

# *T-Ball Manual, Drills, and Practice Plans*

Written by: Michael Paladino

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**Questions on any information included herein please contact:**

Michael Paladino [mpaladino@mfpglobal.com](mailto:mpaladino@mfpglobal.com)

Peter Torres [ptorres13@hotmail.com](mailto:ptorres13@hotmail.com)

Jason Halper [jasonhalper75@gmail.com](mailto:jasonhalper75@gmail.com)

or the commissioner Ian Magley [ianmagley@gmail.com](mailto:ianmagley@gmail.com)

Good luck and have fun!

## Introduction

This is the Randolph Baseball T-Ball manual complete with gameplay guidelines, drills, and practice plans. The emphasis is on learning fundamentals and teaching a love and respect for the game.

Coaching at the T-ball level is not always easy. Aside from feeling at some points that you are doing well just to get everyone to pay attention. That's why the drills and practice plans are important tools in keeping the players learning, engaged and excited. Be prepared and efficient

Assistant coaches are key! Being able to conduct these sorts of drills (and to keep things moving) is one of the reasons that we suggest “the more the better” in terms of assistant coaches – ideally you would have at least 4 coaches (including yourself) helping at each practice/game

This designs T-ball practices by outlining T-ball drills and games that will build skill development, while being fun for the players. In **Drills and Practice Plans** we've got 7 practice plans with the drills we have included, so you can have a practice laid out for you. **Be sure to stick to the practice plans as outlined.**

Each of the practices are going to be 90 minutes long.

The drills are divided into four main areas:

- Hitting
- Fielding / throwing
- Game play
- Scrimmage

There is an orientation, gameplay guidelines, and fundamentals section. The fundamentals are very important as those throwing, catching and hitting mechanics are what we are trying to develop at this and every level of Randolph Little League. In addition, the drill section will show you what you need to run the drill, how to run the drill and then what kind of results you should expect.

When you get to the **Practice Plans**, where applicable, please be sure to break players up into groups of 3 or 4 with a coach to keep the drill and players moving.

Scoring scrimmage is slowly integrated thru the first three Practice Plans. Evaluation and lineup sheets also included.

## **Orientation**

Let each player introduce themselves to the group and who's their favorite MLB player.

Explain they will have fun and learn the proper way to play baseball. Suggest they come up with a team name

Expectations are to give best effort, pay attention and show good sportsmanship toward teammates and opponents.

Always run on and off field and all players will get to hit and play everywhere in the field.

### **Expectations on game day:**

- when batting is lineup on bench in batting order with helmet on and bat against the fence. No bats are allowed to be in hitters hands unless they are at the plate hitting. No throwing of bats after swinging
- be prepared with hat and glove to go into field

At the conclusion of each practice be sure to review briefly practice and or scrimmage. Tell players what they are doing well, where they have improved and remind them of the things they can practice at home. Remind them to thank their coach's.

Be sure to outline to players and parents to practice what is learned at home whether playing with peer, parent or throwing a tennis ball against a wall or even just up in the air to self.

### **3 Inning Gameplay Modified Scoring**

- Gameplay can be as long as 3 innings but games will be limited to 90 minutes
- Remind players on gameday protocol, sitting in order on bench, no bats in hand, have fielding gloves and hats ready after hitting. Run on and off field
- Position fielding team at pitcher and remaining 4 infield positions and one additional behind the 2<sup>nd</sup> base bag as a 5<sup>th</sup> infielder. The presence of this fielder should aid the players in getting force outs at 2<sup>nd</sup> base. Remaining fielders can be spread evenly thru the outfield. Be sure to remind the player their area of responsibility to mitigate all the players chasing the ball (which is not uncommon)
- All hitters hit each half inning. Runners out come off the bases. Baserunners can advance only one base at a time including the batter.
- Score can be kept by fielding team recorded outs, ie for each out recorded in the field of play the fielding team gets 1 point. Hitting teams do not count runs.
- Coach 1 should be allocated at home plate to advise the hitter of proper technique and tee the ball.
- Coach 2 line up behind pitcher instructing fielders on ready position and thinking about where to go with ball. Stress responsibility for each position
- Coach 3 at first base in foul territory advising runners to run thru the bag and when to run to second.
- Coach 4 at third base in foul territory advising runners when to run home and remind them on proper baserunning. Can slide feet first at home plate
- Any additional coach's or volunteers can work with outfielders and also keep players in order in the bench area reminding them when to hit and take field and enforce bench rules
- Be sure to rotate fielders each inning. Be sure to use players more likely to catch a ball at first base. Should gameplay slow any extra outfielders can work on coach thrown pop ups in between batters or during instruction at the plate. Same applies to infield coach. To keep players engaged roll groundballs and have them return the throw to you
- After the game, the day is finished with a relay race against the two teams. One team starts at home plate the other at 2<sup>nd</sup> base. If uneven number of players someone runs twice. Reinforce baserunning principles

## Fundamentals – To be applied with attention to detail in all drills and gameplay

- **Hitting mechanics** - focus on good stance and hand position

- i. Hands back
- ii. Feet shoulder width apart
- iii. Emphasize good hand position

*Don't overgrip bat (ie hold it lightly, don't squeeze it)*

*Line up second set of knuckles (ie the ones just above a ring, if you were wearing a ring) in hitting stance – many kids at this age over rotate their top hand (so that their first set of knuckles are lined up, ie the ones where your fingers start) – a proper grip is key for bringing the bat through the hitting zone properly*

- iv. Work on bat coming through hitting zone on a level plane, and with a snap of the wrists (think about hammering a nail into a wall at about waist height – that's the action you want as the bat comes through the hitting zone)

- v. Some kids can start adding in a small step to start their swing – doesn't need to be a big step at this age which will just throw their swing off

- vi. Follow through – wrists flip over after contact, and bat finishes on front shoulder/tricep (ie don't let swing stop out in front of you as with a forehand in tennis – flipping wrists over after contact and bringing bat around to front shoulder/tricep will add power

- vii. Most important thing at this and any age really – especially in the games – remind them to watch the ball all the way to point of contact!

- **Fielding fundamentals**

- i. Work on good ready position – feet shoulder width apart, hands out in front at waist level with palms up (not on ground to start), bend in knees and at waist with glove down and out in front with free hand behind glove

- ii. Ground balls – slide laterally to get into position in front of ball, hands drop to ground with both hands out in front (ball should be fielded out in front, not between legs), knees bent, head up, free hand behind glove – then shift into proper throwing position by moving feet and stepping to target. Alligator can be taught where free hand is used to cover ball upon entry into glove. If ball is bobbled or dropped teach player to push ball into ground with bare hand to pick up and throw. Remind players to watch ball all the way into the glove. Don't rush take time on mechanics

- iii. Catching - Glove extended away from the body. Players will try to catch palm up...attempt to have them turn the glove thumb pointed down and catch properly. Watch ball into the glove. Dropped balls are expected..stay positive and stick to the plan –goal here is to get the players to understand proper throwing technique and proper position and technique when receiving.

iv. Pop flies – tough at this age for many kids (start with tennis balls) – Start without gloves, then progress to using a glove. Both hands should be held out high with palms facing up. Emphasize the triangle shape both hands make, i.e., hands should be relatively close to one another. Head and shoulders should be directly under the ball when catch is being made. Ball to be aligned slightly in front and above head. Throwing hand covers the ball as it enters the glove

- **Throwing Mechanics**

i. Start facing sideways with throwing hand away from target, and with hands in ready position, feet shoulder width apart, front hip pointing at target (ball in throwing hand with proper grip ready to throw, throwing hand in glove) At this level is recommend kids gripping with three fingers (2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup>) across the seams (if possible) and not holding the whole ball in their hands

ii. Break hands from ready position - throwing hand comes up and back with ball facing away from target, and extend glove hand simultaneously toward target)

iii. Step toward target and throw ball, extending throwing arm overhand, elbow up and release out front finish down in front of thrower and extend to follow through...finish with bringing around throwing leg

iv. Emphasize throwing only when the receiver is giving a proper “target” – ie looking at the thrower with both hands up, and ready to catch the throw - “don’t throw to people who aren’t looking!” Importance of picking target on player or coach they are throwing to (preferably chest).

- **Baserunning**

i. Coach orientate the players with the proper bases by running around yelling name of each respective base.

ii. Get all players lined up behind home plate single file. One at a time run full speed down the line, touching the front of first base and running thru the bag.

iii. Progress to rounding first base, touching corner of each subsequent base finishing with a slide into home plate. Show proper way to slide, one leg out other tucked under body, don’t slide to early or too late.

## Hitting Drills

### **Front Foot Tee Drill**

**What you need** – You will need to set up a tee with the ball on it. Batters should have a bat and a helmet on. Split squad, one group hitting and one group in infield

**How this drill works** – Setting a young player up in the batting area might be one of the toughest things to get them to do when batting. They don't quite understand the concept of a batter's box, so you need to help them understand how to line up through a different method. Fielders play the hit ball. Batter gets 5 hits then rotate hitters. No running...want to get batters rotating efficiently

Explain to the player they must keep their front foot across from the ball and show them how far away they should be (around 24 inches or distance from bat to ball with arms extended). Once batting stance is correct with back elbow up, hands back, and slight bend in knees a ball can be set on tee. Fundamental swing and step instructions are given. Stress step to pitcher with front foot, level swing, and watch bat to ball, finish across the body with 2 hands on the bat. Remind players not to throw the bat.

**Result** – Once players have learned the grip on the bat and how and where to stand, proper mechanics when swinging this ensures the highest success when swinging the bat and making contact.

### **Invisible Bat Drill**

Teaching the kids the proper swing is important to building a foundation for hitting the ball.

**What you need** – Line the kids up on the first and third baselines, and ask them to get into a **batters stance**.

**How this drill works** – This will be a fun drill for the kids, as they get to show off their swing without the bat as an impediment. When they line up, ask them to assume the **batter's stance**. They should have their arms up with their hands raised to their ears and their back elbow raised

When you call out '**swing**', all of the kids will show you their swing with the invisible bat. At this stage, you (and assistant coaches) can view the swings of each player and you can make small adjustments to the swings.

**Result** – With coaches watching over their swing, better instruction can be given to help the players swing properly.

## **Tee counter**

This is a basic batting drill to help a player work on the contact they make with the ball.

**What you need** – A player with a helmet and a bat at the tee. Make sure the tee is at the appropriate height (waist high, or just under). You can set up other stations with a few players at each, with another coach or parent helper.

**How this drill works** – Once the player gets to the tee, they must get into their batter stance. The coach should help them set up properly so they can increase the chance of good contact.

The other players in the station are waiting, gloves in hand, to field the ball. The coach says, ‘hit’, and the player swings. If the ball is hit the first time, the rest of the teams yells ‘one’. For each hit, they say the corresponding number. This provides encouragement to the player when they are hitting.

The coach should give each player five swings on the tee. On the final swing (and hit), the player should drop the bat and run to ‘first’ base.

**Result** – This drill helps players get used to making contact with the ball and using the encouragement of their teammates to help them along the way.

## **Kiss and swing**

This will be a fun drill for the kids as they try to get the bat to kiss the ball

**What you need** – Place a ball upon the tee and have a batter with a helmet and bat standing in the proper position to hit the ball. You can have two or more stations for this drill with a parent helper or assistant coach at each station.

**How this drill works** – Coaches will help the batter assume the correct stance in the batter’s box. The rest of the drill is up to the batter. Sometimes, taking a swing in slow motion so a player can visualize where they want to hit the ball is valuable in building memory.

Before the batter takes a swing, they need to slowly go through the batting motion and stop the bat right where they want to hit the ball. This is the ‘kiss’ the bat will give the ball. The player then brings the bat back up and then takes a normal swing at the ball.

Focusing on the spot they want to hit (the kiss) is a fun way for kids to learn what motion they need to hit the ball where they want.

**Result** – Your players will begin to develop the muscle memory and coordination to make consistent contact with the ball.

### **Coach Says**

This will help the players learn the different steps involved in a good swing.

**What you need** – Start off this drill the same as you would start off the drill with the invisible bat. Line up the kids on both the first and third baselines.

**How this drill works** – This is a batter's version of 'Simon Says' where the players must do what you say in order to demonstrate their understanding of a skill.

You will focus on three key areas: grip, stance and swing. When you say any one of those three words, the player must show you their best grip, stance or swing (after instruction, of course). As the coach, you can watch, and go to individual players to help them with different aspects of their swing.

**Result** – You will be able to help the players with each step of their swing, and sometimes that is more helpful than seeing the entire swing all at once.

### **Don't Miss**

This is a game that can be played with the players to try and establish the desire to hit the ball.

**What you need** – Set up several stations each starting with one batter and three or four fielders. Set up one base that the hitter will run to.

**How this drill works** – With a batter at the plate and fielders in the field for each station, the batter will attempt to put the ball in play by hitting it. If they miss the ball or if they hit the tee without knocking the ball forward, then it will be considered a strike. This is a perfect opportunity to teach them about how three strikes means an out.

This will be one of the player's first introductions to an 'out'. The player needs to understand the importance of making contact with the ball in order to get to first base and to advance other runners.

Each time the player hits the ball, they must drop the bat and run to first base.

**Result** – This drill adds a step to the process, after hitting and then running to first base. Making contact within three strikes is the key.

## **Spot the ball**

Sometimes a visual mark will help a player understand where they need to make contact with the ball.

**What you need** – Set up a tee with a ball on top of it, and line up a batter in the batter's box. You can have fielders to field the ball if you want. The ball will have a black dot the size of a nickel marked on it (with a black marker).

**How this drill works** – This is a simple batting drill that once again helps the batter to focus on a spot they want to hit. Think of the saying, "aim small, miss small." With the black dot facing back toward the backstop, the player is able to locate and ultimately hit the spot on the ball.

The player will focus on striking the spot with the bat – not just the ball. If a player tries harder to focus on hitting the spot, it can decrease their overall margin of error and make it much easier to hit the ball.

Over time, you can reduce the size of the black mark on the ball, until eventually the black mark is gone and the player is just hitting the ball.

**Result** – More focus and consistency hitting the ball.

## **Throwing and Fielding Drills**

### **Show the Ball**

Learning how to properly hold the ball is the first step to throwing it well.

**What you need** – Each player needs to have a ball and a glove in order to work in this drill.

**How this drill works** – Gripping the baseball is essential to throwing properly and accurately. At a young age, learning the proper grip is the best way to help them build the foundation for throwing.

Each player has the ball, and they must grasp the ball with the thumb on the underside, and the two top finger spread slightly apart over the top. The ring finger and the pinky should be touching the side of the ball slightly on the outside. If they are unable to grip with two fingers try with 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> across the seams and not holding the whole ball in their hands

When the coach says ‘show me’, each of the players gets into the proper throwing stance: legs apart (one in front of the other), foot on the throwing side is behind the body, and the arm is up, with the elbow raised to shoulder height and the forearm and bicep at a 90 degree angle (L-shape).

**Result** – Coaches will be able to watch how their players are gripping the ball as they show them the grip and the throwing stance. Problems can be corrected at this point.

### **One Knee Throwing**

This helps players learn the upper body action of throwing, without using their legs.

**What you need** – Each player needs to have a ball to perform this drill. To start, you may want to give the players a softer ball, like a tennis ball.

**How this drill works** – This drill emphasizes the upper body action: right from the grip, to the raised arm and elbow, the L-shape between the forearm and bicep, and then turning the body and following through towards the intended target.

The player starts with the body facing the target and the ball raised. The player can throw at a target, a fellow player, or a coach. The proper throwing mechanics should be watched for as the player throws the ball toward the target. A good follow through toward the target is important.

**Result** – This drill helps the player learn to upper body action for throwing, along with building throwing strength and accuracy.

### **Bounce to the bucket**

It's good to learn throwing accuracy at an early age – this is a fun game to learn!

**What you need** – Set up a bucket or box at the first base. You can set up more than one station for this drill. Line up kids at each station about 10 feet away to start.

**How this drill works** – The first thrower steps up and tries to get the ball into the box or bucket – and they get 10 points. If they hit the side of the bucket they will get 5 points. The closest ball to the bucket will get 2 points.

You can increase the difficulty of the drill by increasing the distance that the players have to throw. But, don't sacrifice the distance for the accuracy. Once the kids gain the accuracy, then in time they will build the strength to throw the ball a greater distance.

**Result** – The players will begin to develop a sense of how to get the ball to their intended target by aiming at the box or bucket.

### **Soft fly ball**

Sometimes younger baseball players have a fear of catching the ball because they are afraid it is too hard.

**What you need** – You will need enough softer balls (t balls or tennis balls) for all of the players. The player should have their gloves.

**How this drill works** – It is tough for some young players to get over the fact that the ball is very hard and they may get hit. This prevents some players from making the effort to catch the ball. They are afraid that if they miss, the ball is going to hit, and therefore hurt them.

Start off by showing the players that the ball is very soft, and even if it hits them in the head, they are not going to get hurt. Then, you can start off with the players in the lines and throw the ball to them one by one. Ensure proper hand placement. Once the players get the hang of it, they can start throwing the ball to each other to try and catch it.

**Result** – Younger players will get over the fear of catching the ball by working with the soft ball and eventually moving up to the harder ball.

## **Catch contest**

This is a game that pits the throwing and catching skills of the players against one another. It should be a fun game for all of the kids to participate in.

**What you need** – Pair up the players on the team and give each pair a ball. Each should also have their gloves.

**How this drill works** – Once you have the players paired up, start them off a short distance apart from one another – probably between 8 and 10 feet. The players should throw the ball back and forth executing overhand throws and catches.

The players need to make good throws and good catches, as each time they miss or drop the ball, the pair has to stop in the game. The game ends when the last pair to keep throwing and catching the ball without dropping it is still in the game.

If the game lasts longer (with improved play), you can move the pairs back a step or two.

**Result** – The players will gradually build their throwing and catching skills and learn to work with the other players on their team in this manner.

## **Block the Ball**

This is the first step to getting kids to learn the prospect of fielding the ball.

**What you need** – Set up two or three lines of players so the kids can get maximum repetition. Have a coach or parent volunteer at each line with several balls.

**How this drill works** – With this drill coaches need to first instruct their players on how to move to get in front of the ball. Start the players off in the ready position (hands out front knees, slightly bent, and with their head up watching the play).

The coaches or volunteers should roll the ball directly at the players at first, but then to either side. The player needs to shuffle to get their body in front of the ball to knock it down. For each ball that the player knocks down they get three points. If the player scoops the ball with their glove, they get five points.

The players will get excited about getting points for knocking the ball down.

To teach players how to use their gloves properly, try using plastic milk jugs with one side cut out to form a “scoop”. Have the kids use the scoop to field the ball. This will help them learn to use their gloves to scoop up the ball, rather than trap it.

**Result** – Learning to knock the ball down and ultimately to try and scoop the ball is the first part of fielding the ball.

## **Base Relay Drill**

Teaching the players to field the ball in a round the horn game

**What you need** – Put the bases out (shorter than normal if you like, to start), and then put a player at each base. You can have players in a line up behind each base.

**How this drill works** – You can start the drill by hitting a soft grounder, or rolling the ball to one of the players. First they must throw the ball to third base, to second base, then to first base – and finally back to the coach.

The player need to use all of the skills they have learned in order to make this drill work. They should work on throwing the ball properly and accurately and then make sure they stop the ball when it is thrown to them. Reward the team that is able to get the ball around the bases without many problems.

**Result** – This drill might be tough at first, however with time, the player will find it to be a particularly valuable drill when they learn how to get the ball to one another.

## **One and Two**

Award points to the players for throwing and catching the ball at shoulder level or above.

**What you need** – Pair up the players and give them each a ball. (You can get a softer ball to start).

**How this drill works** – This drill helps players to understand the importance of accurate throws and catches that are at the shoulder level. It makes it easier for kids to throw and catch if they have something to aim for. It makes it especially better if it becomes a gain and there are points at stake.

If the pair throws and catches at shoulder height, then they get two points. If they throw the ball and then catch it at waist level, then they get one point. If it is lower than the waist they get no points.

This will help the players learn to keep the ball up where their teammates can catch it much easier.

**Result** – More accurate throws and players can compete against each other in a game-like setting.

## **Field and Bounce to the Bucket**

This puts together the basic idea of fielding a grounder and then throwing the ball to a spot on the field.

**What you need** – You can set up several stations for this drill in order to increase the amount of repetition. You have a line of fielders and a box or bucket at a base.

**How this drill works** – This puts the original drill of bouncing to the bucket together with fielding the ball. The coach will roll a grounder to the player and they pick it up and throw it to try to get it in the box.

The emphasis is for the player to knock down the ball, gain the proper grip, throwing motion and then aim it to the bucket. Players will get the same points as they would get in the bounce to the bucket drill.

Adding the extra element of fielding the ball may be difficult for some players, but it is an essential skill to master at this level.

**Result** – This is a step above the basic skill of throwing to a target, by adding the fielding aspect to this drill.

## **Slo Mo Throw**

At an early age, coaches often combat players that cannot throw the ball without throwing it as hard as they can.

**What you need** – Set up a target (or a series of targets for several stations), that is about 10 to 15 feet away. It shouldn't be too far for the kids, otherwise they feel like they have to throw the ball hard. Line up the kids in single file in each station.

**How this drill works** – In order to get the player to throw the ball normally, you need to help them understand that the ball will go as far as they want with a slow motion throw. This drill works as a method to reinforce the basic throwing skills, but also to learn control.

Teach the players to learn control by asking them to throw in slow motion with just enough force to get the ball to the target. Once they can get the ball to the target with the slow motion throw, ask them to do the same thing with their normal throw.

**Result** – Younger players will learn to control their throws. This is important to make sure they have accuracy and that they aren't throwing the ball all over the place.

### **Count the catches**

This is a good drill to help players strive toward making good catches, and also a drill they can work on at home.

**What you need** – You can either do this as a group drill, or you can make it a drill that has players paired up with each other.

**How this drill works** – if you do this as a group, you can get two stations going in order to compete against each other, and have a coach or parent volunteer at each station. With a group, the coach will underhand toss the ball to the player in the line and they must make the catch. Everyone yells out, “one!” Then, another toss and “two!” And so on. Each side goes on until a player in the line drops the ball. Then they start at one again. You can run this drill in pairs, with the players trying to catch the ball between each other.

**Result** – This drill simply reinforces the skill of the catching the ball.

## **Game play Drills**

### **Call the ball**

It is important for younger players to learn that communication on the field is essential.

**What you need** – Line up two single file lines that are about 10 yards apart. One coach will stand in the middle, just slightly away to the side of the players.

**How this drill works** – With the two players ready to catch the ball, the coach will throw a fly ball in between them. The players will converge on the ball and they will watch for the other player.

Teach the players to understand that the player closest to the ball is to call, “I’ve got it”. They can scream it, yell it, or just say it softly. They will have fun with that – but they must say it.

The player that calls the ball must try to get under it, and the other player should be their back up in case they miss the ball.

**Result** – This drill will help teach the players basic communication, along with working on their fly-ball catching skills.

### **Base Runners**

Players need to learn to listen to what their coaches say when they are running the bases.

**What you need** – You can have the tee set up, with a batter at the tee, but without a bat. The coach will be at first base.

**How this drill works** – The player will take an imaginary swing with the imaginary bat and then run as fast as they can to first base. As the runner approaches the base he or she will run through the bag into foul territory. Front of the foot touches the front of the base

Run each player through the drill differing each time what you are going to say to the player. They will begin to learn through the repetition to listen for their coaches voice when they are running the bases.

**Result** – Knowing the coach is going to help them will give some players confidence on the base pads. For others it is a lesson in listening to what the coach says on the field.

## **Fast Fingers Drill**

Charging the ball to get to it quickly is a great skill to learn in baseball.

**What you need** – Line the players up in four single file lines along the first or third baseline. The coach will stand out in front of them about 15 or 20 feet away.

**How this drill works** – All of the players will be in their lines and the coach will be in front of them. The coach will point to one of the lines and then roll or hit the ball to them with a slow grounder.

The player needs to run up to pick up the ball and then settle themselves down to throw back to the coach. The object for the kids is going to be to pick up the ball, remember their proper throwing action and make a nice throw back to the coach.

Once the coach tosses the ball, he or she counts out 1001, 1002, 1003... and then stops when the ball gets back to the coach. The object of the game is to have the players get the ball back to the coach as quickly and accurately as possible. The quickest pick up and throw is the fastest fingers player.

**Result** – The players will learn to get the ball to the coach quicker by charging it, picking it up, and then making a good throw.

## **First base drill**

This is the most basic play in baseball and should be taught early

**What you need** – You can start with the players just in a couple of single file line in the infield, or you can put them at positions. You may want to start them in lines and have them closer to first base to build confidence. Have a coach or parent at first base to start.

**How this drill works** – This is a basic fielding drill for beginning players. The coach will softly hit or roll grounders to the players and they need to scoop the ball, set, and then make an accurate throw to the coach.

Coaches should focus on making sure the player gains good control of the ball, faces their target and then goes through a good throwing motion to get the ball to the coach or parent on first base.

You can make the drill more challenging by putting players at the infield positions.

**Result** – The players will learn the fundamentals of making an out.

### **Coach run around (then players)**

This is a base identification drill, and the coach gets a little exercise

**What you need** – Make sure all of the bases are intact and in their proper positions. The kids can watch from the middle of the diamond.

**How this drill works** – At first, get all of the kids attention and go over which bases are which on the field. Then, the coach will stand at home plate in front of the tee and take an imaginary swing at an imaginary ball and then go towards first base. Tell them to yell out which base you are heading to each time.

Once you get to first base, they yell ‘first’. Once you round the bag and get to second, they yell ‘second’. Etcetera.

After you do this a couple of times, then you can run each player through the bases and have them yell out which base they are on, along with all of the other kids.

**Result** – Base identification is important to learn at an early age. It is the fundamental for baserunning and should be something you work on regularly.

### **Tag out Frozen Tag**

This helps players to learn the importance of tagging with the ball, and also promotes a whole lot of fun.

**What you need** – Mark off an area about 20 yards by 20 yards. The T-ball infield might work if you don’t have too many players. Two players will need to have their gloves and a ball inside the glove.

**How this drill works** – This is a tag game that actually requires the taggers to tag the other players with the ball inside the glove. The two players that are ‘it’ will chase other players and they will have to tag those players with their gloves.

If the ball comes out of the glove, then the player tagged is NOT frozen. If they don’t tag with the ball, then the player is NOT frozen. Players that are tagged must be frozen and they need to get unfrozen by their teammates by going underneath their legs or their arms.

**Result** – Players will quickly learn the importance of tagging others with the ball in their glove, and maintaining control of the ball when doing it.

## **Triangle Relay Drill**

This throwing and fielding drill might be best for more advanced or older T-ballers

**What you need** – Match up two players and a coach, and if you have parent volunteers you can have several stations for this drill.

**How this drill works** – This drill works on a players ability to field the ball (in the outfield for example), and then get the ball back to the relay player and then back to the coach or the parent volunteer.

Start the players out about 30 feet away from each other, and the coach about another 15 feet from the ‘relay’ player. This drill begins with the coach rolling a grounder to the player that is furthest away. That player must stop the ball, control it, pick it up and make a good throw to the relay player.

The relay player must then grab the ball from the glove and then make a good throw to the coach. Repeat this drill and switch the players.

**Result** – This is the first chance kids will get to learn how to use teamwork (relay) to get the ball where they want it to go.

## **Batter out!**

This is a good game that works on three critical areas: hitting, fielding and catching.

**What you need** – Divide the team into three groups: batters, fielders and first base. You will need a tee and a ball, with proper batting equipment.

**How this drill works** – The batters will try to hit the ball, and the fielders will be in the field and the first base... well, on first base. Give the fielders an ‘area’ they are to cover, so they are not all chasing after the same ball. The batters will hit the ball and then begin running to first base. The fielders must play their area and get the ball if it goes there. Then, they need to make the throw to first base before the runner gets there.

Coaches should award one point to the runner if he beats the throw and makes it to first base. They should award one point to the fielders for stopping the ball and making a good throw. You can award the first base players one point if they make a good catch with two hands and do not drop the ball. Make it a competition to see which group gets more points. You can switch groups in the same practice or wait until the next one.

**Result** – A good competitive drill that works on three skill areas.

### **Next base drill**

Once a player is on first base, they may not always know where they need to go next.

**What you need** – You can set up a couple of stations if you have enough bases. Set up a diamond with the bases as they would normally be set up. Start with a player on first base and a lineup of batters.

**How this drill works** – This drill starts with a player on first base and one at the tee to bat. Instead of having a real ball, players will ‘show’ coach their great swing and then run to first.

You will also have to explain to the kids on first base, where they need to go next. Another coach, or a parent volunteer can be on second to help direct the players where to go next. Keep going so each player has a chance to bat and run around the bases.

Coaches should watch that the runner understands which base he or she is headed to, and also that they stop right on the base.

**Result** – This is a basic baserunning drill that helps kids learn where to go during the game.

### **Catch the players**

Speedy baserunning is the key to this fun drill for the kids and lots of work for the coaches!

**What you need** – You can either set up a couple of stations with four bases, or have coaches and parent volunteers alternate. Groups of four runners at a time will go.

**How this drill works** – The coach will start the four runners, one at a time. Give each runner a five second head start and then send the next runner. After all four runners, then the coach heads around the basepads.

The object is for each player to catch the players ahead of them while they are running around the bases. Once it gets to the coach, then the coach needs to run fast to catch the players that are left. If any of the players run off the baseline, or if they go to the wrong base, they will be out of the game.

**Result** – This will probably be one of the most fun games you and the kids are playing. It teaches them they need to run around the bases as fast as they can, or coach will catch them. It translates well to a game situation.

## **Pizza Slice defense**

This helps the players learn to stay in their own area based on the position they are playing.

**What you need** – Using cones separate the field into ‘slices’ like pizza, and have it correspond with one of the positions on the field.

**How this drill works** – This drill is intended to teach younger players the importance of playing their position on the field – to prevent kids from fighting over the ball when it is hit.

Show the players that they each have a ‘slice’ of the pizza, but they can’t have a slice of any one else’s pizza. When the ball is hit, or rolled to the players, they must stay on their own slice of pizza when the ball comes out. They cannot go to another player’s slice to steal the ball.

Players who go into the other players slice will have someone else come in and take their piece of pizza from them.

**Result** – Gradually, when players lose their slice of pizza, they will understand that they cannot go into other players’ areas to get the ball. This prevents five infielders from going after the same ball.

## **Go to your Base**

Players need to learn to go to their base when another runner is on base.

**What you need** – You can run this as a two base drill to start, and then run it with three bases, and then all of the bases. Have a player playing second base and first base, with a runner on first base to start. You can have a fielder to shag the grounders.

**How this drill works** – This drill may take some time for fielders to understand, but it is important to advance the development of the fielding player. With a first and second baseman playing their position, and a runner on first, the coach must teach a player to recognize that they need to go to their bag and wait for a throw to put the runner out.

Help the fielder to understand by telling them they need to protect their base if they see another runner coming after it. They protect the base by catching the ball if it is thrown there.

**Result** – In time, fielders will understand they have to cover their base when there are runners.

## **Gameplay Modified Scoring Scrimmage**

- break team up evenly to split squad by number and ability.
- Scrimmage can be long as 30 minutes
- Remind players on gameday protocol, sitting in order on bench, no bats in hand, have fielding gloves and hats ready. Run on and off field
- Position fielding team at pitcher and remaining 4 infield position...any extra fielders can play short outfield
- All hitters hit each half inning. Batted outs come off the bases. Baserunners can advance only one base at a time including the batter.
- Score can be kept by fielding team recorded outs, ie for each out recorded in the field of play the fielding team gets 1 point. Hitting teams do not count runs.
- Coach 1 should be allocated at home plate to advise the hitter of proper technique and tee the ball.
- Coach 2 line up behind pitcher instructing fielders on ready position and thinking about where to go with ball. Stress responsibility for each position
- Coach 3 at first base in foul territory advising runners to run thru the bag and when to run to second.
- Coach 4 at third base in foul territory advising runners when to run home and remind them on proper baserunning. Can slide feet first at home plate
- Any additional coach's or volunteers can work with outfielders and also keep players in order in the bench area reminding them when to hit and take field
- Be sure to rotate fielders each inning. Should gameplay slow any extra outfielders can work on coach thrown pop ups in between batters or during instruction at the plate. Same applies to infield coach. To keep players engaged roll groundballs and have them return the throw to you
- Can finish scrimmage with relay race around the bases

## Practice Plan #1

Time	Drill	Page	Coaching Points
<b>0 to 10</b>	Stretching arms, throwing with partners		Stretch and evaluate form and technique of each player prior to beginning below drills
<b>11 to 17</b>	Show the ball		Learn the fundamentals step by step
<b>18 to 26</b>	One knee throwing		Using the proper upper body action is important
<b>26 to 28</b>	Water Break	-	Keeping kids hydrated in hot weather is important
<b>29 to 34</b>	Invisible Bat		After everyone shows the invisible swing, you can add a ball and real bat
<b>35 to 42</b>	Kiss and Swing		This helps the batter line up the bat with ball
<b>43 to 53</b>	Front Foot Tee		This will help players line up and swing with proper mechanics
<b>54 to 64</b>	Count the catches		Contest between players, instruction proper catching form
<b>65 to 75</b>	Block the ball		Teach players to get the body in front of the ball
<b>76 to 83</b>	Next Base Drill		Teach kids where to go when ball is hit
<b>84 to 90</b>	Base Runners		Batters run to first using proper technique

## Practice Plan #2

Time	Drill	Page	Coaching Points
0 to 07	Stretching arms, throwing with partners	-	This is a great chance to do some team building by stretching together
08 to 15	Bounce to the bucket		Encourage players to get the ball into the bucket
16 to 26	Count the catches		Contest between players
27 to 30	Water Break	-	Keeping kids hydrated in hot weather is important
31 to 37	Pizza slice D		Helps players learn to play a position. Stay with their own slice of pizza!
38 to 45	First Base Drill		Stress the accurate throw to the coach or player at first
46 to 54	Fast fingers drill		Quickest player is the winner!
55 to 69	Front Foot Tee		This will help players line up and swing with proper mechanics
70 to 90	Water Break and Scrimmage		Team breaks up evenly for scrimmage

## Practice Plan #3

Time	Drill	Page	Coaching Points
0 to 07	Stretching arms, throwing with partners	-	This is a great chance to do some team building by stretching together
07 to 15	Block the ball		Teach players to get the body in front of the ball
16 to 25	Slow Mo Throw		Good chance for coaches to watch mechanics and control wild throws
26 to 30	Water Break	-	Keeping kids hydrated in hot weather is important
31 to 40	Triangle Relay		Players must learn that teamwork is important to get the ball to the infield
41 to 45	Invisible Bat		After everyone shows the invisible swing, you can add a ball and real bat
46 to 59	Front Foot Tee		This will help players line up and swing with proper mechanics
60 to 90	Scrimmage & Water Break		Team breaks up evenly for scrimmage

## Practice Plan #4

Time	Drill	Page	Coaching Points
0 to 07	Stretching arms, throwing with partners	-	This is a great chance to do some team building by stretching together
08 to 15	Catch contest		competition
16 to 25	Pizza slice D		Helps players learn to play a position. Stay with their own slice of pizza!
26 to 30	Water Break	-	Keeping kids hydrated in hot weather is important
31 to 43	Soft Fly Ball		Kids can be scared, so show them the ball is soft
44 to 58	Tag out Frozen Tag		Players must tag with ball or ball in glove
60 to 90	Scrimmage & Water Break		Team breaks up evenly for scrimmage

## Practice Plan #5

Time	Drill	Page	Coaching Points
0 to 07	Stretching arms, throwing with partners	-	This is a great chance to do some team building by stretching together
08 to 15	Coach run around		Gets you warmed up for the practice!
16 to 25	First Base Drill		Stress the accurate throw to the coach or player at first
26 to 30	Water Break	-	Keeping kids hydrated in hot weather is important
31 to 42	Field – bounce to bucket		Control the ball, then make a good throw to bucket
44 to 58	Front Foot Tee		This will help players line up and swing with proper mechanics
60 to 90	Scrimmage & Water Break		Team breaks up evenly for scrimmage

## Practice Plan #6

Time	Drill	Page	Coaching Points
0 to 07	Stretching arms, throwing with partners	-	This is a great chance to do some team building by stretching together
08 to 19	Front Foot Tee		This will help players line up and swing with proper mechanics
20 to 29	Three tee batting		Coaches can watch the individual players while batters wait for their number
30 to 32	Water Break	-	Keeping kids hydrated in hot weather is important
33 to 43	Base relay		Good throws to each base
44 to 58	Catch the players		Stress running the bases as fast as players can
60 to 90	Scrimmage & Water Break		Team breaks up evenly for scrimmage

## Practice Plan #7

Time	Drill	Page	Coaching Points
0 to 07	Stretching arms, throwing with partners	-	This is a great chance to do some team building by stretching together
08 to 15	Next Base Drill		Teach kids where to go when ball is hit
16 to 25	Pizza slice D		Helps players learn to play a position. Stay with their own slice of pizza!
26 to 30	Water Break	-	Keeping kids hydrated in hot weather is important
31 to 44	Tee counter		Players get hitting practice and fielder count the hits
45 to 59	Catch contest		competition
60 to 90	Scrimmage & Water Break		Team breaks up evenly for scrimmage

## Manager's Evaluation

Team Name	
Evaluator(s)	

Player Name	Fielding Ground	Fielding Fly	Throwing Mechanic	Hitting Mechanic	Catching Fundamentals	Pitching Mechanic	Base Running	Baseball Knowledg	Attitude	Coachability	Total (50)

<b>Rating System</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 – Needs Improvement</li> <li>• 2 – Below Average</li> <li>• 3 – Average</li> <li>• 4 – Above Average</li> <li>• 5 – Excellent</li> </ul>	<b>Instructions:</b> Managers evaluate each player individually. Evaluations are conducted in the beginning and the end of the season. Evaluations compiles an average score for each category, and a total for each player (max 50). Prepare “Player Evaluation” (following page) and share with player and parent(s). Do not share other players’ scores with player or parent(s).
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## Player Evaluation

Player Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Manager Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Team Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Category	Rating
Fielding Ground Balls	
Fielding Fly Balls	
Throwing Mechanics	
Hitting Mechanics	
Catching Fundamentals	
Pitching Mechanics	
Base Running	
Baseball Knowledge	
Attitude	
Coachability	
<b>Total</b>	

Summary:

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Manager: \_\_\_\_\_

Position	Max Pitches	Number of Pitches	Days of Rest
	max pitches 11-12	85	number of pitches
	max pitches 9-10	75	66+
	max pitches 7-8	50	51-65
			36-50
			21-35
			up to 20
			0
P	P	P	P
1B	1B	1B	1B
2B	2B	2B	2B
SS	SS	SS	SS
3B	3B	3B	3B
LF	LF	LF	LF
CF	CF	CF	CF
RF	RF	RF	RF
C	C	C	C
B	B	B	B
B	B	B	B
B	B	B	B