

COACHING REFERENCE SHEET

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We have provided you with a lot of information about coaching – everything from goal-setting to the basics of running a fun and efficient practice to actual practice plans. If you continue reading you will find a quick reference sheet that you can call on to refresh your memory at any point during your season. Use this guide to help you organize your practices, communicate with your parents and chart your team's progress.

BASIC TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

Keep It Simple

This doesn't always mean basic or boring. Baseball is a simple game. The teams that throw and catch best often win. Reinforce basic fundamentals with simple drills. There are no shortcuts to becoming a good baseball player. The youngest player should catch a ground ball and throw it the same way a college or pro player does. The same fundamentals should be applied over and over. Eventually the young player will progress and be able to execute the fundamentals more effectively. You don't teach players to make great plays. Once the fundamentals skills are fully developed and become automatic, players will begin to make more challenging plays naturally as their bodies mature.

Explain Why

Why is a young person's favorite question! As a coach, if you can't tell a player why he should do something a certain way, you lose credibility. It also is more likely that the player will try to do something the right way if you can explain why that method will make him a better player. Lessons that come with an explanation are more likely to sink in and be applied effectively.

Make It Fun

If we are going to keep it simple and stress repetition of fundamental skills and drills, it is imperative to add some excitement to maintain a high level of interest among the kids. By simply turning a basic ground ball or hitting drill into a contest and implementing a point system, you'll find that kids will do the same drill they were getting tired of for as long as you'll let them. Practice at the youth level is extremely important, but there's no reason that it can't be even more fun for the kids than the actual games. Be creative! Think fun first!

RESPONSIBILITIES OF A COACH

Be An Effective Communicator

- Preseason team meetings to discuss goals, philosophy and ask assistance from parents.
 - a. If you can't get parents to commit to helping all year' ask for one or two different parents to help each week – explain how this will make the experience better for the kids.
- Create phone and email lists of parents.
 - a. Send practice and game schedules.
 - b. Send announcements.
 - c. Send practice plans.
 - d. Do not rely on email lists for last-second or emergency situations. Call everyone about these. Not everyone checks email all the time. Avoid confusion.

Create A Safe, Enjoyable Environment

- Have a medicine kit and ice for injuries (and water) on hand at all times.
- Coaches should be first-aid/CPR certified if possible (if not, find out in any parents are).
- Have proper equipment and make sure it fits.
- Be aware of facility, its hazards and emergency resources.
- Have parent phone list and local emergency phone list numbers in case of emergencies.
- Long practices can lead to injuries as kids get tired and lose focus.

Be A Role Model

- Kids look up to coaches as heroes. Coaches can be very influential. Keep that in mind when you are dealing with players, parents, umpires and opposing teams.
- Search for teachable moments to correct mistakes. Don't single players out in front of spectators, opposing teams, teammates, etc. Pull them aside at appropriate times or address problems in the next practice.

Be Organized

- Have a practice plan.
- Keeps practice moving and shows your commitment level.

Adhere to the teaching philosophies above as closely as possible.

Set Reasonable Expectations Or Goals

Ask these questions:

- Are the kids having fun?
- Are the kids improving?
- Are the kids learning?

Set age-specific goals – Every coach should set five basic goals that his team hopes to accomplish by the end of the season. These should be based on the team's age and skill level and should focus on the following areas:

- Rules
- Throwing and throwing machines
- Catching and fielding
- Hitting
- Positions/positional play (younger teams) and team fundamentals (for older teams – cutoffs and relays, covering on a steal, bunt defenses, 1st and 3rd defenses, pickoff plays, offensive plays and strategies, base running, etc.)

Sample Practice Plan – Ages 12 And Under

- 10 minutes Base running
1. "Big League" base running and/or dynamic warm-up
- 20 minutes Stretch and throw
1. Stretch around mound or in center field
 2. Go over practice plan
- 46 minutes Stations – small groups, 15 minutes per station and rotate
1. Live batting practice
 2. Tee work/soft toss – use batting cage/portable nets
 3. Fielding/throwing station – while live batting practice is going on.
 4. Fly ball/throwing station – while live batting practice is going on.

- 10 minutes Base running

As always, common sense must prevail. For ages 4-6, a practice should not last much longer than an hour. Times should be shortened accordingly if the kids are struggling and don't seem to want to be there that day. Practice can be extended at this age group, but only if the players ask to stay longer. Players ages 7-9 should be able to handle an hour just about any day and may even be able to maintain interest and concentration for as long as an hour and a half (try to keep practice to about an hour and 15 minutes for this age group). Players in the 10-12 age group can probably handle an hour and a half with regularity. Use this framework as a guideline and customize practices to fit your needs.