



Coppell Baseball Association

Coaches Guide

The Coppell Baseball Association is grateful for your willingness to invest time and money in leading a team this season. In an effort to help, we thought it would be a good idea to begin generating resources that might be helpful to you. One of these resources, this short Coaches Guide, is meant to help better prepare you for the season.

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You'll want to set the tone early, and be as informative as possible. Proactive communication is a key to a successful season, and can save you headaches down the road. The following suggestions may help you over the course of a season.

First Email – the draft is complete and parents are beginning to receive notifications from the league and their coaches. Be sure to get your emails out quickly, as parents of



young children, as you know want information now! You should include the following information in your first email if you have it...

Team Information – team name, colors, roster of who's on the team, practice days, times, and locations, etc...

Schedule – share a complete schedule of practices and games (if you don't have all the information at this time send it in a follow up email).

Request Assistance – depending upon the age you're coaching, you're going to need help. You shouldn't try to do everything on your own, and it gives the other parents a chance to have a great experience with their children.

Equipment Needed – if there is additional equipment needed (i.e. extra tees, balls, bases, etc...), you should ask to divide up the cost evenly, so it's not a burden on you.

Uniforms and Equipment – let them know what they will need to purchase. What color pants will you wear, what color socks, belt, etc...? They should have a glove, bat, helmet (face protector for helmet for Kid Pitch 9 – 11), an athletic support and cup, cleats, etc... Encourage them to take advantage of the Dick's Sporting Goods CBA Day to get a discount on all materials they might need.

Share Links – if parents are asking what size bat or glove to get, they can use the following sites to enter their child's height and weight to get recommended sizes and types.

Ball Glove Warehouse – <http://www.ballglovewarehouse.com/>

Bat Warehouse – <http://www.batwarehouse.com/>

Request for Information – be sure to ask for all parent's names, emails, and mobile numbers, so you can put together a distribution list, and a roster to share with your team. That way, everyone is able to stay in touch.

Philosophy and Approach – be sure to take this opportunity to share why you've decided to coach this team. Explain your philosophy in coaching and what you hope their children get from the season.



Other Ways to Communicate – depending upon how ambitious you are, you could use Facebook and GameChanger to help centralize your communication. This way you don't have to completely rely on email.

Facebook – set up an FB Group to allow parents to post updates and pictures over the course of a season. You can provide weather updates, links, etc. . . This is another way for them to share with relatives who aren't able to attend games.

GameChanger – <https://gc.com/> - this is a great site for teams who are keeping score of their games and keeping track of stats, as they get older. You'll want to have a reliable coach handle the scorekeeping during the game, so the stats don't get overinflated. This is also another great way for those who can't attend the game to watch real time.

Equipment



The CBA provides each coach with two dozen baseballs, catcher's equipment, a pitcher's chest protector, and a tee (depending upon the age level). To run practices and manage games, you'll find that you may need some additional equipment. As mentioned above, you'll want to determine what you need and divide up the cost among your team, so you don't have to incur the entire cost on your own.

Bases – none of the practice fields have bases, so you'll want to invest in some bases.

Batting Tees – typically, you'll find one tee isn't enough. All age groups should invest in several tees, and make sure you plan to use them in each practice.

Balls – there are a variety of balls you may want to have for your practices. It's always best to have a good assortment, so you can get more done during your workouts.

Baseballs – you'll want to have three to four dozen baseballs, so you're not wasting so much time picking up balls between rounds of batting practice.



Plastic Balls – golf ball sized plastic balls are great for hand-eye coordination using the slim training bats. It helps young players develop good swing paths and focus in on the ball.

IncrediBalls – Easton’s Incrediballs, or other softer balls, are a great way to help develop confidence in catching the ball. They’re also critical for teaching catchers to receive and block the ball without beating them up with real baseballs.

Total Control Balls – while expensive, these are good to use for pre-game, and in reinforcing the correct mechanics of a swing.

Training Bats – the slim training bats are good for air drills and for use with the small plastic balls mentioned above.

Practice Planning



Planning is the key to having effective practices, and eliminating wasted time. I am sharing several practice scripts (Appendix A), that will give you an idea of how to segment your practices. The following are important elements for any practice...

Time – at this age, you should plan on breaking up your practice into multiple short segments; 10 – 15 minutes typically. You should plan on practicing for 90 – 120 minutes each time you have a team practice.

Skills – you’ll want to focus on the basics and extend your team’s knowledge of the game. Typically, you’ll frame your practices around the following skills...

Playing Catch – you must emphasize the importance of playing catch every single day. In each practice the focus during warm ups should be on good throwing mechanics and good receiving mechanics.



Throwing Mechanics– the key to throwing for young players is to keep them in a linear motion. We want their front foot to land in line with their back foot prior to pulling the front elbow back directly behind them.

Coaching Point: Be sure your players aren't swinging open leaving a wider spacing between their front elbow and their throwing arm.

Receiving Mechanics– be sure your players aren't trying to catch everything laterally. They must get used to attacking the short hop to catch it in the air, or to back off the short hop to make it a more manageable catch. The same goes for catching balls that sail over their head. They can't wait until that ball is past them. Once they realize that the ball is going to be above them, they need to start moving back in a position to catch the ball.

Fielding – be sure to spend time on the proper mechanics of catching pop flies and ground balls of all kinds.

Infield – have your infielders focus on the types of plays they'll experience during games (i.e. slow rollers, backhands, forehands, short hops, flares, fly balls, etc. .). Maximize the number of reps they get during each practice. You also want to have them throw balls to various bases to get them used to completing plays.

Outfield – throw your outfielders as many fly balls, line drives, and groundballs, as you can. Put them on the run, so they become accustomed to catching balls that aren't hit directly at them. You also want to give them opportunities to throw balls from the outfield and hitting their cutoffs.

PFP's– don't forget about your pitchers when working on fielding. This will include fielding their position, protecting themselves from hard hit balls up the middle, covering first base on balls to the first base side of the field, pick offs, and bunt coverages.

Routes– provide your players with reps that work on their attack steps and drop steps for quality pursuit of balls that are hit. There are times that they will move laterally, but most often, they will be in an attack angle or pursuit angle to cut off the ball.



Communication – take time to teach your players the importance of communication on flyballs and grounders. Teach them to talk to each other and help each other out.

Coaching Point: *The CF is in complete control on flyballs over the Left Fielder, Right Fielder, and any infielder. The SS is in control on any flyballs in the infield.*

Backing up – teach your players how to back up plays if they're not the one the ball is hit to. All defensive players should understand that they have a place to be on the field every single play.

Base Running – teach them how to properly run through first, how to round first, how to get lead offs (9 and above), how to slide, how to pick up the base coach, how to tag up, how to read pop ups and advance safely, etc. . .

Hitting – break them up into smaller hitting groups, so they have an opportunity to maximize the number of quality cuts in during practice. One group can be hitting off tees, while another group is hitting soft toss, another can be working on hand/ eye coordination drills, another on hitting live, etc. . . This obviously depends upon the number of coaches you have to help during practice.

Pitching – you should start planning on teaching your players to pitch during the 8U season, so they're more prepared for their Fall 9U season where they'll start kid-pitch. Teach basic grips, mechanics, and have them complete bullpens, so they gain experience and confidence.

Catching – your catchers need to see as many balls as possible. Throw incrediballs to them teaching them the proper positioning of their glove, as well as, getting the body in the correct position to block balls in the dirt. You'll also want to focus on their footwork, teaching them how to throw the ball back to the pitcher, and to throw out base stealers to 2nd and 3rd. Communication is also important for catchers, as they need to call out the base that the defense is to throw to.

Team Defense – to teach players where to be on certain plays, you'll want to make sure you build time into each practice, so players can work on different situations. This includes cut offs, back ups, run downs, double plays, bunt coverages, holding runners, etc. . .



Repetition – give the players time to practice the skills you’ve taught them. Repetition of key skills helps players develop the proper muscle memory to be successful in games.

Competition – always build in competition segments into your practice. It keeps things fun and helps them learn how to compete. The following are some competitions we’ve used in practices...

Last Man Standing – you can use this for hitting and defense. We use this one primarily for offense, where you give each player 3 – 5 cuts assigning a point value to each type of hit. The players with the least amount of points each round are sent to defense, while the remaining continue to compete. The following points system is what we use...

- 1 Point – weakly hit ball
- 2 Points – average hit ball
- 3 Points – well hit ball

Relay Races – these can be defensive relay races or running relays.

Defensive Relays – there are a variety of defensive relays you can use. The following are a few of them...

***Out off Relay** – set up the teams into groups of three over a lengthy distance. The middle player will serve as the cut off and work on transferring the ball to the next player correctly. The ball should make it all the way down and back before the other teams.*

***Around the Horn Relay** – set up your players on each base (4 players per team). The ball starts at home and you give them a minute to see how many times they can get the ball around the horn without in that time. The ball starts from home each time, so any ball overthrown, will be let go while another ball starts.*

Running Relays – you can set up sprints, or different base running relays, to have players compete against one another.

Tunnel Game – the tunnel game is great when you want to end a batting practice in the tunnels. Divide them into two or three teams. Tell them how many innings you’ll play. This is a fast-paced game and a lot of fun! The rules are as follows...



Single – line drive or hard hit one hopper into L-Screen

Double – ball hits third base side of the tunnel between the L-Screen and back of batting tunnel.

Triple – ball hits first base side of the tunnel between the L-Screen and back of batting tunnel.

Home Run – ball hits the back of the tunnel in the air without hitting the ground, the top, or the sides of the tunnel.

Outs – all other types of hits, misses, and foul balls are outs.

Scrimmages – build in team or group scrimmages, so the players have an opportunity to work on all aspects of the game.

Bunt Game – break your team up into two – three groups. You'll want to have a bunting group and a defensive group during this game. The defense is working on fielding bunts with different base running situations, and the offense is trying to execute the bunt play for each bunt situation.

Flip – this is a simple game where players will get into a circle and flip the ball to one another using only their gloves. The object is to knock out all the players and be the last man standing. You can have a maximum of four errors, flipping or receiving, before you're knocked out. The players keep track by flipping their hat around their heads, a single turn for each mistake. Once the hat makes its way back around, you're out until the next game.

Pepper – this is a great game that focuses on hand-eye coordination as a hitter and as a fielder. One player will be at bat, only making half swings with the back knee and hands in sync. The other players in the group will be about 15 feet away from the hitter working on making accurate throws, and fielding the ball. If the hitter misses the ball on a swing, the player at the far right of the line is the next hitter. If a defensive player catches the ball in the air, they are the next hitter. If someone makes an error, they go to the end of the line (far left).

Hitting, Throwing, Catching – you can set up any kind of competition around hitting, throwing, or catching. Just be creative. There's no right or wrong way to set up competitive periods.



Small Groups – do your best to divide your team up into small groups for practices. You should have small group and team sessions in each practice. This keeps them more attentive during practices, and keeps chances for bullying and players getting hurt to a minimum.

Situations – find time to put your players into various offensive and defensive situations to better prepare them for what they'll see in games.

Offensive – you'll want your hitters and base runners experiencing as many situations as often as you can, so they can execute during games without much thought.

Defensive – put your defense (team, Infield-only, Outfield-only) in various game situations, so they know what to do. Knowing where to be on the field during each play is one of the most complex parts of the game, so you should spend portions of each practice working on this.

Batting Practice – you may want to have BP-only sessions where you schedule players to come hit in the tunnels with you on a non-practice day, or on a day where the fields are closed due to rain.

Water Breaks – make sure you build in time for your players to stay hydrated. You can always review earlier segments or skills while they are drinking water, or you can use the time to set up the next portion of your practice.

Team Review – you should end each practice with a review of the practice, a look ahead at the next practice, or game, and to answer any questions your players might have.



Instruction



Instruction is vitally important at this age, as players are learning the game, learning to compete, and developing muscle memory for each skill they learn. We will be adding additional resources, including videos, links, documents, etc. . .to help coaches, parents, and players have what they need to be successful. These will be posted under the Instruction section of the CBA website – <http://www.coppellbaseball.org/>.

Game Management



Make sure you have enough support during games. You should plan on having at least six adults to help for Blast Ball, four coaches to help during all Coach Pitch games, and two to three coaches for Kid Pitch games .You should consider the following for each game...

Pre-game – you should try to have your players arrive 30 minutes before each game to get ready. You should set up the dugout, have players throw, and run through various short offensive and defensive time depending upon the amount of time you have.

In-game – make sure all the coaches know where you want them, and what you're supposed to do.