

EVERYTHING *A New T Ball Coach Needs to Know*



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Preface

It's been over twenty years, but I remember that day like it was yesterday. After a couple of weeks searching around, I had finally found a T Ball league that started at the age of four. I was headed to their office to sign up my four year old that was dying to play.

As I walked into the office and introduced myself, I was handed a roster. "What's this?" I asked. "Your new T Ball team" was the reply.

For my son to play, I had to coach. They had lots of sign ups but few coaches. Ok, I'll give it a try. But what do I do? Everybody said don't worry, it's a walk in the park.



Well...it's not a walk in the park, especially in the beginning. But after you get comfortable with everything, it gets a lot easier and much more enjoyable.

And that is why I wrote this eBook. The quicker you figure things out, the happier you will be. This eBook will guide you through every step of the way. No need for you to make the same mistakes as myself and many others have made.

Before you begin your t ball journey, read my book and get some pointers on what to do. I've retraced my steps and covered most of what you need to know about coaching t ball. Sit back, relax and have some fun.

I would like to thank my wife, Paula, for all her support and encouragement.

And a special thanks to my editor, and soon to be daughter-in-law, Laura Palermo.

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The lawyers made me do this.

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Hello Coach

Welcome to the world of youth sports coaching. If no one has beat me to it, I would like to be the first to call you coach.

You are embarking upon a fun and rewarding season of coaching t ball to some eager and/or scared kids. If you are a little bit anxious, that's ok because they are nervous too!



First off, we want to thank you for your purchase. You made a great choice downloading this guide. For many of your new players this may be their first taste of organized sports.

Being organized and prepared will be your number one priority. Everyone will look to you for guidance so reading this book will help you gain the knowledge you need to look like the pro!

You will find in some parts of the book we have two sections; the four and five year old section, and the six and seven year old section. Many leagues include the ages from four to seven in t ball. There is usually division 1, four and five year olds; and division 2, six and seven year olds.

There is a world of difference between the skills and attention spans of four year olds and seven year olds. So, like in the practice drills sections, we have drills for four and five year olds and different drills for six and seven year olds.

There is a lot riding on you to win their confidence and make this a fun and rewarding time. This is where our guide will help you as we have experienced it all! We will tell you what works best as well as next steps. While there is no right way or wrong way to approach coaching, we want to help guide you in finding the right approach for you.

First Contacting Parents – What to Say

You may or may not know some or all of your players and their parents. Either way, communicate with them as soon as possible. Communication is key!

Word travels fast that t ball teams have been formed. Parents and kids are anxious to find out who their coach is.

For that reason alone, start contacting them as soon as you can. This will make a great first impression by showing them that you care and are on top of things.

We suggest your first contact with a parent should be by phone. This is the best way to introduce yourself and pass on some information. Be prepared for some lengthy calls as most parents have a list of questions or concerns for the coach.

They may ask a lot of questions that you don't know the answers to yet, like when is the first game. But reassure the parents that you let them know as soon as you find out.



Of course, many calls will only be brief. If you get an answering machine, go ahead and leave a message that you are the new coach and ask them to return your phone call.

After the first phone call, communicating to the masses by email is acceptable. Hopefully your league provided you with email addresses with your roster.

If they didn't, be sure to get them on that first phone call. And if the league did give you the email addresses, be sure to confirm those. People change email addresses frequently.

Keep in mind that each child might have more than one point of contact. There are many circumstances where multiple people need to be informed and notified. Coaching t ball is a lot easier when everyone is well informed.

Social media is also a great tool to communicate with your team. Create a Facebook group and invite all of the parents to join. From there, you can post updates and keep them informed.

Be Sure To Attend the Coach's Meeting

Your league will probably have a coaches meeting that you should attend. There are a couple of things you will want to ask about if they are not discussed.

Know the rules. All leagues have different rules and it is nice to know them. In my first t ball game as coach, our team started in the field and got the first three batters out. Since I thought three outs completed a half inning, I had our players run off the field. The umpire informed me that everyone bats 10 batters each half inning. I felt pretty stupid.

You also want to learn how the league cancels games due to bad weather. Nothing is worse than your entire team showing up at game time and no one else is there. Make sure to check your email before every game so you are up to date on the status.

Parents need to do this as well. Just because it didn't rain where you live doesn't mean that it didn't rain 10 miles away at the fields. The same advice should be applied for practice. If it looks rainy at all, check your email!

Recruiting Assistant Coaches



Good assistant coaches will make your life so much easier. And at the t ball level you should have no problem coming up with at least a couple of real helpful parents you can call assistant coach. Trust me, you will need them!

There will be some parents who thought about volunteering to be the head coach of a team, but got cold feet. These will be

your best helpers. They probably have been playing baseball with their child for a year or two, and won't need many instructions on how to teach or coach.

Then there will be some parents who want to help, but don't know the first thing about baseball. That is fine because there is plenty of need for parental guidance. Try to make these parents feel like their contribution is extremely important, because it is. Trying to corral 11 or 12 four or five year olds is more than a one person task.



Unless you already have some assistants lined up, get the word out early. From the beginning try to involve every parent you have. Parents that are involved are less likely to complain about what is being done. Everyone wants to feel like a part of the team.

If you create a great experience for kids and parents in youth sports, you will have made some lifelong friends. To this day I have parents come up to me that I can barely remember thanking me for coaching their child. It is fun to go to high school baseball games and see kids that I've coached still playing.

Line up your helpers early and be sure to communicate with them. The worst mistake you could make in coaching t ball is not asking for enough help.

Where to Practice?

One thing you will quickly learn about coaching youth sports is that practice facilities are hard to come by. However, t ball practice may be one of the easier sports to find a location. While a baseball field with a backstop and stands would be ideal, you can practice t ball on any open field.

The league you are a part of may provide a field for practice, but don't hold your breath. The league probably has dozens of teams in each age group, and a limited number of fields. T ball teams always seem to be at the bottom of the barrel in choices. If your league offers you a practice time, grab it. It may not be what you want, but maybe you can make a trade with someone else.

More than likely you will be searching for an open field to use. Churches are a great place to start. They are typically cooperative, especially if you have a member of the church on your team. Most of them have big open areas as well!

Be sure to get it cleared with the maintenance department of the church. You might ask them if it is ok for you to cut the grass a little lower if needed. We used a church once and the grass was always high. One of our dads volunteered to mow the grass before every practice. Some parents really help out!

Another possibility is a grade school. This is usually a little tougher, unless you have a good connection. Once the school allows one team to use a field, they get lots of calls from other coaches. Many principals don't want the headache. And schools may want you to have a certificate of insurance. This is a cost you probably don't want to incur.



Here is what you are looking for in a practice facility. Enough room to hold a small infield, with bases 45 to 50 feet apart. You will also need enough room to have another station or two going. While you are coaching “run the bases”, an assistant coach can be holding hitting or fielding drills. You don't need an entire football field size, but maybe a third of one.

Be sure to find out where parents should park. Don't forget to leave the area litter free. If there was some litter there when we showed up, we always picked that too. The last thing you want is to lose the use of the field. In many cases, just use common sense.

Always Think About Safety

I know you will be as safe as possible, but here are a couple of issues that we want to give you a heads up on. First off, do not use real baseballs, or as they are also known, hardballs, in any situation.

Don't Use Hardballs

Now I'm sure you wouldn't use hardballs for playing catch, but maybe you think they are ok for a ground ball drill. Don't do it.

One of your ground balls might take a bad hop, and kids this age just cannot react fast enough. You wind up with a player who has a cut lip or broken tooth and very mad parents.

Parents sign their child up for t ball expecting a safe environment. No one can guarantee that there will be no injuries, but getting hitting with a hardball is not acceptable in t ball.

Make sure every assistant coach knows not to use real baseballs. It is a good idea to make sure every parent is aware of this as well.

Little Johnny might show up at practice with his big brother's baseball and plans on using it to play catch. Hopefully, if his parents know that baseballs are not allowed, they will correct the situation before it even happens.

Throwing the Bat – Big No No

Here is an even tougher situation. Every t ball team has one or two players who just let their bat fly after hitting the t ball. This is extremely dangerous and you need to address it before every practice and before every game.

Teach your players to set the bat on the ground after hitting the ball, and then run to first. In most leagues a player is out for throwing his bat.



Even when you are practicing running drills around the bases, have the batter swing an imaginary bat, set it on the ground, and then run. A bat flying through the air can cause serious injuries so it is important to remind the players to swing, set the bat down, and then run.

You may want to do a hitting and running drill a few times at the first practice without a bat. Kids will tell you that they understand what you are telling them, but really don't. Run a hitting drill without a bat and see if everyone sets the bat down, If not, correct immediately.

These two situations happen very often so it is important to be on top of your game!

How many practices a week - 2 but only 1 required

You have your team and you have found a field to use for practice, so when should you schedule practices? If you have the luxury of picking any times that you like, then consider yourself lucky!

Let's just assume you can pick any practice times that you like. Here are some thoughts to keep in mind. Weekends are a good time to schedule practices, except you are always going to have some kids missing. Birthday parties, out of town trips, and family functions usually out rank a t ball practice.

So you decide to avoid those conflicts and have practice during the week. With kids this age you don't want to be practicing too late. If your season starts before school is out, and most do, then you need to have practice over by 7 or 7:30.

Ideal Time 6:00 to 7:00

Don't start practice before 5:30. Any earlier than that and lots of kids will be late. An hour practice from 6 to 7 would probably be ideal. Friday night is considered part of the weekend and Wednesday is typically church night, so you are down to Monday, Tuesday or Thursday.

There is one thing I forgot to mention. If you are using a baseball field provided by the league, then you may lose use of it after games start. You want to be sure and find out if this is the case. If it is true, you may need to look a little harder for another field to use.

Monday, Tuesday or Thursday

So it appears that Monday, Tuesday or Thursday, from 6 to 7 might be the ideal time to have your weekly practice. Even 5: 30 to 6:30 or 6:30 to 7:30 would also be about as good. It might be in the middle of dinner time for some people, but something has to give.

You will learn that you are never going to please everyone. There were baseball seasons that our practice times would just not work out for a family, so we found them another team and made a swap. If you try hard enough, you can usually find a solution.

Two Practices – Only One Required

Here's another idea you might try and should work for about everybody. If you can, schedule one practice on a week night like we discussed above, and schedule another practice on Saturday. Tell everyone that you only expect them to make one of the practices each week, but if they want to come to both that would be great.

This schedule is really the best of both worlds and you can really make some progress with the kids that show up twice a week. If you are able to do this, probably about three fourths of your team will make both practices.

This might be a great schedule to use up until games start. If you play games twice a week, then two practices on top of that might be too much.

The best plan is to try and practice twice a week before games start, and then play it by ear. There might be weeks with only one and you might practice twice that week. Then when there are two games in a week, have only one practice.



As long as you listen to feed back from the majority of your parents and most are fine with your schedule, then you should have little trouble.

What to Do Before Practices

Practice is where assistants will help you out big time. I don't have to tell you that 4 through 7 year olds have short attention spans, and get bored quickly. Assistant coaches will help you keep practices active and fun.

Different Stations

You will want your practices to have many different stations and at each station you will need at least one parent to help. In some cases you will need more than one so lose that "I can handle this alone" attitude and share the fun.



Once you know how many parents will help and how many stations you can have, print out a listing of stations and a brief description for each station. Be sure to have a copy of station instructions for each station at practice so there is no confusion. Trust me on this, your life will be so much easier if you print out instructions.

Instructions don't need to be long or super detailed. Just something quick like at a throwing station tell the assistant to work with the players on stepping forward with the opposite foot and throwing. My instructions were never more than a line or two. Just something to give them an idea what I was thinking.

Schedule the Time

With most practices being an hour long, you will also have to schedule the length of time to be spent at each station. You need to have one main station, such as running the bases or learning to field groundballs. Here excess players can wait their turn. At the other stations you might have



players rotate every 5 or 10 minutes. The time allowed at each station will depend upon the number of players and the number of stations you have.

If you have plenty of assistants, the best use of your time will be spent going from one station to the next and offering words of encouragement. It is also easier to keep track of the time if you are not involved in a drill. If you are not running a drill, don't let parents occupy your time with idle conversation. Mix it up with the players and get to know them.

Plan Ahead

To be really prepared for practice, you might assign assistant coaches to stations a few days prior to practice, and email the list to everyone. In the beginning, you could also include in the email "station instructions". There will be questions about your instructions, so this is a way you can hopefully have them all answered before practice.

There will always be one or two parents who at the last minute find out they can't make practice. Because of this, it is a good idea to hold back a couple of assistants from the original list, and use them as fill ins. List them on the original list as helpers at a station that doesn't really need help. Then they can either help out there, or take over a vacant station.

If you are organized and have plenty of good help, practices will be your favorite part of t ball. Just make sure the kids are having as much fun as you are!

Practice Drills 4 & 5 Year Olds

Starting From Scratch

You will have players who show up at your first practice and don't know which hand to put their glove on...no joke!

Many will be so scared that you will need a pair of scissors to cut the apron strings from their mom. Now I'm kidding, but they may need some coaxing to get involved.

There is no need to push or rush things with shy kids. Let mom and dad handle the situation and just go about practice like it is no big deal. After some time, they will warm up and adjust to practice.

This is not the time to be the aggressive coach.

But here's a helpful tip. Kids are just like adults, in that we feel more comfortable around people who know us. The sooner you can learn your player's names, the sooner they will warm up to you.



Work hard on memorize their names. It will go a long way!

Unless your team is well advanced, the following three drills are about all you should attempt at your first few practices. Anything more and you will beat your head against a wall.

Playing Catch

The first is playing catch. Or should I say playing chase. One player throws the ball and the other player chases it.

Do not get hung up on trying to have them master playing catch quite yet. T ball is the right age to introduce them to playing catch, but they are a few years from being able to do it well.

Start off practice with this drill so when the other kids show up, it is easy for them to join.

This is also a good time to start getting parents involved. Rather than have them play catch with their child, have them back up their child.

Otherwise this drill will look like a three ring circus. Recruit all the help that you can! Getting the parents involved is important because they will not only lend a helping hand, they will also learn how to instruct their child.

Most of us know how to play catch. We forget to tell someone who is learning to step with their opposite foot or to hold their glove open to catch a ball. These are examples of things that are sometimes overlooked.

While doing this drill, be on the lookout for players that can catch and throw. Try to pair them up in practice and in a game, play them at the pitcher and first baseman positions. They might actually make some outs.

Try and run the two drills at the same time. The more kids you have doing a drill, the more successful your practices will be. The next drill is hitting and the other is running the bases.

Hitting Drills

Since the hitting drills are usually off away from the infield, it is a good idea to have your assistant coaches run them. Contact them prior to practice and make sure they are willing to volunteer. Describe to them what you want to teach the kids during these drills.

They can set up and hit in the outfield. Go ahead and use two tees if you have them. If you have two, send a group of five or six to do this drill. If you only have one tee, I would send a group of two or three.

In the beginning, a big emphasis should be on not throwing the bat. A few kids will swing the bat and let it fly. Many leagues will call the batter out for doing this, and with good reason. Throwing the bat cannot be allowed.

Teach the players to swing, and then lay the bat down before doing anything else. Don't let them take one step without setting the bat down.



The other training that should be done with hitting is checking the placement of their hands. Right handed batters should have the left hand on the bottom and both hands should be touching.

If you have plenty of help, have one parent work with the players waiting to hit. They could be showing the players how to place their hands on the bat and how to hold the bat up and behind their head. There is no need for a tee to do this, just enough parents to help.

Once they are at the tee and hitting, try to get them to swing level and through the ball. Some players will swing so soft it looks like they are bunting the ball.

Tell them it is ok to swing hard and make sure to reinforce the idea of setting the bat down after hitting the ball. You can never repeat that too much.

Running the Bases

The last of the 4 and 5 year old tee ball drills is running the bases. At my first tee ball practice I was shocked that kids did not know how to run the bases.



Start the drill with a parent or two at home plate, you at first base, another parent at second base and one at third base.

The parents at home will have the kids stand in the batter box. Then, when the parent says "Play Ball", they will swing an imaginary bat, lay the imaginary bat down and run to first.

You will be at first and encouraging them to run hard and get to first. For the first few practices you should only work on one base at a time. Later on you can work on advancing past first on their hit.

I suggest placing a parent at every base to show the players where to run. Some leagues allow coaches at every base in games also.

Even if your league does not allow this, I would place them there the first few practices. It takes a while for most of the kids to figure out where to go on the bases.

You can use this drill at every practice. Most teams will need to work on this drill all season.

There you have it, the three tee ball drills to run at your first few practices. Kids at this age like a routine and after a few practices they will enjoy knowing what drills will be done at practice.

You might think they would get bored with these drills, but that is not the case. Just keep everything positive and you will do fine.

Practice Drills for 6 and 7 Year Olds – Part 1

Practice drills for six and seven year olds start to resemble real baseball...just a little. You and the players are both ready to advance from the hitting and running drills of four and five year teams, and move on to learn things like base running rules, fielding positions and more catching techniques.



However, do not forget those basic drills. If you haven't already, go back and read the drills for four and five year olds. In your early practices you might want to use them for a short period of time as a refresher.

Hitting off the tee and running the bases will still be an integral part of your game. Start with the four and five year basic drills and build from there.

Some things you should put emphasis on are running through the bag at first and sliding into the other bases. You should also teach them to swing hard thru the ball while hitting.

Before we move on to the drills, there are a couple of important points I want to mention here.

Start Practice on Time

You, as head coach, and hopefully your assistants, should arrive at practice fifteen to twenty minutes early.

This gives you time to set up the bases and hitting tees. It also gives you time to answer questions of parents who arrive early.

More importantly, arriving early and being set up lets the parents know that practice will start on time. If you start on time it is more likely that parents will have their child at practice and ready to go on time.

Have a Practice Plan

The other important point is having a plan for practice and trying hard to stick to that plan.

Your practices are probably only an hour long or maybe an hour and a half at most. You probably will only practice once or twice a week before games start so practice time is very precious. There are a lot of things you need to teach your players, and little time to get it done.

Many of your parents will be learning during your practices, just like their child. Most of them played t ball, but they have never coached. They can catch a ball but don't know how to teach their child to catch.

This is where your instructions become valuable to them and this is why you need to cover as many areas of playing baseball as possible.

The more you teach, the more your parents will know what to work on at home. Now, it's time to move on to drills.

Playing Catch

Let's first talk about playing catch. Again, it is the ideal drill to start a practice. It only takes two to play catch, so as the players show up pair them together to warm up their arms.



Better yet, have an assistant coach running this drill. Parents like to ask the head coach questions when they arrive at practice or they want to relay information about their child missing a future practice or game.

It helps to have some free time to answer questions or write down information parents are passing on.

At this age, it is time to start working on the thumb pointing up and thumb pointing down catching drill.

Any baseball that a player catches over his waist he should have his fingers and thumb pointing up. Any baseball that a player catches below his waist he should have his fingers and thumb pointing down. It seems pretty basic until you watch a player trying to catch a ball below his waist with his thumb pointing up.

Teach the finger and thumb up drill to all the players the first couple of practices. Some will pick it up real quick, and it will take longer for others.

You can tell who gets to play catch at home, just observe who is still having a problem and either you or an assistant work one on one with them for a couple of minutes. Eventually, they will figure it out.

Relay Throwing Drill

Now it is time to introduce the relay drill. This is a drill that will help players improve their throwing accuracy and catching abilities. Kids love games that are competitive...Don't we all!

Set this drill up as a race. After the players have had a chance to warm up their arms, split the team up into groups of four or five. Each team will be in a straight line. Spread the players a part about ten to fifteen feet.

They are going to have a relay race by throwing the ball from one player to the next all the way down the line. They will then turn around and throw it back to the beginning. The purpose of this drill is to teach them to throw and catch a ball.

Any bad throws have to be retrieved by the players and then they go back to their positions and try the throw again.

The big point to make with the players is to try and make an accurate throw the first time. Teach them to hurry, but don't go so fast that their throws are wild.

This drill could turn out to be one of your popular drills and you may want to use it at every practice.

Practice Drills for 6 and 7 Year Olds – Part 2

In Part 1, we talked about working harder this year on getting the players comfortable while playing catch. We introduced a new relay throwing drill to help with this.

In the next couple of years when your players are in machine pitch or coaches pitch, the kids who can catch and throw good will stand out.

in this section we are going to talk about fielding and hitting.

Fielding – Ground Balls

Let's start with fielding. If your team rotates players to different positions, which is recommended, then every player will probably have a groundball or two hit to them during the season.

Practice is the time to introduce your players to the proper way to field a groundball. Since most groundballs aren't hit directly at fielders, you must teach them to run over and get in front of the groundball.

Show them how to bend over and place their glove down to the ground, or near it, and scoop or trap the ball. Then bring the ball into their body, stand up and throw to the proper base.

Fielding – Pop Ups



T ball seems to have a lot of pop ups. Teach your players to get under the ball and catch it at eye level. Unless the player has been working on this somewhere else, this will take some to learn.

Fielding a groundball or catching a pop up is pretty scary the first few times. Start with tossing the groundballs slowly and don't throw the pop ups high; you are trying to

build some confidence in their abilities.

The last part of fielding is to introduce the kids to the force out rule and the tag up rule on pop ups.

Force Out Rule

When teaching the force rule, where a runner is forced to the next base by the batter, always use live examples. In other words, have an assistant coach or dad stand on first and have someone bat and hit a groundball.

Then, show the players that fielding that groundball and getting the ball to second base before the runner from first gets there is an out.

Show them that a runner on second with no runner on first does not have to run, and cannot be forced out. To get that player out, he has to be tagged with the ball while not on a base.

Use situations to show what a runner on first base has to do if there is a pop up. He has to get back to the base quick if it is caught, or get to the next base if it is dropped.

I would suggest the only other thing about the rules to teach at this time is if a runner is hit by a groundball, then he is out. Tell them when they are running the bases check and see where the ball is hit. They want to get out of the way of the ball if it is coming towards them.

If they can learn these rules by season end, then they will be ahead of the pack.

Hitting

Earlier we talk about hitting and hand placement as well as following through and a player's swinging level. You definitely will want to reinforce those ideas as they are the foundation for hitting in t ball.

Now we are going to start fine tuning the batting stance and swing.

First, make sure the batters feet are shoulder width apart. This will help with their balance and good balance is key for a strong swing.

Their feet should be placed across from the tee, maybe slightly behind it and knees should be slightly bent. You want the body leaning forward, only to get the weight of the body on the balls of their feet. It is hard to swing when you are leaning back on your heels.

The bat needs to be held high at shoulder level. If the bat and hands are too low it will cause an upper swing and pop up just like in this picture.

Now tell the batter to keep both eyes on the ball and to swing all the way through the ball. Many young players will stop their swing upon contact. Keep working with them until they swing thru the ball.



Don't forget laying the bat down and running to first!
Lying the bat down is a big safety issue that needs to really be emphasized.

If your players can perform all these drills efficiently, you will have a good job of coaching. Congratulations!

Off Field Activities

One of the first articles in this book is about recruiting assistant coaches to help you on the field. Another person you need just as badly is an assistant for off field activities.

This person is going to make your coaching life much simpler. They are going to handle things like uniform sizes, snack lists, and the season ending get together.

If possible choose someone organized, but don't hesitate, grab anyone that acts excited!



Ask the moms if any of them would be interested in being the administrator assistant, and you may find your answer. There are people who may not want to coach, but like being involved in other ways.

Quite often, no one volunteers and this person turns out to be your spouse. If this is not the case, keep searching and plead a little if necessary.

Trust me, you will be glad you have someone else handling these items. You, as the coach, don't have time during practice to be running around and getting shirt sizes. Try hard to

delegate this out.

Uniform Sizes

One of the first duties this person should perform is getting uniform sizes. While your first game may not be for another month, you need to get uniforms ordered right away. This is a very busy time for uniform or screen shops and their lead time will be long.

In many leagues, t ball teams just wear the same t-shirts and caps. In some leagues teams wear the full uniform. As I said before, this is an item with a long lead time, so jump on this quick.

If you have your assistant before the first practice, use this time to get sizes. They can gather the information from the parents while you are running practice. This will be a big time saver!

If you try to get this information by email or over the phone, you may wind up spending a couple of nights working on it. It takes longer than you would imagine!

Snack List

Another duty for your assistant is preparing a snack list. Typically, teams will pass around a signup sheet. It may be just one snack per player, or a snack and a drink.

If you have enough parents and not many games, one set of parents can bring a snack and another set of parents the drink.

At this age, snacks after the game are a big deal. After a game my players never asked who won, they just wanted to know who brought the snacks.

In fact, just last fall, we saw our grandson crying after his first t ball game. We rushed over to him ask what's wrong or see if he was hurt?



Oh no. During the summer season he had gotten used to snacks after the game. But his dad, the coach, decided no snacks in this fall season. Our grandson had just found this out.

It is a good idea to ask if any of the players have a food allergy. One of our grandsons has a peanut allergy and it is very important that he not eat

anything with nuts. Parents of kids with food allergies will really appreciate you addressing this.

It is very important that your administrative assistant send out reminders to parents bringing snacks a couple of days before their game. People forget easily and everyone feels bad when the snacks are forgotten.

Pictures

Everyone loves to get the baseball cards of t ball players. There is nothing cuter than seeing your four year old grandson or nephew in his uniform with a bat in his hand.

The leagues know this and they typically line up a photographer to handle the duties. Hopefully, you are not involved in collecting any of the fees for pictures.

The first or second year it is probably wise to go with the league on this. However, in later years, as a service to your parents, you may want to shop around and see if you can find a better deal.

One year, I even had a dad on the team who was an amateur photographer take the pictures. He did an outstanding job and everyone was happy. Just make sure whoever you pick knows what they are doing.

While trying to help everyone save a few dollars, you don't want to create a headache for yourself.

Medals

Most leagues provide some type of year end "hardware". It might be a medal, a trophy or just a certificate.

Our league gave all players a medal. I would get them and have our team name and year engraved on the back. It didn't cost much and everyone appreciated the added touch.

If your league provides nothing, then I would suggest finding or creating a certificate to give the players. It's something the parents can put in their scrapbooks.

Season Ending Get Together

This is what pizza shops were made for. Not every team has a pizza or swim party at the end of the season, but I would say most do. Unless you had an awful year with the parents, this is a nice gesture.

Most pizza places have handled many of these and might even have a separate room. Have your assistant check around and make a reservation.



Make sure to ask if they offer any deals for large parties. And have everyone pay their own bill.

My wife always made a cake for this occasion. Again, just a nice added touch that people enjoyed.

A good time to have this party is the same day and time when you had games. Everyone has this time blocked out for t ball, so it usually works for the party.

You want to have the party as soon as you can after the season ends. Some kids start another activity soon after t ball, so the sooner you have the party the better.

This party is where you hand out the medal or certificates. Many of your parents may have already asked you, but this party is also a good time to inform everyone what your intentions are for next year.

Do you plan to coach again? Are you trying to keep the same team or going to have tryouts? Next season begins on this night.

Bonus #1

Baseball Equipment Needed – The Must Have and the Nice to Have

Here are the essentials that you are going to need:

- At least one batting tee (two would be even better)
- T balls (a half dozen or so should get you started)
- Depending on your practice location, bases
- Batting helmets
- Catcher's equipment (may not be needed, read below)
- Water cooler

Before you go buy all these things, check with your league. Your league might supply some of this. If they do, it will probably be catcher's equipment and batting helmets.

Another source to check is with the players parents. A couple of them may have batting tees you can use.

A couple of other great places to check is second hand stores and garage sales.

Batting tee (or two):



You really want to go for quality here. Some of your kids will be able to swing a metal bat pretty hard, but not accurate. A cheap batting tee will not stand up to being hit multiple times, and your tee is going to get hit a lot. A good quality batting tee will run you around \$25 to \$30 dollars.

The batting tee will be used in future years. My eighteen year old son hits off our tee all the time. It is one of the best practice tools for older

players also.

Two batting tees would just be a luxury when you have batting practice. If you have two tees, and two hitting coaches (be on the lookout for them all the time) then all the players will get more swings per practice. So the second one would be nice, just not a must.

T Balls:

You are going to need one t ball (any ball that is soft) for every two players. The reason behind this is when you have a throwing and catch drill, two players will play catch with one ball.

There are many different types of t balls available. I wouldn't buy any expensive ones. Ten or twelve dollars for six balls should be the most you have to pay.



Most leagues will provide balls for the games. You may want to check that out, because for games you want to use a pretty good ball. But for practice, even tennis balls would work, especially for hitting.

Bases:

You should check out your practice field to see if bases are available. If not, buy some throw down bases at Wal-Mart or Target for around \$8. Or you could make some. Even cones would work.

But you will need something to identify the bases for your running drills. Something flat so the runners can stand on them is the most important thing.

Batting Helmets:

Hopefully this is another item your league will furnish. Lots of your players will have their own but you cannot always depend on other players bringing them.

Your team will need at least four. One is needed for each runner on all three bases and one for the batter. You should be able to find a helmet for around \$10.

Catcher's Equipment:

More than likely you won't need this at all. Few leagues require a catcher to wear catcher's gear. If they do require it, they should be providing it. Unless you are told differently by your league, don't worry about a mask, chest protector or shin guards. In my opinion, they are not needed.

Water cooler:

Just thought I would mention a water cooler. If it will be hot and water is not provided at the field, then you might consider bring a water cooler and cups.

At this age water can be a big distraction and problem. It doesn't take much for a water fight to break out. If you do bring one to a practice or a game, be sure to have a parent keep an eye on it.

Bonus #2

Recruiting Players – The Dos and Don'ts

It is always nice when doing something new to have friendly faces along for the ride. And that is true with coaching t ball. If you are in a position to pick your own players, then think it over.

There are pros and cons to choosing friends to join the team.



Before you start loading up your team with neighborhood kids, check with your league to see if and how many players you can bring with you. Many leagues frown upon or completely disallow coaches from forming their own team.

Select Teams Allowed?

These leagues are worried about select teams coming in and dominating other teams. These leagues might not even keep score, but they want the level of play to be somewhat equal for both teams.

Some leagues require a certain number of players to be from the local city or school district. This is usually a city run league using some government funding. Again, if you know the rules ahead of time you can plan accordingly.

So let's say your league is ok with you bringing five or six players with you and your child has some friends that might like to play. Maybe there is a cousin that wants to play on the team. Sounds like a no brainer asking them to join the team, doesn't it?

Who to Recruit?

In most cases I would say yes, try to recruit some friends for the team. Typically, people that know you are more likely to help out. They are already comfortable with your personality and you will feel at ease asking them to help.



Also, the player knows you and that getting to know you period is already over. While that's not a big deal with many kids, it is for some.

Make sure to think about this carefully. Does this family miss many events? Do they show up late often? And do they ask for rides for their child a lot?

Since they know the coach, they probably won't be any different with t ball. You may feel taken advantage of.

Missing practices may not bother you much, but other parents will see it as your friends taking advantage of you. It is just not a good situation.

Another potential problem is your friends expecting favorable playing time. At this age equal playing time is the best course of action. Learning and having fun are the top priorities, not winning games.

Down the Road

And the last consideration when choosing friends is a long range one. It may not be for a couple of years but at some point your child and his friends may be heading in different directions as far as baseball is concerned.

If you continue to coach, and you decide to keep your team more non-competitive, some kids will leave seeking a more competitive team. If you decide to make your team more competitive, you may have to cut some kids.

Both situations mean you will lose some players off your teams in the future. In the second situation, where you are cutting players, it can get nasty. Just a heads up as to what the future might have in store for you.

With one son I coached in t ball we kept the team together for five years. When it was time for us to move on to a more competitive league, we only took a few players with us. Those that I was not taking with me I let know up front, before the end of the season.

There were no hard feelings at all. I explained to the parents that their child just wasn't ready for competitive baseball. I had hoped that one of the remaining parents would take the team over that next year, but it didn't happen.

Since I didn't spring it on them at the end of the season, and instead talked individually with each set of parents in the spring, everything went smoothly.

Yes, Recruit Friends

It may seem that I am not in favor of picking friends to join your team, but in fact I highly recommend it. At the same time, I wanted you to be aware of the pitfalls that lie ahead.

You must be thinking who would have dreamed coaching t ball could be so difficult. Yes, coaching, even at the t ball ages, has its ups and downs.

Hopefully, your ups way outnumber the downs.

Thank You So Much!

I hope you've enjoyed this eBook as much as I loved writing it for you. Baseball is a great game and the more kids playing it the better.



To each and every one of you I take my hat off for taking on the hard task of coaching our youth. If you haven't learned already the rewards are big to those that take the time to work with kids, but the pitfalls can also be very big. Don't get discouraged and remember you are doing this for the kids.

I now have two favors to ask of you. I know you are a busy person and I respect that. But if you happen to get a minute, I would love to hear what you think about this eBook. Please go to my website, www.helpful-baseball-drills.com and leave a comment. Or, you can shoot an email to me at vic@helpful-baseball-drills.com . I read and answer every email.

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