



Tips for Coaches

There are some basic considerations to keep in mind when you decide to coach a Softball or Baseball team.

- Training is most successful when it encompasses both learning and enjoyment.
- To enable the player to progress and the team to be successful you need to focus on fundamentals
- Skills are developed by repetition.
- Faults in basic technique need to be corrected - not just practice but "perfect practice makes perfect"

A successful training session is one which

- Is planned
- Keeps moving
- Keeps the players interested
- And where the player (and parents) can see improvement

A common error is to try to cram every aspect of the game into each session. This results in hurried sessions where faults are not corrected and at least some of the players are not getting a solid foundation to move on to the next level. Go back to your coaching manual regularly - review the teaching points and fundamentals. Goals or objectives will change from time to time.

It is important to recognize that no amount of telling or showing players what to do, or how to do things better- will do much good unless the players have an opportunity to put what you are teaching into work. Practice is then the key.

Planning Your Training Session

It's worth the effort to plan your training session and develop a regular routine that the players are familiar with. Each session will normally include fielding, batting and pitcher/catcher segments. These aspects are then supplemented by development of skills and the gradual introduction of specific offensive and defensive plays (e.g. relay and trailer plays, bunt defense, etc).

As in all teaching situations, remember

I - Introduce the skill that you want to teach - make sure that you have their attention **D**

- Demonstrate the correct way to implement that skill.

E - Explain how the skill works and why it important - they should see why this is important to them and their game.

A - Assess their understanding - the players perform the skill to show they understand even if they have not yet perfected it.



Whatever your plan you should have variety within your set routine.

While the overall format should be the same, plan to introduce new drills regularly.

Some tips to ensure the sessions are satisfying to you and the players:

1. Insist that players arrive on time.
2. Have a regular routine for warm-up and stretches that the players move to without being told.
3. Always incorporate a number of “water breaks” into the training sessions. Players must always bring their drink bottles to training. They need to be encouraged to drink before, during and after training.
4. Teach your team some regular drills that allow you to break the team into group activities so that you can focus your teaching skill where it is most needed.
5. Recognise that children have short attention spans. Change focus after 15 minutes.
6. When introducing a new skill/drill, don't 'lecture' for more than 5 minutes without having players demonstrate the activity. Make sure that you have their attention - that they can see you clearly and there are no distractions.
7. Keep instruction positive. Concentrate on reinforcing the correct action not criticising the errors.
8. Finish on a positive note - find something to praise and share the praise around.

A suggested time frame:

10min - Jog and stretch. Cord work can be incorporated in this time. Certainly should be done at Under 14 level. For beginners the most appropriate elastic cord is red in colour.

20 min - Throwing. The distance and the number of throws depends upon the age of the players. For Under 14 say 12x60', 10 x 90', 8x120' and back to 12x60'. Others coaches throw by time – five minutes at each 60', 90', 120' and back to 60'. The distance would shorten for younger age groups.

45 min – Individual skills and team play. It is suggested that this session include three or four skills or team play activities – each lasting no more than 10-15 minutes. Examples of activities would be Infield/Outfield, double plays, cut offs/relays, trailer plays, bunt offence and defence, tee work. We will talk more about these later

25 min – Modified game. It is an important technique that players learn by playing and then teach the tactics and skills rather than teaching the skills and then teaching them to play.

10 min – Fitness work – it may be appropriate to include base running in this session.

5 min - Cool down, jog. Use this time to review the items covered in the training session, “homework” or details of the next game.

Some final points:



- Always establish your objectives for a practice session in advance.
- Write your objectives down together with the “key” teaching points.
- Keep the scope within the available time.

- By pre planning every session, you can follow the simple rule of keeping all the players occupied at all times with worthwhile drills during every session