

T-BALL DIVISION

The WLALL Board of Directors values your support, involvement, and time commitment.

T-Ball is a baseball game for young boys and girls. Our collective mission is to create a safe and fun environment for all players to learn how to play the game and help foster a lifelong relationship with baseball.

WLALL T-Ball League Standing Rules

- A. The T-Ball division will consist mainly of four (4) and five (5) year-old players. League age six (6) year-olds may also participate when deemed appropriate by the T-Ball Commissioner and league President.
- B. Only RIF Level 1 baseballs may be used.
- C. Game length will be no more than three (3) innings. An inning will end when all players on both teams have batted. A new inning shall not start after 50 minutes. Managers shall agree on the official game start time prior to the start of the game.
- D. There will be no forfeits. Players may be borrowed from the opposing team if necessary.
- E. There will be no standings or scorekeeping.
- F. Players must bat off a tee.
- G. There will be no strikeouts, base stealing, or leading off allowed.
- H. If a hit ball travels less than then five (5) feet from the tee, it will be considered a foul ball and the batter will remain at bat.
- I. An offensive player shall not be called out after batting off the tee so long as the player does not attempt to advance past 1st base, regardless of the contemporaneous defensive play.
- J. An offensive player may be called out if, after hitting the ball in fair territory, that player attempts to advance past first base and is thrown out or tagged out by an infielder.
- K. The ball shall be live after it is hit into fair territory and shall remain live until it is returned to the infield. The ball shall be considered dead when it reaches the

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- baseline between 1st base and 2nd base or the baseline between 2nd base and 3rd base. Once the ball is determined to be dead, the play is stopped. Runners still advancing to a base may continue to the next base if they have advanced at least halfway to that base. If the runner is not halfway to the next base, then they must return to the previous base.
- L. Runner(s) may not advance any bases on an errant throw that goes into foul territory.
 - M. The entire team shall take the field. Infield shall consist of no more than seven (7) players: Two pitchers, 1B, 2B, SS, 3B and a rover who shall play at or around 2nd base.
 - N. Managers and/or Coaches of the team in the field should be located on the playing field around Left Field, Center Field and Right Field to help defensive players understand the game and encourage proper play. The Manager of the team at bat shall stand at home plate and be responsible for placing the ball on the tee and facilitating each player's at bat. The two other coaches of the team at bat may be located adjacent to first base and third base to help team baserunning. One coach or parent shall be in the dugout with the players waiting to hit to facilitate the team sitting in its batting order, taking appropriate turns at bat, and returning to the bench. Any volunteer who assists on the field or in the dugout must complete a background check and be approved by the league in advance of being on the field or in the dugout. No more than three (3) coaches (one (1) manager and two (2) coaches) shall be on the field at any time.
 - O. The entire team roster shall constitute the batting order for each inning. Managers shall create new batting orders each week to allow players the opportunity to bat at different points in the lineup.
 - P. No defensive player shall play the same position for more than one (1) inning per game. All players must play at least one (1) inning in the infield per game.
 - Q. Outfielders cannot make an out by tagging a runner or stepping on a base.
 - R. If there is one (1) player in the pitcher's position, they must be in contact with the pitching rubber (if there is one) when the ball is hit. If there are two (2) players near the pitcher's position, they must each be within five (5) feet of the pitching rubber.
 - S. If any player represents a danger to the safety of the other participants because of size and/or ability, it shall be brought to the attention of the T-Ball Commissioner

and the league President or Player Agent who will determine the player's possible re-assignment to another division. As necessary, the Player Agent shall inform the parents of the League's decision.

- T. The only adults allowed on the field of play, for the defensive team, are the manager and designated coaches. No parents are allowed on the field of play during games.

Playing Rules Introduction:

The ball is not pitched. It is hit off a batting tee. Every player bats and plays in the field. There are no strikeouts or walks (bases on balls) and no scorekeeping. When the ball is hit, the batter cannot throw the bat. Runners must stay on base until the ball is hit. There is no stealing. The inning is over when all players have batted once. Batting helmets must be worn when a player is at bat or on base. Only the player who is at bat shall have a bat in their hands. Safety comes first at all times in games and practices.

Here is a list of ten points to keep in mind:

1. Keep things simple and safe.
2. Avoid technical information.
3. Teach basic fundamentals.
4. Use easy to understand terminology and use it consistently.
5. Adopt the kids' slang and apply it to your baseball teaching.
6. Celebrate players' individual talents and differences.
7. Work in small groups or "stations."
8. Keep things interactive and fast moving.
9. Involve parents as your helpers. Any volunteers who help at practice, in the dugout during games, or on the field when filling in for an official coach must complete a background check and be approved by the league prior to their involvement.
10. Whenever possible, create competitive games during drills or when wrapping up a drill.

Tips for Coaches:

1. As a coach, get organized and develop a practice plan and game positioning before practices and games. Learn as much about T-Ball and baseball as you can.
2. Remember to present your material in kids' terms. Successful coaches know their audience and use analogies and common visual imagery for their coaching tools. For T-Ball players, these images are best when they are a bit dramatic.
3. Don't assume anything. Go over all the basic playing and safety rules, including where the bases are, defensive positions, which way to run to 1st base, when to start and stop running, how to hold a bat and glove, and the number of outs, innings, fouls, etc. Make it clear the only player who can hold a bat is the player hitting in a game or at practice and that a ball should not be thrown to another player unless that player is looking at the player throwing the ball.

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4. One of the most difficult things a coach has to do is coach their own child like any other player. Remember to be a coach on the field and a parent off the field. If possible, have your assistants instruct your son or daughter to avoid conflicts.
5. Coaches need the assistance of their players' parents. Parents are normally willing to help out, but are usually reluctant to come forward unless asked to assist. If you give them specific things to do, they will be more comfortable. All volunteers must first complete a background check and be approved by the league.
6. On the field, you have to be a teacher as well as a coach. Teach them what they need to know, show them what you taught them, practice the things you taught them over and over, then be prepared to do it all over again
7. To make the most of your practice time, break the team up into two or three groups, depending on the number of coaches. This will enable you to keep more kids occupied and less bored. Remember the attention span of a 4-5 year-old is measured in minutes.
8. The game: Sit the players on the bench in the batting order. No one should have a bat in their hands. Horsing around on the bench will translate into foolish behavior in the field and injuries.
9. Keep the parents informed as much as possible. An ideal handout will have a schedule of practices and games and the times and location. It is important to include your phone number and try to insist that parents call if their child will not be at a game or practice.

T-Ball Skills Checklist

Throwing is one of the most important skills in baseball. Stress to your players that accuracy is more important than speed. Teach them to bring their arms down past their hip before bringing the arm up to throw over the top and not side arm.

Windup:

Bring the throwing arm back and up, turn your front shoulder so it is pointing at the target. The glove hand points toward the target. The arm extends behind the body with wrist cocked and elbow bent:

Delivery:

As you start your delivery, pick up the lead foot and stride toward the target. As the lead foot touches the ground, the hips rotate toward the target. Release the ball in front of the body and follow through. Always look at the target throughout out the throw.

Follow-Through:

The follow-through ends with the throwing arm down in the front of the body and the feet almost parallel, in a balance ready position.

Catching:

A major defensive skill is catching. Initially, some players will be afraid of catching a baseball. That fear will make them flinch right before the ball reaches their glove. This will cause them to drop the ball instead of catching it, or worse, the ball may hit them. This can create a fear that can eventually cause players to quit. Teaching players the correct catching technique is not easy. You must first overcome their fear of getting hit with the ball. Demonstrate that the ball is softer than a standard hard ball. You might want to work with some of your players with a tennis ball for the first couple weeks.

Hitting:

Hitting a baseball is probably the most difficult skill to master in baseball. Five separate hitting components should be taught to young players: grip, stance, stride, swing and finish.

Grip:

Grip the bat firmly (don't squeeze) hands together above the knob with the middle knuckles lined up. Players at this level should be encouraged to hold the bat until contact is made and then to drop the bat vs. throwing it.

Stance:

Players should be comfortable in the batter's box. Don't try to make every batter assume the same stance, but do stress the following three basics:

- **Stride:**

The stride is a trigger motion to begin the motion of the shoulders, hips and knees

as the pitcher releases the ball. This will become a more useful tool as the players develop but for now a small stride of the front foot toward the mound will be a good start to force some weight distributions and begin their swing sequence.

- Swing:

The legs and hips initiate the swing. Eyes on the ball, shoulders level, bat and head steady. The swing should be level to slightly downward to bring the bat through the center of the ball. Watch the bat hit the ball; keep your head down. Extend arms and follow through. Focus on making contact and not swinging too hard.

- Finish:

Balanced position when the swing is over. Do not watch the ball. Drop the bat and run hard to first base.

Baserunning:

Run on the balls of the feet. Look at the base you are running to, not where the ball went. Run outside the foul line. Teach the players to run straight through 1st base; don't jump on it or slow down. Watch and listen for coaches' instructions. Keep one foot on base leaning forward until the batter hits the ball and use the base to push off. Know where the ball is. When running the bases, touch the inside corner. Make sure to touch every base.

Practice Tips:

-Batting: Practice, Practice, Practice. Work with small groups using a tee and go over the five components of hitting. Hit into the fence or a net when the field is being used for other drills.

-Bounce to the bucket: Use a large basket or bucket and place it on the base. Outfielders try to throw it into the container. Can be done as a game with 10 points for in the bucket and 5 for hitting the bucket and 1 point for two feet either side of bucket

-Catch: Two or more players play catch. Keep track of the number of successful catches. See how many in a row they can catch.

-Catching Flies: Hit or throw fly balls to fielders. Throw ball right to the player to develop confidence and then toss ball to right or left. During this drill you can introduce someone coming over to back up the play. Make sure to instruct the use of two hands.

-Coach in the Middle: Circle the kids with the coach centered rolling the ball or tossing to each player. For practice, have the kids field the grounders without a glove to reinforce the use of two hands.

-Crab Drill: Player is in basic fielding set position stance, crouched forward with glove open and down. Player takes three or four steps as the coach rolls the ball.

-Track meet: Player stands at home plate with bat in hand. Coach claps hands and player drops bat and runs hard to 1st base. Time how long it takes to get to first and record it. Run drill later in season and see if there is any improvement.

Remember: You should be satisfied if the kids have fun, learn the basics of baseball and are enthused to play again next year.