

How to Help a Child Overcome Their Fear of Playing Baseball - Eleven Tips to Perform Better

Here are a few tips to help your son or daughter if they are demonstrating a significant fear of being hit by the ball:

1. It is normal to have some fear of a moving object moving toward your body. Explain this to your child, but also tell them that they can learn how to protect themselves and how to manage the situation. Also, tell the kids that once they develop their baseball skills, they will overcome much of their discomfort.
2. Some children are afraid of being hit when they have a catch. If you can, begin playing catch with your child at an early age. If your child is under two or three, you can start by just rolling a ball back and forth to your son or daughter.
3. As your child grows older, you can start to use a sponge ball and begin tossing the ball softly toward your child from a close distance. Use an underhand toss and arch the ball so it gently moves towards your kid. Demonstrate how to catch the ball for your son or child and give them lots of praise as they learn how to receive the ball. Introduce the idea of greeting the ball with soft hands. I encouraged my kids to say "hello ball," as they would catch the ball to add some additional humor and playfulness to the learning process.
4. Use what coaches call the "sandwich technique." Insert a little instruction in between two phrases which praise and encourage them. ("Great job. Now just watch the ball into your hands a little more carefully. Now you are a star.")
5. As your child improves and gains some confidence in his or her catching ability, you can begin to introduce a tennis ball. Then you can move to a soft ball. Introducing your kids to a harder and harder ball in stages will help them to develop their confidence as they develop their skills. Periodically, toss a ball which will gently hit your child on their arm or leg. This will help your son or daughter to feel less scared of the flying object.
6. At age four to six you, you can introduce a glove to the process. Make sure you get a glove which is the right size and shape for your child. Gloves come in a variety of sizes and there are some that are very soft and easy to squeeze and to manage.
7. Begin with a tennis ball and continue to use the underhand toss until your child gets comfortable catching the ball in the glove. Don't introduce a baseball until your child appears confident and ready. You can use a tee ball as intermediate step in the learning process. These balls are not as hard as baseballs.

8. You need to demonstrate the various ways of turning the glove to accommodate the various spots your child will need to catch the ball in. Stand alongside your child as show the four or five various positions.

9. If your child throws right handed, begin by tossing the ball to his or her left side. This is generally the easiest way to begin. Once they can catch a dozen balls in a row on this side, you can start tossing to the center of their bodies. Then, you can start tossing a few soft pop ups where they can be taught to catch the ball above their heads. The ball thrown to the right side of a right handed child is a tough catch, since they need to turn the glove as it crosses their body. This is not a natural act for most kids. (Obviously, you need to reverse these guidelines if your child is left handed.) Interestingly, my son is ambidextrous, so it took a little time to sort out which hand we wanted to use to throw the ball. The first glove I bought him was for a lefty. Then at age four, we shifted to a right handed mitt.

10. When you teach your kid to field ground balls, tell them to open their glove, keep their head down watching the ball and field the ball in the center of their bodies. Begin with soft grounders and gradually increase the speed and vary the kinds of bounces your child experiences.

11. In order to improve your kids throwing skills. Teach them the proper grip. Many coaches teach a two finger grip where the second and third fingers are on the laces and the thumb is at the bottom of the ball. My daughter named it the bunny rabbit grip.

Have the child point his elbow toward their target and encourage him to place the ball behind their ear and step and throw. Begin with a short distance of perhaps four feet and gradually extend the distance. The step and throw gives the idea of weight transfer which is important in many sports.

Keep the encouragement and the compliments coming. Begin with short teaching sessions of perhaps ten minutes and increase them, if your child is enjoying the throwing and catching. He or she will tell you if they are interested in baseball. When my son began playing baseball, he didn't like it very much. Now he can't play enough baseball.

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