



Things to Know: Running a Tee Ball, Rookie, or Minor Division Baseball Team (5-7 year olds)

This note summarizes the goals, logistics, safety rules that all LMLL Lower Division coaches should know. Please contact Commissioner Matt White if you have any questions – CoachMattW@verizon.net or 610-348-2768 (M)

1. Goals:

- Instill sportsmanship and love of the game.
- Teach baseball basics: Throwing, catching, hitting, and fielding skills.
- Have fun.

2. LMLL's expectations of coaches:

- Demonstrate encouragement and positive feedback for all players.
- Know how to teach the basics of baseball: throwing, catching, batting stance, swings, and fielding grounders.
- Be organized. Know your plan for practice. Start and end on time.
- Be safety-aware at all times.
- Be respectful of each child and parents (even if the latter don't reciprocate it).

3. Parent communications:

- **Pre-season parent communication and welcome.** Email game and practice times and locations (provided by the commissioner) to parents a week or more before the season starts. Introduce yourself and the team members when you receive them. Commissioners will assign kids to teams in the lower divisions.
- **Snack assignments.** Assign a "snack-parent" for each weekend of the season. (It is parents' discretion on what to bring, but juice boxes and snack bars are popular).

4. Safety concerns and best practices:

- **Bat safety.** The most significant potential hazard at this level is a kid who picks up a bat and casually starts swinging it close to other kids, hitting someone else directly in the head. Teach your players the "one batter" rule at the start. The "one batter rule" is:

No one picks up a bat until a coach tells him/her to do so.

- Players' own bats.* A player who brings his/her own bat (we encourage this) should place it with the team bats upon arrival, not hold/keep it.
- **Batting helmets.** All players wear a batting helmet when hitting and when on base.
 - **Dugout / thrown bat safety.** Players waiting to bat should be seated well out of the range of foul balls and flying bats. Five-to-seven year olds tend to throw bats.
 - **Fielding collisions / avoiding 'swarming'.** A perennial problem with this age set. They all run and scrimmage for the ball, like a rugby scrum. The safety hazard is they sometimes bonk heads, get bloody noses or forehead goose-eggs, and the like.

Solution: Teach them the "closest person gets it" rule. Remind them of this constantly. If a player forgets it and grabs a ball out of position, then go to them after the play and (gently) remind them: *the closest person gets it. Were you the closest person?* Etc., etc., good parenting run amok.

- **Enlist parental involvement when batting.** Parents can be a useful help on bat safety and dugout safety-rule enforcement. Tell the parents our safety rules as well as the kids, and if you are short an assistant, recruit one to help with this. Parents are usually eager to help preserve the safety of their children, especially when it comes from a coach with clear and well-reasoned safety rules. How much of an issue this is for your team varies greatly, depending what kids end up on your team. :-).