

8U coaching basics

Coaches have responsibility to set positive tone. Best to start at 1st contact.

Parent letter/ Equipment/volunteers

Safety

- Gloves should be 100% leather to ensure ability to “break in” and ultimately close the ball to catch.
- Bat must have ASA 2004 stamp (t-ball bats are clearly not “juiced” but still illegal and umpires won’t allow them in playoffs).
- How to size a bat.
 - Stand a bat up next to your child with her arms at her side. The bat should reach, but not exceed, about ½ way up her wrist. If it reaches past this area, it’s going to be too long to swing. Some prefer to use the hip as the measure, which works just as well.
 - Have your child hold the end of the bat in their non-dominant hand (a right handed hitter would hold in their left hand) and hold it up directly in front of them, horizontal to the ground. If the bat is too heavy the barrel will dip at the end rather than remaining parallel.
- Bats on the ground when not in the on-deck circle, at home plate, or swinging in the cages.
- Face masks on helmets. Chin straps now optional.
- Visors vs. Face masks on defense
 - Emphasize the benefits of face masks at this level. Especially for pitchers.
 - Masks also help inexperienced fielders have more confidence.
- Shutterfly site
 - Indispensable for communications
 - Ideal for tracking availability
- Volunteers
 - Do yourself a favor and delegate non-coaching tasks to parent helpers. Your time is more valuable on the field.

Practice time – 1.5 hour

- Throwing:
 - Safety tips:
 - Always be sure the girl being thrown to is looking and ready.
 - Be aware of different throwing and catching abilities. Pair accordingly.
 - On one knee:
 - Good “C” grip + Wrist flicks
 - Good “C” grip + Wrist flicks + Arm included
 - Good “C” grip + “Get sideways” (glove or elbow facing partner) and rotate at the waist, finishing with arm all the way through (throwing arm should end up just outside of bent knee when done)
 - Stand up and put it all together (again, focusing on good throws and have them count how many good throws they make)
 - Face perpendicular to direction of throw.
 - Step with left foot toward target.
 - Add step with right foot for long throw.
- Bases
 - Run through base
 - Round base
 - Rocker Step when on base
 - Stop on 2B (don’t run through)
 - Sliding – it is time to learn (it’s a safety issue)
 - Proper protection is helpful
 - Sliding pad in Quad Shed

- Fielding – Ground balls
 - Think of a triangle
 - Jumping position
 - Keep glove off their knees
 - Hands out in front
 - Glove in dirt
 - Capture ball with two hands (alligator)
 - Step and throw
 - Drill: Line of girls at 2B, 3 girls at 1B
 - Rotate from 2B to 1B
 - Move line to SS, then 3B
- Fielding – Fly balls:
 - Use a large and very soft ball
 - It won't hurt and requires two hands
 - Both hands should form a "W"
 - Toss gently (underhand) initially, work up to bigger
- Hitting
 - Note to coach's about pitching without arc
 - Simple swings
- Relay races

Hitting

- ****When not in a drill, the barrel of the bat should be touching the ground****
- Ideally their bat would be -12 (length -12oz, not 10oz).
- When the bat is on the ground the length should be a little above their wrist
- The less movement the better (quiet feet like Ken Griffey Jr.)
- Stay balanced
- Keep feet in a straight line on the ground (with feet in "jumping" position)
- Softball pitches rise and girls do not want a "baseball" swing with uppercut. Think Rod Carew, not Craig Counsel to keep bat level.
- Hands by the ear.
- Look at the middle of the ball.
- Little step, hips, then hands
- Keep hands inside of ball (flashlight on pitcher)

Pre-game plan:

- Warm up throws
- 3 stations:
 - Swings off tee into bownet
 - Whiffle balls (SKLZ are great)
 - Soft toss - regular balls with a bow net
- Coach tossing fly balls
- Ground balls and bring it in
- Importance of this during regular season: it is your only practice time most weeks

Game time

- Blue tape on the bench, cheers in the dugout

- Parent in dugout to keep girls ready for hitting and for fielding positions. Also help to keep girls engaged.
- Lineups should be rotational at some level, but should keep the girl's safety in mind.
 - Follow division rules about playing time
 - Goal should be to evenly distribute at bats through course of season
 - Can make more competitive as playoffs near
- Sample lineup – Have a copy for each coach, dugout coordinator, and one big one for clipboard.

	1	2	3	4	5
1 Ariana	RF	1B	SS	P	LF
2 Bella	C	LC	3B	C	1B
3 Ella	LF	C	2B	3B	C
4 Ashley	RES	2B	RC	LC	SS
5 Trinity	LC	RES	C	LF	2B
6 Saige	3B	LF	LC	SS	RES
7 Hailey	RC	3B	1B	RF	LC
8 Kate	2B	SS	LF	RC	RC
9 Aksha	SS	RC	RES	2B	RF
10 Angie	1B	RF	P	RES	P
11 Tori	P	P	RF	1B	3B

- Parents cheer, coaches coach
- Only head coach should talk to umpires about calls on the field
 - **Everybody (parent and coaches)** should treat our youth umpires with respect. And understand that they are learning too!
- Unruly parent – it happens
 - Deal with them quietly and away from girls if possible
 - Know who your board member on duty is

Additional notes:

- Can't teach everything, work on basics, and work on improving.
- Not about the scoreboard at this age:
 - learning
 - Reward unsuccessful effort.
 - Mistakes are OK
 - Progress not perfection
 - Ensure the girls are having fun and improving
- Praise – truthful and specific
- Be cognizant of non-verbal communication
- When possible, take a knee when talking with them
- Magic ratio 5:1 (positive comments: negative)
- Dad at home, coach at field
- Avoid non-teachable moments
- Get rid of negatives, tell them what you want (Not – “don't swing at a bad pitch. Instead - “Pick a good pitch”)
- Reinforce what you want
- Ignore what you don't want
- Calm, consequences, consistent
- If one of the kids is disruptive, get them involved
 - 70% of kids are auditory, 90% of coaching is auditory