

## **T-Ball Guidelines**

### **Administration**

**Bench Parent:** Can be the same person as snack person. Responsibilities on the bench besides snacks when kids are batting: keep order, have kids ready to bat when it is their turn, keep helmets on, get catcher dressed and ready.

**Manager:** Sends out emails, ensures team is aware of practices and game times. Makes up snack & bench parent list.

- Kids have a 5 minute attention span. Drills should last no longer than that
- I would always bring gum (sugarless) to be handed out after practice and before games.
- Let kids pick a fun team name
- When I call the kids in, they go down on one knee in their glove
- Team should support each other with high fives and cheering on each other
- All players stay on the bench when it is their team's turn at bat
- Assign a "batting order" at the start of the season by alphabetical order of first name, or by order received from the divisional coordinator. Players will sit on the bench each time in the same order for the season. The first player in rotation will always be the catcher next inning; this allows the player time to get dressed in gear assisted by the bench parent. The next inning this player will be the last to hit and so on through the rotation

### **Base Running**

- One base per hit and the last batter automatically hits a home run and clears the bases
- Best drill to start out is to count the bases running behind the coach calling out: 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, etc.
- Call out 1<sup>st</sup> base and have all the players point to it. Run with arms pumping and have all players run through first base by at least 7 or 8 feet. Have the 1<sup>st</sup> base coach give a high five standing past the base
- Teach the kids where bases and positions are by calling out and having the kids point
- The relay is great fun for both practices and after the games. Split the players into 2 groups, one behind home plate and the other behind second and have them run the bases handing off a ball to each other
- Have the players stand at home, take a swing, put the bat down in a designated spot next to the tee and run to first
- Make sure players learn to run the bases with players in the field who will probably be in their way
- Games are usually 3 innings in length, 2 innings if it's cold or if there is a lack of attention

- Mouth guards are not required as a ball will hurt but most likely won't knock a tooth out (but a bat will, more on that later)

### **Fielding**

- Lots of kids will have new gloves that are stiff and too small. They will need 2 hands to catch anything
- With their gloves off, have them hold their hands in front of them and place their pinkies side by side, in a cupped position. Next, demonstrate for them how to bend their knees and get their hands near the ground while keeping their pinkies together. Remind players to keep their back as straight as possible. With their gloves still off, hand roll grounders to them from eight to ten feet away. Do this in groups of 3 or 4; roll it as slow as necessary for them to be successful. Then do it with gloves on.
- The ready position is knees bent, feet shoulder width apart, both hands in front looking at the tee. When the coach calls ready position all the kids (after lots of practice) will look good and ready to go in the field (and possibly stay a little more focused on the game)
- For grounders, we used the alligator mouth analogy. Glove hand down is the lower jaw and then the jaw would close by having the second hand come on top
- Start catching pop flies in front of them. All players in the field are to throw to 1<sup>st</sup> base. Start with having the players roll the ball and progress to throwing to 1<sup>st</sup> base. Don't expect your 1<sup>st</sup> base person to catch a whole bunch. Ensure that the 1<sup>st</sup> base kid touches the base each time after getting the ball, then throws the ball to his/her catcher. The catcher then hands the ball to the batting coach who will place the ball on the tee
- To encourage lateral movement (instead of diving at the ball) introduce the "bunny hop". Have all the kids in ready position for a grounder and have them move laterally by small jumps and eventually by side steps
- Have them play catch by themselves, throw the ball upward and catch it

### **Inside/Outside Row**

- Each inning the line up is broken into 3 groups:
  1. the prime spots, catcher, pitcher, 1<sup>st</sup> base
  2. The rest of the infields, 2<sup>nd</sup> base, 3<sup>rd</sup> base, short stop & pit stop
  3. Outfield (the rest of the kids)
- Make up your field position schedule ahead of time and it should revolve around whose turn it is to be catcher
- The rest of the group has one inning in each of the 3 groups above
- When a ball is hit to a player and goes past them, he/she is not allowed to go get it unless they are outfielders. This keeps the infield players in position
- The rules say one coach in the field; we always had two, one behind short stop and one behind the pit stop. That way you can walk over to any child to give instructions and you can keep them in positions when a ball is hit. For example, if the short stop misses a ball you could ensure that the left fielder was there instead of the centre fielder
- Avoid the "honey pot" theory at all cost

- Call out positions for each player at the start of their inning
- Have assistant coaches help find the right spot until the kids understand

### **Throwing**

- Ensure the kids are looking at the target before they throw
- Have them point at the target with their glove hand; this will encourage some upper body rotation
- Hold the ball facing down behind them, bring the ball up behind their ear and throw the ball snapping their wrist forward
- Line the kids up in two rows (by ability or they could get injured or bored)
- Have them take a step forward with the glove side foot at the same time
- For a distance throwing contest, have all the kids line up and see who can throw the farthest. Have them run out and get their own ball and throw it back
- Accuracy helps. To develop have them throw at a large tree, a garbage can or put a coach out there and the “try to hit the coach” drill was always lots of fun

### **Batting**

#### **Safety First**

- Only one bat at a time is to be used
- One practice swing when the coach says so
- Set a rule during the first practice that no player is to pick up a bat at any time unless it is their turn at bat and are instructed to by a coach
- Remind players to never go near another player who is holding a bat
- For the proper stance, I drew a line in the sand and then 2 more for the feet across this line adjacent to the home plate. I used my foot or a stick and instructed the player to put one foot on each cross line
- The swing is different for each child. Some need to slow down, some swing too hard and others need to learn to swing all the way through. Teach the kids to swing level
- Have each child take one natural practice swing. This will let you know how high/low to adjust the tee. If the child misses the ball 3 times at bat, swing with them and hit the ball. This will help their technique, confidence and the speed of play
- Don't let the batter rest the bat on their shoulders and choke upon the bat where necessary
- To ensure bat safety, discuss dropping the bat on or close to the tee and explain the dangers of bat throwing
- By pretending to squish a bug with their back foot by pivoting the back foot during their swing, the batter will generate more power using their hips and have fun learning how

- After the coach adjusts the height of the tee, he places the ball on it and says “defense ready”. When the batting coach is satisfied that the other team is sufficiently ready that no one will get injured because they are not paying attention, then callout “play ball”. At that point, the player is free to swing. If the player missed the ball and hits the tee, lower the tee. The same applies if swinging above the ball -raise the tee. If the ball travels less than a satisfactory distance (5 feet), , yell “dead ball’ and start over
- There are no strikes and no outs
- Discourage any negative remarks from your own team at any time about the other player’s level of play.

### **Pitching**

After the May long weekend teams are ready for coach pitch. It can take a little longer so only 2 innings may get played the first game. The pitching coach will go out to the “mound” with 5-6 balls. I found that getting on one knee and throwing over hand worked best as the players could see the angle the ball was coming at them. Have the catcher on the other team throw the balls back to you after each batter or have an adult there to help. After 5 pitches, re-introduce the tee. Explain to the kids that this could happen and its no problem. Have coaches at 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> bases. Older siblings love to help. Encourage all players to play catch at home.

### **Rule #1**

- Have fun!

### **Rule #2**

- Read rule #1