



COACHING T-BALL/8U PLAYERS

FEATURES OF THIS AGE GROUP

- Developing self-concept
- Learning social skills and how to interact with peers
- Starting to understand the rules of a game or sport
- Fine-muscle motor skills NOT developed
- Limited ability to react quickly to stimulus
- The primary method of learning physical skill is an repetition

PRINCIPLES

- Focus on large muscle and simple motor skills
- Emphasize the development of confidence, self-esteem, teamwork, and cooperation
- Emphasize having fun and making 100% effort
- Focus on primary, fundamental skills
- Simplify the rules
- Focus on developing good practice/learning habits

MENTAL PREPARATION

- Expand on the basic rules of the game
 - How to score a run
 - How to get an out
 - Start talking about force outs and tag outs
 - Fair/foul
- Focus on the importance of teamwork (usually takes two players to get an out)
- Focus on sportsmanship
 - Appreciation of opponents and officials (cheers and analogies opponents and umpires)
 - Support of teammates (no put-downs)
- Teach why and how to practice
- Introduce and practice the concept of focus
- Introduce the importance and techniques of warming up, general fitness, and nutrition
- Develop the ability to give 100%

SOFTBALL SKILLS – PHYSICAL

Focus on the most fundamental skills in softball: throwing and catching the ball and running. Hitting should deal with the basic technique, focusing on the development of hand-eye coordination and ensuring bad hitting habits are not developed (e.g., swinging up.) Try to teach the whole motion of a skill. Break down the components only to correct a specific problem.

THROWING

- Focus on “full motion” (body rotation, big “C” or “pet the dog” with the arm)
- ✔ Check the following:
 - Pivot step with the correct foot
 - The lead shoulder at the target
 - Stride foot pointing to the target
 - Elbow higher than shoulder
- Show glove to target and pull glove side elbow to the body as throwing arm moves forward towards the target
- Eyes on target - Throw at a specific target, not just towards it (e.g., at the receiver’s glove or chest)



CATCHING A THROWN BALL

- Focus on safety and confidence (they go hand in hand)
- Work without gloves frequently (tennis ball a good options also)
- ✔ Check the following:
 - Facing the thrower (square)
 - Using both hands
 - Never point fingers at the ball (glove should always be perpendicular to the path of the ball)
 - Move to the ball, trying to catch it in the vertical centerline in front of the body

FIELDING

- Demonstrate and practice the basic fielding “ready” position. Glove down and knees bent
- ✔ Check the following:
 - Good throwing mechanics
 - Eye following the ball into the glove (or hands)
 - Ready to field on every pitch



RUNNING AND BASE RUNNING

- Practice running for speed over short distances (e.g., home to first)
- Emphasize “fast feet”(feet touching the ground for the least amount of time)
- Introduce proper sliding technique - figure 4 slide
- ✔ Check the following:
 - Running in a straight line to the target
 - Arms moving back and forth
 - Arms in sync with legs
 - Push with toes

HITTING

- Focus on developing hand-eye coordination (contact rather than power) and emphasize watching the ball all the way
- Develop a desire to hit
- ✔ Check the following:
 - Smooth swing directly to the ball (no hitches or dropping of hands)
 - “Level” swing to produce line drives (avoid swinging up)



FITNESS

- Develop flexibility skills (how to stretch)

SOFTBALL WORKOUT

WORKOUT	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY

