

Northampton Township Little League

Coaching Handbook

Welcome

Thank you for volunteering to manage or coach a team this season! We truly appreciate the time and effort you are investing in making Northampton Township Little League an amazing experience for everyone involved.

In this Coaching Handbook, you will find important information about coaching Little League Baseball. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you need clarification or support.

Sincerely,

Steve Torpey

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Northampton Township Little League

1. The Role of a Little League Coach	2
2. Coaches Meeting	2
3. Beginning of the Season To-Do List.....	2
4. Coaching Philosophy.....	3
5. Essentials of Positive Coaching	4
6. Practice Planning	5
7. Recommended Practice Structure	6
8. Parent Participation	7
9. Non-Teaching Activities for Parent Helpers	7
10. Safety Guidelines	7
11. Pitching.....	8

12. Batting Practice Notes	8
13. Coaching Resources on League Website	9
Final Thoughts	9

1. The Role of a Little League Coach

The Little League® manager and coach must be leaders. All must recognize that they hold a position of trust and responsibility during a formative period of a child's development.

Coaches must:

- Demonstrate patience and understanding
- Inspire respect
- Recognize physical and mental limitations of players
- Use baseball as a vehicle for growth and enjoyment

Children often idolize their coaches. The quality of leadership directly impacts the Little League experience. The game is a tool for development — not an end in itself.

2. Annual Coaches Meeting

Attendance is strongly encouraged by all managers and coaches. Meeting details will be shared with Coaches at least 10 days in advance.

Date: TBD: 3rd or 4th week of March

Time: TBD

Location: Northampton Civic Center or St. Leonard's Clubhouse

3. Beginning of the Season To-Do List

Volunteer Clearance (MOST IMPORTANT)

Anyone stepping onto the field must be cleared as a volunteer.

Steps:

1. Register at nighthawksbaseball.com
2. Select a volunteer role
3. Complete annual JDP background check
4. Complete required PA State Clearances (available on our website)
 1. Criminal Record Check (Good for 5 years)
 2. Child Abuse Check (Good for 5 years)
 3. CRBA Affidavit (if you lived in PA for 10 years) OR FBI Fingerprint Check

Staff Your Team

Appoint:

- 1–2 Team Parents (make it clear what you need from the parent volunteer)
- 1-2 Scorekeepers/Pitch Counters (Majors division -Gamechanger app)

Hold a Parent Meeting

Communicate:

- Playing time philosophy
- Approach to winning
- Umpire interactions
- Safety expectations
- Team culture and goals

Remember: It takes a village to complete a Little League season.

4. Coaching Philosophy

Keys to Successful Managing

- Learn from other coaches – Don't be afraid to ask questions
- Be organized and prepared – show up to every practice with a plan
- Know Little League and Northampton Twp in-house rules

- Communicate clearly with parents
- Create team traditions – game balls, celebrations, etc.
- Emphasize fundamentals repeatedly

Establish Team Priorities

RESPECT

- Listen to coaches
- No negative talk
- Thank volunteers

EFFORT

- Hustle always
- Effort is controllable

POSITIVE

- Encourage teammates
- Be specific with praise

SAFETY

- Helmets required for batting
- Bats only used in designated areas

Reflect on:

- Why are you coaching?
- How do you want to be remembered?
- What positive experiences do you want to recreate?

You have an opportunity to impact lives through baseball!

5. Essentials of Positive Coaching

Redefine “Winner”

Focus on effort and improvement, not just score.

Fill Emotional Tanks

Use praise, not criticism. Focus on positive body language

Discipline

Use calm, consistent consequences. Avoid emotional reactions.

Keep It Fun

Kids have a lot of pressure at school and at home. The baseball field is a place where kids can escape and enjoy the game. At season's end, players remember how much fun they had.

Model Behavior

Players watch how you:

- Handle adversity
- Treat umpires
- Follow rules
- Speak to others

Teachable Moments

Character is tested constantly in sports. Look for the teachable moments to encourage composure, team play, sportsmanship, and self-control.

After-Game Circle

Encourage players and coaches to share positive experiences from the game and reinforce team unity.

6. Practice Planning

Always Have a Plan

Practice plans should:

- Be written
- Include time blocks
- Assign volunteer responsibilities
- Be flexible
- Be shared with parents if possible

Prepared coaches build player confidence and parent trust.

7. Recommended Practice Structure

Warm-Up (5–10 min)

- Light movement and stretching
- No unsupervised throwing

Example:

“It doesn’t take any talent to play hard.” — Derek Jeter

Baserunning (5–15 min)

Traditionally, coaches put baserunning towards the end of practice following hitting. This is fine. Consider putting baserunning at the beginning because it’s often underemphasized, and putting it first is a way of stating its importance.

Playing Catch Practice (5–10 min)

Playing Catch is arguably the most important segment of a practice. Instead of a sloppy activity used for warming up, it should be the most focused, intense, and disciplined part of the practice. As coaches, we need to make sure each player is using proper catching and throwing techniques during Playing Catch practice.

Fielding Drills (10–15 min)

- Full-team drill
- 3–4 skill stations (Combination of ground ball, fly ball, and pitcher-catcher drills).

New Skill Instruction (5–10 min)

Make it your goal to teach something new at every practice. These new skills and drills will become part of your “practice menu” as the season progresses (examples: bunting, calling fly balls, defensive positional responsibilities, applying tags, etc.).

Hitting (20–30 min)

You can plan and structure a full-team BP where everyone is active, engaged, and developing skills throughout the activity. It’s important to communicate to your team that full-team Batting Practice is also Fielding Practice and Base Running Practice. It is critical to minimize standing around.

End-of-Practice Activity (5–10 min)

It's important to end practice with something high energy and fun. Examples: relay races, coach/player wiffle ball game, rundown games (pickle), etc.

8. Parent Participation

Practice becomes boring when kids stand around.

Involve parents to:

- Increase activity
- Reduce downtime
- Improve repetition

Parents do not need advanced baseball knowledge — only willingness.

9. Non-Teaching Activities for Parent Helpers

- Back up throws
- Catch throws at bases
- Shag balls during BP
- Run basic repetition stations

Clear instruction keeps messaging consistent.

Invest early in training parent helpers — it pays off all season.

10. Safety Guidelines

Bat Handling Rules

- Carry bats by the barrel

- Swing only in coach-designated areas
- No bat tossing or unsupervised swinging

Multiple Batter Rule

No movement until all bats are set down.

Review Northampton Twp LL Safety Manual and concussion information on the league website at nighthawksbaseball.com.

11. Pitching

Please review the Northampton Twp Local Rules for pitch count information for each division. Be aware that Northampton Twp LL may be more restrictive than Little League Baseball International. Know your counts. Make parents aware of the required rest days and the importance of them for the safety of their child.

Please make sure that your pitchers are ready to pitch the maximum pitch limits before you have them do it. Some will be ready and some will not. A gradual increase is what is best. So just because the maximum pitches allowed increases for players at league-age 11–12 doesn't mean your oldest pitchers should be jumping from 50 to 85 pitches. This can be quite harmful to their arm.

12. Batting Practice Notes

Live batting is not a time for in-depth instruction. This is a chance for kids to get reps and to adapt timing to their swing. Ideally, some instructional understanding has been established between the coach and batter prior to hitting live pitches. The talk during the live session is limited to quick, simple reminders of fundamental parts of the swing.

In-depth batting instruction is done in an organized group situation where the focus of every player is learning the swing or when working with one or two players and there is time to really work on what is being taught.

13. Coaching Resources on League Website (nighthawksbaseball.com)

- Coach Pitch training program
 - Quickball program guide
 - Northampton Township League rules
 - Pitch Smart USA pitch count
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Final Thoughts

The impact of a Little League coach extends far beyond wins and losses. Your leadership shapes character, confidence, and lifelong memories.

Thank you for your commitment to the players and families of Northampton Township Little League.