



Willetton Tee-Ball Coach's Manual

Congratulations on volunteering to coach a tee ball team!

You will find the coming season both enjoyable, rewarding and possibly a bit challenging at times. This manual has been put together to provide you with some hints, tips, suggestions and advice to ensure that everyone has a great time and learns a few skills along the way.

Firstly, you are NOT expected to know every rule! You ARE expected to keep the players safe, help them, praise and encourage them, and teach some basic skills of tee-ball along the way. It is also your responsibility to ensure they have fun!

The game should always be played in the spirit of the tee-ball philosophy
(The Four F's)

1. FUN
2. FAIR PLAY
3. FUNDAMENTAL SKILLS
4. FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

FUN – Each player (and coaches) should always be having fun. Trainings should teach basic skills and the understanding of the game but should never be repetitive or go for longer than 1 hour in duration. Training should always include a fun game usually at the end when the kids' attention is failing. It is also important to praise good effort as well as good outcomes. (If a player gets out but hit the ball hard or ran through first base etc then a high five or praise is a must.)

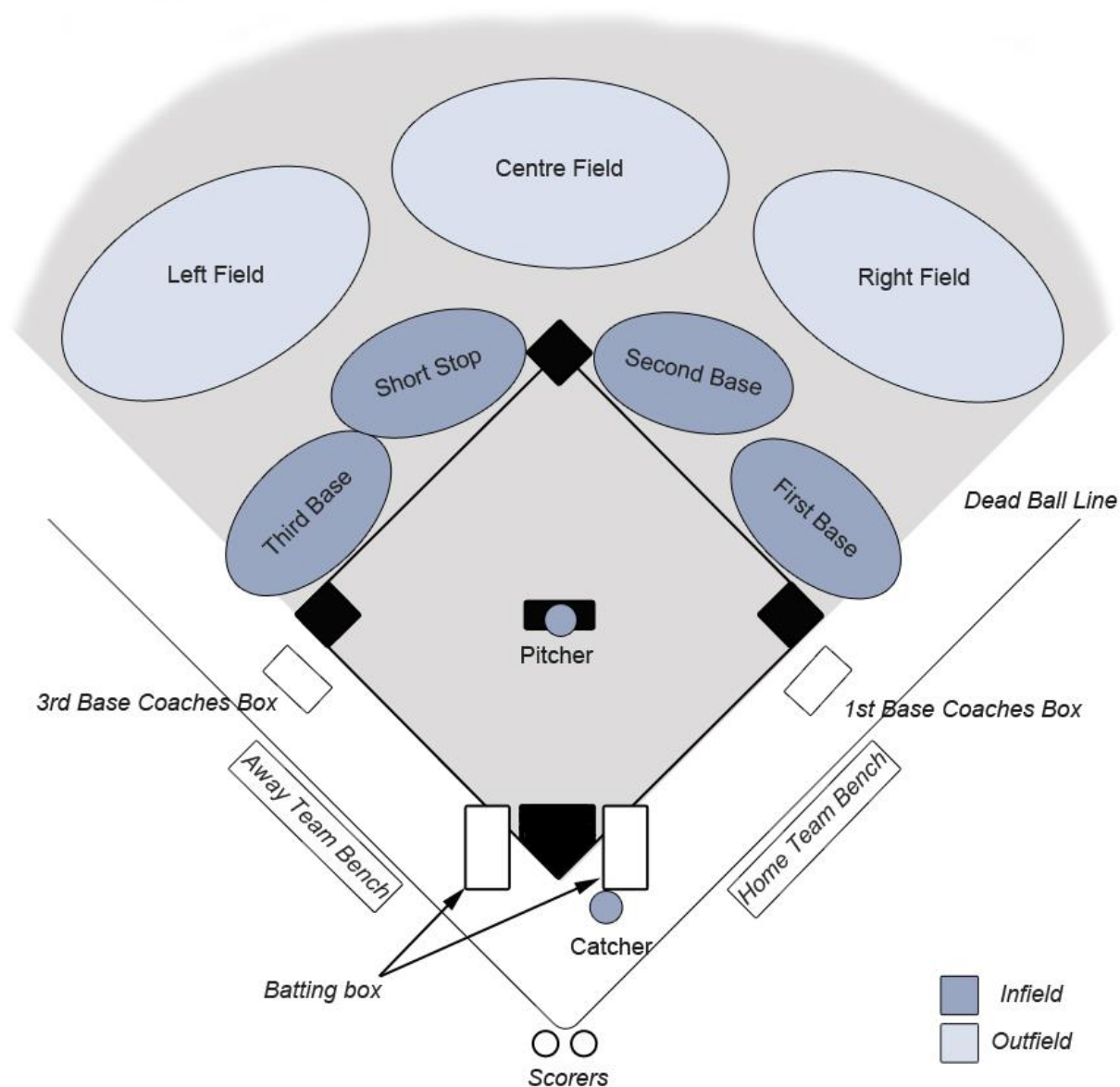
FAIR PLAY – Players should be rotated through all positions on the field and the batting line up. There should also be a fair rotation through sitting on the bench (I like to call it "Cheer Squad"). It is vital NEVER to argue or question the umpiring decisions. After all they are volunteers too, and at the end of the day it doesn't really matter as long as the kids are having fun.

FUNDAMENTAL SKILLS – Attempt to teach the players the fundamental skills "FIRST". Learning how to catch, thrown and field the ball correctly will help them to enjoy the game, keep them safe and ensure they get the fundamentals required to play. Keep the game simple when first starting and try not to teach too many rules at first. You will find that rules are best learnt during a game where everyone can see how the game actually works. Trying to replicate a play at training can sometimes be confusing for players who have never played before.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT – The game is for all to enjoy and participate. Parents should become involved in coaching, umpiring, managing or helping with equipment.

Tee-Ball Basics

Fielding Positions:



Pitcher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • must stand with a minimum of one foot in contact with the pitcher's plate until the ball is hit • required to wear a chest plate and a helmet with face mask.
Catcher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • must stand in the far back corner of the opposite batting box to the Batter until the batter has hit the ball and play begins
In Fielders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fielders at 1st, 2nd, 3rd and short stop are considered "infielders" and must stand outside of the diamond in the areas shaded above • the infielders shall not enter the diamond until the ball is hit
Out Fielders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Left Field, Centre Field and Right Field are the outfield positions • these fielders stand in the areas marked above
Batter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the batter shall hit the ball from the batting tee after the plate umpire has called "Batter Up... Play Ball" • If the batter hits the ball then he/she must run to first base, and if a good hit then they may be called by the base coach to continue to the next base • If the batter misses the ball or hits more tee than ball, then the plate umpire will

	<p>call “foul ball – one strike on the batter”, and the batter comes back to bat again. After three strikes the batter shall be called out, and the next batter called to the plate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When the third out is made, the plate umpire will call “three out, side away”. The batting team now becomes the fielding team.
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Game Overview:

In a game of tee-ball, members of two teams take turns at batting off an adjustable tee set on Home Plate. Batters hit the ball off the tee and try to get on base safely and advance around the diamond to 'Home Plate' in order to score a run for their team. The Fielding team tries to prevent runs being scored by getting the Batters out. The fielding side settles nine players into the positions above. The batting side aims to hit the ball into fair territory (shown above in grey), and reach first base before the first baseperson receives the ball and tags the base (places a foot on the base). If the ball is received by the fielder and the base is tagged before the runner reaches it, then the runner will be given out. Once a batter reaches first base safely, then he/she must rely on their other team members to move them around the bases. This is done by hitting the ball into fair territory, similar to the previous batter. At the end of the game, the team that scores the most runs is deemed the winner of the game.

A change in fielding and batting team occurs when 9 batters of the batting team have had their turn at bat, or when three batters are given out. The fielding team places 9 players out on the diamond, but as most teams will have more than 9 players, the positions are played on a rotational basis, changing each innings. The game ends when the teams have completed nine innings, or after one hour – whichever occurs first. Note: both teams will have completed equal turns at batting and fielding within the time allotted.

Fundamentals of Tee-Ball

BATTING – Where to Begin?

Bat Selection

The starting point for any hitter is finding the right bat size. Have the player grip the bat at the end of the handle and lift it with one arm, fully extended, straight out from their body. They should be able to hold it level with the ground for three seconds without wobbling or shaking. If not, find them a lighter bat.

Safety First

Young players don't pay attention to others around them when they swing a bat. For the safety of your players, set a rule during the first practice that no player is to pick up a bat unless instructed to do so by a coach and then enforce the rule. Also remind your players to never go near another player who is holding a bat.

Proper Stance

A good training aid at practice can be useful in helping a beginning batter learn the proper stance in the batter's box. Try using a flat piece of rubber approximately 19" long and 5" wide, like the flat pitching rubber that is included with many throw-down practice base sets. Place the aid in relation to the tee where you want the toes of the batter. This will allow the player to assume the proper batting position with minimal assistance.

Pivot Foot

Let the batters practice pivoting their back foot by pretending to "squish a bug". By pivoting the back foot during their swing, the batter will generate more power using their hips and have fun learning how.

Bat Safety

Many young players get excited and throw their bat after a hit. That can be dangerous for the other players if not corrected and will cause them to be given out in the game. An easy remedy is to place a glove near the tee during practice and have the batter drop their bat on the glove when starting to first base. After a few repetitions they will do it without being told.

BATTING – The Basics

Hand Position

- Dominant hand on top
- Hands together, above the knob of the bat
- Hold bat firmly; don't squeeze

Hitting Stance

- Adjust tee so that the ball is set even or slightly above the batter's waist
- Stand facing the tee
- Feet shoulder-width apart and pointed at home plate
- Front foot even with the tee
- Bend knees
- Bring bat up and away from body, over back shoulder
- Eyes on the ball

The Swing

- Take a short step forward with front foot
- Swing level so that the bat hits the centre of the ball
- Shift weight to the front foot; back foot stays on the ground
- Watch bat hit the ball and keep head down

The Follow-Through

- Hit through the ball
- Drop (don't throw) the bat

THROWING

Nose, Toes and Throws

For beginning players, it is helpful to use a rhyme to help the players remember the proper throwing motion. Say "Nose, Toes and Throws" as they practice throwing. "Nose" is for looking at the target before throwing. "Toes" is for stepping toward the target with their glove-side foot and "Throws" is for throwing the ball. It works! Have them begin their throwing motion with their glove-side shoulder facing the target to force them to turn their shoulders as they throw.

Accuracy Counts

To develop accuracy, use a fun drill that will make them want to practice. Take a 20 Litre bucket and lay it on the ground with the open end facing the player. Have them practice throwing into the bucket using their throwing technique (Nose, Toes and Throws). You will see a huge difference in their accuracy. The best part is, it's a lot of fun. The kids won't even know their practicing.

THROWING – The Mechanics

The Grip

- Thumb under the ball
- Middle fingers over the ball with little finger off to the side

The Throw

- Focus on the target
- Hand and arm back and up (make an L with elbow up)
- Front shoulder turned toward the target
- Big step towards the target with opposite foot
- Release the ball in front of the body
- Follow-through

FIELDING

Starting Right

With groups of three or four, teach beginners how to field by showing them the proper hand and body position for fielding grounders. With their gloves off, have them hold their hands in front of them and place their pinkies side-by-side, in a cupped position. Next, demonstrate for them how to bend their knees and get their hands near the ground while keeping their pinkies together. Remind the players to keep their backs as straight as possible. With their gloves still off, hand roll grounders to them from eight to ten meters away. Roll it as slow as necessary for them to be successful. By starting this drill without gloves, it allows the players to see the correct hand position during fielding. Let them have several turns and then try it with their gloves on, using the same hand positions.

Speed Ball

To help young players develop quick hands and learn to hustle for a passed ball, use a fun drill that encourages speed. Have three or four players line up side-by-side with enough space between them that they can't touch each other with their arms out. From about ten meters away have a coach hand-roll balls to each one, in order, as many times as possible in one minute. Do it again and try to increase the number each time you do it. Have them run for past balls and make it fun.

FIELDING – The Mechanics

1. Eyes on the ball
2. Watch the ball go into the glove
3. Cover the ball with the bare hand

Ground Balls

- Legs shoulder-width apart
- Bend knees and stay low
- Keep body in front of the ball
- Scoop or catch the ball, squeeze and cover it with the throwing hand

Fly Balls

- Run to where the ball is going
- Call for the ball, "I've got it!"

- Hands together, fingers up, shoulder high
- Watch the ball into the glove, squeeze and cover

Thrown Balls

- Ball thrown above the waist: Hands together, facing out, thumbs up
- Ball thrown below the waist: Hands together, facing down, little fingers touching.

RUNNING BASES

Starting Point

Remember that beginning players will not know to run to first base when the ball is hit. Try something very simple that teaches base running. At the end of every practice, line up all the players on the first base side of home plate. During their first practice just let them take one turn running to first base, all the way around the bases and back home without stopping. Make sure the players in line at home plate are not blocking the runner's path as they finish. With each practice, add something new like base coaches at first and third stopping the runners randomly at different bases. This will get the players to watch their coaches for instruction and reinforce the need to be on a base when they stop. Later, let them hold a bat before they start and be sure they drop it at the plate when they run. Make them start over if they sling the bat more than one meter from the batter's box.

Run Through First

One sure way to get runners in the habit of running through first base after an infield hit is to have a base coach give the runner a high five. Have the base coach stand about four feet past first base and give the runner a "high five" as they pass. Have the player run seven or eight feet past the base. They can slow down when they give the high five instead of base.

Body and Mind Warm-up

Line your team up on the first base side of home plate for a base-running drill. Before each player runs, ask them where a different base or field position is located. For example, ask the player "Where is centre field?" After a correct answer, or a simple point of the finger, let the player run the bases. Let each player have one or more turns. This will help them remember where all positions are located and that will make it easier to get them in the right spot during games. They think running bases is fun.

RUNNING - Mechanics

- Run on the balls of feet
- Pump (swing) arms back and forth
- Look forward
- Step on the edge of the base
- Never pass a teammate in front of you on the base path

Training Session Tips

- Arrive early to training so you can set up a diamond, batting tees and cones depending on what you have planned.
- Name tags are a great way to learn the names of the players quickly. For the first few weeks this can be very helpful.
- Introduce yourself to the kids and parents and encourage each child to tell the group their name and whether they have played Tee-Ball before.
- Ask for help! Let the parents know that you may require help. Their help will be needed at training and at games.
- If something doesn't work, or the kids are getting bored, change the drill! Don't feel like you have to persevere with something. You might find you can come back to it later in the season. It is also suggested not to take too long to explain a drill as this can also lead to the kids tuning out and getting bored. Rather give a brief explanation then get the kids started immediately.
- Encourage effort and not outcome. Praise good effort and attempts. The kids are going to make mistakes, some more than others and will develop at different paces. The one thing they can all be good at is EFFORT. This will help to instil confidence which will, in turn, lead them to continue trying and ultimately getting better.
- Keep drills short (no more than 10 mins). It can also be a good idea to have multiple stations (each managed by a parent) where the kids can rotate through a variety of drills.
- The first few sessions should focus on basic skills (throwing, catching and fielding ground balls), infield (throwing to first base) and batting (how to hold a bat and stand in the box).

Example Practice

Team Meeting 5 minutes

Three Rules of Tee-Ball

1. Baseball is “FUN” (louder and louder)
2. Always keep your eye on Ball
3. Always listen to the coach

Warm-up and Stretching 5 Minutes

Throwing and Catching Activities 10 Minutes

Fielding Activities/Drills 10 Minutes

WATER BREAK 5 Minutes

Batting Activities/Drills 10 Minutes

Running and/or Defence Activities 10 Minutes

Closing Meeting/Team Cheer 5 Minutes

SUGGESTED WARM UP DRILLS

Always start the training with a warmup.

This can include the following:

- Two laps around the bases. You can mix it up by asking the kids to do one lap at a slow jog and the other lap running to each base differently (jog backwards to 1st base, side step from 1st to 2nd base facing inwards, side step between 2nd and 3rd facing outwards, then sprint from 3rd to home.
- Get into a circle or a line and go through some stretches. Arms, legs, back, arm circles etc
- You can always play a game for warm up or make something up yourself. (See games list.)
- Throwing warm up- With older players, have them get into pairs and commence throwing practice. (See throwing practice list). If the players are young or new, it can be more beneficial to have each player paired up with a parent, so the drill can run more smoothly and not have balls flying around everywhere.

SUGGESTED BATTING DRILLS

1. **Hitting off the Tee to the outfield** – This require two tees to be set up in the middle of the “home to first base line” and the “home to third base line”. Have two batters and the remainder of the players spread out in the outfield. The aim is to get the kids hitting off the tee on the “home to third base line” in the direction of right field, and the tee on the “home to first base line” hitting the ball to left field. This should ensure only one ball is ever going in the one direction. Alternate between the two

tees so the fielders in the outfield know from which direction the ball is coming from. This drill can allow you to get through the whole team fairly quickly. If you have more than two tees, then you can put all the tees in a line and alternate between each tee so there is no more than one ball being hit at a time.

- 2. Directional Hitting** - Place a tee at home plate as it would be in a game. Have each player direct each hit to a different location. Explain how moving their feet direction will change the location of where the ball will go. You can have a field both infield/outfield set up for this.
- 3 Hitting off the Tee into fence or at cones** - Set a tee one and a half meters from chain link fence (backstop) Do not use the side of a building. Have the kids hit into the fence whilst working on proper motion. Alternatively, set up cones one and a half metres apart in front of tee and have the kids take ten swings. They earn points for each cone they get ball to (make it a game against themselves and not between each other.) Have kids better their score at each practice.

SUGGESTED FIELDING DRILLS

THROWING/CATCHING & GROUND BALL DRILLS

- 1. Underarm Throws** - Place the kids all in a line facing a parent/volunteer (1 Parent per child) at a distance of about 2 metres. (You can pair them up with each other however, when they are learning it can be easier to use an adult. Have the player underarm the ball to the parent who will underarm it back. This can be a bit tricky whilst they learn the correct release point.
- 2. Overarm Throws** – Following the underarm throwing drill, have the kids move back to a comfortable overarm throwing distance. Demonstrate pointing the glove hand at the person they are throwing to and aiming to hit their chest. This can be quite chaotic at first but by the end of the season you will find that kids should be able to throw to each other without too much of an issue.
- 3. Throwing on Knees** - Throw from knees to each other (3 metres). Work on Shoulder rotation with arm stretched all the way back. Front arm stretched all the way forward (for balance and pointing to teammate.) Twist shoulders and keep the back elbow bent (90 degree). Follow through by crossing throwing arm in front (across) body.
- 4. Catching** – It is important to teach the kids how to catch a ball for their own safety. The glove should always start facing up and move in a “window wiper” motion in front of the face. Ask the kids to do this before starting. Any ball that comes at this height and location will be caught this way. For balls lower (below waist height) then the glove can turn to face the ground. Try to avoid kids having the glove facing the ground but lifting it up to catch a higher ball as this can lead to the ball hitting them in the face. When the ball goes in the glove, have the player place their bare hand

over the top of the ball to stop it falling out. Once they get the hang of catching and are throwing with a teammate, you can give them the challenge of seeing how many they can catch in a row.

5. **Ground Balls (Alligator)** - Roll ball from one and a half metres in front of the player and tell them to start with their glove on the ground and once the ball goes in, to place their bare hand on top like an alligator.
6. **Ground Balls (Alligator with sidestep)** - Roll ball to one side or other have player shuffle feet to get body in front of ball. (Many kids will have trouble with this at first.)
7. **Pop Flies** - Use a tennis ball throw 3 to 4 metres in air for them to catch

INFIELD DRILLS

1. **Throwing to First Base** - Place a player on pitcher, 1st base and catcher and hit the balls to pitcher and have them throw to first base. At each subsequent training you can add another position. (2nd base throwing to 1st base etc). Ensure the first base player is touching the white bag when they get the ball.
2. **Catching Balls in the air** - Place players in two lines and throw balls in the air to each player one at a time at close range. Try to keep the ball to the side of or in front of them as when they are first learning, throwing the ball in the air straight to them can result in them getting a ball in the face.
3. **Fielding the Ball and Touching the Base** – Place a player at short stop, 1st Base, 2nd Base and 3rd Base. Roll the ball to them and tell them to touch the base. You can explain that when a runner is coming to the base that they are at, that they can field the ball and touch the base to get them out. (Explaining when it's a force play and when it isn't can be a bit confusing for new and young players, and for the purpose of this drill we will assume that all runners are forced).

OUTFIELD DRILLS

4. **Outfield Throwing to 2nd Base** - Place players at Left Field, 2nd base and catcher. Roll the ball to the Left Field and have them field the ball and throw it to 2nd base. (The 2nd base player must start in the regulation position then move to the base when the ball is thrown.) You can then change to Centre Field and Right Field; however, utilise the short stop position to receive the ball at 2nd base.
5. **Catching Fly Balls** - Place players in two lines and throw balls in the air to each player one at a time from a greater distance than you would for infield. Try to keep the ball to the side of or in front of them as when they are first learning. Throwing the ball in the air straight to them can result in them getting a ball in the face.

SUGGESTED BASERUNNING DRILLS

- 1. *Running Through First Base*** - Teach running through 1st base. Have kids lining up at home plate. The first player swings an imaginary bat and runs through the orange bag, turns around and comes back to the white bag and stand on it. Once they have done this they can walk back to the line. You may want to go over these 2 or 3 times.
- 2. *Running to Second base and beyond*** - Teach running to 2nd base. Have kids lining up at home plate. The first player swings an imaginary bat and runs to first touching the white base and continuing to 2nd base and stopping ON 2nd base (not overrunning it). This may only be relevant in older age groups where a player can hit into the outfield; however, is important to teach that first base is the only base we run through (apart from home plate). We are required to stop on both 2nd and 3rd base. The player is NOT required to use the orange base at 1st base if they are able to continue to 2nd base and there is not a play at 1st.
- 3. *Sliding – ADVANCED DRILL ONLY*** - This can be very fun but also very scary for some kids. This is only suggested when the kids are a bit older and more experienced and understand when to slide.

Set up a base, and in front of it you will need to place a large piece of cardboard (it will need to be about 1.5m in length) into the grass. If you can't obtain a large enough box, then two smaller pieces of cardboard can be used, but make sure the overlap of the cardboard is with the direction of the kid sliding as you don't want anyone to get stuck between the gap. Have the kids remove their shoes so they are just in their socks. (Pre-warn them that they will need to wear long pants and socks for this drill as you don't want any burns!). Each kid takes turns running towards the base and sliding on the cardboard (which acts as a nice sliding surface) to reach the base. They should end up with their legs just touching the base which can be a bit tricky to time.

SUGGESTED FUN GAMES

1. *Protect your Base/Rob the Nest*

Choose two or three small groups to protect their base! (Usually 1st, 2nd 3rd base). All the balls start on the pitcher's plate in the middle of the diamond, and each team starts behind their base. Teams must run and pick up a ball and run and place it on another teams' base. They can only have one ball in their hand at a time and they must not throw the ball. After a designated time (usually 1 or 2 mins) the team with the least amount of balls on their base is the winner.

2. Protect the Line

Choose two teams to stand along the 2nd/ 3rd line and the home to 1st line. Each team is given the same number of balls and must try and roll the balls past the other team's line. The fielder must attempt to stop the balls and quickly roll them back towards the other team to try and get them past their line. Balls must only be rolled and must not be thrown and must stay between the bases to be counted. The team at the end of the allocated time with the least balls on their side are the winners. (This is a great game as it teaches attacking and fielding the ball.)

3. Base Relay

Choose two teams and place each at either 2nd base or home plate. One at a time each player must run around all the bases until they reach back to their team and tag the next person to go. The team who has all their players finished first is the winner.

4. Race Around the Bases Game

Choose a player to go first. The remainder of the players choose a place to stand in the outfield. Once each player in the outfield has chosen where they will be standing, the batter can then hit the ball (announce "Batter Up, Play Ball.") and commences running around the bases. They score a point for every base they reach while the fielders rush to the ball to stop it and line up in a line behind the ball. At this time the coach yells stop and determines the batters score.

1st base = 1 point

2nd Base = 2 points etc

5. Beat The Ball

Players are placed on each base plus in between each base. So, there are 8 players on the field. (If you don't have enough then just remove one of the players in between the bases). The fielders have to throw the ball to each player located around the diamond CLOCKWISE starting at home plate and finishing at home plate. The runner must run around the bases (the correct way which is anti-clockwise) and try to get to home plate before the ball.

6. Throwing Relay

Choose two team's and place them in a line. Spread each player out so they are a good distance apart to make an overarm throw. (You can bring them in closer if you want to practice underarm throws.) The ball starts with the first person who throws to the second person in the line, the second person must catch the ball and turn around thrown to the next person in the line. The ball must go all the way to the end and back for the winner to be determined. If someone does a wild throw the next person must go and get the ball and return to their spot before continuing. This is a good drill to teach the correct way to turn. Ensure the player always turns to their glove side, as this is always quicker.

Game Day Tips

Game Day Line-up and Organisation

Create a spreadsheet of the player's names to record where everyone has played and how often. Attached is a sample spreadsheet. Create a weekly "Game Day" roster to record the batting line up and where each player will be positioned in each inning. During a 1 hour game, it can be normal to go through as little as 2 innings and as many as 4 innings, therefore I suggest that you prepare for 5 innings. This will ensure you aren't caught out without positions for the 5th inning!

Game Day Warm Up

Arrive at the ground at least 30 minutes before the game commences to allow for the diamond and shade shelters to be set up. Take the team for a brief warm up including a short run with stretches and then some throwing and fielding. There is generally not too much room to do any batting.

Introduce yourself to the other coach and the umpire, then, Have Fun!