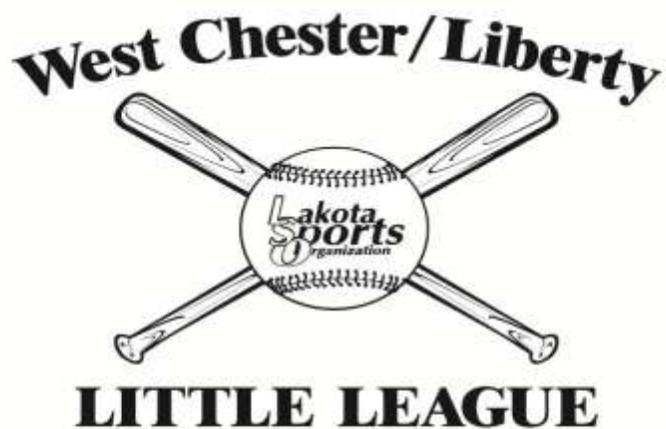


Coaches Guide



	Index
Chapter	Page
Becoming an Inspiring Coach	3
Communicating with Players	4
Communicating with Parents	5
Preparing for Practice	6
Fielding Tips and Drills	7
Batting Tips and Drills	10
Base Running Tips and Drills	11
Catching Tips and Drills	12
Situations	13
Sample Practice Plan	14
Preparing for Game Day	15
Great Links for Coaches	16

Becoming an Inspiring Coach

Good coaching can make a big difference in a child's experience as a participant in a sport. That doesn't mean that you have to be an expert, but you should realize that your approach to the game will impact your players. As a coach you have an opportunity to make a positive impact in the lives of your players and their families.

Recognize the positives in every player. Every child makes improvements and it is important to recognize this as the season progresses. Whether it's handing out a game ball or just going down the line and giving a compliment, make sure to recognize your player's efforts.

Prepare for practices and games. Preparation helps the time you have together to run smoothly and be an effective use of that time. Be prepared not only to teach baseball skills but also to look for ways to promote positive leadership examples.

Teach the fundamentals of baseball. With proper fundamentals, every child can succeed. Realize that every play has a teachable moment. Whether you're on the bench or in the field you can actively instruct your players.

Show respect for the game officials. Treating opponents, umpires, and opposing coaches with respect sets a great example for your parents and players.

Ask for help. You don't need to do everything yourself. Enlist the help of the parents. Many don't know enough about baseball to help, but would love to be useful. Getting them involved strengthens the team and allows you to focus on coaching. League officials are happy to help if there is a topic that you are having trouble with or if you have questions.

Communicating with Players

Creating a positive environment for your team begins with how you communicate with your players.

Greet players with enthusiasm and let them know that you are glad to see them.

In all of your interactions, talk on the player's level.

When teaching a skill, focus on a few points at a time. They won't be able to master every nuance at once.

When directing players, tell them what you want them to do instead of telling them what NOT to do.

Show the players what you want to be sure that everyone is on the same page. Don't assume that they know how to do something.

Baseball is a game – Have Fun!

Communicating with Parents

Contact your families right away when you receive their contact information. They are anxiously waiting to hear from a coach. Verify their preferred contact information; don't just assume that they are receiving your emails.

Get to know the parents and family members of your players. Include the parents in your first team meeting. At that time, introduce yourself and share your excitement and plans for the upcoming season.

Use the site provided by LSO to set up a team website. This allows parents to share pictures but also sends out team emails with reminders about schedules and snacks.

Many parents and family members want to support you and the team but don't know what is needed. Some ideas:

- Ask a parent to put together a schedule for families to rotate bringing snacks to the game.

- Ask a parent to put together a schedule for families to rotate to watch the bench when the team is batting so the coaches can focus on coaching.

- Ask a parent to be your team's raffle coordinator and distribute and collect the LSO raffle tickets. (Spring only)

- Ask parents to help run drills at practices.

Preparing for Practice

As a coach, it is essential that you come prepared for practice. Lay out a detailed practice outline. This will make your practice times focused, efficient, and meaningful.

Practice format

Coaches meeting. Meet with your assistant coaches and tell them the practice plan. This helps minimize down time and keeps the practice moving. Show them the proper techniques that you want to be the focus of the drills.

Warm up Activity. Play catch until everyone arrives.

Team Meeting. Talk with the team about the practice plan and split into groups. Small groups keep players moving and give them more repetitions and individual attention.

Drills Drills help players to refine basic baseball skills and are essential for every level of baseball.

Scrimmaging Scrimmaging is a great way for players to practice the skills that they have been taught. This also gives you time to coach technique and strategy. Stop play to teach as often as you feel necessary.

Teach. Don't forget that players respond better to positive instruction than they do to criticism.

Keep in mind that some younger players have fears about being hurt by the ball. Using a tennis ball is a help for some of these players. They can practice skills and gain confidence while using a softer ball.

Practice Drills

Fielding

Alligator Arms Tball

What you need: Gloves and balls

How it works: Have the kids show you with their arms how an alligator's jaw works. Show them how fielding a ball works the same way, with both hands coming together to trap the ball. Have the players stand in a single file line in the ready position. Roll the ball to them and have them place their glove down on the ground in front of the ball, trapping the ball by using the other hand on top.

Getting in front of the ball Tball, Rookie, First Pitch

What you need: Gloves, balls, 2 pylons placed 10 feet apart

How it works: The coach will roll the ball towards the player who must field the ball before it passes the imaginary line between the pylons. The goal is for the players to charge the ball, shuffle their feet from side to side in order to get into position, etc.

Fielding and Throwing to First Tball, Rookie, First Pitch

What you need: Gloves, bat, and balls

How it works: Have a line of players at second base. For older age groups, one player should be placed at first base. For younger players place a coach at first base. The coach hits a ground ball to the player at second who fields it and throws it to first.

Catching Contest Tball, Rookie, First Pitch

What you need: Baseballs, gloves

How it works: Line the team up in two lines a few feet apart, facing a partner. Each pair should have one ball. Partners should throw the ball back and forth, taking one step back after each successful catch. See how many successful catches the players make (and how far apart they get).

Force Out Rookie, First Pitch**What you need:** Just the field

How it works: Explain to the players the idea behind the force out. Put a runner on first and show them that when the next batter is running, the runner on first is forced to go to second. Move the runner to second. Explain that if the runner at home is coming, that player is not forced to run since there is no one on first. Once the players understand this concept, explain a force out. If the runner is forced to run, tagging the next base will result in an out. If the runner is not being forced, the runner will need to be tagged in order to be out.

The Cutoff Man First Pitch, Minors, Majors**What you need:** Gloves, bat and balls

How it works: One player is placed at second base, one at short stop. The rest are equally divided between left and right field. The ball is hit to the right fielder. The second baseman moves towards the outfield to be the cutoff man while the shortstop covers second base. The fielder fields the ball, throws to the cutoff man, who throws to the base. When the ball is hit to the left fielder, the shortstop becomes the cutoff man while the second baseman covers the base. The fielder will field the ball, throw to the cutoff man, who will throw to the base. The coach will randomize where the ball is hit so that the fielders will have to adjust accordingly.

The Pickle First Pitch, Minors, Majors**What you need:** 2 fielders, 1 runner, gloves, and ball

How it works: A runner is trapped between second and third, it takes practice to learn how to get the runner out. The fielders need to throw the ball back and forth, working together to keep the runner in between and eventually tag the runner out.

Outfield Fly balls First Pitch, Minors, Majors**What you need:** Gloves and balls

How it works: All of the players except 2 form two lines, one in right center, one in left center. The coach stands near second base with a player on each side of him. Alternating sides, the coach throws fly balls over the heads of the fielders. The players should be running to catch the ball, not backpedaling. As the players field the balls they should throw it in to the player standing on their side of the coach. The player who catches the throw runs to the back of the opposite line and the player who made the throw takes the position next to the coach. This is a skill that takes a lot of repetition in order to learn how to judge the ball as well as how to approach it.

Second Base Out Minors, Majors

What you need: Catcher's equipment, gloves, balls

How it works: Have a pitcher, catcher, and shortstop in place, with a runner at first. Secretly tell the runner which pitch to run on. When the runner goes, the catcher must throw them out at second. This helps the catcher work on a quick release to second and a low throw, just above the pitcher's head. The shortstop should yell that the runner is going and needs to then field the ball and put the tag on the runner. The tag should be between the ground and the runner. This is a great opportunity for the runners to work on sliding as well.

Throwing Home Minors, Majors

What you need: Gloves, balls, bucket, helmet

How it works: Divide the players into 2-3 teams and place them in the outfield. Place the bucket on home plate with the helmet on top. The coach hits ground balls to the outfield. Fielders need to cleanly field the ball and come up throwing to home, trying to hit the bucket. If the player hits the bucket their team gets 1 point. If the player hits the helmet their team gets 2 points. While it is usually correct to throw to the cutoff man, there are situations where a throw directly to home is needed. Aiming for the helmet simulates aiming for the catcher's glove.

Lakota Drill Minors, Majors

What you need: Gloves, bat and balls

How it works: Players form two lines, one at second base and one at short stop. One player is placed at first base. The coach hits a ground ball to the player at short stop, who fields it and throws it to first. After making the play, the player at short stop moves to cover third base. Once the player at first base catches the ball and throws it home to the coach, he moves to the back of the line at short stop. The coach hits the ball to second base, where the player fields the ball and throws it to third. After making the play, the player at second base moves to cover first base. This drill moves quickly once the players learn the flow.

Hitting

Keeping your eye on the ball All levels

What you need: Tee, bat, balls

How it works: Place a small dot on the ball, in the middle of the side of the ball. For tball players, place the ball on the tee with the dot facing them. Have the player keep their eye on the dot as they're taking their swing. With older divisions, the player should be looking for the dot as the ball comes towards them. The dot could even be different colors to make it interesting for older players. Focusing on the dot forces the player to focus on the ball.

Hitting station Tball, Rookie

What you need: Tees, bats, waffle balls

How it works: Repetition is the key to hitting. Setting up a hitting station is a great way to make this happen. Place the tee so that the player will be hitting into fencing. It can be confusing for a tball player to face the wrong way at the backstop, so a sideline or outfield fence is preferred. Baseballs damage fencing and can bounce back at the player, so waffle balls are used instead. If the player has too many things to think about then none of it will make an impact, so correcting small things as the players take swings is the key to correcting a batting style.

Coach Says: Tball, Rookie

What you need: Nothing

How it works: This game is similar to Simon Says. Coach rapidly calls out one of five commands:

Hands: players grip an imaginary bat

Feet: players jump with feet apart facing an imaginary tee

Stance: players stand in batting position with arms raised toward rear shoulder

Squash the bug: players step, swing and rotate on the ball of their back foot

Swing and drop: players do a full swing, including dropping the "imaginary" bat

Running to 1st base Tball, Rookie

What you need: First Base

How it works: Line up the players on the backstop. One at a time the kids can do a fake swing (no bat), and run to 1st base. Have a coach standing 10 feet beyond the bag and stress the kids run thru the base and give the coach a high 5.

Base Running

Running the bases Tball

What you need: Stopwatch

How it works: Divide the players into 2 teams. Have the teams run the bases, one player at a time, beginning at home plate, running to first, second, third, back to home, and then tagging the next player in line. Time each team, the team that runs the bases the fastest wins.

Running to First All levels

What you need: Just the field

How it works: Players line up at home plate to take turns running to first base. For younger kids, the goal is to have them learn to “run through” the base, realizing that they can be faster if they tag the base and keep running than if they slow down and stop at the base. As players get older, they can work on listening to coaching and running through, running in an arc to “turn and look” to see if they should keep running to second, or to “take two” and simply tag first and keep going to second. This is a good drill for teams at every level so that coaches and players can become familiar with base running cues.

Tagging Up First Pitch, Minors, Majors

What you need: Ball

How it works: Place runners at first, second, and third base. The coach throws the ball high in the air. As the ball goes up, the runners take a couple of steps off the base. As it comes down the runners get back, tagging the base and being ready to run once the ball is caught.

Sliding form First Pitch, Minors, Majors

What you need: a large flat piece of cardboard is ideal

How it works: In the outfield grass, place the cardboard to give the players a smooth sliding surface. Players slide creating a triangle with their leg. The right leg is straight out, the left leg is tucked under with the left leg creating a triangle shape. Hands are up. Having the players hold something in their hands is helpful so they aren't injured. The player should slide more on the backside of their thigh and less on their bottom. When sliding is mastered, move to the bases and have the player stick the right foot in the base and pop up. Using the right foot allows them to face the next base that they are going to.

Catching

Blocking First Pitch, Minors, Majors

What you need: Catcher's gear, balls

How it works: The coach throws some good pitches to the catcher, randomly throwing a ball into the dirt. The goal is for the catcher to knock the ball down by getting his body in front of the ball, not just hitting it with a glove.

Pop ups First Pitch, Minors, Majors

What you need: Catcher's gear, balls

How it works: The coach lightly tosses a ball at the catcher's mask and then immediately tosses up a pop up ball for the catcher to find and catch. This helps the catcher work on reacting even when they've been hit with the ball. Young catchers may be more comfortable with tennis balls at first.

Situations

At the older levels, a portion of practice should be spent on game situations with a focus on how the fielders should move in order to react to the situation effectively. Players don't stand and watch the play unfold, several players move on every play.

Players should be placed in all positions on the field, and the coach should set up a situation and instruct the players on their reaction to it. For example, if there is a ball hit to second base, who fields it, who backs up that fielder, and who covers the base? Does the situation change if there are runners on the other bases?

Once players are comfortable with the goals, batters can be introduced so that the fielders will have to react to the situation in real time. Not knowing where the ball will be hit each time will better prepare the fielders for game situations.

Sample Practice Breakdowns

Tball, Rookie 1 hour practice

5 minutes warm up

30 minutes stations

5 minutes water break

15 minutes batting practice, players hit the ball, run, and fielders execute appropriately.

5 minutes base running and fun

First Pitch, Minors, Majors 75 minute practice

5 minutes warm up, tossing, jogging around bases

30-35 minutes 3 station drills- fly balls in outfield, grounders in infield, pitching/catching on side

10 minutes team skill – sliding, base running, bunting, etc.

20 minute game situations – players in position, runners, live ball hit by coach to work on how everyone reacts. Lots of coaching after each hit.

20-25 minutes Coach pitch batting practice. Last ball hit, player runs. Fielders execute properly when ball is hit.

Don't forget water breaks.

Preparing for Game Day

Being prepared for Game Day helps you focus on your players when you're at the game and helps the game run smoothly.

Prepare a Line Up

Plan which positions the players will be placed in for each inning.

Send out a reminder to your team about game time and location as well as a snack schedule if applicable

Confirm your umpire assignment if applicable

During the game, use the time on the bench to talk with your players about game situations. Using this time to teach fielding strategy can be very helpful.

Hold your critique for the end of the game. Pick a few key points that you will work on for the future. Do not point out a specific mistake, that only discourages and humiliates players. Instead, choose generic concepts that the whole team can improve upon.

Great Links for coaches:

Little League Coach Resource Center <http://www.littleleaguecoach.org/Home.aspx>

This is a terrific resource for coaches of all levels. It offers drills, practice plans, managing game day, pitching help, and much more.

LSO Coaches page <http://www.lakotasports.org/coaches-corner/78-lakota-sports/104-forms-documents-for-coaches> This page has information on background checks and the Coaches Code of conduct as well as other needed information.

Concussion Training <http://www.healthy.ohio.gov/vipp/concussion.aspx>

The Concussion Management Training section has all of the directions you'll need to complete the training. Please be sure to save the certificate of completion.

Coaches Code of Conduct <http://www.lakotasports.org/coaches-form-submission>