



## SFX YOUTH SPORTS T-ball Coaching Handbook

Welcome to coaching SFX Youth Sports T-ball. You're going to have a blast! The suggestions in this handbook are just that: **suggestions**. Take what seems useful, and add what you think works. The whole point of this league is to get young kids active and interested in baseball, while HAVING FUN!!

### **REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS:**

- The reality is that most kids (about 99%) won't catch a ball all season, even during simple drills.
- They'll all throw the ball, but it will rarely get close to the intended target.
- Most kids will have a significant amount of time where they could care less about the game...
- KEEP IT SIMPLE
  - o **Suggestion:** Focus on the number 1 (1 person swinging the bat at a time, running to 1st base; 1 person fields the ball).
- During "practice" have a plan for only 1 or 2 simple activities. Divide the team into groups and ask parents to help with the "drills"/activities.
- Kids this age can't wait too long to be in the "action" without losing interest.
- Focus on the small stuff...
- **Suggestion:** At the beginning of each game, have a "team meeting" where you call out the line-up and choose a skill that players should focus on that game. During the first few games, focus on "1 fielder to the ball" and "drop the bat and run to 1<sup>st</sup>". Later in the season introduce concepts like "throwing the ball to first base"!

### **BATTING:**

- For most kids this age, BATTING IS THE BEST PART OF T-BALL!
- However, kids won't know where to stand, or how to hold the bat.
- Some will have awesome hand eye coordination and get this part easily. Either way, start with the basics.
- **Suggestion:** Mark the baseball with a letter or number and set it on the tee so that the mark is visible to the batter. Encourage the batter to hit that mark... They'll keep their eye on the ball.

### **RUNNING THE BASES:**

- As batters, kids should know the names of the bases, and the direction to run.
- Have a picture of the baseball diamond (even better yet, provide a coloring page for them to take home!) They LOVE coloring pages!
- Perfect drill for t-ball players: Line up your kids behind home plate. Position base coaches. Tell the first player to run to first. When they get to first send the next runner (the first runner goes to second base and stops). Send the third runner, as the first two advance. Send the fourth runner, as the first runner runs home- give them a high five... and so on.... and so on...until all players have run the bases at least TWICE! All coaches should cheer ALL players on. Kids LOVE it, and they learn the bases!



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- You will be so proud the day all your players drop the bat and run to first WITHOUT you, the 1<sup>st</sup> base coach AND all the other parents telling them to do so!
- Suggestion: Know who the last batter in your line up is. When they're at bat remind all the baserunners to run out the next hit like it were a home run...

### **FIELDING:**

- As fielders, kids should know the general idea about positions, and that the GOAL is to have one player field the ball.
- Talk about "SHARING" the ball and "TAKING TURNS". These are phrases they're used to hearing.
- Remind them that not EVERYONE will get to field the ball each inning, but that everyone will get a chance eventually...
- Make it a SAFETY issue. They are also learning about safety at school at this age, so they'll get it... "I don't want to get hurt, or hurt someone else..."
- Teaching them to use the Alligator they make with their throwing and glove hands to field and catch balls.

### **INVOLVING PARENTS:**

- Parents want to help out... so USE THEM!
- Ask for a parent volunteer to coordinate snack. Each family should be asked to bring snack for one game each season. Handout the snack after the game is over. No food will be allowed in the "dugout".
- Ask parents to assist as 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> base coaches.
- Provide 2 copies of the batting line up to the assistant coaches or parents each game. They can help get kids lined up for a SMOOTH batting order... You'll then be able to concentrate on helping your batters and runners.
- Many parents want to be in the field with their players. You'll find that runners can't see the next base with all the tall people on the field, nor can your own fielders find the ball... Encourage parents to actively cheer from the sidelines instead (or take turns stopping balls in the outfield).
- Suggestion: Ask a parent to make sticky nametags for the team- Stick them on each player where coaches and parents can see them. This makes it easier for adults to cheer on ALL players (and for coaches to remember their new players!)

### **STAYING POSITIVE:**

- At the end of each game, have a "team meeting" where you quickly tell the players how AWESOME they were and highlight their accomplishment! "Give aways", like stickers, are always a hit!
- Constant praise and attention will make EVERYONE happy!



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### Pre-game Practice

The first 45 minutes of each assigned slot is for practice. The remaining 1 hour is for the game. There is no weekday practice for Tball.

For example: if the game has an 11am start time. From 11am - 11:45am – practice, short break and then a 1 hour game.

Players must attend practice or they will not learn the game.

Practice session: It is suggested that the coaches from each team work together (enlist parents to help when needed) to ensure that the practice is run smoothly and effectively. This ensures that we make the best use of the allotted time.

**Work together. Running the practice as a JOINT practice means that no time is wasted.**

Each head coach should assign an assistant coach or parent to work a station. The head coaches use the time to manage the flow from one station to the next.

There should be three stations: batting, fielding and throwing, base running and pitching.

**Batting:** coach pitch balls and use of a batting tee to hit balls into the fence. The ideal place is right field.

**Fielding and throwing:** line the players up in groups and do ground ball drills, pop up drills. Refer to our coaches manual for drills,

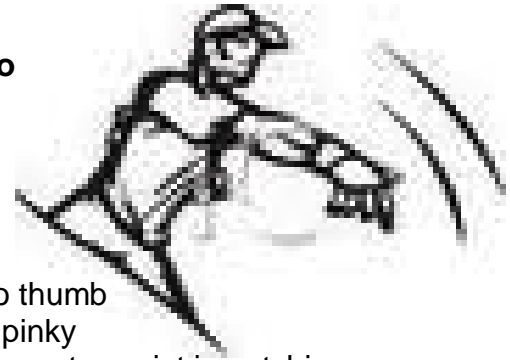
Players should throw with other players.

**Base running.** Practice the proper base running techniques.



## SFX YOUTH SPORTS T-ball Coaching Handboo

### Throwing/Catching



#### KEY POINTS

- 1) When ball is above their waist- hands should be thumb to thumb
- 2) When ball is below their waist- hands should be pinky to pinky
- 3) Encourage players to keep their throwing hand next to glove, to assist in catching AND ready the throw
- 4) STEP INTO THE THROW- Step with foot opposite the throwing arm
- 5) FOLLOW THROUGH- The player should be encouraged to end up "pointing" to where the ball should go
- 6) "KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE BALL"- tendency is to look away as ball gets closer (reflex), but if players keeps looking at the ball, they will be learn how to defend themselves
- 7) "LOOK THE BALL INTO THE GLOVE"- encourages players to keep the ball and their glove in a straight line. Teaches them to move their body and their glove to the ball.

#### DRILLS/GAMES

- 1) Simple catch
  - a. Throw back and forth
  - b. Grown-ups are encouraged to participate on their knees so players don't have to throw HIGH
- 2) 0, 5, 10
  - a. Stand about 10-15 feet apart
  - b. The goal is for the player(s) to be accurate in their throw to the catcher
  - c. Players get 10 points for balls that make it to the chest/head level of the catcher, 5 points for balls under the waist, 0 points for balls that don't reach the catcher, or aren't within arms distance.
  - d. THE TEAM OF PLAYERS accumulates points, not the individual players
  - e. Play to 25-50 points...
- 3) Stepping Back
  - a. Start really close to each other (5 feet away)
  - b. Throw to each other with CONTROL and accuracy
  - c. Every time there is a successful catch, the catching player steps back
  - d. When the ball is not caught, the catching player steps in
  - e. DON'T OVERDO IT – throwing for distances too far can injure small ligaments/tendons/muscles





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### Batting



#### KEY POINTS

- 1) Set-Up: The player should be lined up properly in the batters box.
  - a. Righties on 3<sup>rd</sup> base side/lefties on 1<sup>st</sup> base side
  - b. Toes point towards home plate
  - c. Feet parallel
  - d. Distance from tee is determined by reaching the bat away from the player (sweet spot on bat should be ideally centered on ball/tee)
  - e. Tee must be properly adjusted for player's height
- 2) Stance:
  - a. Hands together (right over left for righties, left over right for lefties) towards bottom of bat handle
  - b. Bat should be off the shoulder and slightly behind the player
  - c. Elbows off the body
- 3) Swing:
  - a. Encourage player to swing LEVEL (not up- will make fly ball, not down- guarantee short distance grounder)
  - b. Player should step front foot towards the pitching mound WHILE swinging the bat towards the tee.
  - c. Batter should be encouraged to keep eye on the ball.

#### DRILLS

- 1) The invisible ball
  - a. Goal here is to work on the swing so that it is level and in the right spot (not hitting the tee itself)
- 2) Basic batting practice
  - a. Goal here is for player to consistently hit the ball more than 10 feet off of the tee
  - b. Work on stance and swing
- 3) Picky Hitting (ADVANCED PLAYERS)
  - a. Encourage player to "place" their hit
  - b. Provide point system that gives more points to hits that go up 3<sup>rd</sup> base line (for instance)





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### FIELDING

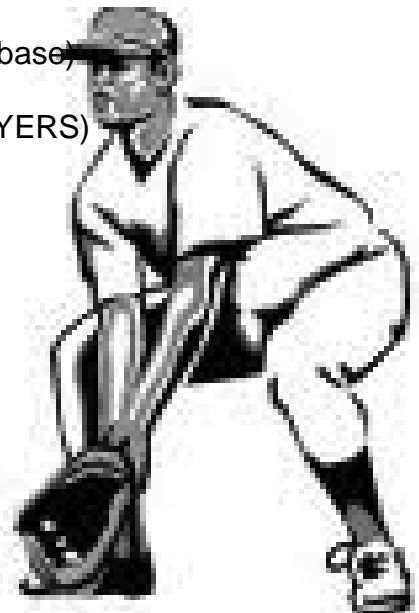


#### KEY POINTS

- 1) Fielding Grounders
  - a. Players should get in front of the ball
  - b. Players should rush the slow ball (not wait for it)
  - c. Encourage players to place their open glove ON the ground, and have throwing hand RIGHT next to glove (creating a wall/barricade)
- 2) Fielding Line-Drives (ADVANCED PLAYERS)
  - a. Just like playing catch!
- 3) Fielding Fly-balls (ADVANCED PLAYERS)
  - a. Get under the ball
  - b. Pinky-to-pinky- have throwing hand there to assist catch and ready the throw!
  - c. LOOKING THE BALL INTO THE GLOVE IS SUPER IMPORTANT HERE

#### DRILLS

- 1) Fielding grounders and throwing to 1<sup>st</sup>
  - a. With one or more players fielding at a time
  - b. When there is more than 1 fielder in drill, adds the issue of WHOSE BALL IS IT?
- 2) Fielding grounders and throwing to 2<sup>nd</sup> (or appropriate base)
- 3) Fielding fly-balls (ADVANCED PLAYERS)
- 4) Fielding WHATEVER comes at you (ADVANCED PLAYERS)





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### PARENT ROLES DURING GAMES

All parents are encouraged to provide positive feedback to

ALL players through cheering and clapping

### **OFFENSE ROLES- The Coach will help batters at the Tee**

**Line-up Coach-** Keeps the lineup moving smoothly. Tells batters when to put on a helmet (when available). Makes sure the players are available to prepare to bat.

**On-deck Coach-** Prepares the 1<sup>st</sup> player in line for batting for their turn. Helps them with practice swings. Reminds them to run through 1<sup>st</sup> base when they get a hit.

**1<sup>st</sup> Base Coach-** Vocally and visually help batters run THROUGH first base. Remind runners on first base to wait until the ball is hit before running and to STOP on 2<sup>nd</sup> base. Encourage runners to be in a ready position, with one foot on the base, and the other off the base pointing towards 2<sup>nd</sup> Base.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Base Coach-** Vocally and visually help batters run from second TO third base. Remind runners on 3<sup>rd</sup> to wait until the ball is hit before running and to run THROUGH home plate. Encourage runners to be in a ready position, with one foot on the base, and the other off the base pointing towards homeplate.

### **DEFENSE ROLES- The Coach will roam the sidelines.**

**Sidelines Assistance-** Help remind our infield players of where the plays can be made. Positively encourage players to field the ball. Commend them for their efforts. Save detailed suggestions for after the inning is over.

**Outfield Assistance-** The two parents in the outfield can help keep outfielders alert. The main role of these positions is to keep balls from going too far in the outfield. If the ball is heading past our outfield, you can stop the ball, but DO NOT THROW IT BACK IN (unless the umpire tells you to). Instead, encourage our players to come and retrieve the ball.