

Conshohocken Little League
Coaching & Parents Guide to T-Ball

Why this guide:

This guide is intended to establish a set of basic skill goals for T-ball league players.

Every coach will have this or her own style, it is not the intent of this guide to suggest a certain style of coaching. It is the intent of this guide to establish some basic expectations for the children and the parents as to what will be instructed.

At this level it is very probable that this is the first exposure to organized baseball that many of these kids have had. Many of the kids and perhaps even the parents know very little about baseball. There is a lot to learn over the course of a season, but we believe that every T-ball player should understand and be able to perform the following five basic skills by the end of their first T-Ball season.

The following are the five fundamental skills goals for T-Ball:

1.) Developing a basic swing

The key here is to keep it simple. Player should have a relaxed square stance, and a hands together grip. Weight should be on the balls of the feet and evenly distributed. The swing should be uncomplicated. Hands should be back and about chest high. The player should make a soft stride towards the pitchers mound, make a quick, level swing with good hip rotation. TIP: We encourage a soft stride, have the player “sneak” a step with their stride foot towards the pitchers mound. To encourage hip rotation have them “squash a bug” with their back foot.

2.) Fielding a ground ball

Each of the players should understand the “ready” position. Gloves should be down and the players behind should be down. Make sure that the player watches the ball into the glove and that they use both hands to field the ball. TIP: Have the player act like an alligator: The player’s glove hand is the bottom jaw, the throwing hand is the top.

3.) Throwing

The focus here is staying “over” or “on top of” the ball and aiming with the glove. A good circular throwing motion should be emphasized with the toes of the stride foot and the glove pointing towards the target. Here is a good rhyme to help teach the proper throwing motion. “Thumb past thigh. Elbow up high, knuckles to the sky, then wave by-by!” Make sure that both elbows are shoulder high and that they follow through completely.

4.) Catching

Building confidence is very important. Coaches are asked to emphasize using two hands with the thumbs and fingers pointed to the sky for any ball thrown above the knee and the fingers and thumbs to the ground for ground balls or any thing below the knees.

5.) Running the bases

The most important idea to get across in T-ball is running through first base as hard and as fast as you can. Coaches are asked to emphasize the importance of not watching the ball after the player hits it, but at looking at first base and running thru the base to the outfield grass.

For some of us time starved coaches, here is a suggested T-Ball practice:

Duration: Approx.1 hour

Running the bases - 5 minutes

Drills – Set up three stations and enlist the help of some parents. Divide your team into three groups.

Tip: Take a minute to explain the athletic, or ready position. Feet shoulder width apart, knees slightly bent, weight evenly distributed on the balls of the feet.

Hitting – 10 minutes

Equipment needed – Batting T, Batting Helmets, 10 baseballs

Have each of the players hit a minimum of 10 balls off the tee into the backstop or a fence. Focus on technique.

Fielding – 10 minutes

Equipment needed – Gloves, 2-3 baseballs

This station is located somewhere in the infield. Have all the player line up about 25 feet in front of a coach. Have the kids act like alligators and gobble up the ball and throw back to the coach.

Throwing/Catching – 10 minutes

This drill uses tennis balls and helps the kids with throwing and catching. Pair the kids up about 10 yards apart. They will start off on one knee facing each other. The knee of their throwing arm will be on the ground. The foot of the glove hand will be out in front with the toes facing their target. The kids have a catch with the tennis balls. Using tennis balls will keep the kids safe at this distance and allow them to develop confidence

Scrimmage 15 minutes (or until every kid gets an at bat)

Assign positions, explain the responsibility of that position, rotate positions every three batters. TIP: make sure that the player at first base can catch the ball safely

Change it up: As the kids develop introduce new techniques and skills such as catching a pop-up, tagging the lead runner, learning the difference between a force out and a tag out.

Game Day

A lot of the learning for T-ball occurs during the games. Get as many parents involved as you can. When taking the field explain each position and what the job of that players position is after you assign it. Celebrate success and take every opportunity to reinforce the basics during the game. A big part of baseball is sportsmanship and this is something that is learned by the kids directly from the coaches and the parents.

Some Tips: Keep a batting order and chart each of your players and the positions they play this will help to ensure that every player gets equal playing time at every position. Every player should have the opportunity to play every infield position multiple times throughout the season. (Safety is a consideration for some positions.) Ask a parent to help in the dugout when your team is up to bat. Remember these are 5 & 6 year old kids and sometimes will be difficult to keep focused. By designating a parent to help keep order you will be able to focus on the players.

The focus on T-ball is the FUNDAMENTALS!

Stare at that word – it starts with FUN!

Keep in mind you are coaching 5 and 6 year olds. Make it fun, focus on the basics. Your goal as a coach and your expectation as a parent is that your T-ball little leaguer will have a solid grasp of the five fundamentals. We suggest that you practice them every week. Let the kids learn the game by playing, but become better baseball players by practicing these fundamentals, over and over again!