

Coaches Info & Tips

Ten Guarantees all Coaches Owe Every Athlete

1. Adequate individual player coaching time.
2. Be gracious with Encouragement.
3. Provide a reasonable opportunity to compete.
4. To be a top notch role model.
5. The absence of inappropriate language.
6. I'll be a good listener and guidance counselor.
7. I'll be prepared and organized for each practice and game.
8. Will provide recognition for the contributions each athlete makes to the team.
9. Discipline! Fair, firm, and consistent.
10. I will do my best to provide a fun experience.

Coach's Golden Rules for Baseball

GR#1 – **Never take your eye off the ball.**

GR#2 – **Think Ahead** – defensive play, base running, batting

GR#3 – **Ready Position** – walk into it – always be ready

GR#4 – **Follow the Ball** – be in proper position

GR#5 – **Back-up** – don't let the runner advance unnecessarily

GR#6 – **Fundamentals** – Make the routine play – stay focused

GR#7 – **Listen & Watch the Coaches** – base runners & batters

GR#8 – **Study the Pitcher** – learn his moves

GR#9 - **Good Character + Good Attitude = Good Sportsmanship**

Always work hard at doing what is right, always work hard at doing your best and play fair by the rules.

GR#10 **Have fun** – Baseball is a game – it should be fun
competitiveness with good sportsmanship, win or lose,
should be fun.

Add all this up and it equals a winning spirit!!

Review these “Golden Rules” before every practice and game.

Example of a Early Season Throwing Routine

Seated – focus on arm extension, upper body rotation, and follow through

One Knee – focus is the same as the Seated position with more emphasis on the follow through

Square Feet – same focus

Stride and lead shoulder – focus as above with adding step and proper aiming shoulder position

Long Toss – key is to maintain same throwing technique

Other pointers – the throwers target is the center of the chest, everyone is also working on two hand catches, taking the ball from the glove, & catching top half of ball. Each player must master playing a good game of catch. Coaches this period is much more than just warming up arms.

Stretching and arm circles should be down prior to the throwing routine. Don't skimp on the arm circles. Start out with 8 rotations at 0, 30, 60 & 90% forward and then start over with reverse. 0% - arms are straight out horizontal with the ground, while 90% straight up – the arms must be straight with little or no bend at the elbow. Gradually work to 16 rotation, then 8 with a baseball in each hand – to 16 with a baseball in each hand.

Week 1	Jog	
Day 1	Seated – 10 throws @ 15 ft -	Throwing speed about 50%
	Knee – 10 throws @ 20 ft	
	Jog	
	Square – 10 throws @ 25 ft -	Throwing speed 50 to 75%
	Stride – 10 throws @ 35 ft	
	Jog	
	Long Toss – 5 throws @ 45 ft -	Throwing speed about 75%
	3 throws @ 55 ft	
	2 throws @ 60 ft	
	Jog	

Week 1	Jog	
Day 2	Seated – 15 throws @ 15 ft -	Throwing speed about 50%
	Knee – 15 throws @ 20 ft	
	Jog	
	Square – 10 throws @ 25 ft -	Throwing speed 50 to 75%
	Stride – 15 throws @ 35 ft	
	Jog	
	Long Toss – 5 throws @ 45 ft -	Throwing speed about 75%
	3 throws @ 55 ft	
	2 throws @ 60 ft	
	Jog	

Week 2**Day 1**

Jog

Seated – 15 throws @ 15 ft - Throwing speed about 50%

Knee – 15 throws @ 20 ft

Jog

Square – 15 throws @ 25 ft - Throwing speed 50 to 75%

Stride – 20 throws @ 35 ft

Jog

Long Toss – 5 throws @ 45 ft - Throwing speed about 75%

3 throws @ 55 ft

2 throws @ 60 ft

Jog

Week 2**Day 2**

Jog

Seated – 15 throws @ 15 ft - Throwing speed about 50%

Knee – 15 throws @ 20 ft

Jog

Square – 15 throws @ 25 ft - Throwing speed 50 to 75%

Stride – 20 throws @ 35 ft

Jog

Long Toss – 7 throws @ 45 ft - Throwing speed about 75%

5 throws @ 55 ft

3 throws @ 60 ft

Jog

Week 3**Day 1**

Jog

Seated – 15 throws @ 20 ft - Throwing speed about 50%

Knee – 15 throws @ 25 ft

Jog

Square – 15 throws @ 30 ft - Throwing speed 50 to 75%

Stride – 25 throws @ 40 ft - Throwing speed about 75%

Jog

Long Toss – 5 throws @ 50 ft - Throwing speed about 75%

3 throws @ 60 ft

2 throws @ 65 ft

Jog

Week 3**Day 2**

Jog

Seated – 15 throws @ 20 ft - Throwing speed about 50%

Knee – 15 throws @ 25 ft

Jog

Square – 15 throws @ 30 ft - Throwing speed 50 to 75%

Stride – 25 throws @ 45 ft - Throwing speed about 75%

Jog

Long Toss – 7 throws @ 55 ft - Throwing speed about 75%

5 throws @ 60 ft

3 throws @ 65 ft

Jog

Week 4**Day 1**

Jog
Seated – 15 throws @ 20 ft - Throwing speed about 50%
Knee – 15 throws @ 25 ft
Jog
Square – 15 throws @ 30 ft - Throwing speed 50 to 75%
Stride – 25 throws @ 40 ft - Throwing speed about 75%
Jog to 90% on last five throws
Long Toss – 5 throws @ 50 ft - Throwing speed about 75%-90%
 3 throws @ 60 ft
 2 throws @ 65 ft
Jog

Week 4**Day 2**

Jog
Seated – 15 throws @ 20 ft - Throwing speed about 50%
Knee – 15 throws @ 25 ft
Jog
Square – 15 throws @ 30 ft - Throwing speed 50 to 75%
Stride – 25 throws @ 45 ft - Throwing speed about 75%
Jog to 90% on last five throws
Long Toss – 7 throws @ 55 ft - Throwing speed about 75%-90%
 5 throws @ 60 ft
 3 throws @ 65 ft
Jog

This throwing schedule is for example only - adjust this schedule number of throws, distance, and speed over time based on age group and condition of players.

Do not skip the jog – this warms the body and improves blood circulation. Never let any player let loose (throwing 100%) until after three or four weeks. Always make sure the throwing mechanics are the same at all speeds. Monitor players arm condition each practice and adjust. The key is to get the arm in condition and strengthen it without injury.

Coach/Manager Tip of the Month

This tip comes from Al Herback and Al Prince, who helps provide the Little League Official Education Program for Managers and Coaches. This month, the focus is on making the game more fun for players by letting them know you care.

Recent research suggests that one of the reasons players drop out of this great game is because they don't feel like an important part of the team. Of course, your primary goal is to make sure every player on your team – from the little Als (the less skilled players) – is having fun, feeling important and learning to love the game of baseball.

First, every player needs to know you care about them as a person and as a member of the team.

The most successful coaches make a positive connection with every player at every practice and every game.

The players on the team will model their behavior after you. If you are the kind of coach who includes everyone in conversations, you will create team chemistry where the players will do the same. If you don't, there is a good chance the big Als won't even talk to the little Als. No wonder the little Als are the most vulnerable to drop out of the game.

You need to have conversations that matter to you and to each player to have an impact.

Too often the conversation is one-way with the coach talking – telling the player what to do, how much to do, how fast they want it done – often dwelling too much on what they did wrong. That is not the conversation that we are talking about.

Ask questions that help you learn more about them as individuals such as: How did things go today at school? What is your favorite subject? Do you have any brothers or sisters? Do you play any other sports? What do you like most about baseball or softball? How can I make practice more fun for you?

There are lots of opportunities to have a personal conversation with each player when you get together as a team – as they arrive early before practice, during the stretching warm-up, during breaks, between drills, between innings of the game, in the dugout when it is their turn to be on the bench, after the practices of game.

At first you may need to be quite intentional to make sure you don't miss anyone. Carry a little roster card in your back pocket. When you connect with each player, check them off.

If you make this a part of your coaching style, the rewards for you and for your player will be immediate!

In kids' sports today, you're
either
burned out or left out.
Whatever
happened to fun?

Game Over

BY MARC LERNER

SARA SIMPSON AVERAGED ten points per game as she helped lead her Bloomington, Indiana, basketball team to a winning season in her second year on the competitive youth squad. "I really like playing," the tall ten-year-old told her parents. But, when the team got off to a slow start in 1999, the coaches upped the tempo in arduous two-hour practices and treated tournaments like life-or-death matches. "Everything is about winning." Sara complained to her mother.

One afternoon, Sara and a friend were giggling during a break in practice and didn't hear the call to a huddle. The coach, an imposing man in his 40s, grabbed them by the elbow and pulled them aside. "These practices aren't about fun," he barked at the young girls. "Laugh someplace else." When the coach, who would not comment for this story, began to cut her playing time to almost nothing for no apparent reason, Sara had had enough. "I don't want to go through this anymore," she told her father. She hasn't played on a basketball team since.

Across the country, children are rejecting sports because adults are draining all the fun out of it, says Fred Engh, president of the National Alliance for Youth Sports and author of *Why Johnny Hates Sports*. Kids are dropping out due to burnout, the emphasis on competition, and a lack of enjoyment. Meanwhile, for every kid who quits there's often another less talented child who wants to play but never gets a chance. The trend is particularly alarming at a time when public schools are cutting back on sports programs, and obesity has become a national epidemic. What's happened?

One of the big shifts is the decline in the spontaneous pickup game and the rapid growth of private leagues outside of school. With parents' heightened fears about leaving kids at the playground unsupervised, concerns about liability in parks, and the popularity of video games, the pickup game of soccer or stickball is going the way of the home-cooked meal. Another change is the upsurge in what experts call "competitive parenting," where parents make sure their kids are enrolled in every program and activity that the neighbors' children are in. In a way, it's the perfect storm: the falloff of the pickup game, the up tick in competitive parenting, and the lack of available positions on school teams. The not surprising result is that the majority of kids who play sports in this country do so on private teams. And a lot of these young players specialize in just one sport.

With ten-month seasons, often daily practices, hefty participation fees, paid coaches and elite travel teams that play in state, regional and national tournaments, youth sports are a far cry from the after-school choose-up-sides games played a generation ago.

Traditionally, non-school squads, including Little League Baseball and Pop Warner football, were focused on the kids, not on their records. But nowadays many have become "minor leagues" of sorts, identifying talent early on and encouraging only the best kids. While striving for excellence is valuable, the win-at-all-costs model can undermine a child's physical and social development, says Gregg Heinzmann, director of the Youth Sports Research Council at Rutgers University in New Jersey, who extols the benefits of choose-up teams, making rules, and mediating disputes.

Today, it's often a lose-lose situation: Either you're athletic and you get pushed until you burn out, or you aren't seen as talented and are discouraged from playing altogether. "Too many parent-coaches are taking their cues from the professionals rank and ESPN," says Bob Bigelow, a former NBA pro and co-author of *Just Let the Kids Play*. "What they often don't realize is that in their ruse to nurture the kids they think are the best, they're ignoring the rest."

Brooke de Lench, a mother of triplets in Concord, Massachusetts, knows how the youth sports system affects youngsters with different skill levels. When her boys tried out for a 12-and-under travel soccer team, only Hunter was selected. Spencer and Taylor didn't make the cut. "The basic message was, 'Sorry chump, you don't have what it takes to be a champion,'" de Lench recalls. "The boys were crushed."

De Lench was livid that her hometown league couldn't form enough teams to give every child a chance to play. So she offered to coach the team herself. "You won't win a single game," de Lench was told. "A lot of kids had to be dragged to our first practices," she says. "They were so hurt by being cut and didn't want to be seen as the kids who weren't good enough." Inspired, de Lench started momsteam.com, a website devoted to sports and parenting. Shortly after that, de Lench's coaching efforts paid off: The team had an undefeated regular season.

But many children find themselves on the sidelines— and it's not always because of the coach. Parents are often at the core of the problems. Many make a positive difference to youth sports, as de Lench did, but some parents can also hinder their children through overzealousness. "Even in a Little League community of 200 families, if just 10 percent care about winning and nothing else, that can ruin things for all the kids," says Doug Abrams, a law professor at the University of Missouri, who tracks incidents of parental excess in youth sports.

SOME PARENTS realize late that they've enrolled their kids in programs that are too intense. Travis Walker, a shortstop from Columbus, Ohio, found that out the hard way. When his dad and some other fathers came up with the idea for a travel baseball team, Travis was eager to play. By his second year, however, Travis was beginning to feel the strain of a 70-game season, frequent practices and out-of-town tournaments. The decision to stop playing on the team his father helped start was a relief for Travis, who confessed that his commitment to baseball had become a burden. "I never have any free time," he told his mother.

Of course, not everyone feels burned out by non-school leagues. In fact, many kids and parents credit competitive leagues with providing excellent athletic instruction, sportsmanship and self-esteem. Stan Kolbe, who coaches the Washington Senators, one of the nation's top-ranked 14-and-under softball teams, agrees: "I don't want to see elite teams get a sore eye. We need to let the more competitive kid shave an outlet."

Kolbe's daughter Alie, who throws a softball more than 50 milers per hour, plays on the team. "I love it, especially pitching, which really gives you command over the game." says Alie, who practices five days a week— eleven months out of the year. "Learning on a top team beats playing more but learning little on a recreational team," says Kolbe. Despite has team's competitive nature, Kolbe makes sure all the girls get to start at least one game every tournament.

But not all coaches have Kolbe's attitude. Sports chat rooms are jammed with coaches looking for players. Some coaches regularly prowl playgrounds and Little League games in the hung for prospects. Nancy Lazenby Blaser remembers playing catch with her five-year-old daughter, Alexandra, in San Jose, California, when a stranger approached. "Your girl has a great arm," the man said. He introduced himself as the coach of an elite softball team and asked if Alexandra played. "Don't you think it's a little early?" Blaser asked. "If she doesn't start to play soon," the coach predicted, "she probably won't be able to compete in high school." Chuckling, Blaser explained that she is the commissioner of athletics for the Central-Coast Section of the California Interscholastic Federation. The coach backed off.

“It’s tough when you see other parents sighing up their kids,” says Bloser. “You wonder if you are selling your kids short by not doing it.” Children are pigeonholed into organized sports at earlier and earlier ages as though they were training for the Olympics, and they have the injuries to prove it. Over-training and the constant repetition of physical motion—whether slapping a hockey puck or pitching a baseball—can impact a child’s physical development. When speed and power are encouraged before a child masters proper technique, the effects on bones and soft tissues can be harmful.

“Most parents don’t have a clue about the risks involved for young people in sports,” says Dr. James Andrews, who founded the American Sports Medicine Institute. “They don’t realize that many of the things they have their kids doing—playing year-round, pitching too often, throwing too hard—are exactly the kinds of things that introduce injuries that will preclude a professional career.”

“Besides, winning isn’t the top priority for kids. It shouldn’t be the yardstick for parents and coaches, either,” says Daniel Gould, director of Michigan State University’s institute for the Study of Youth Sports. Parents wouldn’t want to keep their kids in a school where their child was being beaten up or verbally abused, but many competitive non-school teams with grueling schedules and must win philosophies can take a similar toll on a child’s body and spirit. “I wanted my sons to be in a cooperative situation with rivalry,” says de Lench. With more “Bad News Bears” teams like hers, maybe all kids can get a chance to play, develop their skills at a higher level, learn teamwork, and most of all —have fun.