



Coaching Guide

Introduction

First, thank you for stepping up to share your time with our community's youth. You can make a positive impact on many of our children's lives. This guide provides information, ideas, and strategies (to add or supplement what you may already know) so you can hold effective practices and be successful in your role as a Manager and Coach. Being organized, prepared and able to communicate clearly are keys to a successful season.

Why kids play sports

You may have played sports when you were younger. Remember what made the experience fun for you? Was it winning, learning a new skill, or just being part of a team? The lessons learned from sports go far beyond the playing field. We want those same and new experiences for your child. As a manager/coach, you have an opportunity to make a positive impact on someone's life. Remember kids play sports because it's fun! They stop playing when it becomes stressful and no longer fun for them.

Your role as a Manager and Coach

As Manager/Coach for your team, you are the leader. You set the tempo and example for not only your players, but the parents, and volunteers as well. Communication studies show, messages are conveyed primarily by how you say it, rather than what you say. Your tone and example will have an impact on all those associated with your team. The key to effective coaching is realizing your responsibility and performing your duties with care. Just be your relaxed self and make it fun! As the Manager/Coach, it's your job is to create a safe environment for kids to learn baseball, develop skills, and grow as a team and an individual. But most importantly - to have fun! And our Board of Directors are here to help you along the way! Please do not hesitate to reach out to us with any questions or concerns.

Your approach matters

As the Manager/Coach for your team, you must be mindful of your role and how you impact others on and off the field. The following recommendations will help you plan, manage and coach during the season. These ideas apply to all playing divisions. Bring your experience, your energy and passion for the game of baseball; the kids will respond to you and respect and appreciate the time you have invested in them.

Keep it fun. Most kids signed up to play baseball to have fun. Your team will have players with varying maturity, skill levels and attention spans, that's all ok. Your job will be to engage all players, so they learn baseball, develop skills, and grow as a team as well as individuals. When teaching a skill, be creative and.....

- find ways to keep it simple. An example of this is teaching hitting. I refer to this as “**H/H/H**”, which stands for:

Hands = hands up, shoulder height

Hip = weight on back leg

Head = keeping head down, tracking the throw from the pitcher’s hand

- **Balance.** Sometimes, less is more. Remember as the season progresses, too much practice time can reduce the kids desire to play. Balance your needs for skill development with time on the field. Make game time special. When the kids have had enough, recognize this. Start and end practices and meetings on time.
- **Set goals based around learning and fun.** One of the lasting benefits of team sports is the connection of continuing improvement through learning and one’s effort. Early in the season (recommended at first team meeting), state what you want to accomplish. Observe progress towards goals. Review progress periodically with the team.
- **Engagement.** Involvement leads to commitment and effort toward goals. Be creative engaging players in practice and games. This builds the sense of a team and helps players understand how their role and contribution are important. Delegate tasks to parents and volunteers, this increases everyone’s engagement and reduces your time commitment, it’s a win/win for everyone.
- **Treat everyone with respect!**
- **Be positive with your interactions.** Greet your players, assistant coaches and volunteers at each practice and game. Remember your time together on the field may be the best part of their day! Enjoy your time together!

Three “Ps” approach. This works for all aspects of managing and coaching:

✓ **Perspective**

- Be objective, take the long view, and give everyone the benefit of doubt. Remember that missed call by the umpire or that last error is not the defining moment of your season. Learn from it and move forward.
- Share your perspective early and repeatedly! This will help you manage expectations and define roles and responsibilities during the season. Your initial team meeting is a good time to communicate this.
- Be calm. Remember you are the cool head on the field. You are their example.

✓ **P**atience

- Be patient working with players, parents, and volunteers. You will have a wide range of experience and skills on your team. Development and progress will take time - your parents and volunteers will be forever grateful to you. Enjoy the wins as well as the defeats. Remember mistakes are the greatest learning opportunities and everything gets better with practice and time.
- Skills are developed over time with repetition. Remind players (and parents) to be patient. The difference between success and failure is not giving up. If they don't get it the first time, encourage them to keep practicing on their own, work with family members outside of practice time or if they have the means, to attend clinics. Skill development/mastery will improve the players confidence.

✓ **P**lanning

The more time spent planning and anticipating needs of your players, parents, and volunteers; the smoother the season will be. This sets a good example for your players and your parents will appreciate you even more.

- Success is a choice that starts with planning. By creating thoughtful plans, you are proactively creating a safe environment for practices, meetings, and games. Resulting in a more rewarding experience for all involved.

Use positive instruction methods, also known as the “Sandwich Method.”

Example:

- **Positive comment #1** = “great effort going after the ball.”
- **Instruction comment** = “Do you know why you missed that catch? If you keep the ball in front of you, you’ll increase your chances of catching it.”
- **Positive comment #2** = “you’re getting better each play! Great Job!”

Encourage players to be curious and learn:

Use the Benjamin Franklin approach... tell them why, show them how, involve them/let them do it!

Let them explore ways to improve their skills. Explaining why to players helps them understand. Focus on understanding and learning. Kids will make the connection why a skill or rule is important when they understand how it helps the team or impacts the game. Understanding context helps kids focus their efforts to improve their skills. This also builds engagement.

Work in small groups:

Skill development works better in small groups and helps the players maintain focus. Break up the practice time into various skills stations and rotate the kids through each station. After assessing skill levels on your team, match up kids by skill level. As everyone's skill level increases, mix up the

kids within groups. As everyone's skill level increases, mix up the kids within groups. Be creative. Keep the practice moving.

Add competition to drills:

Competition adds an element of fun to practice drills. Examples:

- Hitting contest; see who can hit the ball the furthest
- Throwing contest; see who can throw the furthest with accuracy or most strikes

Be creative and make up your own fun games! This helps with engagement and learning.

Live games teach situations:

Situations come up during games that create learning opportunities; these are hard to duplicate in practice. Encourage your players to take risks and learn from mistakes. Don't dwell on errors. Have a few practice games if schedules permit it. Ask another team Manager if they are interested in having a practice game.

It's the kid's game:

Be mindful of over-coaching during games. Kids will put pressure on themselves to perform as it is. Pick an opportunity to coach during the game that is effective without embarrassing the player. Let them enjoy it and have fun. Encourage the players to talk to each other during the games. Let them create their own strategy. Encourage players to come up with ways to stay focused on the game. Try to step back more and more with each new game.

Communicate regularly with parents:

Update parents weekly on the progress of the team (your Team Rep can help you with this). Share upcoming practice and game schedules. Create a message board such as **GroupMe** to help you keep in touch. Parents are interested in the safety and development of their child. Spend time getting to know the parents, they can make you aware of special needs of their child.

Remember baseball is a simple game of catching, throwing, batting, and running. Winning is fun, but it isn't everything. Don't let a child lose the love for the game.