

Baseball Coaching Tip and Techniques

"Learning Proper Fundamentals Early -- Enables Learning Advanced Skills Later!"

Throwing

Identify if kids are throwing correctly, starting with the first practice, and emphasize drills and proper throwing technique.

- 1) Throw overhand, not side arm.
- 2) Grip should be four-seam (index and middle finger should cover two seams each) to prevent the ball from curving on hard, long, throws.
- 3) Full Throwing Motion - Ball should go from glove, down around to where it's being "shown to the player behind you" and, then over the top to the release point. Here is a great stop frame example of the proper motion:



- a) It's much easier to correct a poor throwing motion in T-Ball or Instructional than it is once the player has moved to higher levels.
 - b) Also, every player wants to be a pitcher. The first thing a coach at higher levels is going to look at when a player wants to pitch is their motion.
- 4) Drills -

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- a) **Throw Against Fence** - Have the players line up on the foul line and face the fence in front of the bench. Show them the correct throwing technique (Ball taken away from glove to where it's "shown to the player behind you" (1), step and throw over the top to the fence (2)). Count off "one" and "two" as the players practice the correct technique throwing against the fence. Each player should have multiple balls and there should be coaches walking behind each player to correct poor mechanics. (Great for T-Ball and Instructional)
- b) **Advanced Pitching Drill** - Have the player start from the "stretch" position, holding the ball in their glove at the chest or waist. Using the same "counting" drill from above with the addition of the knee lift as "one" and then "two" being the ball take away and "three" the step and throw to the catcher. Also, don't forget the follow through which brings the back leg all the way to the point where the player finishes the throw in a good, square, fielding position. This drill emphasizes that the knee lift and follow through are just as important as the motion when pitching.

Fielding

Good fielding fundamentals will result in solid play in the infield and outfield. Catching and stopping the ball are just as important as throwing and hitting!

- 1) Teach "Two Hands Up" - players should stand with two hands up when ready to catch a ball.
- 2) Catch the ball in front of you, whether it's a throw from another player or a pop-up off of the hitters bat - "See The Ball Go Into Your Glove".
- 3) Stay "Under The Ball" - stepping to the side to catch or field the ball indicates a fear of the ball.
- 4) Drills -
 - a) Alligator Hands (T-Ball / Instructional) - Teach the players that when fielding a ground ball they need to spread their legs, bend their knees, and get the glove on the ground as wide open as

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possible. The glove is the bottom jaw of the Alligator and the bare hand is the top jaw of the Alligator and when the ball is coming we want to trap it in the Alligators mouth. Like this:



The younger players love this one.

- b) Two Hands (Any Age) - Have the players take off their gloves and field slow ground balls (use tennis balls for younger players) and ask them what they have to do in order to field/catch it? They should be using two hands. Now remind them that the same thing applies when they have a glove on one hand. Use the glove to catch/stop the ball and the free hand to trap it in the glove.
- c) Ball Fear - Players that are afraid of the ball will typically step to the side when catching or fielding. Help break this by starting them off with a tennis ball or even a plastic ball. Do the same fielding/catching drills but with the softer ball until there is no sign of fear. Then move to the soft T-Ball style baseball and eventually to standard ball.
- d) Advanced Catching/Fielding Drills - Have the players play "Knockout". For catching have them line up in the outfield with a coach throwing high pops to each player in turn. The player must catch the ball AND throw it back to the coach accurately to remain in the game. Keep making the pop-ups harder and harder until you have a winner. Same drill can be applied to fielding and throwing to first base.

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Batting

Every player loves to hit, but teaching proper swing mechanics will allow every player to succeed.

- 1) Use the proper size bat for age/size of player.
 - a) T-Ball - typically 24-26 inch length and 13-15 ounces. "-12" is a good number.
 - b) Instructional - 26-28 inch length and 15-16 ounces.
 - c) Minors - 28-30 inch, 17-20 ounces (bats must meet Little League requirements)
 - d) Majors - Player preference but all bats must be Little League legal.
- 2) Starting proper swing mechanics in T-Ball will lead to easier adjustments later in the playing career.
- 3) Drills/Techniques -
 - a) Proper Hand placement is important.
 - i) Hands should be together on the bat with middle knuckles lined up. Player should not be clenching or gripping the bat like they would an axe or like they are wringing out a wash rag.
 - b) Bat position.
 - i) Players should hold the bat at just less than a 90 degree angle, not laid back on the shoulder or behind the head.
 - ii) Hand should be located between the jaw and ear. The MLB logo is a great example of proper bat and hand position:



- c) Swing

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- i) The easiest way to teach a T-Ball player the proper swing motion is to put the hitting T in front of them and tell them to hit the top of the T, knock it over. From there you can adjust their hands, arms and hips motion.
- ii) Ask the player to stop their swing right as the bat is contacting the top of the hitting T. The player should look just like this:



This is the ideal hitting position.

1. Front leg straight
 2. Back leg turned with the foot on the ball or toes.
 3. Hands in a position where if the batter could open both hands the palms would be facing each other, like they were clapping.
- iii) Practicing this form when hitting off a T is good for any age level. Even professional players use T's to practice good form.
 - d) Soft toss is another way to practice good hitting form. Two players can do soft toss into the back of the home plate screen on their own taking turns tossing to each other 10 or so times.
 - i) The tosser should set up as if they were in the opposing batter box and should soft toss from one knee so that the ball would be flying into the hitting zone at what would be the front of home plate. Using temporary plate (throw down plate) is a good idea.