

A  
**Coach**  
Will Impact  
More Young People in a Year  
Than an Average  
Person Does in a  
Lifetime



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# BASEBALL

For 7 & 8 years old Coaching Manual



## Parent's Code

1. Do not force an unwilling child to participate in sports.
2. Remember children are involved in organized sports for their enjoyment, not yours.
3. Encourage your child always to play by the rules.
4. Teach your child that honest effort is as important as victory so that the result of each game is accepted without undue disappointment.
5. Turn defeat to victory by helping your child work toward skill improvement and good sportsmanship. Never ridicule or yell at your child for making a mistake or losing a competition.
6. Remember that children learn best by example. Applaud good plays by your team and by members of the opposing team.
7. Do not publicly question the officials' judgement and never their honesty.
8. Support all efforts to remove verbal and physical abuse from children's sporting activities.
9. Recognize the value and importance of volunteer coaches. They give of their time and resources to provide recreational activities for your child.

## Table of Contents

### Player's Code

1. Play for the *fun of it*, not just to please your parents or coach.
2. Play by the rules.
3. Never argue with the umpires decisions. Let your coach ask any necessary questions.
4. Control your temper – no mouthing off, throwing bats or other equipment
5. Work equally hard for yourself and your team. Your team's performance will benefit and so will your own.
6. Be a good sport. Cheer all good plays whether it is your team or your opponent's team.
7. Treat all players as you yourself would like to be treated. Don't interfere with, bully or take unfair advantage of any player.
8. Remember that the goals of the game are to have fun, improve your skills and feel good.
9. Cooperate with your coach, teammates and opponents, for without them you don't have a game.

Introduction	2
Goals and Skills	3
Fear, Failure, Incentives and Listening	4
Hustle, Parent/Player Meeting Helpful	5
Photos	6
Safety Tips	7
Equipment	8
Dynamic Fundamental Warmup and Game Skills Warmup	9
Throwing a Baseball Drills	16
Catching a Baseball Drills	21
Hitting a Baseball Drills	22
Fielding a Baseball Drills	26
Running the Bases	29
Sliding Drills	30
<b><i>Fun Games To Play</i></b>	
Toss and Hit	32
Infield Throwing Games	32
Two Games At One Time	34
California Kickball	34
Defensive Game	34
Pitching Machine Game	34
Video, BC Baseball Educational Staff	35
Player's Code	36
Parent's Code	37
Coach's Code	38
Notes	39

## **BC Baseball 7-8-year-old Development Booklet for Coaches and Parents**

This booklet is to assist volunteer coaches who are mostly parents in running fun and productive practices so that players want to play the game and stay in it longer.

This information will assist parents at home who can have fun working on the baseball skills with their kids. If both the coach and parents are on the same page it makes it a more fun learning experience for the kids.

The details in the booklet are a result of scientific research and many years of working with young kids ages 7-8 years old.

**The booklet details** are part of a very successful BC Baseball Player/Parent/Coaches caravan program held for the last 7 years. In the 7 years of running the caravan we have received an increase of player participation and great feedback from kids, parents, and coaches about the program.

**The goal with this booklet** is to assist in the education of the most important people in the development of players in the game at the grass roots level. Our volunteers are the grassroots of the game. They give many hours of their time to help many young people enjoy the game, and we feel we need to be there to assist them in any way possible.

**This booklet will assist you with preparing players to use pitching machines in their games.**

**There will be a process to help the young player adjust to hitting off the machines. You do not start by hitting off the machines first, the machines are part of the process. The player must first understand and feel a balanced swing so they are confident when they are about to hit a ball that is moving. Confidence in the ability to control their body and the swing must come first. You will progress from hitting off the batting T, to a coach tossing a ball underhand, to throwing a ball over hand while kneeling down to the machine.**

## **Pitching machine game**

Pitching machine game but you only get one pitch. If it is a ball and you do not swing then you get first base. If you hit the ball and put it in play you play it like a regular game situation. If you foul it off you get one foul ball, second foul ball you are out. This game will go faster if the players understand the rules ahead of time. Also, the players on deck are behind the fence and hitting a ball off the batting T to get ready. They hit into a screen or a coach on one knee throwing so you simulate the pitching machine.

## **Videos to follow**

**BC Baseball is here to assist you in any way possible to help you become a better coach which ultimately help the kids enjoy the game. At this age it's all about enjoying the game, fun and learning along the way. We would like to thank you for all the time you volunteer to help the kids. Have a great season with your practices and games, please ask us any questions you might have anytime. BC Baseball Coaches Educational Staff**

glove to hand, base running, dealing under pressure, doing it quickly and so much more.

If a team is running the bases you should take cones and place them about 20 feet (6 meters) before the base and also one after the base. The one after should be close to the baseline so the players stay inside the cone and do not end up in right field when they make the turn. The cone before the base is the one they turn around the cone. You can have 2 cones at each base.

### **Two games at one time.**

If you have 12-14 players you can also have two games at the same time. One game can be on the field and the other game in the outfield. The game can be the defensive game listed below where you only need 4 infielders and a catcher. The game can be 5 on 5, if 6 players you can have a pitcher, or a player by second base. The idea is to have creative games and keep players active.

### **California Kickball**

This game is played with a miniature soccer ball or playground ball. The players place the ball at home plate and kick the ball into the field. They run the bases and the defense gets the ball and throws it to a player at the base to get the out. Players use 2 hands to catch the ball.

### **Defensive game**

The coach can toss a ball at home plate or use a batting T, infielders only, softer baseball. You can have 6 infielders if you like, one plays up the middle. No outfielders, players have to hit line drives or hard ground balls, you can have a pitcher at the position.

Rules: If the ball gets past an infielder the runner gets one base. If an infielder jumps and cannot catch the ball then it is an out. Line drives or ground balls must go past the infielders. Fielders play the ball like a regular game.

### **Your Goals**

The goals of the coaches are to make sure all players are active at all times, develop some basics fundamental skills so that they feel some individual success, make sure the players are having fun, and to be very positive all the time. Instill a fun atmosphere during practices and games. You can begin to add some competition for the player. For example, a player hitting off the batting T, if they get 8 hits and 5 are line drives, ask them to get 6 the next time, or have a target they can try and hit on the fence. Then place the target straight up the middle. Players like to be challenged especially if the task at hand is too easy. If it is too difficult then reduce the challenge until they are able to perform it.

### **The skills in the booklet will include:**

Dynamic warm ups with fundamental skills/game skills involved.

Fundamental movements of throwing a baseball. (small 6")

Fundamental movements of catching a baseball.

Fundamental movements of hitting a baseball.

Fundamental movements of fielding a baseball.

Fundamentals of running the bases

Fundamentals of sliding

The drills for each skill are fun, incorporate a game, use key words, and are not always baseball related.

At this age it is important to keep it simple, develop their individual athletic skills, and of course show some success. All this means the player will have more fun.

Keep in mind that baseball may be the sport with the most individual skills involved so there will be more failure. It is also a game where players stand around too much, and we need to figure out how to limit that standing around.

### **Reducing Fear**

Anytime you are teaching a fundamental movement such as catching a baseball, hitting a baseball, and fielding a baseball, the first thing you have to do is reduce the fear factor of getting hit by something hard. One way to do this is by using a softer object like a softer baseball. Now the brain can concentrate on the proper movements over and over to develop a very good habit. This allows the player to gain confidence in their ability to get in the right position, move properly, control their body, and develop the correct technique. The fundamental skill becomes easier, to accomplish the final goal.

### **Failure**

Coaches need to let players know that failure is part of the process and that they just need to keep working on the fun skills and getting better. Coaches need to make sure when correcting a skill, or anything the player is doing incorrectly or not well, that you tell them a few things they are doing really well. Do not be afraid to challenge them by asking them how they can get better. Answers will vary, such as, practicing on my own and not just at my team practice.

### **Incentives**

If you have baseball cards these can be used as an incentive when kids are trying, hustling, listening, and getting better. They can also be taken away when not listening and hustling. Do not take a card away if a player does not improve the skills because this is a much harder task. You can have fun with the players and the cards. Make sure you are always smiling yourself with the players. Other incentives can be that the player will hit first in the next practice.

### **Listening**

Encourage listening and why. Stress that listening is the most important skill in baseball. Explain that you listen with your eyes and ears because together they will make the body understand what to do. Begin to mention that listening with your eyes and ears is a sign of respect when someone is

### **Infield throwing games:**

Have players take a position in the infield, they do not have to play those specific positions. If you have twelve players you would have two teams. One team on the field, third base, second base and first base will not be at their bases, rather they will be at their position. Here is how it starts, the pitcher has the ball, you whistle and he throws to the catcher, catcher to third (not at the base at the position) third to second at the position, second to shortstop at his/her position, shortstop to first base at his/her position, first base to catcher and back to the pitcher. This game can be done where everyone has to catch and throw the ball, does not matter where you start and finish.

Another way to play this game is where the coach can also add skills for the position, when pitcher throws to catcher he does it from the stretch or windup, (its ok if they do not pitch yet, let them have some fun and start doing it). Then have the catcher from a squat position, catch the ball and throw to third. Third places a tag, then throws to first base and, the first baseman stretches to tag base, then throws to shortstop who throws to second base for a double play. Then the ball goes to first base and the first base throws home and catcher places a tag like a runner is coming from third base and then throws the ball to the pitcher. This can be done in many ways, be creative.

For the above two drills you can practice this, it is fun. Switch teams or do this in two fields, use the outfield, lay down plastic bases and do the same drills.

These can also be done with ground balls.

As they get better at this and it becomes too easy you can make it competitive by using a stop watch and see how fast they can do it. Add pressure like a game situation. They have to learn to be competitive and stay composed. See which teams have the best time.

Another drill, you can have one team run the bases and the other team throw the ball around. If the ball gets to the pitcher before the runner gets home then a point for the defense. If the runner gets home first then the offense gets a point. This is very competitive and fun. Lots of skills being taught. Throwing, catching a baseball, moving your feet, transferring the ball from

**ball to the other fielder. As the ball is released the runner can run, and the other fielder has to catch the ball, throw it back, and the other fielder catches the ball and tries to tag the runner sliding. Make sure the tag is one that goes down to the base and up. Do not teach swipe tags, takes perfect timing and the ball can fall out of the glove. Also, if the runner gets too much of a jump have the fielder with the ball fake a throw sometimes to hold the runner and then throw it.**

Once you do this a few times you can make it a game. If you are put out then you are a fielder. You can also rotate the players so they all do the throwing, catching, tagging, running, and sliding.

### **Key Words**

Bent leg slide

Slide on butt

Slide early and not late

Sliding position

### **Fun Games to play**

#### **Toss and hit:**

Players are on defense, and the coach to the side of the hitter tosses the ball underhand. If you have a screen you can toss from the front, more realistic. Or you can use a softer ball and toss from the front. A softer ball is good because the ball does not go as far, and it's a smaller field, more action.

When you toss the ball, as your arm goes back to go forward so the hitter can time it, the defense begins to get into a ready position. At times stop and do not throw the ball, and look back to see if a fielder is not in a ready position. If they are not in a ready position, that is an out so when they hit they only get 2 outs instead of 3. This game is to teach and create a habit how to get ready and also when to get ready. There is a lot of defensive work because the ball is hit a lot. If a relay is done incorrectly, or a throw is thrown to the wrong base, you can stop the play. Start from where you started, recreate the play again, teach where to throw it, roll the ball to that player, and finish the play.

talking to you. Use the example that if you as the player were asking a coach a question, would you like it if the coach looked the other way while you were asking a question? If not, then do not do that to others, look at them and listen, you will learn a lot. **Create good habits now right away. The earlier you begin to create good habits the better.**

### **Hustle**

Hustle is also a skill and must become a habit. We will show some fun drills to teach players how to hustle. Ask players, do you want to be a faster runner? Not many kids will answer no. If yes, then explain if they run everywhere they go in practice or games, they will be telling their legs to move fast and they will become faster. If they walk or go slow they are training their legs to do that instead. This must be instilled and practiced from day one. This can be done in a fun and productive way for the players. Later in the manual we have some examples of fun drills you can do with the kids.

### **Parent/Player Meeting**

It is very important that you always have a meeting with your parents and players prior to your first practice. This meeting is to ask for their assistance in practice and also to continue helping the players get better by playing catch, roll ground balls, toss some wiffle balls underhand, and have fun with your kids in the back yard. Explain that the players need to do the skills and play games each day for a least 10-15 minutes a day. The things they will do with their kids they can see when they are assisting in practice. You can also show them a few drills the day of the players meeting. Let the parents know that you and your coaches are volunteers and will do your best to help each player get better and have fun. One or two practices a week just gets them started, and they have to practice on their own to get even better. This will lead to more success in the skills and fun playing the game of baseball. Of course, at this meeting you can discuss your coaching philosophy, rules, what you expect out of the parents, and why.

Most kids are visual, and it also keeps their attention. When showing or demonstrating fundamental skills you should cut out photos, and also print photos of the positions you are trying to show them, like hitting stance,

contact point, and finish position. Also, you can show photos of a fielding position, and ready position, etc. Here are some sample photos you can use.



When demonstrating a drill, you might take two of your better players and have them demonstrate it, players will pay attention more to their peers than the coaches. This is a great tool to keep players attention and get them to learn. Once they see their peers do the drill you want them to do, then it's usually easier for them to see it, imagine it, and do it.

As you are getting closer to the base you will begin your slide early and not late. You will begin to lower the center of gravity and bend one under the other leg as you go into the slide. Keep your hands in front of you so that your upper body stays up a little and does not lean back and hit your head. Do not place hands on the ground, slide on butt and not on the side. Bring elbows by ears to protect your head from a bad throw.

### Drills

Have players sit on the ground, place one leg bent under the other. With both hands begin to move forward on the ground for about 4 to 5 moves and stop. Then switch legs, do it again, the leg that felt comfortable is the one you will bend when sliding.

Now have players stand up, bend leg behind other, begin to bend other leg, come down and go into a bent leg slide. Do not fall into a bent leg slide. You will gradually sit into one. Do this a few times as it teaches the players how to go into a slide and not fall back into a slide which is dangerous.

Next drill have them go on their hands and knees. From there they will begin to crawl forward fast and then the coach will say slide, they will kick into a slide, kicking feet forward. Check the slide and do it again, do it a few times. This drill might be easier for some players on their, hands and knees with the knees slightly off the ground.

Next, if you have 3 coaches, 3 flat bases, 3 lines, on coaches whistle the first 3 runners run and slide. The coach can pretend they are tagging the runner. If a player slides slightly incorrect then lay them down and put them in the correct position or have them change what they are doing incorrectly as they are on the ground. Practice this until they are good at sliding.

**Here is a fun game** which incorporates sliding, throwing, catching and tagging. This game begins to help the runner know when to begin to slide. Do not do this drill until they feel good about sliding and are doing it properly.

**You can have as many lines as you like, but basically you have two flat bases, a runner with a helmet, and two fielders with one ball. The ball will be at the base with no runner, the fielder with the ball throws the**

territory before the base, this is the cone they will run around before they touch the base. Then place a cone after the base, about 3 feet (.4 meter) back from the base line. This is the cone they have to stay inside the cone, not outside or the turn is too long. Place cones the same way at each base. The players can practice running the bases by following the cones.

When touching the bases try and touch the inside tip of the base, look at the base when touching it. You can also color that part of the base so it's a visual effect as well, easier to see.

### **Key Words**

Look where you are running

Pump arms

Lean forward

Touch inside of the base

Freeze

Drop bat

### **Sliding**

#### **Skill:**

This is a skill not practiced much but very important so players do not get hurt. They will have to slide, and there is a fear factor when running and you have to go into a slide. We assume players know how to do this naturally, not true.

**Sliding position**, on butt, not on the side, one leg bent under the other, hands in front, thumbs in hand. Lead leg that is not bent should be straight and foot up so it does not jam into the ground. Upper body slightly up so the head does not hit the ground.

If you are interested in furthering your education in helping kids in baseball you can go to <http://www.humankinetics.com/products/all-products/Youth-Baseball-Drills-8945401>

### **Safety when coaching is very important:**

#### **Some important tips**

- Always have players in areas where you can see them at all times.
- Check the field before practice or games for glass or any dangerous items on the field where someone can get hurt.
- Make sure the bases are secure.
- Check catcher's equipment to make sure its all good and notbroken.
- Check batting helmets and make sure there are no cracks.
- Have a list of both parents names, cell phone/home phone in case of emergency.
- Know where the nearest hospital is and the phone number.
- Have a first aid kit and ice at the field in case of minor injuries, abrasions, cuts, swelling.
- When not sure of an injury always call a medical person. Have a number of a doctor you can call right away.
- All players should have hats on their heads in the field.
- Always have players drinking lots of water. Every player should have their own labelled water bottle
- When players are not swinging a bat but have one in their hands, they should be holding it by the big part of the bat or what is called the barrel. Holding it by the barrel will make it less likely that the player will swing and hit someone. A bat can be a very dangerous item.

### **Equipment needed for a very fun practice**

Stopwatch/Watch (Players love to be timed, fun).

Bean bags (Used to teach how to catch a baseball, the bean bag forms around hands better and it's safer).

Softer baseballs (Safer, eliminates fear, and the body learns better/quicker).

Flat bases (Or make out of cardboard bases).

Big or average size Wiffle Balls.

Big or average Barrel Wiffle Ball Bats.

Whistle (Players hear and react to whistles instead of your voice that can sound mean at times).

Regular bats (At this age it is always better to have a light bat to control the bat).

Pitching machine/balls for pitching machine.

Cones used to show starting and ending points in warm ups, drills or rounding the bases when running.

Always use the equipment you would use in a game when practicing a skill. For example, any time you swing a bat you should have a helmet on. Another example are catchers playing catch. They need to get used to it wearing the catcher's gear because that is how they do it in a game. For catchers you can have them put the shin guards on (See correct way to do it below) and play catch. When they get comfortable with the shin guards on have them put the chest protector on and play catch. Do not do it all at one time. Get them used to it.

### **Key Words**

Fielding Position

Throw position

Feet wider than shoulders

Knees bent

Head up to see ball coming

Bare hand on top or to the side

Bend the back knee on back hand and forehand

### **Running the bases**

Skill:

Very important that to play the game the players understands how to run the bases. You do not have to be fast to run the bases. You have to use good running technique and know how to cut the angles properly.

Running technique, run on the balls of the feet, head straight, lean slightly forward, pump arms up and down, look where you are running.

### **Drills**

In the sit down drill have players sit on the ground and put legs straight in front, pump the arms so they know how to do it.

Home to first. Have hitters get in batting box, swing and freeze. Use wiffle ball bat, after they freeze they will drop the bat by opening hands. This is a good technique to teach them not to throw the bat. Then the coach says go or uses whistle, the player should run to first base, this is a hit in the infield, run through base, try and touch front part but do not break stride to touch the base. After running through the base slow down, and look right to see if ball was over thrown.

Run all the bases on a base hit. Take cones, a milk carton with water in it, place it about 20 feet ( 5 meters) down the line, about a foot in foul

Now from a ready position the coach says fielding position and the players take the right foot, or left, short step forward with it, and then the other foot forward and out and they get into a fielding position. Do this several times, ready position, fielding position, ready position, fielding position. They are getting the feeling of how to get from the ready position to the fielding position.

Then, in this drill you will start the players with the ball in the glove and in a ready position. The coach says fielding position, and the players try for the best one they can get in. They will get better as they do it. From the fielding position you say throwing position and throw into a fence. Go get the ball and go back. Repeat 5-10 times.

Now you can partner them up and go from fielding position, the coach will whistle and they go from fielding position to throwing the ball to their partner. Their partner goes to the fielding position with the ball in the glove and you whistle, they throw. Keep doing this until they get good at a short distance. Then move them back and try it from a different distance until they can do it successfully at the distance they would make a normal throw in a game.

Now you can have them start from a backhand position. They will turn sideways on a slight angle back, either the right foot forward or the left. From this position when the coach whistles and they throw, they have to stay low, control the body, go forward, shuffle and throw. If the left foot is forward then before they throw they step with the right, plant the right and then throw. If the right foot is forward you just step and throw.

Have them start turn the other way with the left foot in front, slight angle back. Now they are fielding the ball off the forehand, they will turn completely sideways and throw.

The key to fielding the backhand and forehand is to make sure the knee of the non-stride foot goes down. You have to have some flexibility and strength to do it. You were building this in your dynamic warm ups where the body was doing these positions to stretch and loosen up.

Do not look for perfection.

### **Proper Equipment**

When picking equipment make sure it's the size for them and not their dad or mom.

**Gloves**, should not be too big because that causes bad habits like reaching for the ball and not using two hands. When not using a glove you should turn it inside out, then when you open it back up it will have an open form. **Do not** place two baseballs in the glove. Close the glove and put a string around it to keep it closed in the off season. By doing this you are forming a closed glove. The players hands are not strong enough to open this glove up. Better to leave the glove inside out in the off season.

**Bats**, should be light, be able to swing fast, and keep your balance. Do not worry about the length at this time.

All boys should wear a supporter and cup. All girls should wear a Jill cup

Have sun glasses to protect their eyes.

### **Putting on the catcher's gear on correctly and safely**

Make sure they cover the whole leg and foot with the shin guards. The part you attach them to should be on the outside of the leg.

Chest protector tight and covering the throat.

Helmet on so it does not fall off when they are throwing.

Try and have a throat guard on the helmet covering the throat also.

### **Players this age should learn to play multiple positions.**

If players learn the fundamental skills of throwing, catching a baseball and fielding a baseball correctly, then they should be able to play all positions with the exception of catcher. For catchers let players try it and see if they like it. Do not force players to catch. One way to let players try and see if they like catching is to put on the catching gear and pitch some pitches to

them. Then have a hitter stand in as you pitch, have the hitter swing and miss the balls and see how the catcher feels.

First base is a position if you can play if you are able to catch the ball well. All other positions are about fielding, catching and throwing to a base. Players will not learn if they like a different position if they are not allowed to play other positions.

One drill to try that will get them to play all positions is to hit ground balls to players and they throw the ball to a base or first base. For example, the coach hits the ball to left field, throw to third base, center field and right field throw to second base. After they do this then they come in and take an infield position.

Infielders throw to first and rotate positions, third throws to first and goes to shortstop, shortstop throws to first and goes to second base, second base throws to first base and goes to first, first base throws to third base and goes to third base. You can have each player make a couple of throws and rotate. Then the infielders go to the outfield. This can be done many ways.

## **Skills:**

### **Dynamic fundamental and game skill warm ups**

#### **Skill:**

You are limited with time, so try to do warm ups where players are always moving and accomplishing a skill related to the sport or to help their athletic movements/coordination. During the warm ups the players should utilize their feet, hands, vision, and balance. This warm up should be fun so players will do it and learn at the same time.

### **Below is a fun warm up where they learn how to hustle in and out of the field during games. They also learn positions in the field and the numbers which coordinate with the position.**

During games coaches have a hard time teaching players to hustle in and out all the time. This is due to the lack of understanding that it needs to become a habit. One way to teach this is by making it a fun game. This will also

## **Fielding a baseball**

### **Skill:**

Fielding a baseball is a difficult skill because a ball is coming at you and you must get into a position where you can slow down, lower your body, and stay balanced. Get down early and not late, catch the ball as it bounces on some fields that are not flat. It takes a lot of different skills to work together. Balance, vision, coordination, etc.

A good position as you try to field the ball is for the feet to be wider than the shoulders. Bending the knees is the key to getting lower, lowering your butt, taller guys this is harder, it is easier to lower your butt about to the knee level. Your right foot if you are a right-handed thrower, should be slightly behind the left for balance, if the feet are even in the ready or fielding position they will be on their heels and off balance. The feet position for left handed throwers would be left foot slightly behind the right. This is a very uncomfortable position to get into because the muscles are not used to this position. Hands need to be out in front and elbows slightly bent, glove should be with the finger tips touching the ground, bare hand can be on top or to the sides of the glove, but near so when the ball hits the glove you can cover the glove with the bare hand, not before or that will hurt. It is good with young players to cut out pictures or print photos of major league players in very good fielding positions. Young players are visual and this will help.

### **Drills**

Just to get used to getting into the fielding position is to first take them as a group show a drill that gets them to a fielding position. Start in ready position, hands to the side in a 90 degree angle, take your right foot if right handed, left if left handed thrower and place it behind the other foot. The toe of one foot would be behind the heel of the other, then with the foot behind you will slide it out slightly wider than their shoulders, then take their elbows and place them on their knees, slide the hands out in front with the finger tips of the glove on the ground and bare hand on top. Do this several times to just give them an idea of the fielding position.

whistles and they hit into a fence, check to see how many line drives they can get out of 8, then next round they try to improve the number they got before. Always remind them that after they are done hitting to follow through all the way to stop and freeze so they can always work on their balance.

**Same drill with 2 T's** You can have them hitting out in the field to two players and trying to hit line drives. Let the other players try and catch the ball or get a ground ball.

**Drill with 2 T's**, Place one T with a ball on it and then another about 50 feet (15 meters) away, or a distance reasonable to the age and place a ball on that T. Then out of 8 swings they have to try to knock down the ball on the other T, very challenging, gets them to concentrate and have fun.

**The next station** is where you would have a pitching machine. One hitter hitting off the machine, another player hitting wiffle balls off a coach, one player on deck hitting off a T into a fence and two fielders getting the balls. They would progress from batting T, to coach pitching wiffle balls, to hitting off the batting machine.

### **Key Words**

Stance

Contact Point

Balance

Finish

Swing

Step

teach players that in the future each position has a number. Here are the numbers/positions: 1 pitcher, 2 catchers, 3 first base, 4 second base, 5 third base, 6 short stops, 7 left field, 8 center field and 9 right field.

### **Now here is the warm up game,**

Get the players near your dugout, simulate an inning that is finished. Their hats should be in their gloves on the bench. (On hot days if the dugout is covered they should take off their caps in the dugout to let the heat out of their head. If there are no dugout tops then keep their hats on. When on the field always have a hat on to protect from the sun.) Now you give each player a number. It does not matter how many players you have as they all get a number. If there are more than 9 players then you will have players with the same number. This is ok. Then when you whistle that means the inning is over, and they have to get their gloves. Teach them early on if a player just finished hitting the player on the bench then he or she can be a good teammate and get their glove and hat for them. Then they sprint onto the field in no less than 12 seconds. Use a stop watch. At times they will make a mistake and go to the wrong position, that is ok, they are learning. Then from their position you whistle again and they come in and take their hats off and place them in their glove and then place them on the bench. You also assign a batting order so each one has to remember their batting order. When they come in you can say # 3 leading off, they go and get their batting helmet on, on deck hitter would be 4, and he/she gets a helmet on and goes on deck. Now you say 3<sup>rd</sup> out, whistle, they have to assist the batter with the glove and cap as explained above, get their equipment, and then go onto the field. You can keep changing numbers for the field and also the batting order. They are learning lots of things like how to sprint in and out, to help teammates, learn positions, batting order, working together, and so much more. They are also learning how to become faster runners. You can have fun with this, laugh, and enjoy it. Keep in mind we are trying to create good habits in a fun way.

**Drill: (This drill can be done at the 7-8-year-old level with partners, most likely use tennis balls/softer balls for this age.)**

Every player has a tennis balls, bean bag, or softer ball. This drill also works on listening skills. Place players in a circle or spread out so they are not near

each other. When you say toss they toss the ball up in the air and catch it. If you yell anything but toss they cannot toss the ball. The coach is working on listening skills. This can be fun because you might say go and some toss the ball, or all toss the ball. Ask what happened to their listening skills. They saw you toss but were not listening. Do not point out individual players that did not listen, explain as a group. When they toss it up they count how many they catch. If too easy they toss it higher, if it is too hard for them, keep it lower. Players toss the ball themselves. All players do this, make sure they are spread out. Emphasize giving with their hands when catching the item they tossed, like they would if they toss an egg up in the air and they do not want to break it.

You can do this for a minute. Then change the drill to running in place and toss/catch.

You can also have them catch it with one hand one time and then the other hand the next time, it's a little more of a challenge and fun.

Have them catch the ball with two hands and go to a throwing position and then toss the ball up again. This practice gets them to turn their feet, and gets arms at a 90-degree angle, just like you would if you are to throw a baseball.

Then you can have them jogging and tossing.

Finally run and toss.

**Another drill** is to pick partners. Face each other, they will shuffle in a circle the same way as they toss the ball. They can also reverse the circle. If they are doing it really well and it's too easy then have them toss 2 baseballs. One player yells toss and this works on communication. You can have some players doing this and others working with one ball until it gets too easy with one ball.

Keep in mind they do this when you say the key word. You pick the key word, ( eg. toss, go), then repeat it.

**Key words used:**

with the ball. It's a very good balanced position. From contact position now you say, finish the position.

They finish the swing and go all the way around their body with their hands. The wrists will roll over almost before they finish the swing, the later the better, keeps the bat longer through the hitting zone. If they roll the top hand over too early then they have less of a hitting zone.

Then yell stance, and now you keep doing this by saying, stance, contact, finish. Then yell stance and swing. If they take a step with the front foot and swing that is ok. This will happen naturally most of the time, if not you can show it, step first and then swing. If they step it's good for young kids to just lift the foot and put it down. By lifting the body moves back slightly so it can come back down, and they create some momentum and energy to hit the ball, less movement forward. This is easier to do then actually stepping. They already have their feet wider than their shoulders so they are in a step position and have a wide base for balance when they rotate. **The movement should not be a step and swing at the same time**, it happens simultaneously.

Take 8-10 full swings as a warm up to finish and then have them switch hands and swing the opposite way. This drill works on their coordination, balance and strengthens both sides of the body. Now they are ready to hit. Ask the players one thing, after they swing in the above drills, to freeze at the end until you say stance again. Working on listening skills and balance at the same time. **Very, Very Important.**

**Another drill**, is to have a coach on one knee throwing regular size wiffle balls and the players hits them. Other players get the wiffle balls, fun for them, they give the balls to the coach. You would have a hitter, two fielders, and one coach throwing. Wiffle balls do not go far so you are confined to a certain area and can do it anywhere on the field, grassy area. If a player is hitting very well then you can begin to throw the ball in and out, up and down, still hitting well, then throw one fast and 2 slow, mix it up, have a game. Players love competition, but make sure they are ready for it.

**Another drill**, is to have 4 batting T's, and 8 or less softer baseballs at each T. The player places ball on the T, get into a batting stance, the coach

The mental side of the game for this age group is to think that they are always going to hit every pitch and when they see it's a ball they stop and take the pitch. They should be thinking, hit, hit, hit and take or swing. If they wait to see where the ball is after it leaves the hand by then the ball is on top of them and their decision will be late. You want to try and get your body going slightly back by lifting the front foot before the ball is released. Then the body is coming back to hit the ball.

### **Drills:**

#### **Starting:**

Have the players get their bats. The number one rule when a player has a bat and not using it is to grip the bat by the barrel (the big part of the bat) so they have less of a tendency to swing it and hit someone with it. When coaching safety is a big priority.

You will go over a basic stance and do a warm up before hitting. Have the players place their glove in front of them using it as a home plate. The belly button for now should be lined up with the plate. You will mention these things, and as you say them they will do them. Have them look at what they are doing so they learn. Example, if you say feet wider than your shoulders and toes straight have them look down to make sure it's correct. The other coaches can walk around and check also and help because players will not understand it all right away. Now, as a group spreads out, each player has a bat. Start feet wider than shoulders, toes straight, and bat on the ground in front of them, like a golf club grip bat. This will automatically help them grip the bat correctly. Then raise hands up on shoulders and then lift the bat off shoulder, this is a good batting stance. The player will be well balanced and in a set up where there is no wasted motion to get to hit the ball.

A drill you can use is the coach will tell the player to get in contact position. Do not worry if they are not perfect. Back leg should turn and front leg should be straight, hands should be in front of the belly button, top hand palm should be facing up and the other facing down. Head and eyes looking at the big part of the barrel. They are too young to get in this exact position right away. This is the position for the body to be in when making contact

Toss, Go, Give when you catch.

**Dynamic Fundamental Warm up:** This is another warm up which includes all the different drills. You can do the drills a few times and then go to the next one.

**Line the players up in lines of 4. Put 3 in each line.** This drill all depends on the number of players you have, less lines the better. Set cones up where they start and end, not far, 50-60 feet (15-18 metres) is good. Most if not all of these drills will be done with their gloves on their hand and also a ball in their barehand. This allows them to get used to having a ball and glove in their hands. It will also build strength at the same time. Many times, we ask them to run, do warm ups with no glove, and then put a glove on the hand they do not use very often all day. Then we ask them to field a ground ball or catch a baseball with their weak hand that has had no training all day.

**Drill 1** With their glove on and ball in hand jog to the next cone. Keep in mind you will whistle, first players in line go, as soon as they go whistle right away, do not wait long because its gets boring if they have to stand around too long. Emphasize running techniques. They should be running on the balls of their feet, arms pumping close to the body, up and down, head straight, lean forward and look where they are going.

**Drill 2** Now they run backwards, repeat drill 1. Ensure they lean forward so they do not fall backwards.

**Drill 3** Shuffles, keeping the hands bent to the side and hand/ball in the glove you will shuffle, try and not to touch feet together or jump, stay flexed and low. Control your body and head, do not let the head go backwards.

**Drill 4** Start sideways and shuffle feet, try not to touch your feet together or bounce. As you shuffle you will bring your hands up like you are going to throw the ball, elbow up to shoulders, arms 90-degree angle, and come down as you shuffle. The ball will always go back into the glove and back out.

**Drill 5** To give the players a break from all the running which you want them to do you will stagger some walking drills with faster ones. This drill you will start with arms up in a 90-degree angle, stride forward, bend other

knee down. and get some flexibility and strength with it. Also, this works on balance. As they stride they will keep elbows up to about shoulder level and arms in the 90-degree angle. This helps build strength on the back side which is the part which decelerates the arm and also keeps it from dropping when fatigued. By doing good strides they are working the body in positions they will use to field a ball on their forehand position when fielding.

**Drill 6** Same drill as five now backwards. This is much harder and important because you are building strength, flexibility, and balance on both sides of the body. Maybe do this twice within the routines, not back to back, use it as another slow drill within this warm up process.

**Drill 7** Face the other way, when the coach says go or whistles you use your hips to turn quickly, stay low to the ground, not jumping, and run. Going down one way if you turn to the right side then next time you turn to the left side. This is working on a good jump on a pop up in the infield or fly ball. It's a quick hip turn and run. It also gets kids to learn how to move their feet quickly and move. This turn can be used as a half a turn and go for a ball on an angle instead of straight back.

**Drill 8** Fielding ball drill. You start with the ball in the glove. You start in a ready position and with the right foot, unless left handed thrower then left foot, you take a short stride forward, then with the other foot short stride forward and slightly to the side to make your base wider. Then bend down like you are fielding a baseball, keep doing this, right-left field, right-left field and so on till you get to the cone. This will work on getting from your ready position to your fielding position. Stretch out the body dynamically and in movement. Stress that this is not a race, do it correctly.

**Drill 9** Hitting position and run, drill. Have the players get into a hitting position facing a pitcher, you can use a player as the pitcher so they work on pitching from the stretch. It never hurts to start working on pitching movements even if they do not pitch yet. The pitcher gets into a sideways position, set position and lifts leg a little and pitches an imaginary ball. The hitter swings and freezes the swing at the end, with a good follow through. Then on the second whistle they open their hands as to drop the bat and run. You are also working on teaching the players not to throw the bat.

Balance is the hardest part of the skill of hitting. Starting in a balanced position as if in a game situation and trying to end in a balanced position.

Below we describe how to get in a position to help players grip the bat properly and get into a good batting stance.

### **Teaching avoiding getting hit or hit in a bad area.**

One thing that should be taught at this age is the ability to get away from a pitch that might hit them. Instincts do take over, but you must teach a technique where if the ball comes at them and they cannot get out of the way then to turn away from it, turn towards the catcher, and duck down. If it hits you, it will hit you in the back. You do not want to open up toward the pitcher and let the ball hit you in the chest or face as this is very dangerous. Even pitching machines make mistakes, but it's a good time to teach a technique to create a habit for the future.

### **Drill to teach getting away from being hit by a pitch: This drill can be part of a station when you rotate for hitting.**

Coach on one knee with wiffle ball. The coach is throwing the ball at the player, and the player works on this technique to get out of the way of the ball. Ideally you want to bring the bat down with you so the ball does not hit the bat if it is a high pitch. First worry about getting out of the way, and later teach what to do with the bat.

Then you can have a game with the player. Throw some pitches over the plate or at them, if over the plate they can hit it, if at them then use the technique to get away.

**Do not tell players to swing at all pitches when practicing.** Teach them the strike zone.

Also, in any drills with the pitching machine always treat it like a game situation. They should swing aggressively at any pitches within the strike zone. Teach players to take bad pitches like in a game or they will get into a bad habit and swing at bad pitches in a game situation.

### **Mental side of the game in hitting**

yells toss again, and they toss it back. You can do this 5-10 times and see how they are doing.

Have them do this drill back and forth and switch the hands they try and catch the ball with, the right hand once and the left hand the next time.

Next, have the players use two balls and they toss on command back and forth, catching it with two hands.

Finally, you can have them do the above drill with a glove . They start using the glove to catch with and cover with the bare hand once the ball hits the glove.

These drills are all fun, competitive and are working on athletic skills.

If they do these drills well you can have them move back and keep doing it. Now they might start further back with their gloves on and you whistle and they throw the ball overhand to their partner.

### **A Game**

If they catch the throw from their partner, they both take a step back. If they drop the throw they take a step forward. This keeps them in the area of comfortability.

### **Key Words**

Toss

Two hands

Soft hands

### **Hitting a Baseball**

#### **Skill:**

This is the most difficult skill of all but the most fun that all players prefer to do at practice.

**Drill 10** Swing and run. Same as the drill above, but this time on the whistle the hitters swing and run without stopping. Emphasize full swing.

**Drill 11** Have the players start like they would on a base On the whistle, they run a sprint. You can do a couple of these runs.

**Drill 12** Same lines and now they start sideways, hands together, you whistle, they shuffle twice and make a full throw. Regroup and shuffle again and throw, keep doing this all the way to the next set of cones. So, it's shuffle, shuffle throw, regroup, shuffle, shuffle throw, regroup. This is one of the best exercises to warm up the shoulders and arms to throw a baseball. Emphasize full throws all the way down, do not do a half a throw.

**Drill 13** Two lines and one line will have the baseball/tennis ball. They face each other, you whistle, and the first 2 players go. Shuffle and toss the ball back and forth to each other as they keep shuffling, work on hand and eye coordination, tossing ball properly to their partner, movement with their feet and so much more. If this drill gets too easy then use two baseballs and one player has to yell toss all the time, working on toss and two baseballs going at the same time. If you go back the other way then the other player is the one to say toss. Fun, competitive.

You will learn all the skill positions below in this booklet.

### **A few more fun warm ups which relate to skills are:**

#### **Football toss:**

You will have 3 lines of 4, depending on how many coaches/parents you have available. Each player has a ball, and they can do this without a glove, They have to use 2 hands because it is more difficult or use a softer ball with a glove. They can build up to the glove. At first do not make this too hard. The first player in each line hands the coach a ball and runs as fast as possible. The coach tosses the ball up so they have to catch it on the run. At first do not make it too hard, then a little higher, then further, then short so they have to stop and come back and catch it. Throw it on the other side so they have to turn their feet and catch it. Tell the players they have to run fast

and keep looking at you, not an easy skill to accomplish. This is a lot of fun, it includes athleticism training and so much more.

In this drill you can have 2 lines, one at one end and one at the other. When they catch or drop the ball, get the ball and go to the next line. You can keep it going.

### **Another fun warm up is running the bases:**

In the section on base running you can see how you place the orange cones prior to each base and after each base so they know how to run the bases correctly. Start off and jog around one time, then a little faster, then faster, until they get warmed up and they run it one time as fast as they can.

You can also play a game with base running that you might save for the end of practice which is fun. Same as above but now you have half the team at home and half at second base. First runners go on the whistle, they have to run all the way around the bases back to where they started, tag the hand of the next runner, and the team that finishes all the runners first wins. Try and be fair on how you pick the players. Do not pick all the slow runners last, make sure you mix it up.

## **Throwing a baseball**

### **Fundamentals**

#### **Skill:**

This is a very difficult skill for young people due to the size and weight of the baseball. Allow players to grip the ball with as many fingers as possible to hold the ball. Do your best to keep their thumb at the bottom of the ball. Most likely all players will have 4 fingers on top of the ball and the thumb underneath, and fingers will be spread a little so they can hold the ball. As they get older they can grip the ball with 3 fingers and finally 2, it all depends on the individual players body development.

Last, you can have one team run the bases and the other throw the ball around. If the ball gets to the pitcher before the runner gets home then a point for the defense. If the runner gets home first then the offense gets a point. This is very competitive and fun. Lots of skills being taught. Throwing, catching a baseball, moving your feet, transferring the ball from glove to hand, base running, dealing under pressure, doing it quickly and so much more.

If a team is running the bases you should take cones and place them about 20 feet (6 meters) before the base and also one after the base. The one after should be close to the baseline so the players stay inside the cone and do not end up in right field when they make the turn. The cone before the base is the one the players arc/turn around the cone. You can have 2 cones at each base.

### **Catching a baseball**

#### **Skill**

This is a very difficult skill because the glove hinders the movement of the hands to do it correctly. The ball is too big, and there is always a fear factor that they will miss and get hit by the ball. It helps to have a softer baseball, tennis ball, bean bag, etc. to learn how to catch. First, they have to develop technique. In order to do this we have to eliminate fear by using a hard ball, or an adult throwing from a high angle, or another player throwing the ball. Learning to catch a baseball is a process by way of progression.

First you start by the first drill listed earlier where the players toss the ball to themselves so the hands and body learn how to catch. Then you progress to more drills listed below.

#### **Drills**

Line players up where they have a partner in front of them about 5-10 feet (1.5 – 3 meters) apart. One partner will have a tennis ball, or a very soft ball. On the coach or parents word of toss, the player tosses the ball to their partner underhand, another player tries to catch it. Then the coach or parent

### **Infield Throwing Drill:**

Have the players take a position in the infield, they do not have to play those specific positions. If you have 12 players you would have two teams. One team on the field, third, second, and first will not be at their base, rather they will be at their position. Here is how it starts. The pitcher has the ball, you whistle and he throws to the catcher. catcher to third (not at the base at the position) third to second at the position, second to shortstop at his/her position, shortstop to first at his/her position, first and back to the catcher. This game can be done where everyone has to catch and throw the ball. It does not matter where you start and finish. This is a good warm up for throwing, start with a small field and make the field bigger as their arms get warmed up.

Another way to play this game is where you can also add skills for the position. Now you can place players at specific positions. Keep in mind players this age should move around and try different positions. For example, when the pitcher throws to the catcher he does it from the stretch or windup, (it's ok if they do not pitch yet, let them have some fun and start doing it) the catcher will start from a squat position, catching the ball and throwing to third, third places a tag, then throws to first base and first baseman stretches to tag base. Then the first basemen who throws to shortstop and throws to second baseman which starts a double play. Then the first baseman throws home and catcher places a tag like a runner is coming from third base and then throws the ball to the pitcher. This can be done in many ways, be creative.

For the above two drills you can practice this, its fun. Switch teams or do this in 2 fields, use the outfield, lay down plastic bags and do the same drills.

These can also be done with ground balls.

As they get better at this and becomes too easy you can make it competitive by using a stop watch and see how fast they can do it. Add pressure like a game situation. They have to learn how to be competitive and stay composed. See which teams have the best time.

Focus on a couple of items when they throw a baseball. First, let them throw it and see what they do. Their body may do it correctly. If not done correctly focus on a few items. One, that they take their right foot, left for left handed throwers, and step forward and turn it sideways as they step to the target. This movement turns the body sideways. Step with the other foot and throw. It is important that they turn sideways, place arms in 90-degree angle with elbows at or slightly below shoulders, and then from that position throw the ball. For this age it might be better to start turned sideways and throw so that when the player catches a ball they know how to get sideways because their body has been there many times already.

### **Throwing baseball drills:**

**You are first going to see how the players throw to coaches or parents and also identify how well they catch a baseball.**

Then, give each player a ball.

Have 3 lines of 4, depending on how many coaches/parents you have, with more coaches/parents and less kids in the line is better.

Players will have the ball in the glove and you say throw. They throw to each coach, and the coach then throws the ball back to them watching how they throw and catch the ball. At first you might want to toss the ball back to the player underhand and see how they catch it. Do this several times, and just keep rotating players.

At times if a player does not turn completely sideways before throwing the ball then stop and explain what they are doing well. Then let them know they need to turn more sideways to use their whole body to throw with so they do not hurt their arm in the future. Place them in that position and have them throw you the ball so the body feels what sideways feels like.

If a player's elbow is not high enough, or arms are at a 90-degree angle, then have them get in that position then throw from that position a few times so the body feels it.

## **Drill 2**

Have them throw to a parent or coach, you might have a parent/coach per child or divide them up, 2 per parent, etc.

In this case you can play a point game. If they throw the ball in a circle, the circle is a line from the coaches head to his or her belt buckle and back up to, outside the circle is 1 point, if they throw outside the circle and the coach/parent cannot catch it, they receive no points and they have to go get the ball.

If a player struggles, always go to ready position, throwing position and then they throw. If they struggle from the throwing position then have them start from the throwing position until the body feels it. Then go back and start from the throwing position.

## **Drill 3**

Let players pick a partner and now they will play catch together. On your command when you whistle they will throw the ball to their partner. You start them at a short distance and every 5-8 throws you can move them back a step. Doing it together allows you to see them better, create discipline, and they will like it more.

**With this drill you can make a game out of it. If the whole group keeps the ball in front of them or catches the ball it can drop but must stay in front of them. Then they all move back a step. Use your judgement on what rules you should have, the easier it is for the group the harder the goal. At times it could be if they drop a ball they stay where they are. This type of exercise gets them to concentrate more.**

## **Drill 4**

Begin players from different positions in catching a ball, for example, they start from a lower position because they caught the ball there. Then you whistle and they throw the ball to their partner. Always start with the ball in their glove as they would when they catch a ball. This allows them to always work on the transfer of the ball from glove to hand, a very difficult task.

Then they throw the ball to their partner on the whistle. Have them be creative and start from different positions.

## **Drill 5**

A little more complex, have them drop the ball in front of them. You whistle and they have to go and get the ball and go get to the side of it. If the ball is stopped go down with both hands, pick it up barehanded, by taking the barehand on top of the ball, and then shuffle and throw to the partner. Or if they rolled it too far and they are close to their partner then get it, do not shuffle just throw it. Emphasize to not come up high with the body, stay low and throw it, just like in a game. Give a firm straight throw. Teach players anytime they go to the ground for a ball that they need to keep their posture slightly bent and throw the ball. Do not stand straight up and throw it, as the ball will sail high.

You want to start playing catch with these drills to get players used to getting a ball from a low position and throwing it.

Emphasize the first time they do these drills to do them slow and to get used to it. Then start speeding it up each time it gets easier. Finally, at some point when it's too easy do it at full game speed. This is fun.

**Some other fun throwing drills** you can progress to or mix in with the other drills.

**Four Corner Throwing** Place 4 players in each corner of a box, small box to start, so they get warmed up. Begin by throwing the ball clockwise, then counter clockwise, then make the box bigger as they keep throwing. Do not make it too big, when they start to make too many mistakes that means they are not ready for that distance. You can also have them add a tag, a tag is one that goes straight down and back up. Do not swipe tag because they can drop the ball. If they are very good you can use two baseballs, starting with one in each corner. Ensure they all know the direction they will be throwing. When a ball is thrown away they all yell stop and start over. This is fun, keeps the players attention and allows for lots of activity for the players.