

FWNLL T-Ball Coaches Handout



Stretching & Warm Ups

- Stretching should be the first part of every practice session or game.
- It is recommended that you follow a pattern from head to toe so that the players get used to the system.
- Find a set of exercises that will cover most major muscle groups.
- Concentrate on those that will particularly be used in common baseball motions.
- Stretching should consist of a 6 second count and a clap at the end
- Ask one of the players to help lead stretching to create leadership skills within the athletes
- Before you begin the stretches, a slow jog around the park will help warm the muscles
- Examples of some simple stretching drills are listed below. At this age group, coaches and parents will need to demonstrate for the team.
 - **Stretch arms across chest** – Start by pulling right arm across chest by the elbow. Switch to the left arm. Repeat once.
 - **Stretch arms overhead** – Raise right arm over head as if they are trying to pat themselves on the back. Grab elbow and pull lightly behind head. Switch to the left arm. Repeat once.
 - **Touch toes feet together** – Stand with feet together. While keeping knees straight, bend over and touch toes. Repeat once.
 - **Touch toes feet apart** – Spread feet to twice should width. Reach down with both arms and touch right foot. Switch to left foot. Repeat once.
 - **Cross feet over touch toes** – Put right foot over left and touch toes keeping knees straight. Switch to left foot over right. Repeat once.
 - **Quad stretch with balance** – Lift and grab right foot behind back. Hold for six seconds while maintain balance and limiting ‘hopping around’. Switch to left foot.
 - **Wrist stretch** – hold right arm out in front at shoulder height. Bend right hand downward at wrist. Lightly push hand back towards the body. Lift hand so palm is facing away from body. Lightly push fingers back towards body. Repeat with left hand.

Fielding

Fielding Ground Balls

1. Start with feet slightly more than shoulder width and bend the knees to be in a comfortable baseball position
2. Move your hands out in front of you and drop the tip of your glove to just touch the ground.
3. Place your hands in an "alligator" position and have the players practice 'Chomping' the ground ball
4. Place both hands out in front of your body to provide a target for the ball.
5. As the ball is rolling towards the glove, the player needs to use two hands to 'alligator chomp' the ball.
6. Search out a proper grip with your throwing hand in the glove to get set for a throw.
7. Throw the ball to intended target.
8. When necessary charge the ball and break down into a proper position to 'alligator chomp' ball

Fielding Fly Balls

1. Start in a standing, relaxed athletic position
2. The "glove leg" is pointing directly at the batter, while the throwing foot is turned out slightly.
3. Extend the hands out in front of the body slightly and when the ball approaches the glove, "soften" the hands to cushion the impact.
4. Use two hands to close the glove onto the ball. This allows a quick retrieval of the ball to set up for a throw.
5. Your throwing hand will search out a proper grip in the glove to get set for a throw.

Throwing

The Grip

1. The pads of the first and second fingers are placed across the seams of the ball. The fingers are about one finger width apart.
2. For players with smaller hands, the 3-finger grip should be used.
3. The thumb is underneath the ball, directly opposite the fingers, and should try to make contact with the seam underneath. If possible, have a slight gap between the ball and the palm of the hand. This provides the opportunity for wrist snap, resulting in a more powerful throw.
4. The grip should be firm but not too tight

Throwing a Baseball

The throwing action is a series of continuous motions which combine to propel the baseball toward a desired target.

5. Start with the ball in the glove
6. Find a proper grip of the baseball and pull ball out of glove
7. Point glove at intended target at shoulder height
8. Throwing arm should be extended back behind forming a 'Power T'
9. Step and point front foot towards intended target
10. Throwing arm comes forward in time with back leg creating a follow thru where belly button should be facing the intended target
11. Throw should hit the intended target 'in the chest'

Catching a Baseball

The glove should properly fit the player. Gloves that are too large or too small hinder a player's ability to control the catch. After placing each finger in a finger hole, the index finger may be placed outside the finger hole to provide extra padding. This helps lessen the impact of the ball. Be sure the strap across the back of the glove fits snugly.

1. Place both hands out in front of your body to provide a target for the person throwing the ball.
2. Keep legs shoulder width apart with your glove hand slightly ahead of the throwing hand.
3. Keep arms and legs slightly bent and relaxed.
4. Keep the throwing hand next to the glove in a "ready" position.
5. Keep your eye on the ball, all the way into the glove. Catch the ball with two hands.
6. When the ball arrives in the glove, pull your hands toward your body to cushion the force of the throw.
7. The rule is to keep the thumbs together for throws above the waist...and little fingers together for throws below the waist.

Hitting

Hitting a baseball is difficult for young players. Therefore there are several basics that you can help a player swing the bat properly and make good contact with the ball.

1. **The Grip:** A good strong grip will help a player transfer the power of the arms and shoulders through the bat and into the ball. If the grip is not strong enough, the ball is going to shake the bat loose when the contact is made and a good deal of power will be lost.
2. **The Stance:** The players feet should be comfortably spread (~18-24" apart), weight evenly balanced, body relaxed, knees slightly bent, arms up and away from the body. The bat should not rest on the shoulders as that tends to tie up the swing. The bat should be held back in the ready position. The power comes from the stride and swing. Young players should stand fairly well back in the batters box.
3. **The Swing:** The correct swing is a level one with the wrists on the same level as the pitch so that the whole length of the bat travels right through the area where the ball is.
4. **Focus:** Keep the eyes on the ball. A player's eyes and muscles will coordinate if they keep the ball in view.

Station Overview

Station 1: "Play Ball"

(Infield) -- Play a simulated T-Ball game with bases and batting tee. Have one team on offense with the other on defense. Use helmets for all batters and runners. Have a coach or parent run or direct players to the bases. Have the fielders attempt to throw the ball to 1st base. One base per hit. Players should not advance on overthrows. Switch after one time through the batting order.

EQUIPMENT: 1 Batting Tee; 1 bat; 3 balls; 6 helmets (bases and pitching rubber on field).

Station 2: Tennis Ball Drill

This is a good station to practice pop ups, throwing, and catching with a tennis ball to build confidence with our young ball players.

EQUIPMENT: 4 Tennis balls

Station 3: "Tee Time"

Use T-Ball hitting tees with rubber balls and have each player take 8-10 swings at a tee. Start with half the team at bat with the other half fielding the balls. A coach/parent must always be with each batter to insure the swinging bat hurts no one. Encourage line drive hitting. If you place the ball so the label faces directly back and tell each hitter to hit the label, line drives will be more likely.

EQUIPMENT: 5 Batting Tees; 5 bats; 25 rubber balls; 5 helmets

Station 4: "Power T"

This station is to practice the Power T throwing motion. Players line up opposite a coach, parent or another teammate. Players play catch utilizing the Power T.

EQUIPMENT: 8 soft baseballs

Station 5: "Alligator Chomp" grounders

Players line up opposite a coach, parent, or another teammate. A ground ball is rolled towards the player. The player utilizes proper form to field the grounder with two hands culminating in an alligator chomp. Players making the chomp sound: optional.

EQUIPMENT: 8 Soft baseballs

Station 6: "Watch the Birdie"

In this drill, you will be simulating a pitched ball using a badminton birdie instead of a ball. This will allow the smaller hitters to have more time to hit the "ball" successfully. Set up with three groups of kids, each with a coach/parent. The coach in each group will kneel on one knee and pitch to one hitter. After 8 swings, rotate to a new hitter. Continue the rotation. This is also an excellent drill for older kids adjusting to off speed pitches. By throwing the birdie feathers first it simulates a change-up.

EQUIPMENT: Multiple birdies; 3 whiffle bats; 3 home plates; 3 helmets

Station 7: "Hat Drill"

This is a great drill for players to combine proper fielding and throwing mechanics into a single motion. Focus should be on fielding the ball cleanly and throwing accuracy as each player tries to hit the hat. Place a hat in the middle of the two ball players. Have them throw the ball at the hat to try and hit it. The other player fields the ball with proper two hand technique. The second player then throws the ball at the hat in attempts to hit it. Great fun game to test accurate throwing and fielding techniques.

EQUIPMENT: 8 Soft baseballs

Station 8: "Go Get it"

This drill simulates what a player is supposed to do if the ball goes over their heads or past them in the outfield. Start by asking the player what happens if the ball goes past them. Have them yell back to you "Go Get it". Then throw the ball over their heads. Have the player throw it back to the coach. This drill teaches competitiveness and the importance of good outfield play in young ball players.

EQUIPMENT: 8 Soft baseballs or tennis balls

Station 9: "Whiffle Whomp"

3 Groups. Have a coach soft toss a whiffle ball or plastic golf ball. 6-8 pitches per turn. Rotate often. Set up is same as "Watch the Birdie". Good drill for the players to make solid contact and get some confidence finding a pitched ball.

EQUIPMENT: 4 Whiffle Bats; 16 whiffle balls; 16 plastic golf balls; 4 home plates; 4 helmets

Station 10: "High Flyin"

Group 3-4 players per coach or parent. Have coach throw 5-10 pop-ups to each player. Insure they have gloves up. Keep the "fingers to the sky". Players should view the ball over the top of the glove. Use whiffle balls for some high throws and rubber balls for little pop-ups.

EQUIPMENT: 9 rubber balls; 9 tennis balls; 3 cones; 3 pop up rackets

Station 11: "Marry Me"

MARRY ME	Players form 2 lines facing each other. Lines should be 10-15 feet apart to start. Each player kneels on one knee (opposite of throwing arm).
ACTION	Demonstrate the basics of the grip and throw. Give each player a ball during discussion so they can find the seams. Each player in line will throw to their partner on the coach's command. Before they throw the ball, the player must completely extend the throwing arm all the way back ("tee" position). The player should look back to insure the arm is level (elbow at shoulder height). The 2 front fingers should be visible (like a goal post) and the ball should be facing away from the player. The mitt should be aimed at the partner. At that point, the player throws the ball. The receiving partner should have the mitt outstretched giving the player a target. Once the partners have successfully caught 5 throws, they can move back 3 feet and continue.
PURPOSE	This drill reinforces full arm extension when throwing. It also corrects side arm throwing. This is a good drill to begin practice with. It is called the <i>Marry Me</i> drill since the player has to kneel, as in a wedding proposal.
EQUIPMENT	8 soft baseballs or 8 tennis balls

Station 12: "Hit the Target"

Players will take turns throwing at various targets. Targets will vary in difficulty. A point value can be assigned to each target. Have each player throw 3 balls each turn. Targets can range from fishing nets to bowling pins on a five gallon buckets.

EQUIPMENT: 4 Targets with stakes; 20 balls

Station 13: "Through and Around"

This is a base running station to help rookies run bases effectively. Home, first, and second bases are needed.

- In the first phase, the rookies are taught to run at top speed all the way through 1st base with a short over run. Players should be reminded to run past the base before slowing down.
- Once this has been mastered, you will move on to a base hit approach to the base, rounding the base, with the hopes of going to 2nd base. Small cones should be set out to show the outward path needed in order to gain a good angle toward 2nd base. Remind them to hit the inside corner of 1st base on their turn toward 2nd base.

EQUIPMENT: Home plate; 3 bases; 2 cones

Station 14: "Play Ball"

(Infield) -- Play a simulated T-Ball game with bases and batting Tee. Have one team on offense with the other on defense. Use helmets for all batters and runners. Have a coach or parent run or direct players to the bases. Have the fielders attempt to throw the ball to 1st base. One base per hit. Players should not advance on overthrows. Switch after one time through the batting order.

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