



Coaching Little League Baseball

Coaching kids is a unique animal. On DAY ONE of getting your team, ask for help. There are so many parents who are watching and will help if you just ask. But if you don't ask, they may not step forward. I've had so many parents who raised their hand when I asked but told me that they know nothing about baseball. THAT'S MY FAVORITE PARENT TO GET TO HELP ME !!! Because they are going to do what I tell them to do, NOT what they think they know. That parent is going to run my system. Ideally, with about 12 kids on your team, you'll want 4 coaches to help run practices.

Before you get too far with the team, make sure you communicate clearly with the parents about expectations. One of the things that isn't happening in baseball today is that the kids aren't "learning baseball". We are going to make the kids think about the game as it's happening, so they learn the game. So that means that once the ball is hit, NOBODY (especially from the crowd) yells to the kids what to do. Before the pitch happens, everyone in the field is going to be talking about the situation so everyone knows what to do before the ball is hit. But once it's hit, everyone needs to go silent. Kids need to learn to THINK BASEBALL before the ball is hit. Make this very clear to everyone, including grandparents, before the season starts.

Running a practice... Try to keep practice below 90 minutes (15 minutes of throwing drills, 40 minutes of BP/Fielding drills, and 15 to 20 minutes of the Three Team Game). If you're practicing for 2 and half hours, you're going to make a lot of kids hate baseball. A typical practice should include about 15 minutes of throwing drills, then about 40 minutes of batting/fielding practice (break kids into 3 groups of 4 kids). 4 kids are the hitters, one of them hitting batting practice, one of them doing tee drills, one of them doing soft toss, and the last one is on deck waiting to hit BP. Four other kids are playing the infield during BP, with one kid at each of the four positions. Play each batted ball as a live ball, throwing to first base(the batter is not running, they are remaining as the hitter). Each kid hitting BP gets about 8 to 10 pitches, then they rotate. Also rotate the infield positions at the same time, so each kid plays all positions when the rotation finishes. DO NOT LET THE HITTER RUN OUT THE LAST PITCH. This will result in the kids just running around in chaos (And no bunting, ever. Maybe when they get to high school, they can start to learn that, but it's a waste of time in little league). The third group should be working with a different coach on fielding ground balls. That coach can

determine how in depth they get based on ability, but keep it simple with a lot of repetition. The last 15 to 20 minutes of practice should be the Three Team Game (aka... *Good, Bad & Ugly*).

The Three Team Game... We want to begin working on the kid's Baseball IQ by teaching them how to start "Thinking Baseball". We want to finish the practice with a simulated game that will also be a lot of fun for them. Split the kids up into 3 groups of 4. One team is the outfield, one team is the infield and one team is the hitters. The hitters can rotate through until each player has hit twice, then rotate through so that the outfielders become the infielders, the infielders become the hitters and the hitters become the outfielders. Before each pitch, ask everyone what the situation is. Their response should be the number of outs and where the next play should go (ie. One out, plays at first or no outs, play's at first or second if a runner is on first). Everyone should learn to talk before the pitch is made. Once the ball is hit, NOBODY is allowed to say anything. The kid fielding the ball has to know what to do. With the coach pitching, hopefully there will be a lot of balls in play, so the kids can start to experience a lot of different situations during every practice. This should start to get them thinking about the situation before the ball is put in play, so that this should carry over into the games. NEVER let a player call for the ball after it is hit. And strongly encourage parents and grandparents to not scream out what to do during the game.



Throwing Drills

Throwing Drills:

1. Finish the throw – Elbow up, Arm in front, Fingers behind the ball, Full extension. Grip: Two fingers split across the seams (horseshoe) and thumb on the seam underneath. **Problems to watch for** – low elbow (below the shoulder), don't finish throw – short arm it. Full extension. Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUS6ork8tZM>
2. One knee throw – shoulders turned, Throwing knee on the ground, stride foot pointed at your target, rock throwing arm down and around, elbow up, look at hand – fingers behind the ball, lead arm up, elbow pointed at the target, arms are equal and opposite – rock it three times before throwing (create good habits). **Problems to watch for** – low elbow, arm doesn't go down and around (straight to the ear), fingers in front of the ball, elbow drops during throw (side arm), follow through. Video Link: <https://youtu.be/QsMHEtYTIFE>
3. Standing throw – Standing parallel (no stride, feet don't move) to your partner (sideways), similar to previous drill except now you're standing. Rock throwing arm down and around, elbow up, look at hand – fingers behind the ball, lead arm up, elbow pointed at the target, arms equal and opposite – rock it three times before throwing (create good habits). No stride-hips rotate, feet don't move. **Problems to watch for** – low elbow, arm doesn't go down and around (straight to the ear), fingers in front of the ball (push the ball), elbow drops during throw (side arm), follow through. Video Link: <https://youtu.be/zp4Qsno3H4g>
4. Ten Toes – Standing with all ten toes pointed at your partner (feet don't move). Same drill, but now we include the hips. (Hips deliver the shoulders which deliver the arm) Rotate hips, turn shoulders, throwing arm down and around and up to a throwing position, fingers behind the ball. Lead arm comes up with elbow pointed at the target, arms equal and opposite. **Problems to watch for** – lack of full rotation, arm doesn't go down (straight to the ear), elbow doesn't get up even or above the shoulder, lack of follow through. Video Link: <https://youtu.be/V7weq4u9RO0>
5. Step and Throw – Facing your partner, step, turn shoulders, arm goes down and around and up to throwing position. Lead arm up with elbow pointed at the target, arms equal and opposite. Throw and follow through (put it all together). **Problems to watch for** –

Arm doesn't go down (straight to the ear), elbow doesn't get up even or above the shoulder, lack of follow through. Elbow drops – side arm throw. Video Link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aDiZ5EXYNg0>

6. Long Toss – Face partner, crow hop, turn shoulders, arm down and around, elbow up, lead arm – elbow pointed at the target, arms equal and opposite. Follow through. **Problems to watch for** – Arm doesn't go down (straight to the ear), elbow doesn't get up even or above the shoulder, lack of follow through. Elbow drops – side arm throw. Watch for back shoulder to dip – throwing up hill. A little arc is good, but too much is bad, especially if their lead shoulder goes up and their back should drops. Keep shoulders level. Video Link: <https://youtu.be/z1L6fLF6ovY>

Pitching

Pitching Drills:

1. Simplicity – The biggest mistake young kids make when it comes to pitching is they make it too complicated. The most important pitch you will ever throw is a strike. To throw a strike, you need to do everything EXACTLY the same every time. So simplicity is the key.
2. The Stretch – Everything in the beginning should be done from the stretch. I, personally, do not teach a wind up. If a kid can throw 20 strikes in a row from the stretch, then you can consider a wind up. The problem with the wind up is that it is a lot of extra and unnecessary movement. Once you reach an age that the runners can lead off, 70% of the pitches will be from the stretch. And 100% of the important pitches will be from the stretch. So keep it simple.
3. Set up – Start with your foot against the rubber, not on top or halfway on the rubber. We want to be able to push off with your legs. Have your hands apart and your feet apart.
4. Set – After getting the sign from the catcher, come to the Set position (bring your hands together and your feet up to about shoulder width apart). Take a breath. Then throw (too many kids do not come set and technically are balking).
5. The Pitch – The key to the pitch is to use the same form that we worked on doing the throwing drills. Step toward the plate, glove extended to the target, long arm down and around up to the throwing position with your elbow up even with the shoulder. Then rotate the hips, then shoulders and your arm follows through as your chest extends towards your outstretched glove. **Problems to watch for** – Often, kids will come set and immediately step back with their lead foot. This is a terrible habit because many continue to do it when the kids can lead off and it's an easy stolen base. Many kids do not come set and pause, which is also a balk. Keep it simple. Come set, take a breath and throw. Video Link: <https://youtu.be/yECOR6ohKKw>



Hitting Drills

Hitting Drills:

1. Half Bat Tees – Stance slightly over shoulder length apart (you can jump up and land to get the usual power stance). Lead foot is half a step back from the tees. Lead arm has half bat. Grab shirt with other arm. Say “Set” – Get the hands moving. Lift hand and half bat into power position (slightly up from comfortable stance). Say “Stride” – Slight leg kick, step forward towards ‘pitch’. Keep stride leg stiff. Say “Swing” – Bring bat directly to the ball without letting hands drop. Rotate hips with the swing. **Problems to watch for** – Kids don’t lift their hands on ‘Set’. Want to get hands moving into power position. Kids drop their hands before bringing the bat to the ball. Do not swing ‘A’ to ‘B’ to ‘C’. Avoid the slow pitch softball swing. Kids stride and swing at the same time. Its two separate things. Don’t lunge forward when swinging. Keep the head still. Video Link for bottom hand: <https://youtu.be/HZ7bjgbbpaw> Video Link for top hand: <https://youtu.be/dp5QlfhaKbl>
2. Full Swing Tees - Stance slightly over shoulder length apart. Lead foot is half a step back from the tees. Both hands on bat. Make sure the ‘door knocking knuckles’ are lined up. “Set” – Get the hands moving. Lift hands and bat into power position (slightly up from comfortable stance). “Stride” – Slight leg kick, step forward towards ‘pitch’. Keep stride leg stiff. “Swing” – Bring bat directly to the ball without letting hands drop. Rotate hips with the swing. **Problems to watch for** – Kids don’t lift their hands on ‘set’. Want to get hands moving into power position. Kids drop their hands before bringing the bat to the ball. Do not swing ‘A’ to ‘B’ to ‘C’. Avoid the slow pitch softball swing. Kids stride and swing at the same time. Its two separate things. Don’t lunge forward when swinging. Keep the head still. Video Link: <https://youtu.be/NpsBtBw1LTc>
3. Soft Toss – The ‘thrower’ is diagonally in front on one knee. Show the ball to the batter. Say ‘Set’ (same action as above). Bring the ball back, say ‘Stride’ (same action as above). Bring the ball forward and toss without an arc on it to the batters front hip. Say ‘Swing’ (same action as above). **Problems to watch for** – The ‘tossing’ is very important. Do not put an arc on the ball. If you put an arc on the ball, the batter will have a tendency to drop their hands. This is a quick hands drill. Do not be in a hurry. Give the batter time

to set up and get in a good stance each time. It may take a few tries to get the rhythm.

Video Link: <https://youtu.be/SCJpyWvBnNM>

4. *Golf Balls* – Sitting or on a knee a few steps in front of the batter, give a firm and direct overhand toss. We are no longer saying ‘set’, ‘stride’, ‘swing’, but the hitter should follow that same method in the swing. **Problems to watch for** – Do NOT revert back to bad habits. Video Link: <https://youtu.be/xkRxlCP18Vc>
5. *Front Toss* – Often times, throwing batting practice can be challenging. Don’t be afraid to use front toss. It much easier to control the flight of the pitch. With batter in the batter’s box, you flip the L-Screen around. With only your arm extending outside of the edge of the L-Screen, underhand toss the pitch to the batter. Video Link: <https://youtu.be/x9ASZjiTntQ>

Fielding Drills

Fielding Drills:

1. *Repetition* – Don’t make fielding ground balls too difficult. Repetition is the most important thing. Make a line at each of the four infield positions with 4 coaches hitting to each position. Have them walk into the ball under control. Don’t let them sit back on their heels, but don’t have them charging out of control. As the approach the ball, break down their feet, bend at the knees and waist and extend the glove out and down, creating a triangle with the feet and glove. After receiving the ball, pop up and shuffle feet twice towards the target. Don’t allow them to just stand up and throw. Moving feet towards the target is the key to the throw. After enough repetition, split the group into two lines at 3B and SS. 3B will throw to 1B and SS will flip to 2B. Again, shuffle feet twice towards the target. Video Link: <https://youtu.be/Eju10-KQ-s>
2. *Advanced Footwork* – As the player progresses, we want them to start getting their feet set up correctly before fielding the ball. Layout 3 cones and have your player stand behind the cones. Roll a ball at the center cone. The player must go around the cones so that their feet are now headed to the throwing target as they field the ball so they can more quickly get off a good throw with their feet moving towards their target. Video Link: <https://youtu.be/ixxD0eovyCk>



Catcher Drills

The biggest mistake when it comes to the strike zone is the thought that it's controlled by the umpire. It's actually controlled by the Catcher.

Catcher Drills:

1. One knee receiving – The first and most important thing to teach a catcher is one knee receiving (Non-throwing situation). With your glove knee on the ground, get your body as low as possible. Umpires determine the strike zone off of the catcher's shoulder/body. The lower the catcher can get, the lower the strike zone goes. Keep your body completely quiet. The only thing that moves is the glove. Set the target in the strike zone. The moment the pitcher starts moving, drop the glove into the dirt. Wait to see the ball and take the glove directly to the ball (DO NOT go back to the middle of the zone and then go to the ball). After catching the ball, move the glove into the middle of the strike zone. Video Link:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SluFcqtHvPg>
2. No glove ball transition – Working on transition from glove hand to throwing hand. Take off the glove. Get in the squat positions (throwing situation). Make a target in the zone. The throwing will underhand a ball to the catcher. Have throwing hand behind the catching hand. When the catcher catches the ball, rotate hand to deliver the ball to the throwing hand. Stay low as you take ball back to throw, moving feet and hands at the same time to simulate a throw (fake a throw). Video Link:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j0OAP7-GkfU>
3. Throwing to bases - In full gear, catcher gets into a squat position assuming runner on first base. Thrower tosses the ball as if it's a pitch. Catcher catches the ball, and moving hands and feet at the same time, throws to second base (do not stand up completely to throw). Speed of transition is the key. Do not attempt to gain a lot of ground to make the throw.
4. Blocking – Assuming a throwing situation, so catcher is a squat position. Drop to knees to get into a blocking position with both knees down, glove down between them with

throwing hand behind the glove with the chest brought forward at a slight angle. Thrower tosses a ball in the dirt in front of the blocking catcher who exhales as the ball make contact. Do not move glove up to try to catch the ball. Glove stays on the ground. Video Link: [Pre-Down Blocking - Catcher Drills \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pre-Down Blocking - Catcher Drills)

5. More Blocking - Get in a squat position as if you're ready to receive a pitching with runners on base. Thrower tosses the ball in the dirt in front of the catcher who now needs to drop to knees, place glove between the knees with throwing hand behind the glove with chest at a slight angle forward. Exhale as ball make impact. Video Link: <https://youtu.be/NjEilCewGSA>
6. The Cheat Game – Catcher gets in a squat position as if runners are on base. The thrower backs up to at least 30 feet. Do not let the catcher know if it's going to be in the dirt or not. Catcher has to determine whether to block the ball if it's in the dirt or catch the ball as if it's a strike (and not drop to their knees).
7. Bunt Defense – Catcher gets into position and coach gets behind them. Toss the ball over his head into the field of play. Catcher sees the ball and comes out of squat to get to the ball. Catcher will toss the mask/helmet and get to the ball. After picking up the ball, the catcher will call out "inside" or "outside" letting the first baseman know where he is throwing the ball to avoid hitting the runner.



Driveline Arm Strengthening Program

Very highly advanced, ideal for middle & high school

Driveline Routine

1. Reverse Throws – This drill will help strengthen the shoulders to be able to handle higher velocities. The player kneels on the knee of the throwing arm. Starting with the Plyo-ball out in front of them, the player accelerates backward (in a reverse throwing motion) through a natural arm slot throwing the ball against the wall. The target for the throw is head height directly behind the thrower. Video Link: <https://youtu.be/ZjGhIW7LK80>
2. Pivot Pick Off Throws – This drill is designed to increase forward rotation, forearm strength and pronation speed. Start with the throwing arm perpendicular to the wall, feet don't move, rotate hips, Plyo-ball to the ear and throw against the wall. Pull the glove arm down. Target head height of the player on the wall. Video Link: <https://youtu.be/61J5OSiYq4>
3. Roll In Throws – Facing the wall, step without rotating hips to the wall, keep toes pointed to target, bring arm through with minimal rotation. As soon as the stride foot makes contact, bring the arm forward and fold the glove arm down, keeping stride foot braced. Video Link: <https://youtu.be/OvYCsocPJU>
4. Rocker Throws – Set feet to stride length. Rock forward, then back then throw the ball toward the wall. Keep the lead leg braced and target is eye level on the wall. Video Link: <https://youtu.be/Xjig15sFv9E>
5. Walking Wind Ups – Facing the wall, step with your non-stride foot, then rotate your hips, bringing you stride leg up as if delivering a pitch. Stride out and throw the Plyo-ball towards the target while not stopping at a balance point. Target is eye level on the wall. Video Link: <https://youtu.be/afhANT22g8>
6. Recovery – (Upward Tosses). Hold your arm out to the side with elbow even with the shoulder. Flip the ball up and then catch it on the way down. Video Link: <https://youtu.be/FHFUiiimorkQ>