



2021 T-Ball Coach's Playbook

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Coach's Training

*“Train a child in the way he should go,
and when he is old, he will not turn from it.”*

- Proverbs 22:6

Mission Statement

Victory Sports is committed to equipping believers to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with unlimited children through sports ministry.

Vision Statement

Submitting to God's authority, Victory Sports desires to change generations, instill excellence, and fulfill the eternal desire in every heart through the vehicle of sports.

Responsibilities of a Victory Sports Coach

- Follow the league schedule and guidelines for ALL practices and games.
- Report all injuries or health-related problems IMMEDIATELY to a member of the Victory Sports Recreation Staff.
- Maintain the system of equal playing time for EVERY player.
- Take responsibility for the team's equipment.
- Build your team's staff.

Team Staff

- Assistant Coach: The Assistant Coach provides help at practices and at games. The Assistant Coach may also be called upon to lead a practice or game if the Head Coach has to be absent.
- Team Parent: This parent helps the Head Coach with the organization and administrative duties of the team.
- Dugout Parent: This parent helps the Head Coach on game days in the dugout with batting order and team control.
- Victory Sports Umpire: This volunteer works with the coaches to provide a fair, positive game experience for every player.

How to Effectively Communicate

Communication with Players

As a coach and communicator, below are a few points to consider when communicating with your players:

- *Establish your identity as the authority.* Players should understand that when you are talking, they should be listening. Use “Take a Knee” to indicate when play should stop.
- *Be consistent and be sincere.* This should be applied in both praise and correction.
- *Talk at their level.* Carefully explain things in a manner that is easily understood by each child.
- *Discover their motivators.* Each child has unique motivators.
- *Practice patience.* Remember, they care more about what you do than they do about what you say.
- *Develop and maintain their self-esteem.* Always provide encouragement when correcting. In addition, emphasize the value of the stars as you distribute them to the players.
- *Abide by the established rules and guidelines.* Your players will be looking to you for their lead.
- *See each player’s potential.* Remember that **Every Child Is A Winner!**

Communication with Parents

Get to know the parents and family members of your players. Include parents in **your first team meeting at the first practice**. During that time, introduce yourself and share your excitement about the season. Also, many parents and family members want to support you and the team and will offer to help throughout the season. Here are a few ways to get parents and family members more involved:

- *Prayer Partners.* Give them a copy of the team roster and ask them to pray for each player and family by name each week.
- *Help with Snacks.* Allow families to rotate the duty of providing snacks for after games.
- *Devotion Assistant.* Ask a parent or family member who attends each practice to be a “devotion assistant” who will bring objects for you to use as visual aids each week during devotions.
- *Team photographer.* Ask a parent to take action shots for the team.

Communication with Umpires

Umpires are our authority figures for each game in Victory Sports T-Ball. Whether player, coach, parent, or spectator, we are to maintain respect for the umpires at ALL times. As a league, we will seek to positively affirm each umpire.

Umpires and coaches are the difference in this league. No one can affect the players in our league like their coaches and umpires. It is IMPERATIVE for the coaches and umpires to work together for one mission. This mission has nothing to do with winning or losing games. Winning or losing is a temporary event. This mission concerns things of eternal value.

The umpire sets the tone for the game by gathering both teams and their coaches at the pitcher’s mound for a brief word of encouragement and prayer. The umpire will lead in prayer before the

start of each game. In games where the coaches serve as the umpire, the Home Team Coach will lead the prayer.

Circles of Criticism and Affirmation

Actions and reactions on the field will have a lasting effect that either opens or closes the door to ministry. The circle of criticism and the circle of affirmation are simple diagrams that illustrate the results of a coach giving an umpire either negative or positive feedback.

The Circle of Criticism

- The Circle of Criticism begins when the coach gives a negative response to a right or wrong call made by the volunteer umpire.
- The coach's example gives the parent the implied permission to react negatively toward the umpire.
- The parent's example causes the child to assume that it is acceptable to react in the same way.
- The result can be a negative attitude toward the umpire, who represents authority on the field.

The Circle of Affirmation

- The Circle of Affirmation begins when the coach gives a positive response to a right or wrong call made by the umpire.
- The coach's example influences the parent to react positively toward the umpire.
- The parent's example encourages the player to give a positive response.
- The result is a positive attitude toward authority.

Planning Your Practices

Your weekly practices will be the most important time you spend with your players. During practices, you have the opportunity to work with your players on the fundamentals of baseball and to establish relationships with them. Prepare thoroughly so that you make the most of this time together. Here are a few helpful hints to make your practices successful:

- *Arrive Early.* Always plan to come to the field at least 15 minutes before the start of your practice and 20 minutes early for the first practice, because some players and families will arrive early. This time is a good opportunity to get to know your players' parents and to address their questions.
- *Be prepared.* Have a plan for each practice. Practice drills and suggestions are provided in this notebook that will help you plan for practice.
- *Establish practice rules.* Make your players aware of the rules for practice. The most important rule is for the players to listen when you are talking, so establish this rule first. Other rules may include: being on time, running on and off the field, respect your teammates, etc. Clearly communicating these rules will help everyone get more out of practice.
- *Teach fundamentals.* Your job as a coach is to help your players understand and practice fundamentals so that they begin to establish a solid foundation of baseball skills. We want our players to be fundamentally sound and experience success if they choose to play baseball at the next level.

- *Make it fun.* Use games and drills to make practices fun. Be creative.
- *Use scrimmages as a coaching tool.* Scrimmages are fun and can be a valuable tool to simulate game situations. You can hold scrimmages between players on your team or by playing against another team.

Aspects of the Game

Rules Unique to Victory Sports T-Ball

Victory Sports T-Ball uses several unique rules. These rules are designed to recognize that Every Child Is A Winner by promoting *character, self-esteem, and player safety.*

Game Format

Here is the unique format of a Victory Sports T-Ball game:

- The Home Team, listed first on the schedule, will lead in prayer before the start of each game.
- Game length is addressed in the sections for each division.
- Scores will not be kept in any league, although each coach should be aware of how many runs his/her team has scored in the inning. Because in 1st-6th grade the end of an inning is signified by 3 outs or 5 runs scored.
- Overall standings are not compiled in any Victory Sports league, regardless of age. Such standings lead to unnecessary pressure and intensity for players, coaches, and umpires.
- Coaches are allowed to be on the field in certain age divisions. See the division sections for more details.
- All Victory Sports coaches will adhere to the substitution rules provided on the T-Ball Lineup Form.

T-Ball Lineup

This substitution system is designed to provide every player equal opportunity for improvement. The substitution system ensures that:

- Every child will have the opportunity to hit near the top of the batting order.
- Every child will get to play at least half the game.
- Every child will get the chance to be in the starting lineup.
- Coaches are not open to making unfair substitutions or being accused of doing so.
- Coaches are free from monitoring playing time for each player.

Playing time for all players is virtually even over the course of the season.

KEEP ORDER THE SAME FOR THE ENTIRE SEASON

Starting Batting Order

Game Day	T-Ball Lineup
#1 April 10th	Begin with Player #1
#2 April 17th	Begin with Player #5
#3 April 24th	Begin with Player #8
#4 May 1st	Begin with Player #2
#5 Week of May 3rd	Begin with Player #6

#6	May 8 th	Begin with Player #9
#7	May 15 th	Begin with Player #3
#8	May 22 th	Coaches Choice

Week ____ : Victory Sports T-Ball Lineup Form

#	Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								
11								
12								
13								
14								

Game Day #1 Example

#	Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5	1 Shane	CF	1B	P	LF			
6	2 Payton	SS	RC	2B	3B			
10	3 Jeff	1B	CF	1B	RF			
4	4 Danny	RC	2B	LF	SS			
1	5 Nathan	2B	SS	RF	1B			
8	6 Michael	LF	3B	RC	P			
88	7 Chris	RF	P	CF	2B			
7	8 John	3B	LF	SS	CF			
3	9 Scott	P	RF	3B	RC			

	Name
1	Shane
2	Payton
3	Jeff

4	Danny
5	Nathan
6	Michael
7	Chris
8	John
9	Scott

Game Day #2 Example

#	Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	1 Nathan	CF	1B	P	LF			
8	2 Michael	SS	RC	2B	3B			
88	3 Chris	1B	CF	1B	RF			
7	4 John	RC	2B	LF	SS			
3	5 Scott	2B	SS	RF	1B			
5	6 Shane	LF	3B	RC	P			
6	7 Payton	RF	P	CF	2B			
10	8 Jeff	3B	LF	SS	CF			
4	9 Danny	P	RF	3B	RC			

	Name
1	Shane
2	Payton
3	Jeff
4	Danny
5	Nathan
6	Michael
7	Chris
8	John
9	Scott

Reminders:

- Any player on the bench for a defensive inning must play the next defensive inning, unless injured or ill. A player shall not sit out for two consecutive innings.
- All players shall play a minimum of three innings on defense.
- In T-Ball, all players on the team will play defense.

KEEP ORDER THE SAME FOR THE ENTIRE SEASON

Game Day Stars

In order to build self-esteem and team spirit, each player will be awarded a sticker star to put on

his helmet after each game. **Make it a point to explain why the player is receiving each particular star.** Parents should be encouraged to cheer for the children as the stars are presented. Coaches should use the *Star Distribution Form* to track star recipients.

- Orange represents Best Leadership
- Blue represents Best Effort
- Gold represents Best Sportsmanship
- Gray represents Best Offense
- Red represents Best Defense
- White represents Christlikeness

Star Distribution Form

#	Name	Game Day #1	Game Day #2	Game Day #3	Game Day #4	Game Day #5	Game Day #6	Game Day #7	Game Day #8
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
8									
9									
10									
11									
12									
13									
14									

Star Distribution Form Example

#	Name	Game Day #1	Game Day #2	Game Day #3	Game Day #4	Game Day #5	Game Day #6	Game Day #7	Game Day #8
1	Brittany	Go	W	B	Go	B	Gr	O	R
2	Allison	W	B	Go	O	Gr	R	W	R
3	Lauren	O	Go	Gr	Gr	R	W	Go	W
4	Caroline	Gr	R	B	Go	O	Go	Gr	W
5	Rachel	B	Go	Gr	R	W	O	R	Go
6	Kimberly	W	Gr	W	R	Go	R	B	O
7	Julie	R	W	O	B	Go	W	Go	Gr

8	Whitney	R	O	Go	W	B	Go	W	Gr
9	Jennifer	Go	R	W	O	Gr	B	O	B
10									
11									
12									
13									
14									

B	Blue Star= Best Effort
Go	Gold Star= Best Sportsmanship
Gr	Gray Star= Best Offense
R	Red Star= Best Defense
O	Orange Star= Leadership
W	White Star= Christlikeness

Follow-Up

Coaches should work to develop relationships with players and their families as the season progresses. Be sensitive to their needs. If you are a head coach, be prepared to lead a child to Christ at any practice or game so that you are ready when the opportunity arises. When children make decisions, communicate the information to the Recreation & Activities Pastor, Brother Jimmy Money Penny. **We also ask coaches to call or visit every child making a profession of faith in Christ. Please try to do this within the same week of the decision to encourage the child and answer any questions the child or a family member may have.**

Winning and Losing

- **When They Win.** Every player will tell you it's more fun to win than it is to lose. As a coach, you should model "winning with class" for your team. Teach your team to congratulate the other team after each game. **Do not tolerate players taunting or humiliating an opponent.**
- **When They Lose.** Many times, especially with younger kids, tears of disappointment will accompany a loss. As a coach, understand that losing in baseball is new and painful, especially for many of the younger players. *Console them, praise their efforts, and never embarrass them.* Coach them beyond the game.

Picture Day

Picture Day is scheduled on your practice night the week after your first game. Please refer to your picture schedule in your picture packet for your scheduled time. You will have a team picture taken and your players will have the opportunity to take individual pictures. A complimentary team picture for up to two coaches per team will be provided by Avery Sports Photography. Tentative picture date is the week of April 5th.

Going Beyond the Game

Team Time Devotions

One of the greatest responsibilities and privileges of coaching is sharing the weekly devotions with players during practice. These 5-8 min devotions are organized weekly and can be accessed on our webpage at www.secondfamily.tv. It is recommended that coaches have devotions at the midpoint of practice each week. This accommodates players who may arrive late or leave early.

For team time, the coach will gather all his or her players in a group to review the Learning Verse, share the devotion and close with prayer. This is a wonderful time to share Christian principles in an intimate environment.

Scripture Learning

- During team time at practice, review the weekly scripture verse with players.
- Give each child the opportunity to participate in learning the verse by reciting the verse as a group.
- At the end of practice, award a green star to every player who participated in scripture learning.

The Gospel Presentation

At one of the last practices of the season, you should share a Gospel Presentation with your team during your devotion time. **Christian coaches partnering with non-Christian coaches are responsible for presenting the Gospel.** Victory Sports Staff or commissioners will be available to help present the Gospel to teams whose coaches are uncomfortable doing so.

League Rules

T-Ball Rules

General

1. The Home Team, listed first on the schedule will lead in prayer before the game. When the game concludes we will line up to congratulate the opposing team for a game well played.
2. The Sporting News Official Rules of Baseball shall apply at all times, except as amended below.
3. The game will be five (5) innings. No inning starts after 60 minutes. Weekday games may be shorter.
4. Base lines shall be 45 feet in length.
5. There will be no score kept in this division.
6. Coaches will act as umpires.
7. If the ball hits the coach in the field, the ball is dead & players may advance one base. The infield fly rule is not in effect.
8. The "Visiting" team will bat first.
9. The game should be played as close to baseball as possible, please refrain from making up rules during game play. If there is a problem please contact commissioner and we will consider the change for next year. Changing rules, although it seems best at the time may lead to confusion for coaches, players, and fans.

Offense

1. A Batter has three attempts to hit the ball off the tee. If player does not hit the ball fair within three attempts, the batter is out.
2. For the first six games, players will hit off a tee. For the remaining games, the offensive coach has the option to pitch three balls to his/her player overhand. If the player does not hit the ball, it will be placed on a tee for him/her to hit. *The pitcher may carry a glove for his/her protection only. The pitcher should complement the defensive team and never attempt to distract them. The ball is hit, the coach pitcher shall remove him/herself from the playing field opposite of the play.*
3. Bunting is NOT allowed.
4. The home plate coach should remove the tee if a runner attempts to score.
5. There is a semi-circle in front of home plate. The batter must hit the ball past the circle to be a fair ball.
6. Base runners must stay in contact with base till the ball is hit.
7. Overthrows: A runner may not advance on an overthrow; exception last batter.
8. Bat Throwing will not be tolerated. Any batter that throws the bat will receive a warning. If the same batter throws the bat again in, he or she will be automatically out.
9. The offensive team will bat the entire line up.
10. The offensive coaches are allowed at 1st, 3rd, home plate, and a pitching coach.
11. Runners may advance at their own risk on balls hit to the outfield, if a player is thrown out they should leave the base.
12. All batters and base runners are required to wear a batting helmet.
13. Play is suspended once the ball is returned and controlled in the infield.

Defense

1. All players will play on defense.
2. Defensive line-up should consist of a standard infield with players in traditional infield positions. All of the remaining players should be positioned in the outfield.
3. All players should have the opportunity to play in the infield. Coaches need to ensure that the pitcher can adequately defend themselves.
4. The defensive team coaches may have three (3) coaches on the field for positioning. Should NOT interfere with play.
5. The pitcher, or any other player, may not charge the ball until it is hit.
6. The defense **must make** a first attempt to get the batter out by throwing the ball to the targeted base. They are not allowed to run to the base, unless they are in close proximity to target base. For example: if the short stop fields a ball, they may run to 2nd base for a force out. However the short stop that fields the ball may not run across the infield to first base.

Equipment

- Game balls will be provided by Victory Sports
- A standard batting tee with a home plate base will be used.
- A T-ball bat must be used.
- All batters and base runners must wear helmets.

Skills, Drills, and Tips

Throwing and Catching Skills

You may find that throwing is one of the weakest skills in your players. Even athletes with strong arms often have poor throwing fundamentals. With that in mind, set aside time in the beginning of each practice to work on throws and monitor throwing mechanics during warm-ups.

Grip

Most throws begin with a catch. As you move the ball and glove to the throwing position, take a two-finger grip on the ball by placing your index and middle fingers on one seam and your thumb on a seam on the side of the ball opposite your fingers.

Overhand Throw Progression

As you take the ball out of your glove, be sure to grip the ball as described above. Here are simple verbal cues to give to your players: “Turn, step, and throw.” These cues will remind your players to turn toward the target while extending your throwing hand back; to step in the direction of the target with your glove-side foot, shifting your weight onto that foot while keeping your hips square to the target; and to throw the ball by bringing your arm forward and snapping your wrist, leading with the elbow. Keep your elbow high and your upper arm parallel to the ground. Rotate your forearm through the vertical, keeping the ball high as it goes by your head. After you release the ball, your weight will be forward, your knees bent, your throwing shoulder forward, your throwing hand low and to the outside of your glove-side knee, and your throwing-side foot will come forward to put you in a balanced position.

Here are the three phases of the overhand throw:

1. PREPARATION
 - Weight on back foot
 - Glove side to target
 - Arms extended, glove to target
 - Wrist cocked, ball to rear
2. EXECUTION
 - Step toward target
 - Push off rear foot
 - Elbow leads throw, hand trails
 - Weight on front foot
 - Hips square
 - Forearm rotates through vertical
 - Ball high
 - Glove hand low
 - Snap wrist
3. FOLLOW-THROUGH
 - Wrist snapped
 - Weight forward
 - Knees bent
 - Throwing hand low
 - Throwing shoulder forward

- Assume balance position

Coach Turner's Throwing Method

1. Karate Kid position- directional side (glove) to target; directional side leg up, rear leg down
2. Hands in prayer position- elbows down, "rock the baby"
3. When the lead leg moves down, the throwing hand comes out of the glove.
4. "Thumb to thigh, pinkie to the sky, wave good-bye." - hand out of glove; back of palm is now facing the throwing hand ear
5. When the front leg makes contact with the ground, the throwing hand should be above shoulder height.
6. Belly button moves forward, brings the back hip, and the back hip brings the ball.
7. Finish with fingers to the mitt.

Catching the ball involves tracking the ball, then moving your body, glove, and throwing hand into that path in order to catch the ball. You must visually pick up the flight of the ball by focusing on it while it is coming toward you and move your body in line with the oncoming ball. Once in line with the ball, stand squarely, facing the ball with your glove-side foot slightly ahead. Reach your hands out in front of your body to make contact with the ball, and simultaneously shift your weight onto your front foot. A few things to emphasize here is the glove is an extension of the hand, always use two hands, and the eyes should follow the path of the ball into the glove.

Throwing and Catching Drills

- *Knee Drill – T1*
Start one line of players down the foul line and line up their partners opposite them 10-15 feet apart. Players drop down on one knee with the throwing knee on the ground and the glove-side knee up. The player throwing the ball should rotate the trunk, point the glove-side shoulder to the target, bring the throwing arm back, cock the wrist, and follow through after releasing the ball. The throwing arm should end up resting on the opposite knee. The other player should be in ready position and follow the ball as he catches it.
- *Partner Toss – T2*
Players line up like the knee drill, except both players are standing. Each player should provide a target in the chest area for his partner, using his glove and throwing hand. The receiver stands on the balls of his feet, with his feet shoulder-width apart. He moves his feet to receive the ball and does so with two hands. As he catches the ball, the receiver turns his body so that his back foot is perpendicular to the target. No matter how the player catches the ball, he must set his back foot and turn his body before throwing.
Coaching Tip: Have all the balls in the same line. Instruct players that they should begin on your signal. It is safer if all the players in one line are throwing and in the other line receiving. Look for correct throwing motion, correct follow-through, and catching with two hands.
- *Five Every Five – T3*
Divide your players into partners based on comparable arm strength. Have the partners

start approximately 10 feet apart. Using proper throwing and catching fundamentals learned. Partners throw back and forth on your signal. Every five throws, they should increase their distance by 5 feet by having one person take two steps back. Partners should not go beyond a comfortable distance and can work on increasing the distance between them each practice. An option is to only let partners increase the distance if they make 5 good catches and throws.

- *First to Fifteen – T4*

Players set up with one partner on the foul line and the other about 30 feet away. Players throw back and forth on your signal and all of the fundamentals should be observed. One point is awarded if the ball is caught and two points are awarded if the ball is caught between the waist and shoulders (target). The team to reach fifteen first wins. For older players, play to 25 instead.

- *Chip's Throwing Drill – T5*

Have two lines. Players should be 15-20 feet apart. Spread out; everyone has a partner. Keep the ball on one side and give the command for all players on that side to throw. Command: Ready-Break-Throw. Make sure the players have lined up their shoulders to the target and they point their gloves to the target. On ready command, shoulders are lined up to the target and the ball is in the glove. On break command, the glove points to the target and the ball is extended with the palm down. On throw command, player releases the ball to the target. Player on the receiving end should catch the ball with both hands.

- *Throw and Go*

This drill teaches young players to follow their throws in the right direction. Have two single-file lines of players facing each other at a comfortable throwing distance. The player at the head of the first line throws to the player at the head of line two. After the throw, he continues in a forward motion in the direction of the throw by running to the back of the opposite line. The drill encourages players to follow their throws instead of allowing them to cheat backward as they tend to do when going to the back of the same line.

Fielding Skills

Fielding Ground Balls

When a ball is hit on the ground to an infielder, the player must position his body in front of the ball. The player should start with the glove in the dirt because it's easier to go from the ground up to field the ball. Teach your players to always lead with the glove, no matter which direction they move. For a ball hit directly at him, the player should move toward the ball under control, charging only the slow roller. With your instruction and a lot of practice, the player will be able to anticipate where the last bounce of the ball will be and predict the best place to catch the ball after it takes a bounce. The player then should move in to field the ball at that point.

Here are some tips to give your players for fielding a ground ball:

- APPROACH- A fielder should be aggressive in his approach while making sure to be in a position to make the play under control.

- GLOVE OUT FRONT- Extend the arms in front of the body to reach out for the ball. The glove and bare hand should form “alligator jaws” so that players will learn to field with both hands and not just jab at the ball with the glove hand.
- GLOVE DOWN- Tell your players to get their gloves dirty! The fielder’s glove should be on the ground in the dirt and then work up if the ball hops. Many errors occur even though the fielder has moved into correct position because the glove is not down and the ball rolls under the glove and through the legs of the fielder.
- WATCH THE BALL- The eyes should be trained to watch the ball all the way into the glove.
- SOFT HANDS- Give with the force of the ball to develop “soft” hands.
- WIDE BASE- When fielding the ball, take a small hop to extend the legs more than shoulder-width apart, and bend the knees slightly.
- If the ball is dropped, always pick it up bare-handed, not with the glove.
- BALL TO BODY- After the ball is in the glove, the bare hand should secure the ball and both hands should then be brought into the body leaving less chance for the ball popping out of the glove. This will also help players get set before trying to throw the ball.

Fielding Fly Balls

Here are the keys to catching a fly ball:

- READY POSITION- The key to getting a good jump to the ball is to be as loose as possible and focused on the hitter. Weight should be balanced and feet should be shoulder width apart. Teach your players to hold their position for a count until they know whether the ball is in front of them or over their head because a step in the wrong direction wastes much more time.
- MOVE- Most young athletes tend to drift to the ball, which means they time it to arrive at a point just as the ball does instead of trying to get there early. It is important for you to teach your players to hustle to where the ball is going to come down and then get in ready position to make the catch. Run with the glove down in a typical sprinting fashion.
- CATCHING- Maintain eye contact with the ball at all times. Whenever possible position yourself behind the ball. Catch the ball in front of the head with the arms almost fully extended. As the catch is made, give with the impact by bringing the glove down and in toward the chest. When possible, catch the ball on the throwing hand shoulder side. Doing so allows you to make a throw from the outfield more quickly.

Fly Ball Principles

1. Never “backpedal” to catch a ball that is hit over your shoulder. Always use the drop step and run.
2. On balls hit between the outfield and infield, the outfield has priority. Therefore the infield should go after the ball and try to make the catch until the outfielder calls off the infielder.

Fielding Drills

Too many times we think as coaches we have to hit fly balls with a bat to our outfielders for every practice. Some problems may arise when we consistently attempt this feat: an inability to hit a good fly ball, fly balls that don’t challenge the players, and a lot of standing around waiting

for a fly ball to be hit. Coaches should eventually hit pop flies to players so they can read the ball off the bat, but this drill should not be the only one used in developing outfielders.

- *Quarterback Drill*

Outfielder is 10 feet away for the coach with both feet pointing toward the coach. The coach uses the words “drop step and go” and points in the direction to where he wants his player to drop step and go. As soon as the outfielder hears the coach’s command the player uses the drop step and cross over in order to turn his body and sprint in the direction to where the coach has pointed. If the coach points to the player’s right – the player will drop step with his right foot and cross over with his left. If the coach points to the player’s left – the outfielder will drop step with his left and cross over with his right. Once the outfielder has sprinted approximately 20-40 yards (depending on skill and age) the coach will throw a high fly ball, and the outfielder who is sprinting must try to get under the ball in order to make the catch on the run. To make the drill easier and work the players harder, have each player line up with a ball in their glove. When it is their turn they will toss you the ball and wait for your command. Once they catch the ball, they will jog back to the line with the ball in their glove.

- *Tennis Racquet Fly Balls Drill*

Using a tennis racquet and tennis balls, hit fly balls to your outfielders but add a communication element to the drill. Have half of your outfielders line up in centerfield and the other half in right field (or left field). Hit tennis balls with the racquet in places where two outfielders will have to communicate in order to catch the ball. Hit balls that are over their shoulder and in front of them. This drill also works well if you add your middle infield and work on communication with the outfielders and infielders on fly balls that are hit softly between the infield and outfield.

- *Warm Up Drill – F1*

Here is a good drill where each player gets repetitions in the infield learning how to field a ball, catch, and throw to first. Have team form two even lines with one line at second and one at first. The Coach hits the ball to the player at second; the player “gators the ball” and throws to player at first. The players then switch lines. This is an excellent drill when you are alone as a coach. As the season progresses you can have a line at first and a line at third or shortstop.

- *Around the Horn – F2*

Have a player on each base including home. The ball starts at home and the player throws to third base, then second, then first, then back to home. When a player has his turn then he moves to back up the throw and await his next turn.

- *Star Drill*

The ball starts at the catcher, he throws to the second baseman, he throws to the third baseman, he throws to the first baseman, he throws it to shortstop, who throws it back to the catcher. Give the girls a target to aim for such as three times around the star without a ball hitting the ground.

- *Triangle Fielding, Throwing and Receiving Drill*

Set up a player at first with a second player as a backup. Have a catcher at home. All other players are at third base with one player playing third base and everyone else in line outside the foul line. Coach is at home plate with balls and a bat. Coach hits grounder to the third baseman who fields the ball, makes an accurate throw to first, and then follows his throw and becomes backup at first base. The player playing first base after catching the ball makes an accurate throw home to catcher then follows his throw home to become the catcher. The catcher tosses the ball to the coach and goes to the end of the line at third base. The coach hits the ball to the next player in line at third base and the drill repeats. You can move the line to another position such as shortstop and begin from there.

Hitting Skills

Grip

- Hands together.
- Grip bat with the pads of the fingers.
- Middle knuckles are lined up (knocking knuckles).

Stance

- Eyes and head are level.
- Position is comfortable and balanced.
- Chin nearly touches the front shoulder.
- Looks over the front shoulder.
- Front shoulder is pointed at the pitcher and slightly closed.

Stride

- Stride is soft and short.
- Front side is closed.
- Stride is short so the center of gravity doesn't move.
- Body remains balanced. Picks up the front foot and steps out toward the pitch.
- Head remains steady with little or no movement.
- Hands stay back.

Swing

- Body forms a triangle.
- Drive back knee toward point of contact.
- Knees remain between feet.
- Drive off back foot.
- Head remains center point of rotation.
- Head and eyes down at contact.
- Front arm extends.
- Left hand on top at contact.
- Right hand locked underneath at contact.
- Drive bat head with legs, hips, arms and hands.
- Toes of back foot have pivoted toward pitcher.
- Wrist rolls over after contact.

- Front foot rolls or opens after contact; rear foot may now leave the ground.

Hitting Drills

- *Hitting Off Tee – H1*
Keys: Keep head down and watch the ball. Step; swing and squash the bug.
- *Soft Toss – H2*
The batter and tosser stand in front of the hitting net. The batter assumes his normal batting stance and the tosser drops to one knee at a spot about 4 or 5 feet away from the batter on the other side of home plate. The tosser gently throws a ball into the air, slightly in front of home plate. The batter hits the ball into the screen. Repeat. The tosser should be far enough away from the batter so the swinging bat won't hit him. Variation: Toss golf ball size wiffle balls.
- *Double Toss Drill*
Using two balls forces the hitter to react quickly and delay his swing until the last possible second. His ability to make quick decisions is also enhanced. The tosser positions himself on one knee in front of the batter and slightly to the open side of the hitter. Using two baseballs, he delivers both balls in a slow, underhanded fashion, then quickly calls out "high" or "low" to the hitter. The hitter must react and make contact with the designated ball. The coach should emphasize maintaining a correct swing despite the speed of the drill.
- *Tracking*
Take an old baseball or tennis ball and write the number "1" on it in several places so the number is about three inches in height. Take other balls and write different numbers on them in the same fashion. Put the balls in a bucket. Stand about 8-10 feet in front of the batter and have him take his stance to hit. He should begin by looking at the ground. He should not look for the ball until you say "Now!" Take a ball out of the bucket and get ready to toss the ball into the strike zone. As you begin to toss the ball to him over the plate, say "Now!" and have him visually track the ball into his strike zone. HE MUST NOT SWING THE BAT! When he can read the number, he should call it out. Repeat with the next ball.
- *Long Cage Tee*
Set up home plate at one end of the cage. Set up the tee in the middle of home plate to simulate a ball that will be hit to the middle of the field. Align hitters so that the front foot at completion of the stride is even with the tee. The hitter then takes a swing to hit a line drive to the back net at the opposite end of the cage. The goal for the hitter is to consistently square the baseball at contact and avoid pop-ups or ground balls.
- *Batting Cages*
Only pitch ten balls in the cage to each player, not an entire bucket. An entire bucket tends to allow the batter to get lazy. Have the batter know to make each pitch count.

Base Running Skills

Whether you are leaving the batter's box or first base, an explosive first step is crucial. Your stride must initially be short and then lengthen as momentum is generated. Push off the ground with your toes, increasing stride length each step. Maintaining a low center of gravity during the initial stages of running is a must and allows you to stay balanced. As you begin to lengthen your stride, stand up a little taller while maintaining a forward lean. Increase your speed by moving your arms in a rhythmic fashion and driving them forward and back with each stride. Your hands should be relaxed and should approach the side of your face on the upswing and pass behind your hips on the downswing. Run in a straight line whenever possible, keeping the distance you are traveling to a minimum. As you pass a base, keep your stride and hit the front corner of the base with your foot.

Rounding the Base

The runner should round a base when he clearly has the base outright and needs to get into a position to possibly advance to the next base, depending on what the defense does with the ball. When a base runner rounds a base, he leans toward the infield and touches the inside corner of the bag with either foot.

Sliding

Sliding is "controlled falling." It is not a jump or a leap. The player tucks one of his legs underneath him as he goes into his slide. This is called establishing the leg tuck. The top leg is slightly bent, so it can give a little when it hits the base. It is important for there to be some bend in the top leg, otherwise it can break when it jams into the base. The head is up looking for the base. The arms are off the ground.

Base Running Drills

- *Home to First*
Have players line up at home plate. One at a time, they step to the plate and take a swing without the bat. They run to first base. Practice running through the base. Practice rounding first base and stopping. Practice rounding first and continuing to second.
- *All Bases*
Put an equal number of players at all four bases. The first player at each base steps up, and only those runners execute the play together. The batter takes a swing without a bat and runs two bases, ending at second. He then jogs back to first base for his next turn. The runner at first goes on the swing and takes two bases, ending at third, then jogs back to second base. The runner at second takes two bases, ending up at home, then jogs back to third for his next turn. The runner at third tags up on the swing and scores. He remains at home and gets in line for his next turn. After the group finishes, the next group steps up and repeats the drill.
- *Base Running Game*
Half the team lines up at second base and the other half line up at home. On the signal, one player from each team runs the bases until he reaches the base he started out at. When he gets there, he tags the next runner in line and he runs the bases. This is done

until all the runners have run. If you have an uneven number of players, the team with the least amount of players will have to have one girl run twice. Whichever team finishes first wins.

- *Hat Drill*

This drill trains the runner to watch the 3rd base coach. Have a coach on 1st and 3rd. Have the runner round 1st, and while heading toward 2nd, yell out HAT ON or HAT OFF while looking at the 3rd base coach. The yell must be made loud and before 2nd is reached.

- *The Cardboard Sliding Drill*

The players will get a running start, come in and execute a slide on a big, slick piece of cardboard. Have the players wear old socks the day you do the cardboard sliding drill, because they slide in their sock feet.

Base Running Tips

A coach needs to develop a verbal style of coaching. This means the coaches need to say the same things when the base runners are running the bases. By doing this, the runner does not need to try to figure out what the coach is telling them to do. If you want them to go, say GO, GO, GO. If this is what you choose to say when you want them to take a base, say it every time this situation occurs. Other examples are: STAY if you want them to stay. ROUND THE BASE AND LOOK if you want them to round the base and be prepared to take another if the ball gets loose. ON THE BASE if the ball is coming into the area that they are in. FIND THE BALL if you want them to be able to react on their own if it gets loose.

Here are some key points to emphasize for base running:

- Tag on a fly ball hit in the air behind you.
- Go halfway on a fly ball hit in the air in front of you.
- Freeze on a line drive.
- Tag on any fly ball hit in foul territory.
- On a ground ball hit to the pitcher, you freeze, unless forced.
- When running to second base on a base hit into right field, look at the third base coach.

B	Blue Star= Best Effort
Go	Gold Star= Best Sportsmanship
Gr	Gray Star= Best Offense
R	Red Star= Best Defense
O	Orange Star= Leadership
W	White Star= Christlikeness