

**Maltby Pony Pinto Practice Plans and Drills**

**Introduction:**

First and foremost, THANK YOU!! for volunteering your time. We understand and get that taking on a coaching role at any level can appear overwhelming, but know that the Maltby group of Coaches and Board members are 100% behind you and will help you in any way we can to make your coaching experience a great one.

The key to successful coaching is being prepared and organized. It is important to take advantage of the limited time you get each week with the players. Being organized before you arrive at practice, and having a structured practice schedule with help you stay on track. This document will present a handful of fundamentals and drills. You’ll need to outline the key drills you’ll run during practice. Having a list of drills designed to improve fundamentals and provide game time situations will allow you to make the most of your time. The goal for the season should be to teach every player the basics of baseball (Pinto Level Appropriate):

* How to run the bases (more so…making proper turns, sliding, not overrunning bases, looking for coaches signals as they run the basis)
* Hitting off coach pitch and kid pitch
* Learning the basics of pitching (throwing 1 – 2 innings) (NO CURVE BALLS) Goal is to have 2 innings of kid pitch per game by mid-season
* Learning the basics of catching (staying low, blocking balls in the dirt, making good throws back to the mound, making plays at home)
* All players learning how to communicate between every pitch

This guide will help you along the way. Included are organized batting, throwing, catching and fielding drills along with suggested practice plans. The plans were created to keep the kids interested and provide a positive learning experience. Each page consists of drills and techniques to run your practice.

**Recommendations:**

The drills are in order of difficulty. We recommend teaching a couple drills at a time. The most important thing is focus on the proper form of each drill and do not lose sight of the fundamentals of the game, and most importantly….make it fun!

**Coaching Tips:**

1. **Prepare for practice before you arrive to the baseball field.** Once you arrive at the practice location, you will be bombarded with kids, parents, other coaches, along with the task of setting up. Once you arrive, you will not have time to prepare activities, drills, etc.
2. **Be clear of the goals and expectations of the day and season.** Don’t assume that every player understands what they are supposed to do, and how they’re supposed to act. Be sure to state the plans for the day and expectations as practice starts. Do a quick huddle with the players at the start of each practice to explain what they will do for the day and break the huddle in some fun way.

1. **Ask for help.** Be sure to invite others to be assistant coaches (solicit help early on and have them complete the Coaches Application on the Maltby website so we can do a simple background check). This will be valuable for practices and games. The players will enjoy their experience and will remain more focused, if they can split up into small groups to run the drills…and keep them moving! We recommend having up to 4 coaches. One head coach and 3 assistant coaches/parents.
2. **Have a “potty runner”**. Throughout your practice you will have kids wanting to run to the bathroom. Identify each day, a mom/dad that can be your potty runner. **Do not send the kids to the bathroom by themselves.**

1. **Keep the practice moving.** This will be a key to your success…and sanity… Kids learn better by doing, than listenting….so make sure you don’t talk too much. They typically have a short attention span and will lose interest quickly…looking for the super exciting dandelion or that odd shaped cloud that looks like something they’ve seen before. Be prepared to quickly explain the drill and then get it started. The more the kids are moving to various stations, the less likely you’ll have to deal with other issues.

1. **Focus on the fundamentals.** Always keep player development at the top of the priority list. If you work to develop every player by the end of the year your team will be better prepared than others. If each player leaves the season better than when they arrived, you have succeeded. The “baseball light” will come on for each player at a different time…and seeing that moment of “ahhh…I got it” on their faces is worth it all.

1. **Encourage effort.** Practice is practice. The kids are going to make many mistakes, some more than others. The players will be trying new things and advancing in their development at different paces. The one thing they can all be good at is EFFORT. This will instill confidence in the players and provide them with a base for getting better.

1. **Match-up like skill levels.** Match the players up that have similar skill levels. This will advance them faster.
2. **Kids will be kids.** There is nothing you will do to ever change that. There should be certain guidelines for conduct, but kids being kids is going to happen. Set basic guidelines, and reinforce during practice….and be consistent so the players learn and know their boundaries…as they will test them. IF they don’t follow your guidelines, we recommend having them run bases or have them do something that is baseball related. It’s also ok to have a player sit out if they are too disruptive, and in the worst case scenarios…have them sit with their parent(s).
3. **Eliminate “Don’t”.** Try not to use the word “Don’t”, but instead tell them the correct way to do it. The kids are most likely to retain the last thing you tell them, so if the last thing you tell them is “don’t pull you head”, they will remember “pull your head”.
4. **Coaches are there for the kids; the kids aren’t there for the coaches.** If you missed your chance to play Pro-ball, coaching youth baseball is not the replacement. We can assure you, the Pros won’t be checking our website to see how many games you won as a coach. Our #1 goal is to develop the players and prepare them for the next level.
5. **Coaches are role models.** Remember to always talk positive about players, parents, other teams, and coaches. The kids will look up to you, so it’s important to provide them with a positive image. What we say, how we say it, and how we act can leave a lasting impression on a young player. Always be positive, even on those days that seem most challenging.
6. **Have Fun! Coaching kids should be enjoyable. Try to have fun, and keeps the season in perspective.**

**Practice Plan #1 – (based on 90-minute practice)**

**5 minutes** – Warm Up – it is important to start each practice with a warm up. This provides the foundation for an organized practice and gets the players prepared to start the day.

* Spread out with enough room to do an exercise.
* Light stretching exercises – hip rotations, “light bulbs”, arm circles, etc.
* Calisthenics exercises – jumping jacks, high knees, etc
* Lite jog around the baseball diamond having them touch each base to conclude

**24 minutes** – Hitting Drills (focused on the fundamentals)

* Divide the team into groups of 4 or less (if possible). Rotate stations every 8 minutes, each player taking 10 swings before next players turn
* Station 1 - Hitting off a tee into screen or open field, kids on deck collect hit balls
* Station 2 – Hitting off coach pitch (Coach is throwing from the mound), kids on deck collect hit balls

**3 minutes -** Water break

**30 minutes** – Fielding Drills

1 group of 3 players at home plate (not in catcher’s gear)

1 group of 3 players at 3rd base

1 group of 3 players at Short Stop

1 group of 3 players at 1st base

* + Group at 3rd base:
    - Coach hits grounder from home plate to player at 3rd base; player fields the ball and throws to player at home plate; kids rotate after each attempt; as they progress at catching the ball at home, work in catching and applying a tag to a pretend runner sliding into home plate
    - Rotate group at 3rd to home after each player has had 5 ground balls; players that started at home go to 3rd base
  + Group at 1st base:
    - Players rotate at 1st and short stop; a coach stands between 1st base and home plate and hits grounder to player at short stop; player at short stop throws across diamond to 1st base; players rotate after each ground ball hit; teach players how to play 1st base
    - Rotate group at Short Stop to 1st base after each player has had 5 ground balls at short; players that started at short go to 1st base

**30 minutes** – Outfield Drills

1 group of 3 players at Center Field

1 group of 3 players on Lft Field foul line next to a coach

1 group of 6 players at Right Field

* + Group in Center Field:
    - 3 players line up in Ctr Field, with one out from the group ready for a pop-up; coach hits pop-up from the Lft field foul line; Players rotate catching the ball and making throw after each attempt; player catching the ball communicates loudly “I Got It!!!; crow-hops and makes throw to cut-off
    - 3 players line up next to the coach on Lft field foul line with a simulated base; 1st player runs out upon the ball being hit as the cut-off player; 2nd player stands next to the simulated base directing the cut-off throw loudly directing the cut off player to be in alignment with ball being caught and base; players rotate after each hit
    - Rotate group in Center field with players next to coach after each player has had 5 opportunities
  + Group in Right Field
    - 4 players line up in Rt field; 1 player at a time starts to jog as a coach throws a ball up for the player to catch over their shoulder; (Player does a drop step then turns keeping eye on ball and catches over shoulder) Players rotate after each toss (coach is not throwing from far…15 feet or so)
    - 2 players stand about 15 - 20 feet from one another; coach throws ball up into the air between the two players as they run out to catch the ball communicating who has it; while the other plays role of back-up

**End** – Close with a team huddle, words of encouragement!!

**Remind parents that once the practice is over, it’s over…so no coaching kids on way home in car but only ask how things went etc…**

# Batting Technique Basics

## Proper Stance

* Feet - shoulder width apart,
* Square the feet to home plate – you can draw a line in the dirt to show the players where to stand (Bend the knees slightly)
* Grip the bat with the fingers, not tightly with the palm of hand. A relaxed grip is preferred. Square the shoulders to the feet, chin should be closer to the front shoulder.
* Elbows should be slightly bent with the hands just outside the back armpit.

## Proper Swing Motion

* Load and transfer - Begin the swing with a little to no step toward the pitcher. Do not pick the foot up high. It’s a very subtle lift and move forward.
* The stance should remain closed – do not step out towards third.
* Throw hands toward the ball, bringing bat through the hitting zone to hit the ball.
* Squash the bug. As the hands come through, turn hips at the same time. The player should turn on the ball of back foot. Squashing the bug
* Eyes should remain on the ball through impact.
* Proper stance and swing should be balanced.

## Hitting From the “T”

* Tee should be belt high
* Players should not hit up on the ball
* Hit through the ball – driving the ball toward the pitcher’s feet

## Net Drill

* Place T Ball stand 4’ from a net
* Line up players so they would hit the ball into the net
* Place a ball onto a tee ball T
* Have the batter drive the ball into straight into the net
* Focus on fundamentals of the swing
* Good stance, proper hand position, good swing through contact and correct finish
* You can use wiffle balls or tennis balls
* Set up 2 or 3 stations to allow multiple batters at once

# Base Running

## Base Running – Home to First

* Runners should learn to run as fast as they can when running from home to first.
* They can over run the base and should turn toward the fence when returning to first
* Players should learn to run through the base
* The should not slide – no matter what the circumstances are.
* Players should be taught to touch the bag every time.

## Runner to First Base for a Single

* Line up the players at home plate
* With a bat (no ball) have the players take a swing and run to first
* Make sure they do not throw the bat
* The should place the bat down and run as fast at they can to first base. Make sure they run through the base and return to first properly.

## Runner to Second for a Double

* Line up the players at home plate
* With a bat (no ball) have the players take a swing and run to first
* Coach at first base will instruct player to turn and run to second
* Player should start to angle outside the runner lane so they can properly turn to second without slowing. Make sure to step on base at first. Player may slide or stop on second base.
* Make sure they do not run through base.

## First to Third Base

* Runners leaving first base should start to look at the third base coach at 2/3’s the way to second.
* The coach will indicate to stop (hands up) or continue to third (large circles with arm.
* Players will need to learn to look for coach and react accordingly

## First to Third Base Drill

* Line up the players at first base
* Coach at home plate with hit ball into field
* Runner should start toward second and begin to look at third base coach. Coach will use either command and runner will react accordingly. Continue to run players around to home using same concept.
* Player will return to first base and get back in line to run again.