



# TEE-BALL COACH'S MANUAL

## Forward

We would like to start off by saying Thank You for choosing to volunteer as a youth baseball coach. Understanding that this may be your first experience coaching baseball, we felt it would be helpful to develop some basic guidelines to help you better understand the objectives of Tee-Ball. The purpose of this manual is to inform you of the special rules associated with Tee-Ball, the skills and knowledge that the kids should have before being ready to move to the next level and some helpful tips as you head into the baseball season.

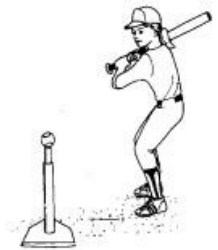
## Special Rules

1. Players may hit off a Tee or a ball pitched by a coach. It is recommended that the coach pitch from approximately 30' to 35' when pitching to the hitter.
2. There are no strikeouts. After three missed attempts to hit a coach-pitched ball, the player hits from the tee.
3. The entire team roster will constitute the batting order for each inning.
4. All batters in the lineup will hit each inning. The game will consist of 3 innings.
5. If a batter, having hit the ball, is thrown out at first, or a base runner is thrown out trying to advance, that player will be removed from the base and returned to the player's team dug out area.
6. When the ball is hit, the baserunners will advance one base only.
7. A batted ball that does not leave the batters circle will be deemed a foul ball.
8. If the defense records three outs in an inning, remove any base runners, reset the outs to zero, and continue batting until all offensive players had the opportunity to hit.
9. The final batter of the inning will be permitted to round the bases in order to clear off the bases prior to the teams changing sides.
10. Helmets must always be worn by batters and baserunners.
11. The entire roster will take the field and should be positioned close to the regular baseball positions. Rotating positionally from inning to inning can help keep their attention.
12. Managers and/or Coaches should be on the playing field to explain to the players what they are doing wrong and to show them proper procedure or play.
13. Coaches are encouraged to instruct players after a play is over.

## Coaching Tips

It is important for you as a coach to enjoy baseball and especially being around the kids. Tee-Ball doesn't always feel like baseball. The kids you will be working with are young and don't have long attention spans. The key is to keep the kids active and minimize the amount of idle time. Your goal should be for the kids to have fun while learning the fundamentals of the game.

1. As a coach, get organized; develop a plan **before** your practices and game situations. Learn as much about tee-ball and baseball as you can.
2. Remember to present your material in kids' terms. Successful coaches know their audience and use analogies and common visual imagery for their coaching tools. For Tee-Ball players, these images are best when they are a bit dramatic.
3. Avoid technical information and speak the kid's language.
4. Apply basic fundamentals. Don't assume anything. Go over all the basics: Where all the bases are and the defensive positions, which way to run to first, when to start and stop running, how to hold a bat and glove, number of outs, innings, fouls etc.
5. On the field, you have to be a teacher as well as a coach. Teach them what they need to know, show them what you taught them, practice the things you taught them over and over, then be prepared to do it all over again.
6. Use easy to use terminology and use it consistently.
7. Work in small groups and set up stations.
8. To make the most of your practice time, break the team up into two or three groups, depending on the number of coaches. This will enable you to keep more kids occupied and less bored. Remember the attention span of a 5-6 year old is measured in minutes.
9. Keep things interactive and fast moving. Most kids this age will not be able to provide their attention for more than 5 to 10 minutes. Incorporate a 7 Minute Rule where you are not asking the kids to do the same thing for more than 7 Minutes.
10. Involve your assistants. You will need them. If you give them specific things to do, they will be more comfortable. It is recommended that you have a pre-practice or pre-game meeting with head coach & assistants to discuss what needs to be taught/reinforced on that day.
11. Make games out of your baseball activities.
12. The game: Sit the players on the bench in the batting order. Only the on-deck batter should have a bat in their hands. Horsing around on the bench will translate into foolish behavior in the field.
13. Place batting Tee directly on top of plate. Position batter slightly back of tee. See illustration to the right.
14. Keep the parents informed as much as possible. Provide parents with a schedule of practices and games, the times and location. Also provide your contact information. You cannot over communicate with the parents. Incorporate the usage of a team app such as *Gamechanger*, *InstaTeam* or *Team Snap*.



It is recommended that all coaches become familiar with the Little League website ([www.littleleague.org](http://www.littleleague.org)). Little League provides a 10-week Tee-Ball curriculum along with other resources. Click on Resources for Coaches to access the available information.

## Recommended Minimum Skill Level

Understanding that all players will progress differently, it is sometimes difficult to know if each player is learning and retaining the information necessary. Assuming a player will spend two (2) years playing Tee-Ball, the following are the minimum skill levels that would be expected at the end of those years.

### 1<sup>st</sup> Year

1. Proper grip on the bat with little direction from a coach.
2. Player should be able to address the plate from the correct side and get into a hitter's stance. The player may require some reminding about how far/how close to the plate they should stand, where to hold the bat.
3. Player should be able to consistently hit a ball off a tee with few swings and misses or hitting the tee.
4. Player should be able to begin to hit the ball tossed overhand from a coach. Expectations would be that they can hit 1 out of 4 from a coach throwing from 30 feet.
5. Players should be able to identify the bases.
6. Players should know to run through first base. They may require reminding from time to time.
7. Players should know that they cannot run through second and third base. They may require reminding from time to time.
8. On defense, players should begin to be able to identify where the positions are.
9. Players should know how to get outs. This includes picking up a ball and throwing it to first. They should be able to resist the urge run the ball to the base.
10. Players should be able to throw a ball from the pitcher's mound to first base. Although the throw may not be accurate enough for a teammate to catch, an adult should be able to catch the throw.
11. Players should be able to catch a ball thrown (tossed) from 10 feet away from an adult.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Year

1. Proper grip on the bat, hands together and proper alignment of the knuckles with no direction from a coach.
2. Player should be able to address the plate from the correct side and get into a hitter's stance. The player should only require minor adjustments about how far/how close to the plate they should stand.
3. Players should no longer need a tee. Player should be able to hit the ball tossed overhand from a coach. Expectations would be that they can hit 3 out of 4 from a coach throwing from 30 feet.
4. Players should be able to identify the bases.
5. Players should know to run through first base. They should not need to be reminded to run through the base.
6. Players should know that they cannot run through second and third base. They should not need to be reminded.
7. On defense, players should be able to identify where the positions are.
8. Players should know how to get outs. This includes picking up a ball and throwing it to first, knowing they can tag a runner, or knowing they can get outs at other bases when there are runners on base. They should be able to resist the urge run the ball to the base.
9. Players should be able to throw a ball from the pitcher's mound to first base. Throws should be accurate enough for a teammate to be able to catch the ball.
10. Players should be able to catch a ball thrown from teammates and generally be able to protect themselves with their glove.

## **Coaches Checklist**

### **First base**

Practice fielding plays; ball thrown to 1B by infielders. Practice catching the ball and tagging the base or the runner.

### **Second base**

Position player in place, anticipating action. Practice fielding plays; such as, throwing the ball to first, tagging a runner out at 2nd base and tag second with a runner on first.

### **Shortstops**

Show positions: one between 2B and 3B. Practice fielding balls and throwing to 1B or 2B for an out. Remind them they can tag a runner and tag second with a runner on first.

### **Third base**

Show position, anticipating action. Practice fielding balls and throwing to 1B or 2B for an out. Remind them they can tag a runner and tag third with a runner on first and second.

### **Pitcher**

Stands in pitcher's area but acts as an infielder. Practice fielding ball and throwing to 1B. This position sees a lot of action and the player must pay attention.

### **Catcher**

Stands behind and away from home plate until ball is hit  
Demonstrate: after ball is hit, adult removes tee and bat; catcher moves up to cover plate.  
Practice actions: catcher tagging base runner out, catcher throwing to 1B.

### **General infield activity**

Catching short fly balls.  
Field balls and throwing to a base or to home plate. (Do not run with ball) Tagging runners on the base path.  
Relaying a ball from an outfielder to a base; to the catcher at home plate.

### **Outfielders**

Position players.  
Practice catching fly balls in a crowd. "I've got it" Practice fielding ground balls and throwing to infield.  
Have one outfielder receive relay from another and throwing to an infielder.

### **Batter**

Give basic hitting instructions.  
Practice hitting ball, then dropping bat properly and running to first. Don't watch the ball when running to first base.

### **Base Runners**

Instruct batters to run through first base. Batters should not stop on the bag. Instruct that forced runner on base must advance. Non-forced runner can hold position on base. Player on base watch what next batter does; where the ball goes.

### **Bench**

Team sits in batting order, encouraging the batter.

Coach talks to team: Listen for instructions. Play fair; follow the rules. Have fun.

### **Coach**

Talking to team, after the game:

Summarize team's activity. Be specific and recognize progress. Note any humorous thing that happened.

No public criticism; as necessary, take player aside. Be positive.

What's next: IE: practice at home, next team practice and game schedule; tell parents

### **Tee-Ball Skills Checklist**

#### **Throwing**

Throwing is one of the most important skills in baseball. Stress to your players that accuracy is more important than speed. Teach them to throw over the top and not side arm. This creates bad habits that are hard to change later. Thumb under the ball.

#### **Windup**

Bring the throwing arm back and up, turn your front shoulder so it is pointing at the target.

The glove hand points toward the target. The arm extends behind the body with wrist cocked and elbow bent



#### **Delivery**

As you start your delivery you pick up the lead foot and stride toward the target. As the lead foot touches the ground, the hips rotate toward the target. Release the ball in front of the body and follow-through. Always look at the target through the throw.

#### **Follow - Through**

The follow-through ends with the throwing arm down in the front of the body and the feet almost parallel, in a balance ready position.

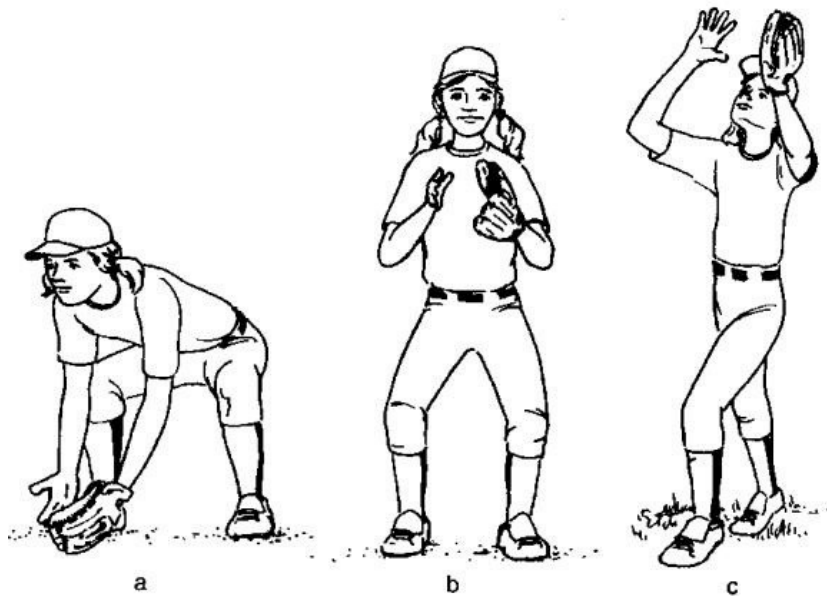
### **Catching**

A major defensive skill is catching. Initially, some players will be afraid of catching a baseball. That fear will make them flinch right before the ball reaches their glove. This will cause them to drop the ball instead of catching it, or worse, the ball may hit them. This can create a fear that can eventually cause players to quit.

Teaching players the correct catching technique is not easy. You must first overcome their fear of getting hit with the ball. Demonstrate that the ball is softer than a standard hard ball. You might want to work with some of your players with a tennis ball for the first couple weeks.

### **Catching the baseball**

- keep your eyes on the ball
- have both hands ready, with arms relaxed and extended toward the ball
- bend the elbows to absorb the force of the throw
- watch the ball into the glove and squeeze it



### **Hitting**

Hitting a baseball is probably the most difficult skill to master in baseball. Five separate hitting components should be taught to young players: grip, stance, stride, swing and finish.

### **Grip**

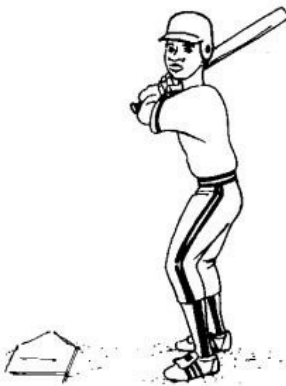
Grip the bat firmly (don't squeeze) hands together above the knob. Fix the grip if the third knuckles line up and the grip can go as far as the having the second knuckles line up. (The player at this level should be encouraged to hold onto the bat until contact is made and then to drop the bat vs. throwing it.)



### **Stance**

Players should be comfortable in the batter's box. Don't try to make every batter assume the same stance, but do stress these basics:

- Feet comfortably wider than shoulders, set in a square (toes pointed toward the plate) stance
- Knees slightly bent with weight centered on the balls of the feet.
- upper body bent slightly at the waist, eyes focused on the ball.
- bat at a 45 deg angle to the hands
- elbows out from the body and flexed, point towards the ground
- Begin with the hands close to the back shoulder



### **Stride**

The stride is a triggering motion to begin the motion of the shoulders, hips and knees as the pitcher releases the ball. This will become a more useful tool as the players develop but for now a small stride of the front foot toward the mound will be a good start to force some weight distributions and begin their swing sequence.

### **Swing**

Adjust the tee with the ball set even to the hitters waist. The legs and hips initiate the swing. Eyes on the ball. Shoulders level; bat and head steady. The swing should be bringing the bat through the center of the ball. Watch the bat hit the ball; keep your head down.

Extend arms and follow through. Focus on making contact and not swing too hard.

### **Finish**

Balanced position when the swing is over. Do not watch the ball. Drop the bat and run hard to first base.

**Base Running**

Run on the balls of the feet. Look at the base you are running to, not where the ball went.  
Run outside the foul line.

Teach the players to run straight through 1st base; don't jump on it or slow down. Watch and listen for coaches' instructions.

Keep one foot on base leaning forward until the batter hits the ball and use the base to push off.

Know where the ball is.

Make sure you touch every base, including home plate.



## **Practice Tips**

**Batting:** Practice, Practice, Practice, Work with small groups using a tee and go over the Five components of hitting.

**Bounce to the bucket:** Use a large basket or bucket and place it on the base. Outfielders try to throw it into the container. Can be done as a game with 10 points for in the bucket and 5 for hitting the bucket and 1 point for two feet either side of bucket

**Catch:** Two or more players catch. Keep track of the number of successful catches. See how many you can catch in a row.

**Catching Flies:** Hit or throw fly balls to fielders. Throw ball right to the player to develop confidence and then toss ball to right or left. During this drill you can introduce someone coming over to backup the play. Make sure to instruct the use of two hands.

**Coach in the Middle:** Circle the kids with the coach centered rolling the ball or tossing to each player. For practice have the kids field the grounders without a glove, to reinforce the use of two hands.

**Crab Drill:** Player is in basic fielding set position stance, crouched forward with glove open and down. Player takes three or four steps as the coach rolls the ball.

**Track meet:** Player stand at home plate with bat in hand. Coach claps hands and player drops bat and runs hard to first base. Time how long it takes to get to first and record it. Run drill later in season and see if there is any improvement.

### **Remember:**

***You should be satisfied if the kids have fun, learn the basics of baseball and are enthused to play again next year.***