

Coaches Game Day Tips

Game Day is what all the players and coaches practice for, so remember to make the game fun! We have provided some game day tips to help coaches organize events so the game experience can be enjoyable for all. Here's to a successful Game Day!

Email

If needed, send “reminder” emails to the team, prior to a game, to re-emphasize game times, how to communicate if rain is in forecast, and to confirm attendance, especially if a number of players will not make the game.

GAME DAY – Pre-Game

-45 Minutes – Time to Arrive Prior to Games

Please make sure, you as a coach, and your assistant coaches arrive 45-50 minutes prior to the start of the game, so as the team arrives, you can provide the proper direction. Stress to your team to arrive at least 45 minutes BEFORE the game start time so players can warm-up properly, and coaches can confirm lineups.

Field Readiness

As part of your “letter to parents” you asked for parent volunteers to help prepare the field (rake, line the field), prior to a game beginning. Depending upon if/when the game is before your game, coordinate your “parent field team” so they can be ready to rake the field, and line the field, with enough time allocated to ensure the field is ready prior to the game’s start time

-45 Minutes – Warm-up Drills

As the team arrives, you as a coach should have mapped out, similar to a practice, the time allocated for warm-up activities prior to the game beginning. Activities to include should be:

5 Minutes - Stretching

When players arrive on the field, it's important to make sure their bodies are in the proper condition to play ball. It is a good idea to begin with some simple warm up exercises, such as arm rotations, arm and leg stretches and then possibly some simple outfield wind sprints

10 Minutes – Throwing Warm-ups

After stretching, have the players warm up by playing catch in the outfield, or along foul territory.

15 Minutes – Batting

Try to work on basic hitting mechanics, using this period to instill confidence and focus for the upcoming game. Generally, it is a good idea to create a stations, mentality, where some players are hitting soft toss, some are in batting cages (if available), and some are “shadow hitting” or hitting off a bat stick. Remember to rotate the team through all stations. It is important to manage the clock, as time goes quickly.

13 Minutes – Infield Practice

Try to take infield and outfield practice with the players in their first inning positions, rotating players where they may be playing in the game, if time is available. This usually consists of players fielding ground balls in the infield and throwing them to first base. Then have the players fielding ground balls in the infield and throwing them to second and first bases for a double play. It may be a long time before they actually turn a double play, but that's no reason not to get them in the habit of trying. Next hit soft line drives to the outfield with the outfielders fielding the line drives on one or two hops. Have the outfielders throw to the appropriate cutoff man (shortstop or second baseman) and then to the appropriate player covering second base (second baseman or shortstop).

Pitchers should begin to warm-up about 15 minutes before the start of the game. Remember the object is not to throw too many pitches, but to focus on good mechanics, and allow for the pitcher to get loose and be ready to perform in the game.

2 Minutes – Team Meeting

Before the game have a pre-game pep talk with the team, going over the batting order, and where everyone will play to start the game. Remind everyone to stay focused, play as a team, have fun and honor the game.

GAME DAY – The Game

The Lineup

The lineup should be filled out prior to the start of the game and given to the opposing teams coach (or designee).

Meeting with the Umpire

Both coaches should meet at home plate prior to the game to provide game balls, go over ground rules, and reinforce sportsmanship.

Game Start

So, it is time for game start, remember, as a coach to:

- ✓ Praise kids
- ✓ Look for positives and make a big deal out of them.
- ✓ Stay calm when team/kids make mistakes, helping them learn from their mistakes.
- ✓ Have reasonable and realistic expectations.
- ✓ Treat team/kids/umpires with respect, avoiding put-downs, sarcasm, and ridicule.
- ✓ Remind team/kids not to get down on themselves.
- ✓ Remember not to take things too seriously during the game.
- ✓ Maintain a “Fun is #1” attitude, with lots of laughter and a sense of humor.
- ✓ Emphasize teamwork and help team/kids think “we” instead of “me.”
- ✓ Be a model of good sportsmanship.

Some More Tricks

- ✓ You should also have each player call out the number of outs in each inning (e.g., call it out, one out, etc). Have each player raise one of their arms with their fingers pointing appropriately with the number of outs each inning.
- ✓ Prior to a batter swinging, make sure each player is prepped in the ready position to field the ball. An infielder should have knees slightly bent with their "alligator" position showing. An outfielder should have knees slightly bent with their glove and throwing hand resting comfortably on their knees.
- ✓ If you feel that your players are getting bored and are losing their focus, or there is a lull in the action, yell to the whole team, "who wants the ball?....."Ready Position".....and/or “
- ✓ Let players know where the next play is going by mentioning the base and the player's name the ball is going to (e.g., Mike you're going to Steve at first base on a ground ball, etc). It sounds like a lot of instruction but you and your players will get used to it after a while. This repetition on each play will eventually be retained by each player, so as time goes by, you might not have to remind players what they should do with the ball if it is hit to them.
- ✓ It is very important that the bench coach ensures that only one batter is in the on-deck circle taking his or her practice swings. No ONE should be allowed near someone who is one deck, taking practice swings.
- ✓ Before each inning in the field, have the players gather around to receive their inning position assignments.

After The Game

1. **Sportsmanship** – After the game is over, the team should lineup for after-game handshakes. Players should extend their right arm and hand and the opposing team does likewise to say “nice game.” Tell the players to go and shake the hands of the other players and coaches who have participated in the game.
2. **Be Neat** – You should gather your teams equipment, clean up any mess, especially if another game is about to begin. Make sure your team has all their equipment, including gloves and bats.
3. **Team Meeting** – Whether in the dugout, the outfield or off to the side of the field, it is important to have a brief team meeting where the coach gives a combination critique and pep talk. The critique is never really negative but constructive. It is never loud. The coaches should praise each player for the positives they performed during the game and reiterate what the team needs to work on as a team for the next game. Game “extras” (game balls, game pins to put on hats etc) for good plays, team plays, sportsmanship etc should also be distributed during this time.