	3-4
First Call to Parents	5-6
Teams	7
Team Roster	7
League Schedule	8
Picture Day	8
Coach Contact Info	9
Parent Support Positions	10
First Meeting and Practice	11-13
Player Positions	14
Player Rotation	15
T-Ball Program Regulations	16
Rulebook	17-18
Parent Position Descriptions	19-20
Practice Game	21
Name Game & Drills	22-26
2024 Season Sponsors	27



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Dear Coach,

Thank you for your willingness to serve as a coach for this season. Included in this handbook are many tips and tools to help you do the job. If we can emphasize anything from our own experience coaching youth sports, it is to start off on day one setting a team culture that **every** parent is expected to help support you in one way or another. This could be as simple as making sure kids are sitting on the bench, calling families during rainouts, or even filling in for you in your absence. Many parents are hesitant to step up, but by showing them they are capable and establishing a foundation where **every** parent helps, each of them can be a valuable asset to the team. These early years are not only crucial for the young players, but this is often where young parents have their first experience as a “team parent.” Making it easy for parents now, will help them become more comfortable helping out the team as their children grow, be it in youth sports or other activities.

These early years can be a challenge; players often need individual attention. It takes at least two to four adults to keep control of 9 to 12 players. To teach the mechanics you must have enough coaches to give players individual attention, at least within the squads during practice.

Serving as a coach at this early stage doesn't require knowledge of baseball. Often your best ‘position coaches’ are those that are new to baseball, because they will not “over coach.” It is your job as head coach to ‘coach’ those parents. Break down the skill you're teaching into a simple task that any parent can teach. For example, when practicing a first base running drill you say, “Coach John, please stand five feet past the base. I want you to encourage each player to keep running, all the way through the base. When they cross the base, hold out your hand to give them a high five, and remind them to walk behind you back to the bench.” Over time, these position coaches will become more confident in their coaching ability and you can give them more complex skills to teach.

You will notice at the end of this handbook you have copies of suggested parent positions. These are provided to parents in their parent packet. Your copies of these are attached to this handbook. Remember, the only way to find out which parents can help is to ask all of them to coach and let them decide where each one can help the most. Parents that provide team support in **any way** will be valuable to this team.

Thank you again for your willingness to coach in this year's T-Ball program. Should you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact us, we are always happy to help.

Boys & Girls Club of the Redwoods  
(707) 441-1030

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## TIPS FROM OTHER COACHES

### **Bats are a safety issue...**

Keep all bats in one place on the field. Keep one parent there to supervise at all times. If a player brings a bat, it belongs to the coach for the duration of the game or practice.

### **Equipment will be lost...**

Tell parents to put players' last name and phone number on all personal equipment (i.e. under the bill of the cap.)

### **Buying a glove...**

Find out which hand the player can throw most accurately with. If you're not sure, an easy test is to simply put a ball on the ground and ask a child to pick it up. Most likely, they will use their throwing hand to scoop up the ball. Buy a glove that fits the opposite hand. Recommend a glove that closes easily.

### **Players do not know the field...**

Run them around the bases single file before and after **each** game and practice.

### **Home plate is the most dangerous position...**

With young players, you may choose to eliminate the catcher position. Always have a coach with the catcher to guard against the following:

- Batter throwing the bat
- Upcoming batters swinging the bat
- Catcher being hurt by runner from third

### **Young players are unfamiliar with the game...**

Your least experienced players need your best effort.

### **Parents who are impatient with their own children...**

Compliment their knowledge of baseball, "I see you know a lot about baseball." Then ask the parent to coach a specific position **other than** where their child is playing.

## TIPS FROM OTHER COACHES

### **Rubber balls are a great training tool...**

Tell parents and players to practice with a rubber ball at home. Rubber balls are safer and rebound back to them. This extra bounce grows a young player's hand eye coordination as well as teaches skills of proper catching technique.

### **Teach your parents some cheers...**

Long game? Hot day? Use the cheering parents to energize the defensive players.

### **Learn players names on day 1...**

Spend time letting the players get to know one another. Identifying the players by name lets them know you're giving them personal attention, and they will be quicker to respond and easier to coach.

### **Bats are a safety issue...**

Keep all bats in one place on the field. Keep one parent there to supervise at all times. (Repeated for emphasis).

### **Call it alligator catching...**

Have players put their glove close to the ground for grounders. Also, have them position the other hand on the heel of the glove, keeping the ball from rolling up and hitting them in the face.

### **Tell, show, practice...**

When teaching a skill, first tell what you're going to do, then demonstrate it, then let them practice.

### **Teach players to run through first base...**

Position a coach five to ten feet behind first base, and just outside the base line, to give each player a high five as they run through.

### **Call the ball...**

Teach players to call the ball while catching grounders; calling grounders makes it easier to teach them to call fly balls later in the season.

### **Assume all batters are going to throw the bat...**

Place an object (i.e. a bat bag) down the first base line. Instruct all batters to carry the bat to that object and drop the bat at that point.

FIRST CALL TO PARENTS

- Know the Place and Time for Practice

Field: \_\_\_\_\_

Days: \_\_\_\_\_

Times: \_\_\_\_\_

- Introduce yourself as \_\_\_\_\_'s t-ball coach.
- Give parents your name and phone number and it is recommended to send out a group text for communication.
- Verify parents/guardians' names from roster, add others that may not be listed. Is the one you have the best to call for game cancellations or schedule changes?
- Does \_\_\_\_\_ have a glove? If not, recommend they get one that the player can close easily. The Club has extra gloves too.
- Tell them when and where the first two practices will be.  
\*\*If for some reason there is poor weather, the team will still gather for a parent meeting at \_\_\_\_\_ to orient and meet all team families
- Remind them to bring water bottles to every practice and game.
- Parents WILL participate, and should bring a glove if they have one. If they don't, there is no need to buy one. Parents can catch bare handed at this stage.
- Suggest using a rubber ball or tennis ball at home to start practicing. The softer balls have more bounce and will help young player's coordination.

FIRST CALL TO PARENTS

- Ask parents to **not** bring personal bats to the first or second practice, as you'll want the fewest opportunities for distractions these first couple of meetings.
- Always be sure to close the phone call asking if they have any other questions you can answer.

TEAMS

**Team Number & Name**

Team 1	Humboldt Area Foundation
Team 2	Quality Body Works
Team 3	Leon's Car Care Center
Team 4	Mercer-Fraser
Team 5	Humboldt Sponsors
Team 6	Coast Central Credit Union
Team 7	Owsley Electric
Team 8	O & M Industries

Team Roster  
*See Attached*



LEAGUE SCHEDULE – PICTURE DAY

Winship Middle School  
2500 Cypress Ave, Eureka

All practices and games will begin promptly at 5pm or 6pm. No new inning can begin after 5:30pm, or 6:30 allowing games to conclude by 5:45pm or 6:45pm. Fields MUST be completely cleared of equipment and any trash by 6pm. Practices & Games will be April 4 – May 30.

LEAGUE SCHEDULE  
*SEE ATTACHED*

PICTURE DAY

Date to be announced! We ask that everyone attends picture day to support those on your team that are getting team photos, and to show the strength of our t-ball program to each of our team sponsors.

COACH CONTACT INFO

<u>COACH</u>	<u>TEAM</u>	<u>PHONE</u>
APRIL	HUMBOLDT AREA FOUNDATION	(530) 515-1104
ANNA	QUALITY BODY WORKS	(707) 616-9255
CHRISTOPHER	LEON'S CAR CARE CENTER	(707) 954-5746
DAVID	MERCER-FRASER	(707) 499-4331
DEREK	HUMBOLDT SPONSORS	(408) 307-5884
JASON	COAST CENTRAL CREDIT UNION	(707) 599-6337
KRISTA & KEN	OWSLEY ELECTRIC	(707) 599-2644 (707) 599-8895
CHRISTINA & JOHN	O & M INDUSTRIES	(707) 613-0957

PARENT SUPPORT POSITIONS

*Below are suggested roles parents can fill on the team. You'll find "position descriptions" at the back of this handbook. Remember, you can always create positions as team needs arise, and as you find what talents and passions are among your parents. Always be thinking of ways other parents can help make your job as coach easier. Some positions are quite involved, while others are so simple that one person can fill multiple positions.*

	Name	Phone
Phone Coordinator / Team Manager	_____	_____
Refreshments Coordinator	_____	_____
First Base Coach	_____	_____
Third Base Coach	_____	_____
Batting Coach	_____	_____
Bench Monitor	_____	_____
<i>Other</i>	_____	_____
<i>Other</i>	_____	_____
<i>Other</i>	_____	_____
<i>Other</i>	_____	_____
<i>Other</i>	_____	_____
<i>Other</i>	_____	_____
<i>Other</i>	_____	_____
<i>Other</i>	_____	_____

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## THE FIRST MEETING AND PRACTICE

Ensure you have the following:

- Team equipment – bats, balls, bases, T-ball Tee, spare gloves
- Parent information packets
- Extra water – for players to fill their bottles

Parents should bring water bottles to all games and practices. These drills will work players harder than they are accustomed.

**Arrive promptly at 5:00pm or 6:00pm for Practices/Games.**

**\*Note: Do NOT arrive early as other Programs may still be in play until 5pm**

- Set up the field with bases
- Draw an on-deck circle ten feet to side of backstop (toward first base). For now, no bats in sight. ---Later the practice bats should be *near* the on-deck circle.
- Set out water jug for players to re-fill their bottles
- Remember, bats are *always* a safety issue. If a player brings a bat, it belongs to the coach for the duration of the game or practice.

First impressions are very important. The first practice is the time to set a routine and establish yourself as the coach for both players and parents. This gives both the parents and the players some comfort knowing you are organized and prepared, and there is a routine they can become accustomed to. Once the field is set up, have parents simply start playing catch with players. At this stage it is best not to pair players with one another, as players are still learning the fundamentals of throwing and catching. Like other life skills they've learned, mimicking their parents or older siblings is a good way to start.

Start practice at the **same time** every day, regardless of how many players are on time. Starting on time regularly will help establish a team culture that it is important to show up on time. Within 5-10 minutes of the scheduled start time, get players into the routine of stretching. This will help influence structure and regularity as they progress in baseball. Stretching is also a great way to involve other parents! Remember, as with all drills, keep them brief. A 5-minute stretch will likely be your limit that you can keep their attention before needing to move on.

## THE FIRST MEETING AND PRACTICE

Short parent orientation at the end of practice. (approx. 10 minutes)

- Hand out parent packets and review as a group
- Parent Participation – Remind parents that everyone is expected to help support the team in some fashion. Ask parents to look through the different suggestions for how they can help the team. At the next practice, you'd like commitments for how each

of them would like to be involved. You can always create new parent positions as needs arise.

- Allow for questions.

Remember, many parents will say things like “I can help out, but I don't want to coach.” It's your job as head coach to help show them how easy it is to support the team. Sometimes your best parental support will come from helping make phone calls or manage the players sitting on the bench. Be creative in ways parents can provide support.

### Ending Practices/Games

Always end a practice or game in the same fashion. Like when you started practice, it will help build your team dynamics if the players and parents have a structure they can rely on. Perhaps you end with a team cheer, or by recognizing a player or two who really stood out. Whatever you decide to do, repeat the same physical action (i.e. kneeling in a circle, sitting on the bench, etc) as well as what you do (i.e. a cheer, a thoughtful quote shared by the coach, etc) at **each** practice and game.

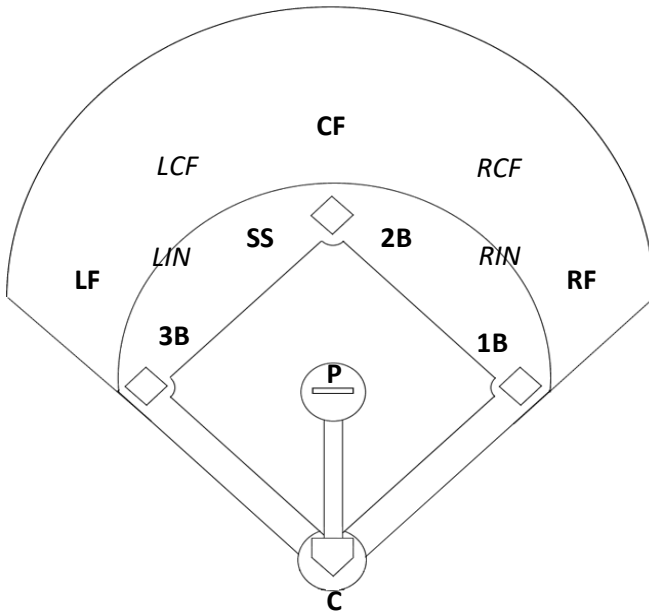
Notes: *Use this space for planning notes for your first practice/team meeting.*

## THE FIRST MEETING AND PRACTICE

The following pages have practice planning tools. You can use the drills found in this book, or others you find online, in books or come up with yourself. The important thing is that you have a plan ahead of time for what you will do at each practice. Follow the routine you established on day 1, and always ask other parents to step in and assist. Remember, you're not alone in coaching this team. You have other parents, and other coaches that can help you come up with other ideas and problem solve.

PLAYER POSITIONS

One of the important lessons of t-ball is simply teaching where the different positions are, and what each player's role is in that position. Many times, teams at this level will add "extra" positions so that all players can be on the field each inning rather than having some sit on the bench. Also, there will often be times when players do not show up, so having a strategy to allow for that will be helpful.



Key: P=Pitcher C=Catcher 1B=1<sup>st</sup> Base 2B=2<sup>nd</sup> Base 3B=Third Base SS=Shortstop  
 LF=Left Field CF=Center Field RF=Right Field LCF=Left Center Field  
 RCF=Right Center Field LIN=Left Infield RIN=Right Infield

Use the chart below to help decide which positions to fill depending on how many players you have

<b>6 Players</b>	P	C	1B	2B	3B	SS	Parents fill outfield positions						
<b>7 Players</b>	P	1B	2B	3B	SS	LCF	RCF						
<b>8 Players</b>	P	C	1B	2B	3B	SS	LCF	RCF					
<b>9 Players</b>	P	C	1B	2B	3B	SS	LF	CF	RF				
<b>10 Players</b>	P	C	1B	2B	3B	SS	LF	LCF	RCF	RF			
<b>11 Players</b>	P	C	1B	2B	3B	SS	LF	CF	RF	LIN	RIN		
<b>12 Players</b>	P	C	1B	2B	3B	SS	LF	LCF	RCF	RF	LIN	RIN	
<b>13 Players</b>	P	C	1B	2B	3B	SS	LF	LCF	CF	RCF	RF	LIN	RIN

**PLAYER ROTATION**

*You can use this sheet to help rotate players through positions so all get equal playing time between infield and outfield. The positions have been pre-filled for 10 players.*

<b>Game Date</b>														
<b>Inning</b>														
3 <sup>rd</sup> Base														
Pitcher														
Left Center														
Catcher														
Right Center														
Shortstop														
Left Field														
1 <sup>st</sup> Base														
Right Field														
2 <sup>nd</sup> Base														



## T-BALL PROGRAM REGULATIONS

T-Ball is a non-competitive, beginning instructional program designed to accommodate participants age 4-7. As a beginning instructional program, our primary focus is on developing a player's skills, fostering good sportsmanship, and building healthy relationships. Because of this focus, we do not count wins and losses, runs or outs. Players should be praised for completing a play correctly, and coached (not criticized) when making a mistake.

### Drug and Alcohol Use

As all of our practices and games occur at school sites and city parks, please remember that each have their own policies regarding pets, smoking, tobacco, drug or alcohol on or near their property. You are expected to abide by these policies and ensure that other team parents and visitors are doing the same.

### Late Registrations

When the season starts, there will likely be kids and parents who ask to join in. If you are approached, please refer them to contact our administrative office at 441-1030. It's very easy to say "I'll take one more player" but please remember, your team is not the only one affected. For example, if one team takes on many extra players, it will take longer for that team to go through a batting order. In addition, it is not always possible to provide uniforms for late registrants. Most importantly, if an unregistered child is playing and gets injured, it can leave you open to litigation. Our administrative office will notify the coach if a new player has requested to join the team.

### Rainouts

Games and practices **CANNOT** be played on fields that are wet or muddy! This is a regulation set by most schools and is often out of our control, not to mention can be a safety risk. If games or practices must be cancelled, please ensure your families are notified by early afternoon. If games are rained out, coaches should check in with one another to avoid misunderstandings. Unfortunately, due to limited field space, rained out games will not be made up. We advise a team parent to be in charge of notifying the other team families, and possibly visit the field to notify parents that show up to play.

### Respect

Please be respectful of all participants involved with our program as well as school staff and community members we interact with. Remember your conduct not only reflects on you, but all other members of our t-ball program. Schools have been kind enough to donate their field space, so please be sure to clean up the field of any trash before leaving. **ANY** time a player, parent or spectator is injured, or there is a strong verbal or physical dispute, please report this to the Boys & Girls Club so we can keep record or take action appropriately.

## RULEBOOK

### Overview:

T-Ball is a game between two teams where participants hit a ball off a prescribed batting tee situated on home plate. Upon hitting the ball, the player attempts to run to each base and eventually back to home plate before being declared “out” by the defending team.

### Field Dimensions:

Baseline will be approximately 50 feet, that is 50 feet from home to 1<sup>st</sup>, 50 feet 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> and so on. The pitching marker shall be approximately 42 feet from home plate. If both coaches agree, this distance may be shortened to facilitate play.

### Umpires:

Assistant Coaches may be used as umpires. Since runs are not counted, their main calls in this level of the game will be to indicate when a hit ball is in fair territory, if the tee was hit during the swing, when a player is declared “out,” and declare when the ball is dead. Their role is to also handle any disputes among coaches or spectators. Both coaches and parents are expected to be supportive of all of the umpire’s decisions, serving as a role model for the players on how to respect the umpire’s calls, or respectfully discuss a call with the umpire. Safety and education of the players must take priority over all else.

### Putting the ball into play:

1. The batting tee is placed on home plate, and the umpire shall adjust the tee to the proper height. For safety, the umpire will move the tee immediately after the ball is hit.
2. A player will play the pitching position to give timing to the game and will make a pitching motion. If the player fails to make a complete pitching motion, the umpire must instruct the player to do so. The batter will not swing at the ball until the pitcher has made the complete pitching motion.
3. Batters will bat until they hit the ball into fair territory. If the batter hits the tee, and the ball goes at least 15 feet in fair territory, the ball will be in play. **Bunting is not allowed, nor are batters allowed to take a half swing.** If the umpire feels the batter is not taking a full swing, they may be called back to swing again.

### Base running, outs, and taking the ball out of play:

- If the bat is thrown, or slips, and lands five feet or more from the batter, the batter will lose that turn and return to the bench.
- Base runners MUST stay in contact with the base until the ball has been hit. When players have advanced as far as possible without being put out, the umpire shall call “time.” Coaches are expected to teach their players to stop advancing once the ball is in the infield. At the end of the play, players should learn to return the ball to the pitcher.

- When an umpire calls “time,” the pitcher shall return the ball to the umpire who will place it on the tee for the next batter.
- If the team in the field is attempting to return the ball to the pitcher, who is within 5 feet of the pitching mound, and the ball is overthrown, the ball is considered dead. If runners are halfway or more to the next base, then they will advance to that base, otherwise, they must return to the last base touched. No further running, or outs, may occur.
- Any ball overthrown that goes out of fair territory will be declared dead. If runners are halfway or more to the next base, then they will advance to that base, otherwise, they must return to the last base touched. No further running, or outs, may occur. If a ball is intentionally thrown out of bounds, the runners may be awarded an extra base, at the umpire’s discretion.
- Players are **not** permitted to lead off base, steal or slide. Any of these will be called out by the umpire. Slips on wet ground do not count as sliding (umpire’s decision).
- At this stage there is NO pop fly rule. Get players used to running as soon as the ball is hit. They will learn about pop fly outs and “tagging up” as they progress in baseball.

**Inning rotation:**

Remember, we do not keep score or count outs. We prefer that you simply congratulate the players for making a play, and let the game continue on. As t-ball’s first role is a learning opportunity, coaches may agree mid-game to shorten base lengths, or allow “out” players to remain on base in order to enhance learning and growth opportunities for players. Players at this stage must learn both the skill of advancing around the bases, as well as how to conduct oneself when being called out. It is the job of both coaches to provide opportunities for players to have a positive experience, and learn the basics of the game without being overly competitive. Teams will rotate from offense to defense after all offensive players have had the opportunity to bat.

**Game duration:**

Typical games will last three to four innings, for a maximum of 45 hour. No new inning can begin after 45-minutes. (i.e. if game time is 5:00-5:45, no new inning can begin after 5:30). If four innings have been completed before the hour is up, the game is over.

**Game forfeit:**

If a team shows up with 6 players, parents may be used to play outfield positions, but will not bat. If a team has 5 or fewer players, the official game will be forfeit, and teams should combine players from both teams and carry out a scrimmage game. Parents shall be used to fill positions as needed. Strive to use the game time as a learning experience whenever possible.

**Recording and reporting:**

If any situation arises that cannot be *easily* addressed by the rules in this rulebook, please write down the situation and how it was resolved and share this with the league. This information will be very helpful to future coaches as we continually improve our procedures.

## PARENT POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

### Phone Coordinator/ Team Manager

The team manager assists the team with communication. Their main responsibility is to disseminate information to parents, and from parents to the coach and league. This is the first person parents would go to when they have questions, freeing up the coach to focus on coaching. When practices or games are rained out, or there are changes, the team manager goes through the roster and makes sure every family is notified.

### Refreshments Coordinator

It is very common among youth sports that parents take turns providing snacks and/or refreshments at the end of each game. This is certainly not required for participation in t-ball but is something optional your team can adopt. The coordinator is responsible for putting together a rotation schedule, and reminding parents when their day is. It is a good idea to find out about any allergies and remind snack-bringers what foods/drinks to avoid. It is also common practice that parents focus on bringing snacks like pretzels or oranges and stay away from things like candies and sodas.

### First Base Coach

The first base coach is important for both offensive and defensive plays. This is a great position to train parents who may serve as a head coach as their children progress in baseball.

*Offense:* The first base coach or **another parent** must stand seven feet behind and outside the base line to give a high five to every runner. This reminder about running through first base is necessary for all games, throughout the entire season. At this stage, it is necessary to remind the runner where second base is located. The first base coach must remind them to stop AT the base, and not run through it like they do for first base. Coach the player to look and listen to the third base coach once they arrive at second base.

*Defense:* Be diligent and repetitive with all players. At practice go through the motions and talk each player through the basic principles of playing first base. This is a very important position. Whenever a first base drill is practiced, this coach should be providing guidance to the defensive player on first base.

## PARENT POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

### Third Base Coach

As players get older, this is an important and strategic offensive coaching position. This is a great position to train parents who may serve as a head coach as their children progress in baseball. At this stage, this is a teaching position. Third base coach is responsible for the runner at second base AND the runner at third base.

When the runner arrives at second, get their attention with your left hand. If the second base runner is day dreaming, call “time” and get their attention. Start using the common “stop” signal when you want advancing runners to stop at third. This is with both hands, palm out, fingers together, and arms extended up or out.

Is there a runner at first? If there is, the second base runner must advance to third when the next batter bats. The third base runner is within verbal distance. As soon as they arrive at third base, point out if there are other runners on base, and if they must run on the next hit.

### Batting Coach

Batting coach is a busy job. Not only does this person help demonstrate the proper stance, swing, and follow through, but they must make all attempts to stop players from flinging the bats. Some players cannot decide if they bat right or left handed. Some players will throw right, but bat left. Ask the parent if you are unsure, or observe accuracy and smoothness in execution.

### Bench Monitor

This can be one of the most challenging, yet most supportive roles at this age. The bench coach is responsible for making sure all the players are sitting on the bench when their team is on offense. They also help make sure the players are batting in order. This person helps allow the coach to focus on coaching players on the field.

These aren't the only ways parents can support the team. Use this extra space on page 10 to write down other ideas as they come up. Any way a parent can give of their time will be beneficial.

## PRACTICE GAME

Practice games move much faster if you split your team into two squads. One squad bats; the other squad plays infield positions. Ask three-to-four parents to play outfield positions.

You need position coaches at all infield positions. To keep the game moving at a faster pace, instruct the position coaches to knock down the ball if it gets past a player.

Do not have the players chase the ball, they do not learn fielding skills by chasing the ball. They learn fielding skills by stopping or catching the ball and completing the play.

Ask a parent to be a batting instructor. Ask another parent to stay behind the backstop to insure children do not get hit with a bat.

When one squad has finished batting, swap player squads only. Leave the same parents in outfield and at bases. Or, move the outfield parents up to position coaching and let the position coaches play outfield.

Good sportsmanship takes practice also. At the end of the practice, ask the parents to line up single file, as the opposing team. Have players line up single file behind the head coach, facing towards parents. Have the two lines walk by each other offering the congratulatory low five as the pass, and say, "good game, good game..."

Do not concentrate on skill level. Concentrate on hustle and completion of task during all drills. Skill will develop with repetition.

*Use this space for notes*

## NAME GAME

Have all the players sit in a circle. Use the infield to help give the ball a surface to roll on. Give a baseball to one player and tell them to say their name, and roll the ball to another teammate. It's good to have 1 or 2 assistant coaches involved as well to insure that every player gets the ball. Once they appear comfortable with the "rules," have them stand and do the same activity tossing the ball to one another. \*Remember, this is a "toss" at a close distance not a "throw." Demonstrate how they should toss the ball to one another. \*In order to "break the ice" you may want to start at the very beginning without using a ball. Instead have them go around the circle saying their name. Encourage those that are shy to speak up in their "outside voice."

## BASERUNNING DRILLS

### Who's on First?

Purpose: To focus attention on each player's running skills.

One player stands at home plate. When the coach yells "GO!," the player runs to first base at top speed. The player should run *through* first base, and turn right afterward. Position a parent or coach 5-7 feet past the base to offer the runner a high five and instruct them to turn right and return to the end of the line.

### What now?

Purpose: To lean baserunning strategy.

Without holding a bat, a player swings and then runs from home plate to first base. The coach stationed there will call out an instruction as the runner approaches (such as "run through" or "run to second"). Repetition with varying commands will reinforce the players' knowledge of what to do when they safely get to first base.

### Track Meet

Purpose: To practice running speed and form.

Have two players start at home plate. One will run to first, the other to third. They continue running the bases (in opposite directions) to try to be the first one to get back to home. \*Position a coach at second base to instruct one runner to touch the outside of the base, and the other the inside, helping to avoid collisions.

### Catch the Players

Purpose: To improve player conditioning, and strengthen the coach-player relationship. A coach starts out four or more players running the bases in 1-2 second intervals. After the fourth has left, the coach tries to "catch the players" tagging them, or knocking off their hat. The players try to get to as many bases as possible.

*Variation* The entire team leaves as a group, and the coach tries to catch as many as possible. - usually an eagerly anticipated "end of game" event.

## THROWING DRILLS

### Show Me

Purpose: To practice holding the ball and starting the throwing motion.

Have players show you that they are holding the ball with the thumb under the ball and with two or three fingers on top. Then each player quickly takes the throwing position with legs apart, the foot on the throwing-arm side behind the body, the throwing arm back and up, and the front shoulder turned toward the target. Repeat three times. \*This is a good drill to pair a parent with each player.

### Use the L

Purpose: To stress proper throwing-arm position.

Remind the players to have their throwing arm bent into the L shape. Separate the team into small groups and have the players throw to your and your assistants or volunteers, loudly calling out "L!" just before they throw the ball.

### One-Knee Throws

Purpose: To focus on one part of the throwing motion.

Players get down on one knee (on the same side as their throwing arm). Their arm is brought up into the L position. The ball is held above and in front of the head, aimed toward the target. The non-throwing hand rests on the other knee. Players reach back and throw to a partner or a coach. The wrist may bend slightly as the arm comes down; the body turns sideways.

### Bounce to the Bucket

Purpose: To develop accuracy when throwing.

Place a large basket, bucket or cooler on home plate. Players try to throw or bounce a ball into the container. You can make this a game, awarding points for making it in. Move players further away as they progress.

## CALL THE BALL

Position players in the infield. Roll grounders to each one of them, instructing them to call out "I got it" when they are going to get the ball. Teach them to use two hands, or an "alligator catch" placing the mitt on the ground, and the throwing hand on top of the ball. Direct players where to throw the ball once they've stopped it. \*\*Have a parent stand 5-7 feet being the players to knock down passed balls. Having players chase the ball does not improve skill.



## FIRST BASE DRILL

**Teaches:** Playing first base, running through first and force out.

**Setup:** Send two parents to each position. One instructs the “lead player” and one controls the rest of the squad and keep them at a safe distance from the ball and runner.

**Players:** Gather players around you, then send players one at a time to these positions. Try to get some novice players and some experienced players at each position.

### Three Squads:

1. One squad in position to play pitcher.  
**Lead Player** in position – in front of pitcher’s mound.  
**Parent** behind the lead player to instruct.  
**Other Players** line up behind second parent.
2. One squad at home plate as runners.  
**Lead Player** standing at home plate ready to run to first.  
**Parent** behind the lead player to instruct.  
**Other Players** line up behind second parent.
3. One squad in position to play first base.  
**Lead Player** in position three to five feet toward second base and three to five feet in front of the base line.  
**Parent** behind the lead player to instruct.  
**Other Players** line up behind second parent.

**Coach gives and demonstrates these instructions at...**

### Pitcher Position

I am going to throw the ball to this player—we will pretend the ball was hit to the pitcher. You will instruct this player to throw the ball to first base. This will be an attempt to get the runner out. After each play, the player here moves to the back of the squad.

### First Base

The lead player at first base begins the drill off the base. When I say “ball is hit,” the player moves to the base. Place your left foot on the edge of the base, face where the ball is coming from and wait actively for the ball. Leave room on the base for the runner to run through. This is called a **force out** where you tag the base only.

## FIRST BASE DRILL

Add One More Coach: have another parent or assistant coach stand outside the foul line and approximately five feet past the base. This parent will encourage the runners

to continue running through the base, and the parent will give them a high five as they pass. The parent will then remind the runner to turn right and go behind them (in foul territory) to return to their squad. \*If the player turns left, they can be tagged out as if running to second base.

### Home Plate

When I say, “ball is hit,” this player will be running to first base. Instruct each runner to run to coach \_\_\_\_\_. Run through first base—touch the base—give coach \_\_\_\_\_ a “high five,” turn right and return to the end of the squad. Instruct each runner NOT to watch the ball, they should be looking at the hand behind first base. **As coach,** position yourself to the third base side of home plate or anywhere you can that you are not in the runner’s path.

\*Coaching note\* Ask one of your assistant coaches or parents to stand with you and learn these commands. This will make it easier for them to step in for you when needed.

### Coach Aloud:

“First base, if the ball is hit, show me what you will do.” Wait for the player to move to the base and give short instructions if necessary to be sure the first base player understands.

“First base ready?” (player back off base)

“Runner ready?”

“Ball is hit.” (throw the pitcher a grounder)

Give short instruction if necessary to have:

1. First base player move to cover first base.
2. Pitcher to throw ball to first base.
3. Parent behind first base to give runner a “high five.”
4. Runner to run through first base, but also touch first base.
5. Players to return to the end of their squad.

Reemphasize: Runner should look at raised hand behind first base. Run to coach \_\_\_\_\_ do not watch the ball, do not stop on first.

## FIRST BASE DRILL

### **Turn control over to the assistant coach when feasible.**

As head coach you should be free to circulate and instruct.

Remember with each rotation, tell the player “When the ball is hit, show me what you will do.” Then ask each player if they are ready.

Having the runner **complete** the run at top speed is **very** important. In a game, the ball is often dropped, but runners will stop early anticipating that they will be out.

### Some notes on the First Base Drill

- Take any early opportunity to include all parents in the drills. If parents participate, they will be more likely to use these drills on their own when playing outside of practice.
- As head coach if you circulate and instruct you will be in a better position to:
  - Watch for safety issues
  - Head off any conflicts
  - Keep position coaches from over coaching
  - Praise players, and establish an upbeat attitude for all players and parents
- Don't be afraid to add variations:
  - Have players bat off tee before running
  - If you're short players, have parents play the pitchers position. This will help improve clean throws to the first base players, allowing them more focus on proper catching.
- Never criticize a player. Do not expect them to know anything you have not taught them repeatedly in extreme detail.
- For many, each play is a complex dance of: action, reaction, follow through, and completion. Take time early to break down the steps into shorter skills. Perhaps squads can work independently on segments of the play before coming together.

### ADD YOUR OWN DRILLS

There are many drills out there you can find on the internet, in books, and by talking to other coaches and parents. Note the ones you might like to use, then implement them in practice.

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