

Practice Plans and Drills

designed for Beginner Baseball



Introduction:

Whether you are a parent whose child is about to start Youth Baseball for the first time or you are about to take on the responsibility of coaching a Youth Baseball team, this guide can provide valuable information to prepare you for the season.

Coaching youth sports can be challenging. With guidance and organization your experience can be extremely rewarding. The key to successful coaching is being prepared and organized. It is important to take advantage of the limited time you get each week with the players. With a structured practice, easy to teach drills and patience you can quickly convert your group into a competitive team. I found that many coaches spend a lot of time on drills not associated with the situations they will encounter during the game. Having a list of drills designed to improve fundamentals and provide game time situations will allow you to make the most of your time. The goal for the season should be to teach every player their positions and the game of baseball (Youth Baseball). Things may look disorganized during the first couple of weeks. If you are patient and consistently coach the players, your games can become competitive and the experience for everyone will be enjoyable.

Product Information Statement:

This baseball guide has been designed for coaching youth baseball. These drills have been used successfully and were created so the coach can effectively communicate and the players can easily understand. Included are organized batting, throwing, catching and fielding drills along with suggested practice plans. The plans were created to keep the kids interested and provide a positive learning experience. Each page consists of drills and techniques to run your practice.

Recommendations:

The drills are in order of difficulty. I recommend teaching a couple drills at a time. The most important thing is focus on the proper form of each drill and do not lose sight of the fundamentals of the game.

Disclaimer:

Information in this document is to be used for information purposes only. The authors do not guarantee, warranty or provide predictions regarding this information. They also do not imply these will work in every situation and/or are governed by your league. You should consult with your league to ensure they will conform to their standards. Nothing on this website or document constitutes or is meant to constitute, advice of any kind.

Coaching Tips:

1. **Prepare for practice before you arrive to the baseball field.** Once you arrive at the practice location, you will be bombarded with kids, parents, other coaches, along with the task of setting up. Once you arrive, you will not have time to prepare activities, drills, etc.
2. **Be clear of the goals and expectations of the day and season.** Coaches quite often will assume that every player understands what they are supposed to do, and how they're supposed to act. Be sure to state the plans for the day and expectations as practice starts. This is also important to address at the beginning of the season when addressing the coaches, players and parents.
3. **Ask for help.** Be sure to invite others to be assistant coaches. This will be valuable for practices and games. The players will enjoy there experience and will get better instruction, if they can split up into small groups to run the drills. I recommend having a total of 4 coaches. One head coach and 3 committed assistant coaches.
4. **Keep the practice moving.** Many coaches like to talk (too much). Depending upon the age group kids typically have a short attention span and will lose interest. Be prepared to quickly explain the drill and then get it started. The more the kids are moving to various stations, the less likely you'll have to deal with other issues.
5. **Focus on the fundamentals.** Always keep player development at the top of the priority list. Many coaches play to win, and often forget they have 12 kids on the team. If you work to develop every kid by the end of the year your team will be better prepared than others. If each player leaves the season better than when they arrived, you have succeeded.
6. **Encourage effort.** Practice is practice. The kids are going to make many mistakes, some more than others. The players will be trying new things and advancing in there development at different paces. The one thing they can all be good at is EFFORT. This will instill confidence in the players and provide them with a base for getting better.
7. **Don't worry about the small things.** Kids will be kids.. There is nothing you or I will do to ever change that. There should be certain guidelines for conduct, but kids being kids is going to happen. Set basic guideline, and reinforce during practice.
8. **Coaches are there for the kids, the kids aren't there for the coaches.** If you missed you chance to play pro ball, coaching youth baseball is not the replacement.
9. **Coaches are role models.** Remember to always talk positive about players, parents, other teams, and coaches. Kids look up to the coach, so it's important to provide them with a positive image. What we say, how we say it, and how we act can leave a lasting impression on a young player. Always be positive, even on those days that seem most challenging.
10. **Have Fun!** Coaching kids should be enjoyable. Try to have fun, and keeps the season in perspective.

Practice Plans #1 – (based on 60 minute practice).

10 minutes – Warm Up – it is important to start each practice with a warm up. This provides the foundation for an organized practice and gets the players prepared to start the day.

- Spread out with enough room to do an exercise.
- Lite stretching exercises – touch touches, hip rotations, arm circles, etc.
- Calisthenics exercises – jumping jacks, high knees, etc
- Lite jog around the baseball field to conclude

27 minutes – Station Drills (focused on the fundamentals)

- Divide the team into three groups (if possible). Rotate every 9 minutes.
 - Station 1 - Hitting (see list of drills)
 - Station 2 - Fielding - Infield/Outfield (see list of drills)
 - The first couple practices should be focus on infield only.
 - After a couple practices introduce the outfield, and start to combine infield and outfield into practice (i.e. throwing to 2nd base, backing up 1st base, etc.)
 - Station 3 – Throwing/Catching (see list of drills)

3 minutes - Water break

20 minutes – Batting & Infield Practice

- Team takes the field in various position
- 10 pitches per player – run on final ball.
- Rotate players in to bat. Recommendation - 3 players batting (remainder in the field).
- Although this is batting practice, the fielders should be taught the make the correct play batted ball

End - Water break/closing comments

Practice Plans # 2 – (based on 90 minute practice).

10 minutes – Warm Up – it is important to start each practice with a warm up. This provides the foundation for an organized practice and gets the players prepared to start the day.

- Spread out with enough room to do an exercise.
- Lite stretching exercises – touch touches, hip rotations, arm circles, etc.
- Calisthenics exercises – jumping jacks, high knees, etc
- Light jog around the baseball field to conclude

30 minutes – Stations Drills - focused on the fundamentals.

- Divide the groups into to three stations - Rotate every 10 minutes
 - Station 1 - Hitting - see hitting drills
 - Station 2 - Fielding (Infield/Outfield) – see fielding drills
 - Start with the infield through a few practices and then teach the outfield.
 - As you progress through out the year then incorporate both into the session.
 - Example - Throwing into the second base, backing up first base, etc)
 - Station 3 – Throwing/Catching – see list of drills

5 minutes – Water break between rotations

20 minutes – Infield Practice/Outfield Practice

- Players take their positions
- Coaches hit balls to various positions
- Important to call out situations and options for the players. (plays at first, second, etc)

25 minutes – Batting and infield practice

- Team takes the field in various position
- 12 pitches per player – run on final ball.
- Rotate players in to bat. Recommendation - 3 players batting (remainder in the field).
- Although this is batting practice, the fielders should be taught the make the correct play batted ball

End - Water break/closing comments

The Basics of Youth Baseball

- Discuss important points of each position.
 - Position on the field and where to stand - in relation to the base
 - Area to cover when ball is hit - boundaries per position to cover
 - Responsibilities of each position

- Important factors to teach as the year progress
 - What to do if ball is hit to their position.
 - What to do if the ball is “not” hit to the player. What do they do? Where should they go?
 - Importance of always paying attention to the batters and runners
 - Return back to position after each play.
 - Discuss backing up other positions when ball is in play
 - Where to go when runners are running
 - When to hold the ball

- Defensive Coaching Tips
 - Players should play the ball and not the ball play them.
 - Eyes on the ball into the glove.
 - Cover ball with non glove hand securing ball.
 - Players should cover the ball or base on every batted ball.
 - Maintain focus on the lead runner.
 - Throws should be made to base in front of lead runner.
 - At this level of baseball always get the easy out, regardless of lead runner.

Fielding Fundamentals

Proper stance:

- Feet shoulder width apart
- Knees bent - weight should be forward on the balls of feet
- Their head is up facing the ball.
- Keep eyes on the ball until ball is in the glove.
- Other hand covers the ball after it enters the glove.

Proper glove/hand position:

- Glove hand should just be touching the dirt at a 45 degree angle.
- Throwing hand should be above the glove with the palm facing the ball.
- Once the ball reaches the glove the top hand should cover the ball inside the glove.

Infield Grounder Drills

Alligator Drill

- Roll grounders to the kids and have them make an alligator out of the arms.
- Bottom arm with glove is the jaw and the top arm without glove is the head.
- When the ball rolls in have them act like the alligator is biting or eating the ball.
- Both arms come together.

Basic Grounder Drills

- Form one line just behind shortstop position
- Have one player at a time step up into the SS position.
- Roll ground to the player and have them field ball and throw back to you.
- Emphasis the importance of proper stance, keeping glove on the ground, and making an accurate throw.

Infield Grounder Drills (continued)

Basic Grounder Drills

- Form one line just behind shortstop position
- Have one player at a time step up into the SS position.
- Roll ground to the player and have them field ball and throw back to you.
- Emphasis the importance of proper stance, keeping glove on the ground, and making a quick but accurate throw to you.

Side to Side Grounder Drills

- Same as Basic but roll the balls left and right of the player to make him move to get in front of the ball.
- Emphasis the importance of moving to get in front of the ball instead of reaching out with the glove.

Plays at First - Grounder Drills

- Form one line just behind 2nd base
- Have one player at a time move into the 2nd base position, and have a player stand on 1st base.
- Hit the grounder to 2nd base. The player should field the ball and make throw toward 1st base.

Plays at First - Side to Side Grounder Drills

- Have one player at a time move into the 2nd base position
- Have a player stand on 1st base.
- Hit the balls left and right of the player to make him move to get in front of the ball.
- The player should field the ball and make throw toward 1st base.
- Emphasis the importance of moving to get in front of the ball instead of reaching out with the glove.

Infield Grounder Drills (continued)

Plays at Second - Grounder Drills

- Form one line just behind shortstop position
- Have one player at a time step up into the SS position.
- Have another player in the 2nd base position.
- Hit grounders to the player at SS and have them field ball and make throw to 2nd base.
- Make sure the player at 2nd base moves to the base to make catch.

Triangle Drill

- With 2-4 player have them form a quarter circle.
- Each player should stand with their feet just outside shoulder width.
- In the dirt draw a triangle using their feet as the base.
- Have them put their hands together and extend out in front of them touching the dirt. This will create the triangle.
- You roll a ball to each player and have them field the ball and toss back to you. Keeping the triangle intact (feet in place with hands in front)
- Attempt to roll the ball quickly and request a quick return.
- Continue around the group for about 5 minutes.
- Speed this drill up as the players advance.
 - Note: You can play a game to see which players fields the most correctly.

Outfield Fundamentals

Proper stance to catch fly balls

- Feet shoulder width glove hand foot in front and other foot back in stance
- Knees bent slightly
- Their head is up facing the ball.
- Glove above head high, with other hand up with glove
- Head and body should be directly under ball.
- Other hand covers the ball after it enters the glove.

Proper glove/hand position:

- Glove hand should just be facing the ball with palm facing out
- Throwing hand should be at close the glove.
- Once the ball reaches the glove the top hand should cover the ball inside the glove.

Outfielder Drills

Tennis Racquet Drill

- Position players in 3 groups – Left field, center field, and right field.
- Using a tennis racquet and tennis ball hit balls into the air toward the player
- Player will move to catch ball. Player must call ball and make catch with proper technique
- This drill provides a safe and easy way to teach the basics

Outfield Fundamentals (continued)

Plays at Second

- Divide the players into two groups – Left field and Right field.
- Also need a second baseman and short stop
- Hit balls either in air or on ground to Left/Right field – rotate field
- Outfielder will field the ball and make throw to second base
- If hit to left field second baseman will cover second base, if hit to right field short stop will cover base.
- At this age, we recommend have second and short back each other up.
- Also, the third baseman and first baseman should be prepared to backup

Backing up 1st base/3rd base

- Line up players in right field
- Have a first baseman, and short stop
- Hit balls to short and instruct for a throw to first base.
- Instruct Right Field to come in and back up first base in case of an overthrow
- This is very import at this age. Many throws from the field to 1st base with be passed balls
- Teaching to backup is import at all positions
- This drill should also be run a balls thrown to third

Throwing Technique and Drills

Proper Throwing Motion

- Players start by facing the target.
- The foot of the glove hand should be closer to the target with the foot of the throwing hand back in the stance.
- Reach back with the throwing hand with elbow bent hand up and wrist straight.
- Glove hand should be in front of the body (and move forward around the body as the ball is thrown).
- Once in position to throw the ball the glove hand foot should take a step toward the target and the back foot should pivot.
- Release the ball at the point the arm reaches extended point.
- After release the body should bend forward, with the throwing arm following through to the outside of the glove hand knee. The back foot should step forward as the throw is complete leaving players square to the target.
- It is real important that the player sees the target, gets into proper throwing position, makes the throw toward the target while still keeping eyes on target, then continues with follow through.

Proper Form Drill

- Without a ball – have the players get into throwing position and talk them through each step.
- Repeat with the ball. Do not be to concern where the ball goes. During this drill the form is most important

Throwing Technique and Drills (continued)

Basic Throwing Drill #1 – Players Throwing to Coaches

- Get a bucket of ten balls and have the player stand with the bucket
- Start at 10 feet away and have the players throw all tens balls to the coach. The coach should reinforce the proper technique during this drill. The goal is get the player to throw a straight ball toward the coach.
- In order of importance. Technique, on target versus left or right, straight versus lobbed. Eyes on target is very important
- Extend the distance based on skill level

Basic Throwing Drill #2 – Players Throwing To Players

- The more players can throw to other players the quicker they will be ready for game day.
- Getting the players throwing to each other still needs to be supervised and used as training to proper throwing techniques
- Team players with similar talent with each other.
- Have the players start at distances which they can be successful. 10 feet away is a good starting point.
- Reinforce proper technique to throwing (and catching).
- Tennis balls work well when starting

Basic Throwing Drill #3 – Fielding and Throwing

- Line up players in front a coach – 3 players preferred
- One at a time have the players receive a grounder and stand up and make a proper throw.
- Roll 3 balls to the player before rotating
- The player should work on the proper technique while throwing.
- Extend the distance as the players improve
- Increase the pace of the drill as players improve

Batting Technique and Practice Basics

Proper Stance

- Feet - shoulder width apart,
- Square the feet to home plate – you can draw a line in the dirt to show the players where to stand
- Bend the knees slightly
- Grip the bat with the fingers, not tightly with the palm of hand. A relaxed grip is preferred
- Square the shoulders to the feet, chin should be close the front shoulder.
- Elbows should be slightly bent with the hands just outside the back armpit.

Proper Swing Motion

- Load and transfer - Begin the swing with a little to no step toward the pitcher. Do not pick the foot up high. It's a very subtle lift and move forward.
- The stance should remain closed – do not step out towards third.
- Throw hands toward the ball, bringing bat through the hitting zone to hit the ball.
- Squash the bug. As the hands come through, turn hips at the same time. The player should turn on the ball of back foot. Squashing the bug
- Eyes should remain on the ball through impact.
- Proper stance and swing should be balanced.

Coach Pitch Tips

- Start by pitching at a distance that is comfortable to players/coaching
- Taller coaches should get down on one knee to keep angle of ball to a minimum
- Pace of ball should not be too slow. You do not want much of an arch in the pitch. Straighter is better!
- Do not lob ball, this creates too much of an arch which is harder to hit
- Find a coach/parent that is consistent with pitching. Important to the success of batting.

Batting Technique and Practice Basics (continued)

Fence Drill – Warm up to Batting Practice

- Place T Ball stand 4' from the back stop
- Line up players so they would hit the ball into the back stop
- Place a ball onto the T
- Have the batter drive the ball into straight into the fence
- Focus on fundamentals of the swing
- Good stance, proper hand position, good swing through contact and correct finish
- You can use wiffle balls or tennis balls
- Set up 2 or 3 stations to allow multiple batters at once

Soft Toss

- This is done facing fence or net
- Player takes batting stance and coach kneels straight across the plate from player
- Coach tosses ball (tennis, wiffle, baseball) to player over the plate
- Toss should be about head high, and should land on base
- Batter is just working on good form, timing, and pivot through ball

Batting Practice

- Three stations - 1 player at each station.
 - Station 1 – Swing the bat – get warm
 - Station 2 – Fence Drill – work on making good contact
 - Station 3 – Coach pitching. Enter field or cage and receive balls to hit
- 10-15 balls per batter, depending on number of players and time

Catching Technique and Drills

Proper Catching Position

- Players start by facing the target.
- The foot of the glove hand should be closer to the target with the foot of the throwing hand back in the stance.
- The glove hand should be eye level and out in front of the body.
- Fingers up and palm facing the target
- Elbow should be bent slightly and arm should be in position to make a full circle in front of the body
- Other hand should also up and close the glove to close the glove once caught
- Earlier stages of Tee Ball the player will want to catch the ball with the palm up and fingers down this ok as they develop.
- The goal is to practice with the palm face the target
- Balls thrown to players above the belly should be caught with fingers up, below the belly fingers down.

Proper Form Drill

- Without a ball – have the players get into catching position and talk them through each step.
- Show the players by making a full circle in front of your body with your catching hand
- Have the players copy you.

Coach to Player Catch

- With younger players it is important to start slowly with catching. Confidence is key to the kids developing into good catching players
- Have play stand in the proper stance at about 10 feet from the coach
- Line up 2 or 3 players per coach.
- Coach throws ball at the glove and the player is asked to watch the ball into the glove
- With a successful throw and catch – plenty of congratulations is needed. Encourage the players
- Important for coach to throw accurately. Tennis ball can also be used.

Base Running

Base Running – Home to First

- Runners should learn to run as fast as they can when running from home to first.
- They can over run the base and should turn toward the fence when returning to first
- Players should learn to run through the base
- They should not slide – no matter what the circumstances are.
- Players should be taught to touch the bag every time.

Runner to First Base for a Single

- Line up the players at home plate
- With a bat (no ball) have the players take a swing and run to first
- Make sure they do not throw the bat
- They should place the bat down and run as fast as they can to first base
- Make sure they run through the base and return to first properly.

Runner to Second for a Double

- Line up the players at home plate
- With a bat (no ball) have the players take a swing and run to first
- Coach at first base will instruct player to turn and run to second
- Player should start to angle outside the runner lane so they can properly turn to second without slowing
- Make sure to step on base at first
- Player may slide or stop on second base.
- Make sure they do not run through base.

Base Running (continued)

First to Third Base

- Runners leaving first base should start to look at the third base coach at 2/3's the way to second.
- The coach will indicate to stop (hands up) or continue to third (large circles with arm).
- Players will need to learn to look for coach and react accordingly

First to Third Base Drill

- Line up the players at first base
- Coach at home plate with hit ball into field
- Runner should start toward second and begin to look at third base coach
- Coach will use either command and runner will react accordingly
- Continue to run players around to home using same concept.
- Player will return to first base and get back in line to run again.
- Coaches will work to ensure players understand the signals and are executing accordingly