



## Drost Park League

### T-Ball 4 and T-Ball/Coach Pitch Rules

Revised January 18, 2021

#### Goals

Simply put, the goals of introductory T-Ball 4 and T-ball/Coach Pitch baseball divisions are:

1. For the players, coaches, parents, and fans to have fun.
2. To introduce the players to the rules of the game, team play, and sportsmanship.

The following rules are designed with these two goals in mind.

#### No Umpires

Due to budgetary, training, and scheduling challenges, the Drost Park League does not provide umpires for these lower divisions. As such it is imperative for coaches, parents, and fans to have a complete understanding of the rules as outlined below.

The following rules will be in effect for each of the three divisions to account for the lack of umpires:

- The overall score for the games will NOT be kept, recorded, or discussed on the field. These three divisions are purely for instruction and fun. All games officially result in a tie. • As such, all innings should be played in their entirety. There's never a situation where the home team would not bat in the final inning as the overall score is irrelevant. • A designated coach of the team on the field (defense) will serve as an umpire for that half inning. If the coach cannot make a confident ruling then the decision should go in favor of the batting team (offense).
- Calls are never to be disputed by the opposing team or fans. Again, all games result in a tie. There should never be a reason to dispute a call.
- Coaches are to follow the rules in this document explicitly and there are to be **no "negotiations" or rule adjustments before game play**. The best way for players to learn the rules of the game (and for fans to not become despondent) is to keep the rules consistent from week to week.

#### Catchers

There will be no catchers in T-Ball 4. The reasons for this include safety, the hassle of putting the equipment on/off players, and the speed of the game. The catcher position in Tball/Coach Pitch is optional. However, we feel you should begin developing the catcher as an essential part of the team just like the other fielding positions. If you forego a catcher, any plays for an out that may be made at the plate cannot be made by the pitcher (illogical play rule). The catcher must wear full protection at all times while on the field of play. This includes helmet, face mask, chest protector and shin guards.

## Division Differences

Most of the rules for T-Ball 4 and T-Ball/Coach Pitch are the same. Each division is coed, and parents can request that their children be on a team with their friends. The differences are outlined as follows:

### **T-Ball 4**

- Players must be going into or just completed pre-K before the season begins. • All players must always hit from a tee. There are not strikeouts. The players keep trying until they get a hit.
- All players should be on the field on defensive. One player should occupy each of the positions of 1B, 2B, SS, 3B, and P. Additional players should be spread evenly in the outfield.
- Runners may never take more than one base.
- Teams should play as many innings as possible in a 60-minute time frame. No innings should be started after 60 minutes, but the game should progress until the last inning is complete.
- Coaches/Parents may be in the field both on offense and defense to help players teaching them the game. There can be no hands-on contact to push or help the players run.

### **T-Ball/Coach Pitch**

- Players must be going into or just completed either pre-K or Kindergarten before the season begins.
- Players are thrown 5 pitches from a coach. Foul balls on the 5<sup>th</sup> pitch will result in additional chances for the batter like real baseball. If the ball is not put in play, then the ball is placed on a tee. Players keep trying off the tee until they get a hit. There are no strike outs.
- All players should be on the field on defense. One player should occupy each of the positions of 1B, 2B, SS, 3B, and P. Additional players should be spread evenly in the outfield.
- Runners may take additional bases if the ball is in the outfield. Once the ball is thrown into the infield runners must stop at the next approaching base. Runners cannot advance on an overthrow to any base.
- Teams should play as many innings as possible in a 60-minute time frame. No innings should be started after 60 minutes, but the game should progress until the last inning is complete.
- Coaches/Parents may be in the field both on offense and defense to help players teaching them the game. There can be no hands-on contact to push or help the players run.

## Inning and Game Length

A half inning is complete when the fielding team makes three outs, or the batting team scores 5 runs. If a runner is called out, he will return to the bench. Do **not** bat your entire line-up each inning unless you have not received three outs and have not scored 5 runs. This rule must be followed.

Runners that are out will **not** remain on base. It is important for players to learn the rules of the game and getting out is part of the game and should be taught at the earliest stages of development.

Coaches should note the official start time with the first batter.

A game will be deemed complete once the first inning as been played. Any cancellation of the game due to weather or other reason after that point will not result in a reschedule of the

game.

To keep the players' attention and for the sanity of the fans, coaches should make every effort to expedite getting players on and off the field and up to bat. Some suggestions along these lines are included at the end of this document.

A designated adult should be placed behind the catcher to shag passed balls by the catcher to keep the game moving. The Coach Pitcher should pitch all baseballs in his/her possession to the batter before pitched balls are returned to him/her. If catcher catches the pitched ball, he/she should take the ball from their glove and roll it behind them to the adult "ball shagger". The adult "ball shagger" is also in charge of moving the bat out of play after a ball has been hit so that injury is avoided by any players.

### **Uniforms and Equipment**

Players must furnish their own baseball gloves and shoes. Rubber spikes or all-purpose shoes may be worn. Steel spikes are not permitted.

The league will provide caps and jerseys as part of registration. Black shorts or baseball pants should be worn and purchased separately. Each team will receive 12 new and 12 used official balls.

The league will supply each team with batting helmets, catchers gear (CP only), League sanctioned rag or soft vinyl training balls, a t-ball bat, and a batting tee. Players can use their own aluminum or wooden bats. (Bats must say T-ball on them.)

Players must wear a protective batting helmet at all times while at bat and while on base as an offensive player.

In Coach Pitch- if you are fielding a catcher, have them keep their shin guards on if they are not due up to bat in the first four batters of that inning. Remove the helmet & chest protector so that they can get relief from the heat. Depending on where he/she is in the lineup, if the first 2 batters make it on base, then remove shin guards and ready the player for batting. Make sure you have an assistant coach/parent ready to help with the putting on & taking off this equipment between innings.

### **The Field**

There are no official distances for the bases or the pitching rubber. Teams will use the bases as placed out on their field (approximately 60 feet) and a pitching distance of approximately 25 feet.

Fair hits that do not advance more than 15 feet from home plate (or, if available, past a chalked arc line) shall be deemed a foul ball.

### **Minimum Players**

Teams may play with a minimum of 6 players. If a team does not have 6 players, then coaches are encouraged to evenly distribute all the players and play the game with mixed teams.

Teams will not carry more than 15 players on the roster.

### **Pitching**

In T-Ball and Coach Pitch, coaches should pitch overhand to boys, so they are used to the motion as they progress to in upper divisions. Coaches may pitch underhand to girls at their parents' discretion to acclimate the player to that motion. Coaches pitch to their own teams and it is encouraged that teams use a variety of pitchers to get the kids used to different styles.

Before throwing the ball, the coach should hold it up in the air signaling to all the kids that he's about to pitch.

There are no walks and batters are given an unlimited number of swings in Tball. A foul ball will be counted as a strike, unless it is the third strike, then it is a foul ball, and the player receives another pitch.

### **Batting**

Players should bat in "Round Robin" mode. This means all players in attendance bat in a defined order regardless of whether they are in the field or not. Suggestions for how to organize the line up from week to week are included at the end of this document. This does not mean that all players bat in every inning. It is still 5 runs or 3 outs, whichever comes first.

When using a tee, the players should never place the ball on the tee. That should only be done by a coach whose responsibility is also to move the tee and bat out of the way after a hit. The coach should hold the ball up in the air, announce to the other team "Here we go", place the ball on the tee, and get out of the way.

Bunting is prohibited and will result in a called strike. Bats must say T-ball on them. You cannot use a regular baseball or softball bat in T-ball or Coach Pitch.

### **Fielding**

Players may not sit out two innings in a row. Players may not play the same position more than two innings in a row. Every effort should be made for players to play both an outfield position and an infield position each game. Suggestions for how best to organize fielding positions are available at the end of this document.

All outfielders must be positioned beyond the infield at the start of play. All infielders, except the pitcher, must be positioned a minimum of fifty feet from home plate before a play may begin. This is for the players' safety. The player playing the pitching position must be even with or behind the coach doing the pitching or at the pitcher's rubber when the batting tee is being used.

The infield fly rule will be waived.

**\*A defensive player may not make an unassisted out unless it is a logical baseball play. All fielders must make a throw when it is the logical play. This applies to all positions and especially outfielders tagging second base and pitchers tagging home plate. If a player is deemed to have made an "illogical play" then the play will result as all runners being safe.**

Coaches must attempt to get out of the way of the ball in fair territory. If they are hit with the ball the play is considered dead and will be replayed. If a runner is hit with the ball in fair territory, they are out.

### **Running**

A player may not steal, lead off, or leave the base until the ball is struck. As stated previously, runners must always wear a protective helmet. Parents/coaches may not physically help the players run.

### **Miscellaneous**

There shall be no protests.

Animals of any kind (especially dogs of any size) are prohibited in the park during games and

practices.

With the exception of water or sports drinks for the players only, all concessions must be purchased at the park and not brought to the field. Any water brought for the players must be kept on the bench.

Any rule not stated here will be determined by the Khoury League Book of Rules and the National Baseball Rules.

END OF RULES

### **Coaching Suggestions**

The following are suggestions made by coaches who have been in the league for several years. Some of these may work well for you. Some may not. Please read through the following and consider their advice.

#### **Getting kids on the field**

One thing you can count on is having a couple games in extreme heat. The only thing worse than wrangling dusty, tired, and hot kids is waiting on the other coach to do the same. Here are a couple tips for getting the kids out to their positions efficiently:

1. In practices do drills where you yell out a position and have all the kids run to it. The best thing you can teach them is where, for example, the shortstop and second baseman should play.
2. Plan out who is going to play where ahead of time.
3. Have the kids gather around you and call out their names and positions like: "Albert – first base, Tom – second base, Scott -- third base, David – short stop, Adam -- Pitcher. John, Jim, Chris, and Rick outfield. The rest of you get some water and meet me on the bench." It will take a little time for them to get the groove, but you'll be there before you know it and the kids will run out to their positions.
4. Do not worry about being specific about the outfield positions. It is enough to say, "you're in the outfield" and have the kids spread out. Trying to have them play specific positions can be too great a challenge.
5. Generally it is best to take all the kids who were in the infield one inning and switch them with the kids who were in the outfield the next.
6. If you're organized enough you can make it so the kids get to play a variety of positions and eventually everyone gets to play pitcher and first base (the most coveted positions) over the course of the season. Parents, you can bet, keep track of the positions their kids have and have not played. You should too.
7. There are probably other efficient approaches to getting the kids on the field, but the worst is to have the kids join you on the mound and ask them where they would like to play. It takes forever and without having it written down you run the risk of accidentally sticking a kid in the outfield the whole game because he never volunteers.

#### **Coaching Staff**

You flat out cannot have enough coaches. The most successful teams invite all able parents to help at every practice and games. The more coaches you have the more you are able to divide the kids up into small groups to practice hitting, throwing, catching, and running.

Here are some coaching positions used frequently in these games:

### Offensive coaching positions:

1. Tee coach. Coach lines up the batter, sets the ball on the tee, gets out of the way, removes the tee off the plate after they hit, high fives the runner coming home, and picks up the bat.
2. On deck coach. Makes sure the next batter is ready to go, has a helmet on, and only swings in the on-deck circle. Often this coach also collects the bat from the tee coach and keeps track of how many runs have been scored in each inning.
3. Batting order coach. Makes sure the kids always know who is up, who is on deck, and who should be putting on a helmet.
4. First and third base coaches. Make sure the kids run the right direction and break on a hit ball.
5. Pitcher. This is the most stressful job of them all. There is nothing worse than a long ride home after you have struck out your own kid. Pick your most steady arm and someone who thrives under pressure. □
6. Bench coach. This is actually the hardest job as you're trying desperately to get the kids to pay attention and quit screwing around while at the same time hoping they're having fun.
7. Catcher. For T-Ball and coach pitch, the catcher retrieves passed balls and moves the bat out of the way of home plate.

### Defensive coaching positions:

1. Right and left field coaches. These coaches spread out the kids evenly and do their very best to keep the kids interested in what's going on. They also give direction to the infielders as to where to throw the ball. And, they do their best to keep all the kids standing and watching the ball.
2. First base coach. This coach reminds the first baseman to keep his foot on the base and to get ready for the throw. Due to the rotation different kids play first base every inning so individual attention is always necessary.
3. Bench coach. At the coach pitch level, the bench coach keeps the kids out of trouble. At the t-ball level the bench coach takes a deserved break while the kids are in the field.

### **Setting the lineup**

The fairest way to set the batting order is to put the kids in alphabetical order by first name the first game. And for the next game start out with the kid who was on deck when the game ended and continue this rotation all season.

The fairest way to set the fielding positions is to start with your leadoff batter and go down the line marking the kids as P, 1B, 2B, SS, and 3B. The rest are your outfielders in the first inning. The next inning starts with the first outfielder and mark them as P and then go down the line. This also helps rotate evenly between the outfield and the infield.

### **Practices**

The biggest thing to avoid at practice is long lines of kids waiting for their turn. If you can get a bunch of parents to help you can split into smaller groups so the kids aren't waiting as long. Here are a couple drills to try:

1. Base running. Line the kids up behind home plate. Have the first kid pretend to hit a ball and run to first. Teach them to run through first base, turn right toward the foul area, and walk back to first. Then send the second kid and have the first run to second. Continue until the kids have made it around all the bases. Always high five them along the way.
2. Hitting. Try to split up into groups. Have a batter, a kid on deck, and the rest out to shag balls. Rotate every 10 hits or so. Batting practice is painful to wait through and best of have as many small groups as possible.

3. Fielding. At the youngest ages it is a rarity that anyone catches a fly ball or a ball thrown to them. Focus instead on ground balls. A fun approach is to tell the kids to be alligators and to “chomp” the ball. So, their glove hand is palm up and their throwing hand is above it and palm down. As the ball is rolled to them, they “chomp” it.
4. Throwing. Have the kids hold the ball in their throwing hand, turn sideways, and point their empty glove outstretched at their target. Have them rock back and forth on each foot to build momentum, throw, and step forward with the foot on their throwing side. This drill is best if they take turns throwing the ball to the coach and the coach rolls it back to them.  
Having them point their glove first at the target is the key to accuracy.
5. Learning positions. Put the kids out in the positions. Roll them the ball. Teach the infielders to throw to first base. Teach the outfielders to throw to second base. That’s all they need to know for T-Ball 4. In T-Ball and Coach Pitch they start to learn to tag the runner and make a force out at the closest base.
6. Tagging the runner. Line kids up behind the second base position. Line other kids up as runners on first base. Yell “Go” and roll a ball to the second baseman as the runner takes off from first. The second baseman must get the ball and try to tag the runner. It is also a great drill to teach kids about staying in the base line.
7. Play a practice game. Everyone (especially the parents) loves to scrimmage.

One of the most dangerous drills is lining the kids up to play catch. That really doesn’t work until they get to coach pitch. And even then it doesn’t work very well. It’s just a lot of kids running around chasing past balls and wandering into the line of others who are throwing.

#### **Communication with parents**

Email is by far the best way to communicate with your parents. You only have to send a message one time and it remains consistent. What parents want the most from their coach are the following:

1. To know exactly when all the games are scheduled.
2. To know exactly when all the practices are scheduled.
3. To know how you are organizing the batting and fielding order.
4. To be invited to help during games and practices.
5. To forward on emails sent to you by the league.
6. To trust that you will call them the day of if a game is rained out.
7. To learn the kids’ names (consider asking the parents to have the kids’ names ironed on the back of their jerseys).

The best measure that you are doing a good job is when the majority of the kids that start the season with you also end the season with you. Communication is the key to everything. The more parents are “in the know” the less questions and concerns they bring to you.