

Coaching Youth Baseball

Ages 5-7: Tee Ball

Quick Start Guide



by Dave Grossman

CoachingYouthBaseball.com

This free guide is taken from
parts of my complete book:

Coaching Youth Baseball 101

Pick it up **HERE**

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Getting Started

Welcome to the world of coaching Tee-ball.

More than likely you are a parent of a 5-6 year old, and you've either been waiting patiently for this moment for years, or you just got told that if no one signs up to coach there won't be a team.

You are busy with life and at least one small kid and odds are that your oldest is 5-6 or you wouldn't be researching coaching sites. This page gives you one quick overview of what you need to have a great season.

Making the Difficult Easy

I started coaching in 1999 before I had kids, so I skipped Tee-ball and started with 10 year olds, then 11's and then 12's.

When my kids were 5, I went back and started again at Tee-ball and I was amazed at how HARD it was.

This guide is all about trying to make it easy.

I will say some of the most fun I've had was at Tee-ball practices — kids ask the greatest questions: "Why do we run around the bases in THIS direction?" or "I always forget which one is right field," etc.



A Suggested Goal

While you might have your own goals for your coaching, I'd also like to suggest one: **the player should have so much fun and learn so much that they want to play next year.**

In Tee-ball this is hard.

There is a lot of standing around, kicking the dirt, and playing with grass. **It's crucial to keep practice fast moving.**

Keeping It Moving

The key to a fast moving practice is to get a LOT of parents to help. To do that you need to be clear in the initial e-mail to parents.

The sample email is below.

Once you send that out, I strongly recommend an opening season pizza party for all players and parents to attend. Ideally you can talk to the parents for about 15 minutes and go through the agenda. The key thing to emphasize is that you want players to return next year and that you need the parents to help out at practice for that to happen.



Tee-ball Initial E-mail

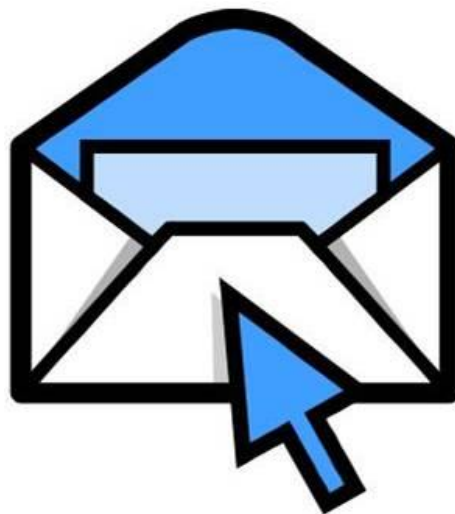
Initial Email to Parents

Below is a sample email that you can use to send out to parents. Obviously modify it as you see fit or as your league requires. In any case, it's a start. I think this e-mail sets the tone for the year so you should work on it.

Once you send the email out, I strongly recommend an opening season pizza party for all players and parents to attend.

Ideally you can talk to the parents for about 15 minutes and go through the agenda. The key thing to emphasize is that you want players to return next year and that you need the parents to help out at practice for that to happen.

Email on next page.



EMAIL FOR PARENTS:

Dear Parents of (Team Name if you have it),

I am the coach of your team. My goal is to make it so your child has a lot of fun, learns a little about baseball, and absolutely plays again next season.

I would like to invite you to a season opening Pizza Party at my house where we'll go over all the odds and ends for the season.

We will practice once a week for one hour, and I'll make sure we start on time and end on time.

Please come to practice and wear exercise clothing so you can help out with the drills. Baseball really is different from soccer, for example, in that one coach and a ball can do useful things. With baseball we need multiple assistants to have real success.

At the Tee-ball level it's crucial that we have as close to a 1-1 parent-child ratio as possible so that the kids will get the attention they need. You absolutely do not need any baseball knowledge. We just need to maximize quality repetitions in order to teach the basics of fielding, throwing, and hitting. The more the kids learn the more they are going to want to play next year.

We are going to need the following coordinators so please be thinking about these when you come to the meeting.

ASSISTANT COACHES — I plan to have several, so please volunteer.

SNACK COORDINATOR — Someone has to be in charge of who brings snacks after the games — for kids this is a very big deal. The most frequent question during the game is usually, "Hey, what are we having for a snack?"

FUNDRAISING COORDINATOR — This person will deal with all the fundraising needs of the league.

TEAM PICTURE COORDINATOR — This person will deal with sharing pictures and with handling the team photo for the league.

RSVP COORDINATOR — This person will make sure I know who is coming to each game and practice. We'll have a web site up and running that allows you to easily click YES or NO if you are coming, but we need someone to make sure people click on YES or click on NO. I'll look forward to meeting all of you. . . .

Sincerely,

YOUR NAME

Tee-ball Parents Meeting Agenda

Below is a basic agenda that you can cover in the Parents' Meeting.

As suggested before, a good way to do this is to have a pizza party for all the players and parents. But of course that's up to you.

Goal for the Season: Want players to return next year.

Coach's Background: Talk about your background and why you are coaching.

Schedule: Talk about where games are, when they will be, practices, etc.

Equipment: Talk about equipment players need — i.e. a glove (bats are usually not needed as they're provided by the team).

Practice at home: Talk about what parents need to practice at home — usually some whiffle balls are very good and tennis balls. They can do some of the same drills that the kids will learn at practice.

Volunteers Needed:

- **ASSISTANT COACHES** — I plan to have several, so please volunteer.
- **SNACK COORDINATOR** — Someone has to be in charge of who brings snacks after the games — for kids this is a very big deal. Most questions during the game will be, "Hey, what are we having for a snack?"
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First Tee-ball Practice

In this section we'll go over how to start your first practice.

There's a too much to go into here for a complete practice, and so if you're interested in that, you can [check out my book](#).



When players show up for practice, immediately begin to shout, "Run!" and "Hustle!"

Tell them, "We don't have much time. We have to start now."

They will start to run and they will start to smile.

Then get them all to kneel down on one knee in front of you and say, "Hi, I'm Coach <your name>. We have a lot to do today. Let's start with some warm-up exercises."

Some Exercise

A few basic exercises such as jumping jacks, arm circles, hip rotations, and hamstring stretches will do the trick.

I would encourage you to throw in a few wind sprints.



Then, I suggest a few "butt kickers," where they run, kicking themselves in the posterior with their heels.

Next, try a few “high knees” -- they run, high-stepping, lifting their knees.

I always like to end with the evil “jump-squats,” which start with the players in a catcher’s crouch and where on my command, they leap up high and clap their hands, then return to the crouching position. This is a great one for building up strength in leg muscles, which are frequently used in fielding ground balls.

Conclude the exercises with a light run around the field.

A Quick Meeting and On with Practice

Once they are warmed up, have them assemble while you tell them the practice plan for the day. Present the goals you want them to learn and send them to their respective initial stations.

Some key elements of your introductory talk should include: how to hold a baseball, how to throw a baseball, and how to catch a baseball.

At the conclusion of practice, say, “Good practice!” and have them run the field again.

Tee-ball Game Management

There are lots of strategies for Tee-ball game management. Do you play all players in a clump? Do you play them all in the infield? Do you really enforce OUTS? Here are my thoughts.

Positions

Play them all in correct positions. After every two or three batters, rotate the positions. Have the pitcher go to catch, have the catcher go to RF, RF to CF, CF to LF, LF to 3B, 3B to SS, SS to 2B, 2B to 1B, and 1B to P.

Practice this and make sure it can be done in the time it takes the other team to get a new batter up. If you take longer, everyone will hate you.

The reason to rotate is that there is absolutely nothing going on in the outfield so this sort of makes it so something is going on.

Between innings, have assistants ready to go to roll balls to fielders so they at least do something.

Time of Games

Keep Tee-ball games VERY SHORT. Maybe 2 innings is good. You'll face some coaches that are thrilled by the whole thing and after two say, "Hey Coach, wanna play one more?"

The right answer is, "NO."

The players are generally done after two innings, so let it be, have a good snack, and use practice to really teach the game.

If it was up to me, there would be no Tee-ball games, as I don't see much learning happening. But alas, everyone thinks the kids love the games. I guess they do — I didn't see too much of it, but so be it. I saw kids picking at grass and kicking dirt as a Tee-ball game really has nothing going on.

Batting

While batting, make sure you have 2-3 bench coaches to get kids ready to bat, helmets on, bat selected, and ready to go. Make sure no kid picks up a bat until it is their turn to bat. There is no on-deck circle in little league, so no need to start pretending there is one in Tee-ball. There isn't and it'd be a safety hazard if there was one.

I recommend moving the T around a little to make it so your batters don't just hit the ball to the pitcher. Make sure you work with batters in practice so they don't sit around and miss the ball for 40 swings. This really slows the game down.



Please play real OUTS. If the other team gets your player out, have your player return to the bench. If you get a player out, encourage the other coach to agree to have that player return to the dugout. There's nothing worse than having your team work on getting someone out, pulling off the miracle it takes to get them out, and then the other team says, "Yeah, I know it's the rules, but we aren't going to do that as it'll make our players sad."

Kids get over it fast, and you are missing a huge teaching opportunity and taking an out away from the defense is really sad.

Snacks

Finally, make sure there is a really good snack after the game.

Youth Baseball Equipment



I'll give you my thoughts on equipment here. No, I do not get a commission from anyone. I did buy all the equipment and uniforms for our league of 600+ players for a few years.

Here's what you'll likely need:

- Bats
- Balls
- Gloves
- Uniforms
- Teaching Aids — Insider Bat
- Teaching Aid - Solo Hitter

Youth Baseball Bats



Make sure the bat weight and size are appropriate.

Most kids 8, 9, and 10 should be under 15oz. Usually a 10-11 year old can handle up to 17oz. After that it depends on the player.

Remember that bat speed is a key to making the ball actually go somewhere.

Too often, we see bats that are far too heavy. Bat speed is the key to hitting, and that doesn't happen when the player drags a bat through the strike zone.

Batting Tees and Nets

Batting tees are for every level, especially AA. There is still no better way to learn hitting mechanics than to work off a tee, and hitting off a tee really should be a station in every practice.

You can have players hit to a fielder to get a fielder used to some live fielding (obviously this requires some space) or just hit into a net. The rolls Royce of nets is the Jugs net (blue cover). It is around \$100, but once you get one, it'll last you



for many years. They are found in all area sports stores. Cheaper nets exist, but they tend not to last as well.

The rubber tees provided by your league are probably OK. The ATEC hard plastic tee is an excellent tee that is extremely durable, and the Tanner Tee (www.tannerteetees.com) is a great lightweight tee.

Youth Baseball Helmets

Even when hitting off a tee, batters should wear helmets with a full “cage” or facemask. It gets them used to the helmet and it’s safer for them to use when hitting with a real bat.

Whiffle Balls / Pickleballs

Plastic balls are fantastic for batting. They don’t take up much space and make it so you can generate a lot of swings in practice.



Instead of one player hitting and nine watching, you can have three or four hitting at the same time.

Whiffle balls have a seam in them that can be broken with an aluminum bat. Pickleballs are just whiffle balls without a seam. The web site tipsfromthecoach.com sells them, but other sports stores have them or can order them.

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