

# Coaching Baseball

As a coach you want to provide the best baseball instruction you possibly can. Baseball fundamentals are essential to a successful team and your ability to teach those baseball skills is going to be a major factor on how fast your players learn. Make sure your baseball instruction and expectations are age appropriate. If you are new to coaching you will often find that many players on your team will not be at a skill level you expected when you have that first practice. Adjust your baseball instruction to get them caught up. Don't stress out that your team is not where it should be. Instead focus on the basics. Youth baseball games are won with sound baseball fundamentals.

Help each player achieve his or her goals for the season. Each player will be different and you will not know unless you ask them personally or have them write it down. Some will want to be an All Star, some will want to Pitch or Catch, some want to get that first hit or catch that first fly ball, some just want to have fun and be on the team with their buddies.

Baseball instruction shouldn't end at practice. You will find that many players will only touch a baseball at practice and games. Try to come up with games that players can do at home. For example, you may have your kids throw the ball against a wall and count how many groundballs they can field in a row. Have them bring that number to practice the next week. For kids that live in apartments, see if the parents will roll a soft ball to them inside if there is no place for them to throw against a wall. It can be time consuming coming up with home activities for your players, but you will see results. Keep it fun and they will enjoy playing at home. You will also show the parents that you are serious about your responsibility of providing quality baseball instruction to their child.

Provide baseball tips that you can hand out at the end of practice for players to take home. Have the tip cover something they learned that day and include an at home practice routine for them to do.

Maybe it's an image of a pitcher getting into a balanced position at the top of the windup. Have players go home and get into the balanced position 20 times before simulating a pitch or balance on one leg (as if Pitching) for as long as they can during TV commercials.

## Youth Coaching Advice

I believe it's the job of the youth coach to allow players to play multiple positions and to provide the baseball instruction necessary to play those positions. Most young players that have to play in the outfield all year long are going to get bored. With all we are going to discuss in this section about keeping focused and motivating your players, it will be impossible to accomplish if a player only sees the outfield grass during a season. Outfielders need to field ground balls and infielders need to catch fly balls. All players have to throw and catch. Develop all players to play in the infield and outfield. The baseball skills they learn in each area will help them to become a more complete player.

They are too young to have a coach determine where they should or will end up playing when they are older. Take pride in developing players that can play multiple positions. Who knows, maybe your standout shortstop will need to play outfield next year. Or your left fielder that has a good arm but doesn't field well will have a chance to play 3rd base next season. Give them both the opportunity to develop and use those skills this season.

Consult your Positive Coaching Alliance handbook as needed but keep in mind that you should expect positive Effort from all players and coaches, Learning of fundamentals needs to take place, and

teaching kids how to deal with Mistakes should be a focus. Remember that in baseball, kids will fail a lot. A good hitter will still fail to get a hit over 50% of the time - much higher as they get older (70%). Baseball is unique this way, especially when compared to other sports and this can be difficult on young athletes.

Many opportunities to teach little "life lessons" will come up during your baseball season, expect them and be the first to put things in perspective for the kids and parents.

In the end, the score at the end of the game is not the most important factor that determines who the winner will be in the long run.

Think long term, think fundamentals, think development of players and ask yourself how you want to be remembered by your team.

This is a compilation of material and research that has been borrowed from many sources (both in person and from the internet) during my time coaching kids ages 6 - 17.

Please keep in mind that much of the information in this document is compiled in a way that leans toward my opinion on how things should be taught or what the proper fundamental should be.

I understand that there are many different philosophies regarding hitting and pitching, I think I have taught or tried many of them to my kids over the years. In the end, I believe that a combination of different philosophies is the best approach rather than one over the other (i.e. rotational vs. linear hitting).

In the end, I have tried to put together a philosophy that will give the kids the best fundamental base in which to grow from. As kids mature and are exposed to different ideas, their individuality will come out appropriately. I hope that you will find this document helpful in your upcoming season.

*Wes Dover - SVLL Director of Coaching and Player Development*

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Many websites on hitting and pitching fundamentals

The Internet