

# T-Ball and Coach Pitch



## Practice Plan



## Table of Contents

General Coaching Tips	-----3
Basic Practice Set-Up	-----4
Stretching Exercises	-----5
Teaching the Fundamentals	-----6-7
Practice #1	-----8-9
Practice #2	-----9-10
Practice #3	-----11
Practice #4	-----12
Practice #5	-----13
Practice #6	-----14
Practice #7	-----15
Practice #8	-----16

# GENERAL COACHING TIPS

1. Plan short drills with many repetitions.
2. Every child should be doing something at all times.
3. End practice with a fun activity.
4. Expect the unexpected!
5. Set out the necessary equipment before practice.
6. When talking to players, kneel down so that you are eye level.
7. Don't display negative criticism, hostility, abuse or anger.
8. Remember the 4 "P-words":

**Preparation**-Plan for meetings and practice, obtain needed equipment, etc.

**Patience**- Take the time to build self-esteem and confidence in each player.

**Poise**- Maintain your composure and remember that mistakes will happen.

**Praise**- Recognize effort and performance verbally.

## **BASIC PRACTICE SET-UP**

Depending on the number of coaches available at practice, each skill can be practiced at a station led by a coach. Divide the team up into even groups and send each to a station with a coach. Rotate each group through each skill station, each lasting about 10 minutes each. The entire practice should last 1 hour.

For example, practice may be set up in the following manner:

Team Meeting	5 minutes
Warm-up and Stretching	5 minutes
Throwing and Catching Activities	10 minutes
Fielding Activities	10 minutes
WATER BREAK	5 minutes
Batting Activities	10 minutes
Running and/or Defense Activities	10 minutes
Closing Meeting/Team Cheer	5 minutes

# STRETCHING EXERCISES

## 1. Arms/Neck

- Roll arms around in a 'windmill type' action. First rotate right arm forward 10 times, then switch to left arm. This can be done using both arms at the same time. Then, change to rotating arms backwards using the same sequence.
- Move head up and down holding each position for 8-10 seconds. Move head from side to side holding each position for 8-10 seconds.

## 2. Quadriceps

- These muscles are the big muscles that cover the front of your thigh. Stand straight. Bend one leg and hold your ankle or the top of your foot. Pull your bent leg until your heel is close to your bottom. Use a wall or a teammate to balance. Hold for 10 seconds. Switch legs. (*Diagram 1*)

## 3. Hamstrings

- These are the muscles at the back of your thigh. In a sitting position with your left leg straight, place the sole of your right foot against the inside of your left thigh. Bend your trunk toward your extended leg, keeping your knee straight and foot in a relaxed position. Hold for 10 seconds. Switch legs. (*Diagram 2*)

## 4. Groin (Butterfly stretch)

- In a sitting position with your back straight, bend your knees and place the bottoms of your feet together. Pull your feet towards your groin. Place your elbows on your knees and gently push the knees toward the floor. Hold for 10 seconds, rest and repeat. (*Diagram 3*)

## 5. Calves

- In a sitting position with legs straight, place right heel on top of left toes. Pull right toes towards body with hands. Hold for 10 seconds. Switch legs.

Quadriceps



*Diagram 1*

Hamstrings



*Diagram 2*

Butterfly



*Diagram 3*

# TEACHING THE FUNDAMENTALS

## BATTING

### Hand Position

- Dominant hand on top
- Hands together, above the knob of the bat
- Hold bat firmly; don't squeeze

### Hitting Stance

- Adjust tee so ball is set even or slightly above the batter's waist
- Stand facing the tee
- Feet shoulder-width apart and pointed at home plate
- Front foot even with the tee
- Bend knees
- Bring bat up and away from body, over back shoulder
- Eyes on the ball

### The Swing

- Take a short step forward with front foot
- Swing level so that the bat hits the center of the ball
- Shift weight to the front foot; back foot stays on the ground
- Watch bat hit the ball and keep head down

### The Follow-Through

- Hit through the ball
- Drop (don't throw) the bat

## FIELDING

1. Eyes on the ball
2. Watch the ball go into the glove
3. Cover the ball with the bare hand

### Ground Balls

- Legs shoulder-width apart
- Bend knees and stay low
- Keep body in front of the ball
- Scoop or catch the ball, squeeze and cover it with the throwing hand

### Fly Balls

- Run to where the ball is going
- Call for the ball, "I got it!"
- Hands together, fingers up, shoulder high
- Watch the ball into the glove, squeeze and cover

### Thrown Balls

- Ball thrown above the waist: Hands together, facing out, thumbs up
- Ball thrown below the waist: Hands together, facing down, little fingers touching.

### Throwing

#### The Grip

- Thumb under the ball
- Middle fingers over the ball with little finger off to the side

#### The Throw

- Focus on the target
- Hand and arm back and up (make an L with elbow up)
- Front shoulder turned toward the target
- Big step towards the target with opposite foot
- Release the ball in front of the body
- Follow-through

### Running

- Run on the balls of feet
- Pump (swing) arms back and forth
- Look forward
- Step on the edge of the base
- Never pass a teammate in front of you on the base path

## **PRACTICE #1**

### **Team Meeting**

1. Introduce all coaches
2. Attendance
3. Announcements
4. Explain the basic rules of the game
5. Show your kids the baseball field and all the positions

### **Warm-up and Stretching**

#### **Skill Stations**

1. If possible, divide the team into 2-4 groups and send to a station with a coach.
2. All groups should rotate to each station.
3. Teach the fundamentals (page 6-7) within each activity.
4. Evaluate and note individual skill level, attention span and personality.

#### **Throwing and Catching Activities**

1. Ready to Throw: On your whistle, all players quickly get into the throwing position. Have coaches go around to each player and check that they are holding the ball correctly. Also check their throwing stance (legs apart, foot on throwing arm side behind the body, throwing arm back and up and front shoulder toward the target). Repeat.

2. Throw to Me Coach: Line players up on a line facing a coach. Throw to the first player, who catches the ball and throws back. Continue down the line, throwing to each player. After a few practice rounds, have the kids count the number of successful catches. If necessary, start beginners with a tennis ball.

#### **Fielding Activities**

1. Basic Fielding: Each player stands in various positions in the fielding stance. A coach slowly rolls or hits a ball to various players. The player closest to the ball takes a few steps to the ball, fields the ball and throws it back to the coach. Rotate player positions throughout the drill.

2. Partner Pickup: Players partner up and stand 10 feet apart from each other. One player rolls the ball for his or her partner to field. Repeat back and forth.

#### **Batting Activities**

1. Practice Swing: Space the players out, each holding an imaginary bat. On your whistle or call, players should go through the batting sequence (stance, swing, follow-through and dropping the bat). Coaches should watch and correct any bad habits.

2. Practice Swing 2: Each player swings a real bat at a tee without a ball. The batter should swing the bat where the ball would be. Coaches should evaluate the full batting sequence.

3. Batting Practice: Each player should get at least 5 hits off a tee. A coach should help adjust the tee for each player and make suggestions for improvements after each swing. On the last hit, have the batter run to first base.

### **Running Activities**

1. Run to First: Line players up a few feet behind home plate. The first runner stands at home plate. On your whistle or call, the player runs to first base. Be sure the player is running with correct form.
2. Catch the Players: Start 3 or 4 players about 5 seconds apart from home plate to circle the bases. Coach starts last, trying to tag the players (or snatch their caps) before they reach home.

## **PRACTICE #2**

### **Team Meeting**

1. Re-Introduce all coaches
2. Attendance
3. Announcements
4. Review the basic rules of the game
5. Review the baseball field and all the positions

### **Warm-up and Stretching**

### **Skill Stations**

1. If possible, divide the team into 2-4 groups and send to a station with a coach.
2. All groups should rotate to each station.
3. Teach the fundamentals (page 6-7) within each activity.
4. Evaluate and note individual skill level, attention span and personality.

### **Throwing and Catching Activities**

1. One-Knee Throws: Players set on one knee (on the same side as the throwing arm). Players reach back and throw to a partner or coach.
2. Bounce to the Bucket: Place a large basket or cooler on a base. Players try to throw the ball into the container from a distance. This can be turned into a game by giving 3 points to balls thrown into the bucket, 2 points for hitting the bucket and/or 1 point for the nearest ball.

### **Fielding Activities**

1. Left or Right: Throw or hit the ball to one side of a fielder, who has to run to get in front of the ball.

2. Fast Fingers: Line up fielders side by side facing home plate. Place a tee ball 10 feet in front of each player. On the coach's whistle or call, the first player charges the ball, picks it up with their bare hand and throws it to the coach. A coach can count out loud the time it takes to throw the ball to add competition. Repeat for the other players.

### **Batting Activities**

1. Coach Says: This game is similar to Simon Says. Coach rapidly calls out one of five commands:

**Hands**: players grip an imaginary bat

**Feet**: players jump with feet apart facing an imaginary tee

**Stance**: players stand in batting position with arms raised toward rear shoulder

**Squash the bug**: players step, swing and rotate on the ball of their back foot

**Swing and drop**: players do a full swing, including dropping the "imaginary" bat

2. Batting Practice: Each player should get at least 5 hits off a tee. The coach should help adjust the tee for each player and make suggestions for improvements after each swing. On the last hit, have the batter run to first base.

### **Defense and Running Activities**

1. Game Simulation: Simulate a real game situation. Place defensive players on the field in various positions and keep 2-3 players in as the first batters. Have the batter step up to the tee, hit the ball and run to first base as in a real game. Rotate batters and defense so everyone gets a chance to bat and field. Coach the fielders on decision-making. Where should they throw the ball to get the out?

2. Team Race: Two players start at home plate. One runs to 3<sup>rd</sup> base, the other to 1<sup>st</sup> base. They continue running in opposite directions around the bases. First one back to home base wins. To avoid collisions, have a coach stand on second base. Instruct one runner to go in front of the coach and one runner to go behind the coach.

## **PRACTICE #3**

### **Team Meeting**

1. Attendance
2. Announcements
3. Highlight the positives from the previous game

### **Warm-up and Stretching**

### **Skill Stations**

Teach the fundamentals (page 6-7) within each activity.

### **Throwing and Catching Activities**

1. Catching Contest: Line the team up in two lines a few feet apart, facing a partner. Each pair should have one ball. Partners should throw the ball back and forth, taking one step back after each successful catch. See how many successful catches the players make (and how far apart they get).

### **Fielding Activities**

1. Block It: Coach hits the ball directly to a fielder, who tries to stop the ball from getting through to the outfield. Turn this activity into a game by awarding 2 points for a catch, 1 point for a block and 0 points if the ball is not stopped.

2. Charge It: Set a ball about 5 feet in front of a fielder or throw a ball that stops a few feet in front of the fielder. The fielder should run to the ball, pick it up with his or her bare hand and throw it to the proper base.

### **Batting Activities**

1. Practice Swing 2: Each player swings a real bat toward an actual tee, without a ball. The batter should swing the bat where the ball would be. Coaches should evaluate the full batting sequence, using the teaching tips on page 6.

2. Batting Practice: Each player should get at least 5 hits off a tee. The coach should help adjust the tee for each player and make suggestions for improvements after each swing. On the last hit, have the batter run to first base.

### **Running Activities**

1. Run to First: A player swings a bat, drops it and then runs from home plate to first base. The next player does the same with the first runner running from first base to second base after the swing. Teach your players that they can only overrun first base. They must stop on all the other bases. Continue the batting and running sequence with the entire group.

2. Catch the Team: This drill is the same as Catch the Players from practice #1 except the coach runs after the entire team.

## **PRACTICE #4**

### **Team Meeting**

1. Attendance
2. Announcements
3. Highlight the positives from the previous game

### **Warm-up and Stretching**

### **Skill Stations**

Teach the fundamentals (page 6-7) within each activity.

### **Throwing and Catching Activities**

1. Catching Flies: Throw fly balls to fielders to catch and throw back. If possible, start off with a rubber ball or tennis ball before moving onto a tee ball.

### **Fielding Activities**

1. To Second Base: Position a coach or a more experienced player at second base. Divide the players into three lines at right field, center field and left field. Hit or throw a ball to the first player in the right field line. The player throws the ball to second base. Repeat through each player in each line, teaching the outfield to throw the ball to second base after fielding.

### **Batting Activities**

1. Home Run: Set out cones or markers in 5-foot increments from the batting tee. Each “zone” is worth a certain amount of points as determined by the coach. Give each player 5 hits to score as many points as possible. A ball may be hit on the ground or in the air to receive points.

### **Defense Activities**

1. Team Defense: Place 8 players on the field at the proper positions. The rest of the team serves as base runners. Start a base runner on first and second base. The coach at home plate throws the ball randomly to each fielder as the runners try to advance. The fielders catch the ball and try to get the runners out. Before the coach throws each ball, the defense should shout out the next situation, such as “The play is at third base!” Be sure each fielder receives a ball to field.

## **PRACTICE #5**

### **Team Meeting**

1. Attendance
2. Announcements
3. Highlight the positives from the previous game

### **Warm-up and Stretching**

### **Skill Stations**

Teach the fundamentals (page 6-7) within each activity.

### **Throwing and Catching Activities**

1. Catching Contest: Players are in pairs and stand about 10 feet apart. Coach yells, "Throw!" and one partner throws the ball to the other. See what pair can throw the ball back and forth the most times without dropping it. The distance can be increased if needed.

2. Diamond Throwing: Place one player at each base and one at the pitching area. Players throw the ball in a diamond shape (Pitcher-First-Second-Third-Pitcher). After this sequence, rotate players and/or reverse direction of the throw.

### **Fielding Activities**

1. Infield Practice: Place players at the infield positions and hit ground balls to each fielder. Instruct players to make plays at different bases.

### **Batting Activities**

1. Game Simulation: Simulate a real game situation. Place defensive players on the field in various positions and keep 2-3 players in as the first batters. Have the batter step up to the tee, hit the ball and run to first base as in a real game. Rotate batters and defense so everyone gets a chance to bat and field. Coach the fielders on decision-making. Where should they throw the ball to get the out?

### **Running Activities**

1. Team Race: Two players start at home plate. One runs to 3<sup>rd</sup> base, the other to 1<sup>st</sup> base. They continue running in opposite directions around the bases. First one back to home base wins. To avoid collisions, have a coach stand on second base. Instruct one runner to go in front of the coach and one runner to go behind the coach.

## **PRACTICE #6**

### **Team Meeting**

1. Attendance
2. Announcements
3. Highlight the positives from the previous game

### **Warm-up and Stretching**

### **Skill Stations**

Teach the fundamentals (page 6-7) within each activity.

### **Throwing and Catching Activities**

1. High and Low: Two players play catch. The thrower scores 3 points if ball is caught above the shoulders, 2 points if caught between waist and shoulders. No points are awarded if the ball is not caught.

### **Fielding Activities**

1. First Base-Third Base: Line a group near first base, with the first fielder to the right of the base facing home plate. Throw or hit a ground ball toward the first fielder. The player fields the ball and then runs to step on the base, simulating a tag out. The player drops the ball to the side and prepares for the second part of the drill. Now, throw a ball in the air to the fielder who should have one foot on the base, practicing lunging to the ball to get a runner out by a throw. The same drill can be done simultaneously at third base.

### **Batting Activities**

1. Home Run: Set out cones or markers in 5-foot increments from the batting tee. Each “zone” is worth a certain amount of points as determined by the coach. Give each player 5 hits to score as many points as possible. A ball may be hit on the ground or in the air to receive points.

### **Running Activities**

1. Run Down: Place two more experienced players (or two coaches) at first and second base. Runners try to run from one base to another (back and forth) without getting tagged out by the fielders.

## **PRACTICE #7**

### **Team Meeting**

1. Attendance
2. Announcements
3. Highlight the positives from the previous game

### **Warm-up and Stretching**

### **Skill Stations**

Teach the fundamentals (page 6-7) within each activity.

### **Throwing and Catching Activities**

1. Back and Forth: Line the players in two lines facing each other. The first player in one line throws to the first player in the other line. After throwing, the player runs to the end of the line and all other players move up one spot. The player with the ball now throws it to the new first player in line and goes to the end of his or her line. Continue the drill until every player has thrown and caught a ball.

### **Fielding Activities**

1. Shortstop-Second Base: One player is in position between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> base and another player is in position between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> base. Throw the ball on the ground toward the second-base player. That player fields the ball while the shortstop runs to second base. The fielder throws the ball to the shortstop for the out. For the second part of the drill, reverse the activity. Throw the ground ball to the shortstop. The shortstop throws to the second-base player for the out.

### **Batting Activities**

1. Game Simulation: Simulate a real game situation. Place defensive players on the field in various positions and keep 2-3 players in as the first batters. Have the batter step up to the tee, hit the ball and run to first base as in a real game. Rotate batters and defense so everyone gets a chance to bat and field. Coach the fielders on decision-making. Where should they throw the ball to get the out?

### **Running Activities**

1. Team Race: Two players start at home plate. One runs to 3<sup>rd</sup> base, the other to 1<sup>st</sup> base. They continue running in opposite directions around the bases. First one back to home base wins. To avoid collisions, have a coach stand on second base. Instruct one runner to go in front of the coach and one runner to go behind the coach.

## **PRACTICE #8**

### **PLAYER'S PRACTICE!**

Pick the player's favorite games and activities for the final practice of the season.  
Or play a Kids vs. Parents game!

#### References

Bing Broido. *The Baffled Parent's Guide to Coaching Tee Ball*, Camden, Maine: Rugged Mountain Press, 2003.

National Alliance for Youth Sports. *Start Smart Participant Manual*, West Palm Beach.

*Tball USA Association*. Available online at [www.teeballusa.org](http://www.teeballusa.org).