



Trampoline[®]

A T-BALL PROGRAM FOR YOUNG ATHLETES

Let's Learn!

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F.A.Q.

What kind of equipment will I need for this age group?

Each child will need a 9” safety ball (like a baseball but softer), pinky ball, or tennis ball and a glove (a 9” or smaller glove should fit the youngest players). Wiffle balls are also useful as children learn to catch. You’ll need a batter’s helmet, adjustable batting tee, and four rubber bases. The proper size bat will be determined by weight as well as length. A few 24” bats (either wooden or metal) in assorted weights will do for your youngest players. Bats can range in weight from as little as 11 ½ ounces to around 15 ounces. To determine which bat is right for each player, have the child stretch his arm out to the side and grip the bat with one hand. Have him hold the bat parallel to the ground while you count to three. If the child cannot hold the bat up while you count, it is probably too heavy and you need to opt for a lighter bat. Children should wear tennis shoes and appropriate clothing for outdoor play.

Where can I find the equipment we’ll need?

Your local sporting goods store or an online sporting goods store should have everything you need, but Trampoline™ can help you gather any supplies you should want.

What kinds of drills or skill builders can preschoolers handle?

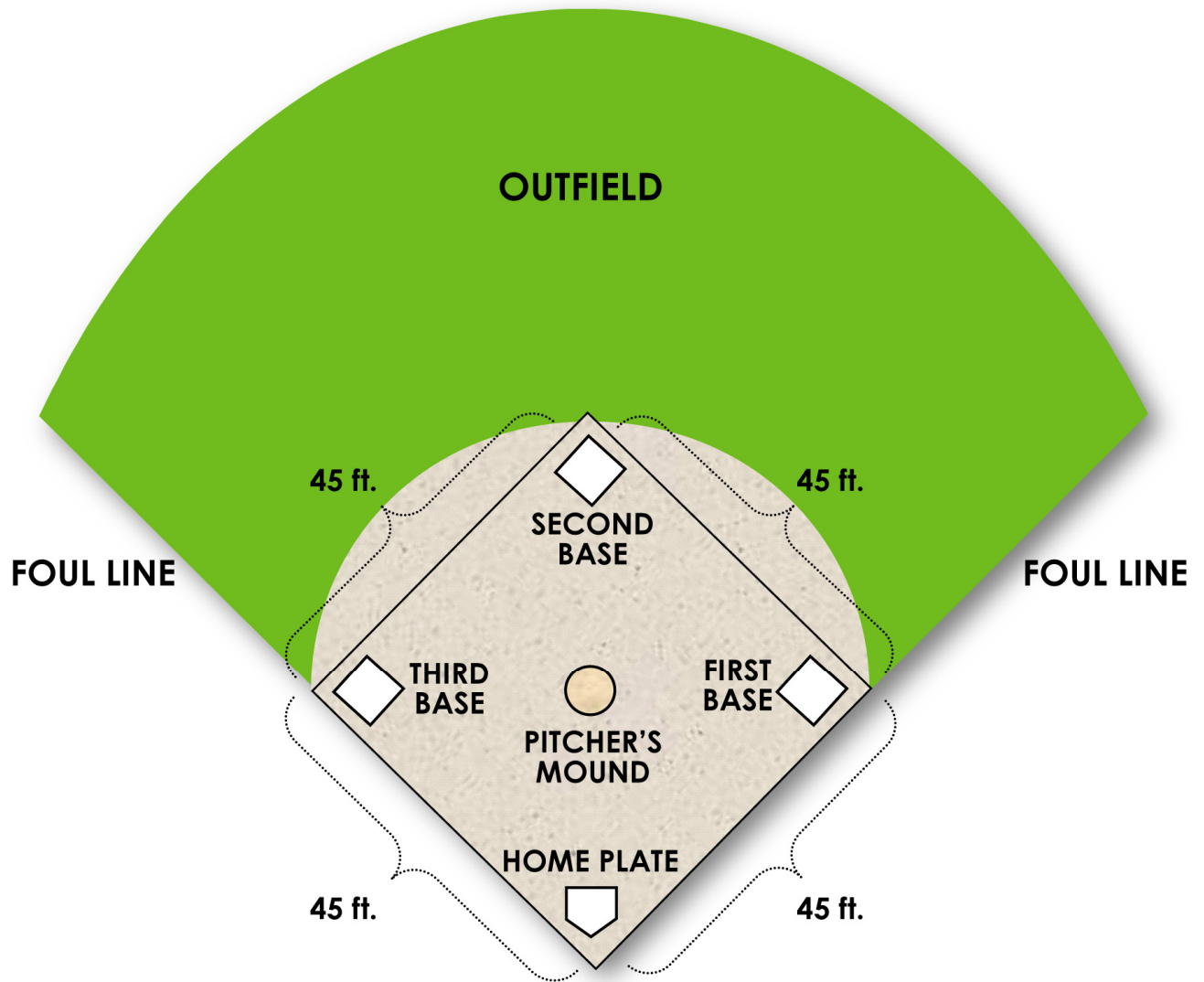
While young children of preschool age are not developmentally ready to play an official game of baseball, they can begin to build the skills that will eventually be instrumental in game play. These skills include physical skills like balance, coordination, throwing, catching, batting, and stamina; as well as the ability to follow directions, to stay focused, and to be a good team player. While your Trampoline™ Competitor program offers you plenty of age appropriate drills, we encourage you to use your imagination too. Think of a game that children like to play on the playground. Is there a way that you can play the same game while incorporating throwing, catching, or batting a ball? Then, by all means, play it! Children love familiarity and repetition. You’ll be giving them a chance to play a game they already know and love while providing an opportunity to hone their baseball skills.

Any suggestions for new coaches or teachers of t-ball?

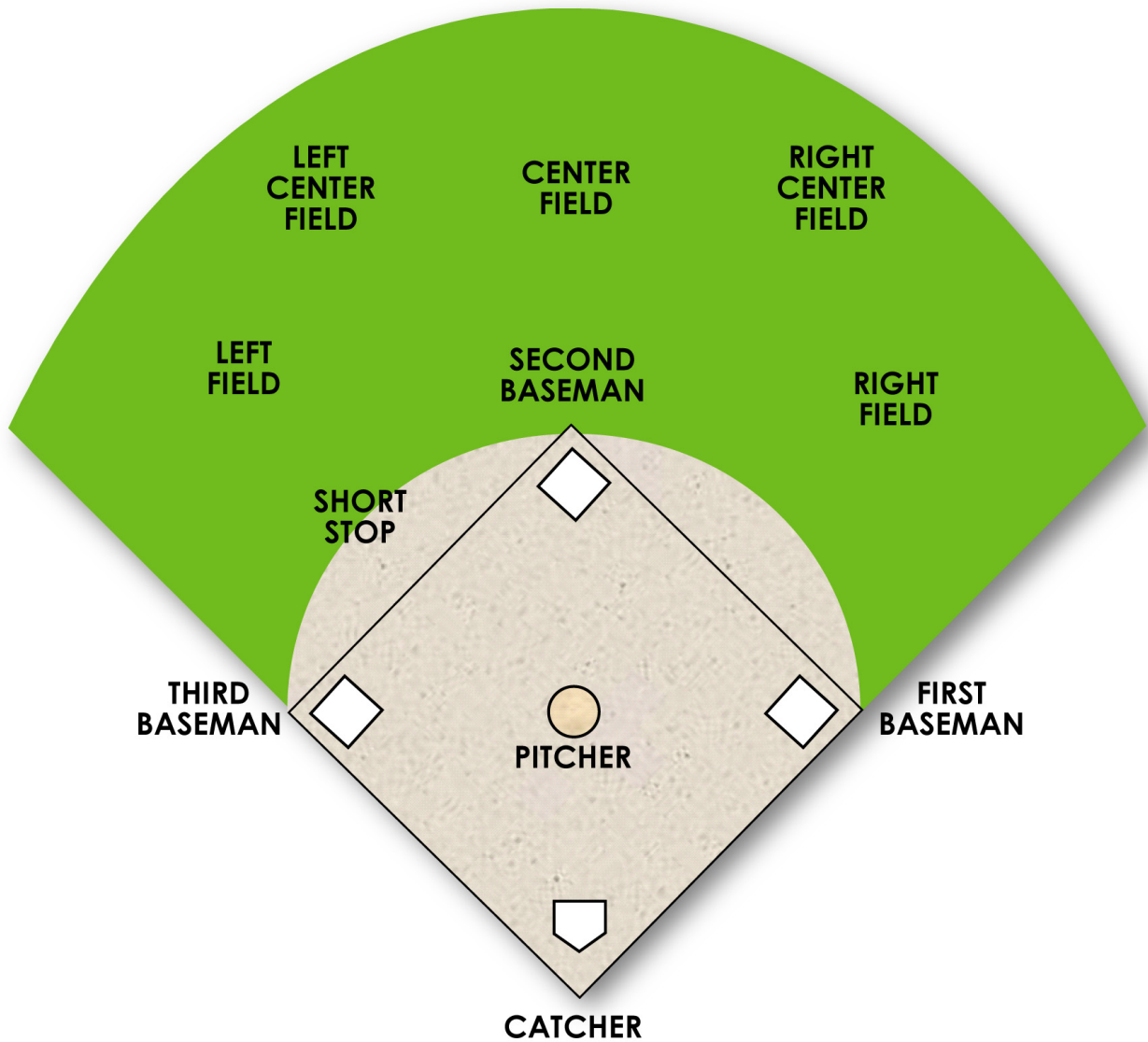
- Familiarize yourself with the rules and objectives of the game.
- Try some of the skills you’ll be teaching your players before you try to teach them. Throw and catch a ball. Try batting and fielding a few balls.

- Make sure every child has her own ball and glove.
- Know the developmental stage of your age group.
- Preschoolers learn best by doing, so give them plenty of time to play.
- Keep rules of games clear and simple.
- When you play a new game or try a new drill, play it first without the ball and/or glove.
- Keep activities short and varied to maintain the attention of your students.
- Revisit, review and repeat. Practicing skills over and over again will lead to retention and mastery.
- Listen to your players. Do they love a particular game or drill? Play it often, using the opportunity to teach and refine specific skills in the context of the game.
- Be prepared and organized.
- Be patient.
- Be enthusiastic.

T-Ball Field of Play



T-Ball Player Positions



If your team has more than 11 players, additional players can be added to the outfield.

Let's Learn!

Object of the Game

T-Ball is a game that was developed to give young players an opportunity to learn the skills of baseball without the necessity for a pitcher. Because the ball is placed on a tee at home plate rather than being pitched, proper batting skills are more easily acquired and the common fear of being hit by a pitched ball is removed.

In t-ball, as in baseball and softball, the object of the game is to earn the most points in an allotted time period by scoring runs. Two teams of nine players or more play against each other, taking turns either hitting a ball off of a tee at home plate and running bases or standing in the field protecting bases and catching the balls hit by the opposing team. A player from the team “at bat” tries to hit the ball into the field. If he does, he may then advance to first base. As players continue to bat, teammates move from first to second to third base and finally across home plate. The team “in the field” works to defend the bases by catching the hit ball and tagging the runners before they reach the bases. A point is scored for the team at bat every time a player successfully advances around all three bases and then crosses home plate.

Basic Rules of the Game

While preschool age children will probably never actually play an official game of baseball until they are much older, you can begin to familiarize them with some of the most basic rules of play and related vocabulary.

- The bases should be placed in a diamond with approximately 45-50 feet between each base.
- Two teams play against each other. Each team consists of at least nine players (a catcher, a pitcher, four infielders - a first baseman, a second baseman, a third baseman, and a short stop - and three outfielders - a left fielder, a right fielder and a center fielder.) The catcher, pitcher, and any player at bat wear special protective gear.
- Teams take turns being “in the field” and “at bat.” Teams that are in the field try to keep the team at bat from scoring points.
- There are nine innings in a baseball game. In an inning, each team has a turn at bat and a turn in the field.

- When a team is at bat, one player stands in the batter's box at home plate. The pitcher (on the other team) throws a hard leather ball to the batter. The batter tries to swing and hit the ball. If he hits the ball, he may drop his bat and run to first base. (In t-ball, the batter hits the ball off of a tee instead of having it pitched to him by the pitcher.)
- If the batter misses the ball and it was a good throw by the pitcher, it is called a "strike". If the batter misses the ball and it was not a good throw by the pitcher, it is called a "ball". If the batter gets three "strikes", his turn is over. This is called "an out". If he gets four "balls" he may walk to first base.
- The game progresses as players continue to come to bat. Every time a ball is hit, the batter runs to first base. If a player is already on first base, that player runs to second base when the batter hits the ball. If a player is on second base, he runs to third. If a player is on third base, he runs to home plate. Each time a player makes it to home plate, his team scores a point.
- As a runner tries to move from base to base, a player on the opposing team who catches the ball can tag him or throw the ball to the baseman protecting the base to which the runner is headed. If the player fails to reach the base before the opposing team gets the ball there, the player is out.
- The team at bat ends their turn when they have had three "outs". They then become the players in the field and the other team comes to bat.
- At the end of nine innings, the team with the most points wins. If the score is tied, extra innings can be played.

Youth Baseball & T-Ball Terms

The following is an extensive list of youth baseball terms. While you may never have the need to present many of them, actually terminology should be taught when relevant.

At Bat – the team whose turn it is to try to bat and score. Each player takes a turn batting until the team gets three *outs*.

Backstop – the fence or wall behind home plate.

Ball – the pitch that goes outside of the *strike zone*. Umpires determine whether a pitch is a ball or a strike.

Base – one of four stops a player must make as he runs around the field in an attempt to score a point.

Baseball – a ball made of rubber and cork surrounded by yarn and covered with white leather and red stitching. Official baseballs are 9” around and weigh about 5 ounces.

Base Hit – a play in which the batter hits the ball and runs to first base.

Base Line – the white chalk lines that begin at home plate and extend in either direction past first and third bases and to the outfield. Balls that are batted within these lines are considered to be in “fair territory”, while balls batted outside of these lines are considered to be “foul”.

Bases Empty – when no players are standing on first, second or third base.

Bases Loaded – when there are runners or players on each base.

Bat – the wood or aluminum stick used by the batter to hit the baseball.

Batter – the player on the offensive team who will hit the ball with his bat in an attempt to run to first base.

Batter’s Box – the area usually marked by a white chalk line in which the batter stands while hitting the ball.

Batting Order – the order in which players on the same team will come to bat.

Bullpen – the area where players (usually pitchers) warm up before the game.

Bunt – a short hit of the ball in which the bat is not swung.

Catcher – the player who is positioned behind home plate and is responsible for catching balls missed by the batter.

Diamond – the infield or area that is made up of each of the four bases.

Double – a hit that allows a batter to run to both first and second base.

Fast Ball – a pitch that is thrown as hard as possible.

First Baseman – the player whose job it is to defend first base. In order to defend his base, he must catch a ball that is thrown to first base before a runner reaches that base. If he does, the runner is *out*.

Fly Ball – a ball that travels high in the air when it is batted.

Foul Ball – a ball that is batted outside of the first or third base foul lines.

Grand Slam – a home run that is hit when bases are loaded. This results in four players crossing home plate scoring four points.

Ground Ball – a ball that bounces or rolls along the ground

Home Team – the team whose field is used for game play.

Infielder – a player who is either a first, second, or third baseman, or a short stop.

Inning – the portion of a baseball game in which each team gets a turn at bat and a turn in the field. A team stays at bat until his team receives three *outs*. There are nine innings in an official game of baseball.

Line Drive – a ball that travels in a straight, direct line without touching the ground to a fielder when hit by the batter.

Offense – another name for the player or team at bat.

Out – the end of an offensive player's time at bat when he hits three strikes. Three outs during an inning results in the end of a team's turn at bat.

Outfielder – a defensive player who plays farthest from home plate. Most teams have a left, right, and center fielder who play in the outfield.

Pitch – a ball that is thrown to the batter by the pitcher.

Essential Youth T-Ball Skills

Throwing

The first step in a good throw is proper grip on the ball. To grasp the ball correctly, the player should hold the ball so that the thumb is on the bottom of the ball and two or three fingers are on the top. Many coaches use the phrase, “thumb to the thigh, knuckles to the sky,” to help players remember the proper positioning of the hand on the ball.



A good throw is measured by aim, control, and speed of the ball. The first goal in aiming for the target is proper body position. Before throwing the ball, a player should be sure that his back and shoulders are straight and his belly button is pointing toward his target. As the player prepares to throw, he should step toward the target with the foot opposite his throwing arm. As he steps forward, he should bend the elbow of his throwing arm in an L-shape, rotating the shoulder. The throwing arm should go down, back and then up behind him. As the arm comes up, the elbow should lead, coming up over the shoulder, followed by the forearm, hand, and ball. The body will naturally twist a bit and the shoulder of the gloved hand (or non-throwing arm) should point directly toward the target as it does. The ball is released when the arm is outstretched just above eye level, keeping the elbow up above the shoulder. Players should keep an eye on the target at all times. Once the ball is released, follow through by letting the throwing arm come all the way down to the thigh and by letting throwing arm side of the body twist toward the target.



Catching

Being able to catch a ball comes with practice, practice, and more practice! Many players must first overcome their fear of being hit by the ball, so the more practice they have catching, the more confident they will become. When catching a ball properly, the player must move toward the ball, grasping the ball with both the gloved hand and the throwing hand, and pull it into the

center of the body where the belly is. Using both hands will keep the ball from popping out of the glove.

If the ball is coming toward a player, higher than the belly button, he should aim to catch the ball with the fingers up and thumbs together (*figure 1*). If the ball is traveling toward him below the belly button, he should point the fingers down with the pinkies together as he catches the ball r (*figure 2*). If the ball is traveling on the ground, the player should crouch low to the ground to receive the ball, using both hands like the jaws of an alligator (*figure 3*) – the gloved hand on the bottom and the other hand on the top.

Be sure to provide plenty of opportunities for players to catch balls at a variety of heights.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

Fielding

Being a good fielder means always being ready to catch a ball that is hit into the field and knowing where to throw the ball once it is caught. It requires lots of patience as a player waits for a ball to come his way, but being on the ready at all times is essential. The stance a player takes as she waits for the ball is important. If her body is in the proper position to receive the ball, there is a much greater chance that she will catch it and then be able to throw it to a teammate accurately.

The most important job of a fielder is to be aware of where the ball is at all times. That means she must pay attention even when the ball is no where near her. A player should assume that the ball could head her way at anytime and therefore, should always be ready to a catch it.

Proper stance will help a player field a ball successfully. Fielders should stand with feet at least shoulder width apart, knees bent slightly, and with most of their weight on the balls of their feet. If a ball comes toward a player, she should step forward to meet the ball, bending at the waist. The gloved hand should be open with fingers pointing toward the ground. The other hand should be ready to grab the ball, pull it into the glove and toward the center of the body. A good visual analogy is that the hands should work together like the jaws of an alligator.



Lots of balls come into the outfield as grounders – balls that roll or bounce on the ground. It is often helpful to learn to catch ground balls without the glove first. When positioning the hands, put them palms up, cup the hands slightly, put pinkies together, and fingers low toward the ground. Once you've successfully fielded some grounders, try again with the glove.

Hitting/Batting

Hitting or batting accurately depends on many factors: the way the player stands, the way he grips the bat, the height and angle at which the bat is held, and the way he swings the bat. Each of these factors is an important component in determining if the ball will be hit and where and how far the ball will go if it is. The first step in hitting successfully is achieving proper stance. Right-handed batters should stand to the left side of the plate so that the left ear is closest to the pitcher. Left-handed batters should stand on the right side of the plate so that the right ear is closest to the pitcher. The batter's feet should be positioned a little more than shoulder length apart with the toes facing home plate and turned in toward each other slightly. Knees should be bent and turned in slightly toward each other. The batter should bend slightly at the waist.



To grip the bat properly, position the bat in the middle of the fingers not the palm of the hand. The middle knuckles of both hands should be aligned on the bat just above the knob with the dominant hand on top. (That is, the right hand sits atop the left for righties and vice versa.) The bat should be gripped firmly but comfortably.

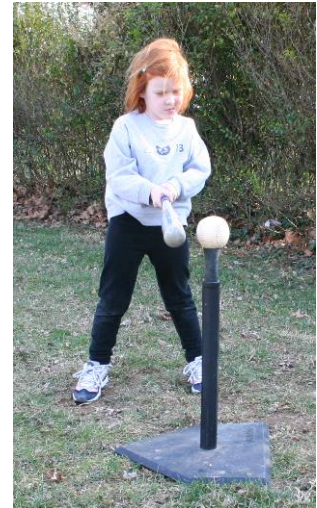


The tee should be set up so that it is the height of the batters belly button. Remind the batter to stretch his arms out and to aim to hit the ball with the fattest part of the bat.

When preparing to hit the ball, the batter should raise the bat so that the handle or part he grips is up by his back shoulder. The top of the bat, or *barrel*, should be above and behind his head.

As the batter swings at the ball, he should arc the bat down at the ball aiming to hit the center of the ball with the spot on the bat that lays about four inches from the top of the barrel. After contact is made with the ball, he should follow through with his swing by arcing the bat back up slightly. The swing should continue until the handle of the bat is at the height of the front shoulder (the one closest to the infield). The barrel of the bat should sweep over the shoulder and around to the upper back.

One of the most important things to remember, however, is keeping the eye on the ball. Follow the ball with the eye throughout the entire swing.



Let's Have Fun!

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Let's Have Fun!

As you build your lessons, be sure they contain the following components:

1. **Warming Up / Stretching**
2. **Skill Presentation or Review (i.e. "What skill are we practicing today?")**
3. **Drills & Games**
4. **Cool Down / Stretching**
5. **Rehydration / Refueling (Throughout your lesson as needed.)**

Warming Up & Stretching

Push Ups

Instruct children to lie on their stomachs on the ground. They should put the palms of their hands flat on the ground at shoulder level, fingers spread. Tell them to keep the body stiff and tuck the toes under the feet. They should look ahead so that the chin is the part of the face closest to the ground. Instruct them to slowly push up until their arms are straight. They should pause for a second, and then slowly lower themselves to the ground again. Repeat ten times.



A fun way to get children to try more push-ups is by playing a game of "Categories" at the same time. While children are lying on their backs, name a category (e.g. Animals, Colors, Foods, Favorite Toy, etc.). As children come up, they must think of an item that fits into that category and shout it out at the top of their push-up (e.g. Bear, Red, Banana, Blocks, etc.).

HERE'S A BRIGHT IDEA...



**Choose a new "Team Captain" each week.
The captain can help choose and lead warm up exercises.**

Sit Ups

Instruct children to lie on the ground on their backs. Have them bend their knees and place their feet flat on the ground. Their arms should be placed behind the head or crossed over the chest – each hand positioned on the opposite shoulder. Instruct them to slowly sit up by bringing their head and shoulders up to their knees while keeping their back straight. Once at the top of their sit up, they should slowly lower themselves back down to the ground. Repeat ten times.



A fun way to get children to try more sit-ups is by playing a game of “Categories” at the same time. While children are lying on their backs, name a category (e.g. Animals, Colors, Foods, etc.). As children come up, they must think of an item that fits into that category and shout it out at the top of the sit up (e.g. Bear, Red, Banana, etc.).

Jumping Jacks

Have children spread out at least an arm’s length away from each other. Teach them how to do jumping jacks. Begin with arms down at the sides and feet together. Then jump, bringing arms together outstretched above the head and feet apart. Jump again, bringing the arms back down to the sides and feet together. Repeat ten times or complete jumping jacks while singing a song together.



Balance & Coordination Activities

Many of these exercises can be used as part of your warm up routine.

Still As a Statue

Practice balancing by standing on one foot. Count to ten together, or sing a song or repeat a nursery rhyme. Try it again using the other foot.

Bunny & Flamingo Hops

Line children shoulder to shoulder on a starting line. At, “go”, have them hop on two feet like a bunny all the way to the end line. Try one length of short, small hops and another of longer jumps. Try hopping again, but this time only on one foot like a flamingo. Complete one length hopping only on the right foot and another length only on the left foot.

HERE'S A BRIGHT IDEA...



Be sure to use plenty of encouraging comments.

Balance and coordination are tricky for young learners so using lots of positive language is essential in helping them retain their enthusiasm for the learning process.

Tippy Toes

Line children shoulder to shoulder on the starting line. Have them run to the end line and back, taking tiny steps on their tippy toes.

Simon Says With a Tennis Ball

Let's Get Ready!

- 1 ball per child

Play Simon Says with a tennis, safety, or pinky ball. Practice following directions, coordination, balance, stretching skills, and more, with this game. Try directives like, “Simon says bounce your ball off your thigh, hold your ball between your knees, hold the ball on the laces of your shoe, put the ball on your knee, bend over and touch the ball with your head.” For older groups and a greater challenge, give a combination of directives like, “Hold the ball on your head while you stand on one foot.”

HERE'S A BRIGHT IDEA...



Continue to reinforce a team mentality. Aside from the obvious physical benefits of play, team sports also foster some great social skills. Being part of a team allows children to learn the importance of respect, cooperation, following directions, and dependability.

Forward, Backward, Left & Right

Let's Get Ready!

- 4 cones – 1 to mark each corner of a squared off play area (distance between cones should be approximately 20 yards x 20 yards)

Practice moving in all directions. Have children spread out - at least two arms' lengths apart - within a squared off play area. Tell them that they must listen to your instructions and run in direction you tell them. You can say, “Forward”, “Backward”, “Left Side”, or “Right Side”. [As children are learning left and right, either place yourself on the side line that you wish them to run toward as you call out the direction, or be sure to stand in front where they can see you and move in the direction you wish them to move.) Change directions frequently for more fun. When running forward or backward, the feet and body should always remain pointed forward. A sideward run will be more like a side step or scissor slide.

Speed & Endurance Activities

First Base Sprint

Let's Get Ready!

- Bases set up in diamond

Line children up behind home plate. One at a time, let each child try to run as fast as he can to first base. Cue each child to run by saying, "On your mark, get set, GO!" and cheer for him when he touches first base. Encourage players not to slow down before they get to first base, but to continue running as fast as they can until they cross over the base.

HERE'S A BRIGHT IDEA...



"To give yourself the best possible chance of playing to your potential, you must prepare for every eventuality. That means practice."

Seve Ballesteros, professional golfer

Running the Bases

Let's Get Ready!

- Bases set up in diamond

Line players up behind home plate. One at a time, have players run from home to first base to second base to third base and back to home. You can cue each player to get ready on home plate by calling his name and asking him a t-ball question (e.g. What is the catcher's job? Where is left field? Which is third base?). Once he gets the answer correct, say, "go," and he can begin running the bases.

Variations:

- To encourage players to stop at each base, create a special warm up exercise for each base as they run around. For example, instruct them to run to first base, do five push-ups, run to second base, do ten jumping jacks, run to third base, do five sit-ups and then run to home.
- To practice dropping the bat, have the player who is next up to run, hold the bat at home plate. When the runner ahead of him leaves first base for second, he may then drop the bat and begin his lap. The child after him picks up the bat and holds it while he waits for his turn.
- Challenge players to listen carefully to your instructions and to run for the correct base. As each player comes to home plate for their turn, call out a base. That player must run to the base you call out and then back to home plate again. For example, if you call second base, the player must run to first, then to second, and then back to home plate. If you call third, she must run from first to second to third, and then to home plate.

Base Running Relay

Let's Get Ready!

- Bases set up in diamond
- One baseball or tennis ball

Line children up behind home plate. At “go”, the first runner takes the ball from the teacher or coach and runs from home to first to second to third to home. Once at home plate, she hands the ball off to the next runner. Runners continue, passing the ball once they have run all the bases, until each player has had a turn.

Variation:

- This game can be played competitively by splitting the group into two teams laying out two diamonds and using two ball. On “go”, both teams begin running the bases and passing off the ball as above. The first team to finish wins.

Throwing and Catching Activities

Thumbs Up, Pinkies Down Catching Drill

Let's Get Ready!

- 1 ball

Practice catching throws above the waist and below the waist. Line children up shoulder to shoulder. Move down the line throwing and catching with each child. First practice catching above the waist. Remind players that they must get their catching hands ready with “thumbs up” – that is, palms facing the ball with their thumbs (and fingers) together and pointing upward. Then, practice some below-the-waist catching. Remind players that they must get their catching hands ready with “pinkies down” – that is, palms facing the ball, fingers pointing downward and pinkies together.

Before you begin, practice these hand positions a few times without catching a ball. Call out, “thumbs up” or “pinkies down” and have players show you the correct hand positions (*see page 13 for views of the different hand positions*).

Throwing and Catching in Pairs/Triangles/Squares

Let's Get Ready!

- 1 ball per pair or 1 ball per group of 3 or 1 ball per group of 4

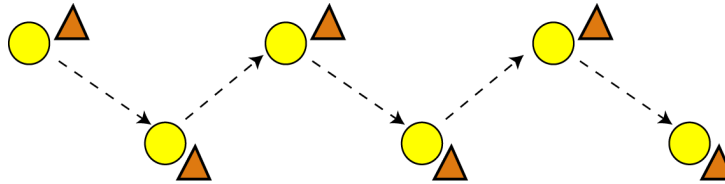
Throwing and Catching in Pairs: Position players in two parallel lines about five feet or more apart. Instruct players to throw the ball back and forth with the person opposite them. Have them try some throws and some grounders. Challenge players to successfully pass the ball back and forth five times.

Throwing and Catching in a Triangle: Group players in threes. Position each group in a triangle shape. Instruct players to pass the ball back and forth between players. Have them try some throws and some grounders. Challenge players to successfully pass the ball around the triangle five times.

Throwing and Catching in a Square: Group players in fours. Position each group in a square shape. Instruct players to pass the ball back and forth between players. Have them try some throws and some grounders. Challenge players to successfully pass the ball around the square five times.

Variation:

- **Zig Zag Passing:** Stagger four or more players in a zig zag formation along your play area. (Use a cone to mark the place where each player should stand.) Have them pass back and forth up the line.



- **Fielding in Pairs/Triangles/Squares**
Practice fielding skills by playing any of the above listed games. Rather than throwing a ball back and forth, have children roll the ball instead.

Circle Ball

Let's Get Ready!

- 1 ball per group

Form a big circle with all of your players. Challenge them not to let the ball leave the circle. Let them pass the ball back and forth around the circle. Keep count of the number of passes they can complete without the ball leaving the circle.

For an added challenge, tell players they must shout the name of person to whom they are passing before they throw the ball. This way their aim must be accurate. Remind players that the planted foot should be pointing toward the child to whom they are passing.

Variation:

- This game can also be played by rolling or bouncing the ball in order to practice fielding skills. Have children try retrieving ground balls without gloves first. Then, add gloves.
- For a simpler version of this drill, the teacher or coach can stand in the middle and throw the ball to players around the circle. When a player catches the ball, he throws it back to the coach.

Target Practice I

Let's Get Ready!

- ❑ 1 ball per child
- ❑ 1 large bucket or plastic tub per child or pair of children

Set up a line of cones. Place buckets approximately five feet away. Have children practice aiming for a target. Line them up at the cones and have them throw their balls – aiming to get them in the buckets. If a player succeeds, move her bucket back six inches or so.

This drill can also be played by bouncing the ball into the bucket rather than throwing it.

HERE'S A BRIGHT IDEA...



Change your activities frequently to hold the attention of your players, but remember to provide plenty of small breaks for rest and hydration.

Target Practice II

Let's Get Ready!

- ❑ 1 ball per child
- ❑ 1 large bucket or plastic tub
- ❑ Tee (raised to about chest height of your players)

Give each child a tennis ball and have him stand about five feet back from the tee. Place a large bucket upside down on the tee. Challenge players to hit the bucket (which will make it wobble) with their tennis balls. If a player succeeds, have him move back one step and try again.

Hitting/Batting Activities

Invisible Ball

Let's Get Ready!

- ❑ Assorted bats (1 per child)

Provide plenty of practice in bat swinging before you even hit a ball. Have players spread out and pretend to hit an invisible ball.

Batter Up!

Let's Get Ready!

- ❑ 1 bat
- ❑ 1 ball
- ❑ 1 tee

One at a time, each child takes a turn batting. All other players are outfielders. Each child swings until he successfully hits the ball off the tee. Outfielders should pay attention to where the ball goes and try to field it successfully. Once the ball has been caught or retrieved, the teacher or coach returns it to the tee for the next child to hit. Continue play until all children have had a chance at bat.

HERE'S A BRIGHT IDEA...



***"Champions are made in the gyms.
Champions are made from something they have deep inside them:
A desire, a dream, a vision. "***

Muhammad Ali, former World Heavyweight Boxing Champion

Power Hitting

Let's Get Ready!

- ❑ 1 bat
- ❑ 1 soccer ball or other large ball
- ❑ 1 tee

Place a large ball on the tee. Let each child practice hitting the ball off the tee. Because the ball is larger than a baseball, they will need to swing harder to get it to pop off the tee. Remind them to use good follow through with the bat as they hit.

HERE'S A BRIGHT IDEA...



"Never let the fear of striking out get in your way."

Babe Ruth, American League All-Star & Baseball Hall of Famer

Keep Your Eye on the Ball

Let's Get Ready!

- ❑ 1 tennis ball pair of children
- ❑ 1 tee per pair of children
- ❑ Permanent markers

Help players practice keeping their eyes on the ball as they swing and hit it. Pair players up so that one is the hitter and one is the fielder. Make sure the fielders are standing far enough away from the tee that they will not get hit by the bat or ball. Draw a different face on each pair's ball. As you place the ball on the tee remind the batter that she should look for the face as she swings and hits the ball. Each fielder should only catch the ball with the face that belongs to him and his partner.

Variation:

- Decorate each of your tennis balls with a different colored shape (blue square, red triangle, purple circle, etc. Older children can identify letters

Playing an Official Game of T-Ball

In general, children under the age of six are too young to be involved in any structured, organized sports program that includes actual game play. They should be engaged only in activities that promote interest in the game and that offer each child plenty of opportunities to experiment with the bat and ball in a fun learning environment.

If an opportunity to focus on specific skills that may later be used in a game setting is desired, mini-games can be introduced as appropriate. These mini-games are best for players under the age of six as they offer children the chance to experience and implement offensive and defensive techniques while giving each child plenty of time “on the ball” and a chance to try to score and block runs. Games that are too long or have too many players per side will result in many children standing around with nothing to do or too many children trying to chase after the ball.

If you opt to build a mini-game into each of your practices, try to have all children engaged in mini-games around your play area. Each diamond should offer approximately 40-50 feet between bases.

Keep the rules simple:

- A team should consist of 12 players minimum, 15 maximum.
- Make sure children know which other players are on their team. (Colored t-shirts or pinnies are helpful.)
- Every player bats and plays in the field - that is, everyone has a turn playing offense and defense.
- The ball is hit off a batting tee; there is no pitching.
- There are no walks or strikeouts.
- No stealing. Players on base must stay on base until the ball is hit by the batter.
- An inning is over when all the players have batted once.
- A standard game is four innings.
- Safety helmets must be worn by batters.
- Remind players that the coach or referee makes the final call. Any arguing with a coach or ref will result in a time out for that player.

- Take plenty of breaks for rest and water.
- If some players must sit on the sideline to wait their turn to play, remind them that they are still part of the team. Their job is to cheer on their teammates while paying attention to the game.
- Most children will want to know the final score – this is, in essence, the point of the game. Competitive games always result in having winners and losers. You can and should let curious children know how many runs were scored by both teams, while reminding them that being good winners and good losers is equally as important. Winning teams have good reason to celebrate and it's reasonable for losing teams to feel discouraged. Remind players that, regardless of their win or loss, the game playing experience should be used as an opportunity to learn from mistakes, to practice skills that need sharpening, and to continue to work together with teammates toward improving their game. Teams (and their coaches!) should always congratulate each other for a game well-played. This is the foundation of good sportsmanship.

Let's Get to Know Each Other!

Baseball Fun Facts



Did you know that...

- Baseball is considered “the national pastime” of the United States?
- While it is believe that the earliest versions of baseball evolved from the British games like *rounders*, *stoolball*, and *cricket*; the first American baseball games were played in Massachusetts and New York in the early 1800’s?
- The first known American baseball club was the New York Knickerbockers of 1845?
- In 1857, sixteen New York baseball clubs formed the National Association of Baseball Players and established the first championship game? Within ten years the number of members had grown to 400 clubs, with some as far away as California!
- The first professional baseball club was the Cincinnati Red Stockings?
- The first World Series, a nine-game series, was played between Pittsburg and Boston in 1903? Boston won.
- The New York Yankees have won more World Series than any other team?
- Mickey Mantle, former Yankees right fielder, holds many World Series records including most runs, most home runs, and most strikeouts?