

T-Ball Coaches

Welcome to East Valley Baseball

T-Ball Division

Reality Tips

Just remember... most of these kids don't know the first thing about baseball.

Make sure that you get all the kids that keep hot wheels in there back pocket to play around and behind third base. I have seen good racing going on in that area with hot wheels and little sports cars.

Show them which way to run when they hit the ball and the basic rules of when they are out.

Fielding: the ball is a magnet to some players and yes they will actually fight over the ball. Tell them where to throw the ball and how to get an out.

Batting "order": you will need more than yourself at the dugout bench to keep order.

EVBB - T-Ball

Tee ball is a baseball game for young boys and girls. It is a way to have fun while learning how to play. Here are the quick rules:

- Players' ages are three to five.
- 9 - 12 players on a team. (most of the time)
- The ball is not pitched. It is hit off a batting tee.
- Every player bats and plays in the field.
- There are no strikeouts or walks (bases on balls).
- There is a real or imaginary *playing line* between first base and third base.
- No fielder shall cross the playing line until the ball is hit.
- The ball must be hit 10 feet or it is a foul ball.
- When the ball is hit, the batter must lay the bat or place the bat on the ground.
- Runners must stay on base until the ball is hit. There is no stealing.
- The inning is over when all players have batted once.
- Safety helmets **must** be worn when at bat or on base.
- Base path distance is 50 feet.
- An inning is over when all the players have batted once.
- Standard game is one hour (avg. four innings.)
- Scores are not kept.
- Teams may use as many base coaches as needed.
- Ball - Sof-T-Ball 9" to 9½" around; 4 to 5 ounces. Softer than a standard baseball. Molded core or sponge rubber center.
- Tee - adjustable, flexible tube on a moveable base.
- Athletic footwear must be worn.

As children play to win in other games and view competitive sports on TV, EVBB does not sanction scoring and winning until the Rookie division for the older and / or more 'mature' players (six years and up). Tee ball is positioned as a skill-building, learning experience, where the score is not the focus of the game. An inning is over after every player has batted one time.

On game day, T-Ball teams shall hold a 30-minute practice prior to their scheduled game time and then participate in a one-hour game (approx. 4 innings.)

Coaches: On offense you have the option of letting your players 'always being safe' on the bases... if you have a team that understands how to run the bases, start teaching them when and why they are out! If the players are 'experienced' enough to understand what an out is then have them leave the base and return to the bench on a legitimate out. Otherwise let them stay on the base so they learn base running. Please let the other coach know what you are going to do.

FAQ

What is the real or imaginary line for?

The line between 1st and 3rd base (or an arc 40 feet from home plate in other leagues) is to keep fielders away from where the batter hits the ball. All defensive players must be behind the line before the ball is hit. It is a safety rule. It also gives the defensive players some time to react in fielding the ball: moving up, back or to the side.

What are the ages for playing tee ball?

The recommended ages are three through seven by T-Ball USA. EVBB ages are three, four and five.

Is coach-pitch part of tee ball?

No. It is most effective when used with older players [6 years+] EVBB introduces coach-pitch in the Rookie A division.

What does "bat around" mean?

It's the playing procedure where every player on the offensive team bats one time during an inning; then, the sides switch. This is the alternative to the traditional three outs, as it insures that all the players on the team at bat participate in each inning.

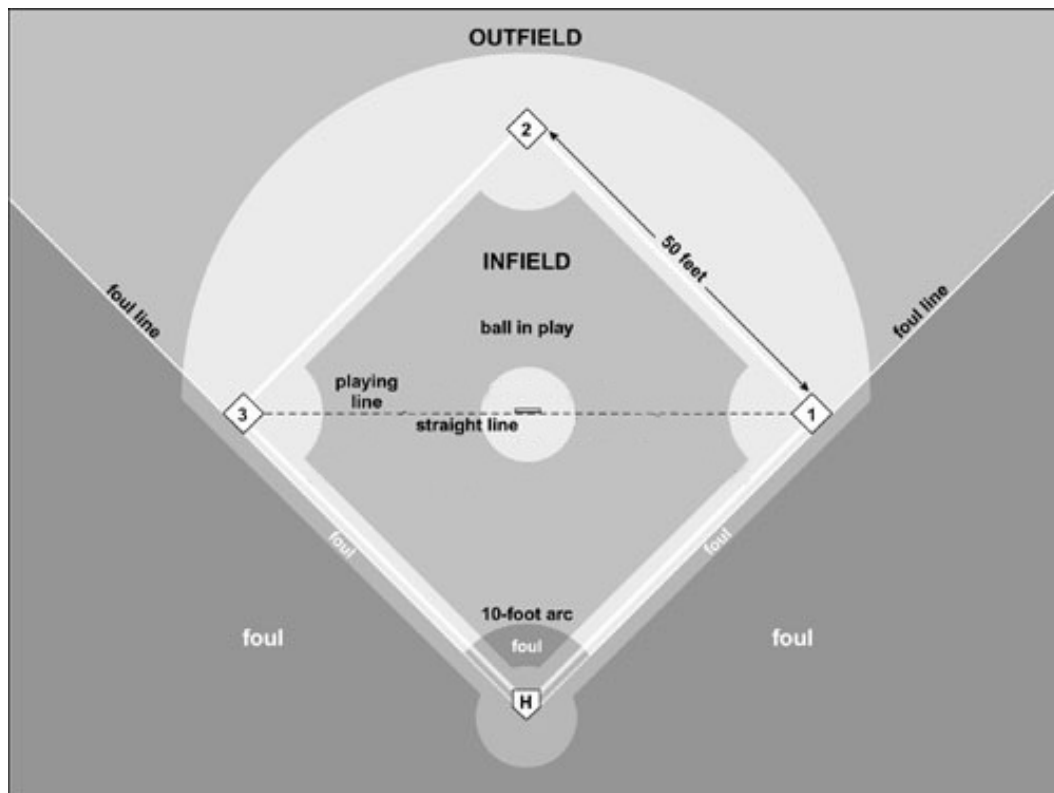
T-Ball is the entry sport to baseball and softball for young players, three to five years old. Members of two teams take turns hitting a ball off a batting tee set on home plate. Batters try to get on base and advance to home; fielders try to prevent that from happening. The elimination of pitching allows children to participate without the fear of being hit by a pitched ball. Tee ball develops the primary baseball skills of hitting, running, fielding and throwing. The players gain an understanding of the fundamental rules, which allows minimally competitive play at these age levels.

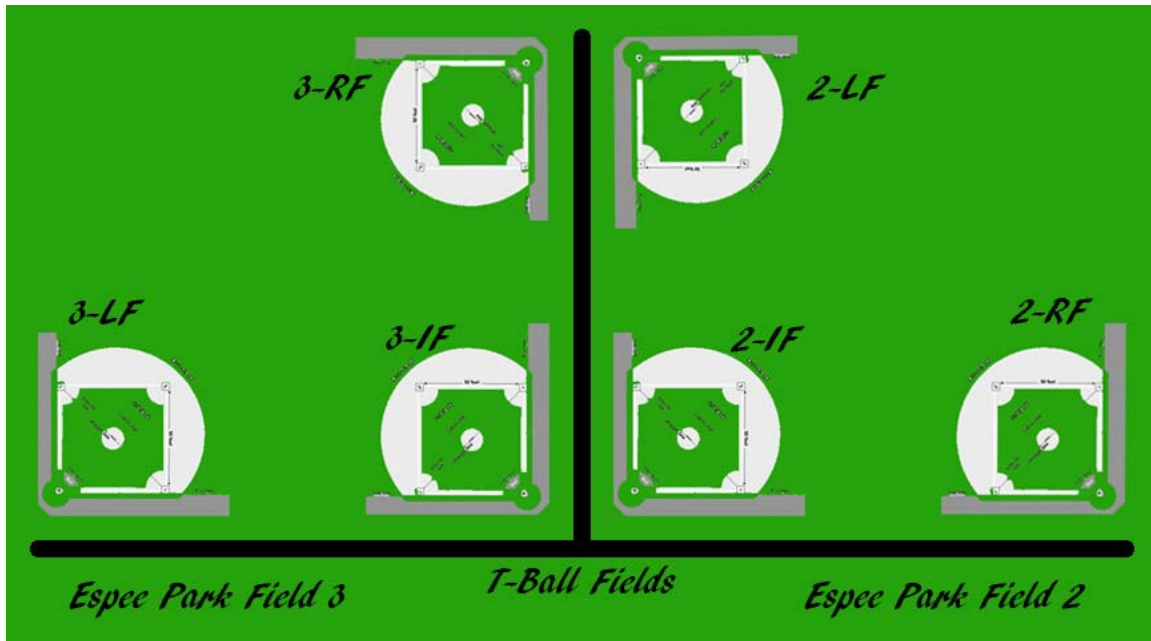
Tee ball is played in every state and territory and internationally. Participation is estimated at 2.2 million players, 65% boys and 35% girls. The sport's constituency includes organizers, directors, administrators and staff, coaches, officials, volunteers and the friends, parents and players from 18+ million American families with youngsters of tee ball age.

Baseball is one of the first team sports for most children; there is a high level of adult support and enthusiasm. Tee ball has proven to be a natural transition into standard baseball and softball. As such, it provides a steady supply of young players already equipped with the basic skills and an enthusiasm for these sports.

East Valley Baseball - T-Ball Field

- We use Fields 2 & 3 at Espee Park. Games will be assigned randomly to infield, right field, or left field.
- Identified on the schedule as: (also in the picture on the next page)
 - 2-IF = Espee field 2 infield (main field)
 - 2-RF = Espee field 2 right field
 - 2-LF = Espee field 2 left field
 - 3-IF = Espee field 3 infield (main field)
 - 3-RF = Espee field 3 right field
 - 3-LF = Espee field 3 left field
- The field of play for the "Infield field" shall be all of the dirt area.
- The field is similar to the dimensions of a youth baseball type field but with only 50 feet between the bases.
- The diamond is a square with a base at each corner first, second, and third.
- The *playing line* is an imaginary line running between first base and third base.
- Home plate is the orange five-sided rubber plate; place the batting Tee on top of this.
- The center of the pitcher's area is 38 feet from the point of home plate.
- The batter's boxes are to be 5 feet long by 3 feet wide. The batting tee is placed on home plate, 2 feet from the front edge of the boxes and 3 feet from their rear border.
- The outfield is the wide area of the playing field beyond the diamond and most distant from home plate.
- The foul lines extend from home plate past first and third bases. Fair territory is the playing field within and including the foul lines; foul territory is the area outside the foul lines.
- A foul strike area is within a drawn arc between the baselines, 10 feet out from the batting tee.





There are 3 games being played on each field. The two fields are at Espee Park. One game will be played on the main field infield and the other two games are in left field and right field. The games are on Saturday morning, with a practice one half hour before the game. Please share your practice area with the other team scheduled for your game.

There are green 'dugout' benches that need to be brought out to your field for your players to sit on (When you have a game in the outfield.) These benches are located in a cargo container outside the center field fence of field 2. Please return the benches to the container after your game. Infield games use the main field dugout benches.

When you have an outfield game, parents and fans can set up chairs and sit on the warning track and the foul territory areas. When you have a main field game, please have your parents sit outside the backstop area.

East Valley Baseball also runs HomePlate concessions with a big red trailer that will be out there every Saturday. If you have any questions or concerns this is more than likely where I'll be or you can ask the person in there that is selling snow cones! Which, by the way, is a great treat after a well played game!

Coaching T-Ball Tips and Tricks

Batting order:

Post the batting order at the dugout bench each game. Whether you change the order from week to week is up to you, just don't change it during the game. You **absolutely** need a dugout mom or dad to stay with the kids and keep them in line, keep them occupied, get them ready to hit, etc. If you have a parent who isn't really into coaching, but wants to help out, this is a great place for them. Make sure you thank them after each game, and do something special for them at the end of the season - this is the toughest job in t-ball. You'll find out soon enough. Remember, the dugout bench is a great place for them to learn to cheer on their teammates. This will help keep them occupied some of the time.

Rotating positions:

I rotated positions each inning. Some coaches prefer to rotate each game, but I think this is unfair to the kids stuck at outfield and third base. Most of the balls are hit to the middle/right of the field (pitcher, 2nd, short, 1st), so OF and 3B do a lot of standing around.

Anyway, here's how I did it. I kept a spreadsheet tally of what kids played what position in what inning. Before each game, I plan out where I want the kids for the next 3-4 innings, keeping in mind where they played the last 3-4. I kept a printout in my pocket. This way I didn't have to think about who's playing where, and I had a record to help me keep things fair. Occasionally you will have to make on the fly substitutions (due to absences, etc.), so it's not a perfect system, but you do the best you can. This may sound like I'm taking this t-ball thing way too seriously, but it makes the games go much smoother. You'll have enough going on without having to worry about who's playing where. It also shows a lot of organization to the parents of your players, this helps in retaining your team for next season, every parent wants to keep their kids on an organized well coached team!

In the field, the coaches usually stood out with the outfielders. I've seen some coaches have a parent 'shadow' each player in the field. It looked a little chaotic, but that's what worked for them.

Who you put at 1st base and pitcher is also a judgment call. I tried to make sure every kid got a chance throughout the season, but there will be a few who don't have the coordination or attention span to play these positions. My goal with these kids was to help them improve to the point that they could play pitcher and 1st base by the end of the season. 1st base is by far the toughest position. I wouldn't expect them to be able to make the catch, but they should be able to knock the ball down most of the time, and have enough coordination to protect themselves from the occasional well-thrown ball. Luckily, most of your fielders won't be accurate enough to put your first baseman in any real danger.

Practices:

The most important thing is for the kids to have fun. Standing around = no fun. I usually had at least three stations, with 3-4 kids per station. This allows you to run a practice pretty smoothly with only two assistant coaches. You'll be working on very basic stuff (especially at the beginning), so it's not necessary for your assistants to be gurus. Just make sure your coaches understand what you want them to do. Early in the season I would have my number 1 assistant (aka my wife) get the kids warmed up while I spent a few minutes with my coaches going through the different drills.

You can't expect kids to know what to do in the game if you haven't worked on it in practice. Early in the season, keep it simple:

Throwing - Feet and shoulders parallel to the target, point with the glove, throw. Keep it simple. Have them yell their partner's name before throwing. This helps them learn each other's names and reduces the number of bean-balls during warm ups.

Catching grounders - Alligator mouth, meaning use both hands. I tell the kids there's an eyeball in the palm of their glove, and they can't catch the ball unless their glove can "see" it. I did a lot of drills where I had the kids get in the ready position then shuffle back and forth. Get them moving their feet. Most kids this age want to leeeean and stretch to get the ball instead of getting in front of it, or they want to park themselves in front of it and sit or kneel down. Discourage this.

Running the bases - This ranges from learning the names of the bases, to knowing how to run them in the correct order, to being able to watch the base coaches, and follow their instruction; baby steps. Also, teach them the "ready position" on the bases. One foot on the bag, one foot towards the next base, hands on the knees, eyes on the batter. Be prepared to remind them of this frequently. When my kids ran the bases in practice, I put a fast kid in line first, let him get about halfway to the next base, then tell the next kid to try to catch him, and so forth. The slower kids get a longer head start. This way all the kids are running as fast as they can, trying to catch the kid in front of them. This is the best way I've found to get them to hustle around the bases. They also need to understand there's no passing allowed. Better they learn this in practice. Also, it's not too early to teach them to run out ground balls. I had a little girl who got so used to getting thrown out at first; she would actually stop and wait for them to throw her out, like she thought that's what was supposed to happen. She literally didn't know she was supposed to try to beat the throw because I never thought to tell her. You can't assume they know anything at that age. Luckily I caught this early and she ended up becoming one of my better base runners.

Hitting - Foot position, hands up and back, swing hard. That's all you should worry about with 3-5 year olds. You'll have to work with some of them to keep them from throwing the bat. Try not to pressure them too much to hit the ball. Some kids have a hard time hitting it off the tee, so they slow the swing way down and just tap the ball. Discourage this. Strikes don't count in t-ball, so let them swing away. I don't really care if they stride or not, as long as they seem comfortable. You can tell if the stride is messing up their timing. If this is the case, you can almost bet they're striding because their dad told them to. This puts you in a tough spot - going against dad's teaching is a slippery slope. What I did was try to minimize the stride as much as possible without eliminating it altogether, which usually helped.

Fielding - Learn the positions. Make sure they know not to stand on the base when they're in the field. Watching the runner and the fielder fight over the base is funny at first, but it gets old quick. It's an amazingly tough concept for a 3-5 year old to learn - "I'm playing second base, why wouldn't I stand on second base?" This is actually pretty important and needs to be corrected ASAP. When this goes on, it's the coach's fault, not the kids. It's not a big deal when it happens but it's a big deal when the coach doesn't step in and correct it. Sorry, it's a pet peeve of mine.

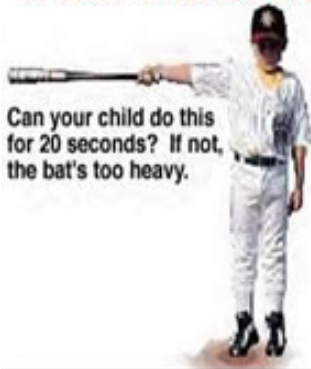
"Practice Recipe for Tee Ball Players"

1. Warm up - twice around the bases - show them to touch the inside corner of the base.
2. Stretch - count out loud to 10 as loud as they can (they seem to have fun with that -especially the girls trying to out yell the boys). They don't really have to stretch at this age but gets them used to the concept.
3. Go over the positions so they learn the name of each one. Run from position to position as a group, "Who knows what position this is?" "Who plays this position for the DBacks?", etc...I had one Kindergarten girl who answered "Gonzo" to every position - it was quite cute and the rest of the kids got a kick out of it.
4. Split into 2 groups - A & B - you can't effectively teach skills to 10-12 kids at a time.
5. Take group A and practice:
 - a.) Hit the ball, DROP THE BAT, and run to first. Twice with each kid - gives you a chance to personally critique their swing. Do this for a few practices until they get it down.
 - b.) Throwing - set up targets - I like to use the black soft plastic office trash cans from Costco - 4 for \$8. You can stack up 2 and put a bucket on top. Kids' favorite drill!! Work on the mechanics of throwing.
 - c.) Use bucket drills for catching, fielding technique, and more throwing practice. You take big bucket - kids take 2 smaller buckets. Chuck grounders or throw into mitt of each kid all the balls from the big bucket. Kids put balls into smaller bucket. The other kids retrieve missed balls and put into smaller buckets. When your bucket is empty you refill from the already collected balls in the smaller buckets and go to 2 new kids, etc...That way each kid gets 10 or more (depending on how many balls you have) reps in a row and you can correct them in between each one. Start with tennis balls for catching until you are sure that they won't hold their mitts palm up at head level (which a lot of them do) causing the ball to bounce out of their mitt and into their face. You need another adult to help keep the kids in somewhat semblance of order on this drill.
 - d.) Infield practice - the basics of infield. Start out by just making the play at first. Don't worry about the other bases until they get that down.
6. Group B does hitting and skills:
 - a.) Set up 3 tees and hit wiffle balls into a net (if you have one). You need 2-3 parents to run the tees. If parents are reticent to help here, bring some pamphlets on basic batting stance, etc... or have a quick "this is the basics of what the kids should be doing at the tee" clinic for the parents who may be interested.
 - b.) Remaining Group B kids go to "FUN" skill station - practice basic throwing, catching, or maybe pop flies.
 - c.) Kids rotate through 3 stations.
7. Switch Groups A & B after 10 minutes or so.
8. You will find the kids skills increasing after several practices. Focus on basic throwing and fielding grounders the first few practices.
9. Explain your practice format to the parents at the beginning of the first practice or team meeting. Tell them you will need X amount of parents to make this format work so the kids will have fun and not be standing around in lines.
10. Be patient, you may have to repeat something to these guys 10 times before they hear you. Have fun and NO YELLING!!
11. Hope for helpful parents!!"

Basic Baseball

Baseball basics for T-Ball

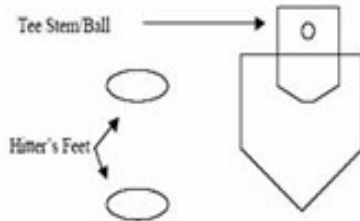
1. Bat Selection



2. Bat Grip



3. Batter's Box



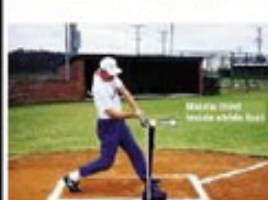
4. Stance



Important! Hands up; elbows make a triangle; feet slightly pigeon toed; bat up at 45 degree angle

5. The Swing

Side view



Front view



Important! Short stride, lead with the hands, rotate the hips, and pivot the back foot (squish the bug)



Throwing: as a right hander, lead with the left side of your body and get both arms up.

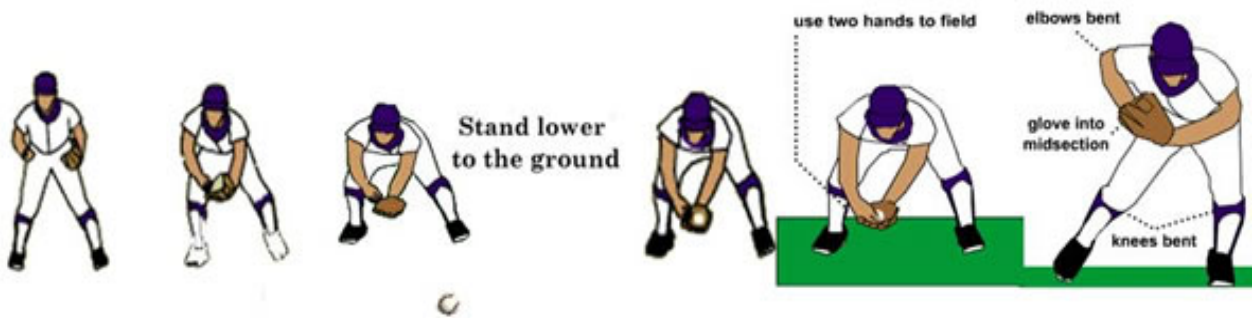


Important! Glove arm is up and grip the ball across the seams

Fielding Ready Position



Fielding a Ground Ball: bend the knees, squat down, glove down, suck the ball up



The fundamentals of baseball: hitting, throwing, fielding, and running. These are the same areas coaches work on with youth from ages 3 to age 18.

Start with the right instruction.

Then top it off with a great field to play on... (or just the one the league assigns you to play on!)

Above all, have fun, be patient, and remember you're coaching the whole team, not just your kid. 😊 Good luck!

See you on the Diamond...

~Mike