



FOREST GROVE YOUTH BASEBALL

TBALL SURVIVAL TIPS

Welcome to Tee Ball!! Whether you're a seasoned veteran or this is your first experience, it is an exciting time of year. However, even people with years of playing experience often have difficulties scaling the game of baseball back to such a basic level at which 4 to 6 year olds can understand. Books and videos teaching Youth Baseball almost always assume the players have a basic skill set. Even the most enthusiastic parents at the beginning of the year can finish the year with a 'Please make it end!' attitude. Hopefully the following helps us all through a fun and successful season.

Remember the Main Goal!!!

Of course, this is the easy one. Have fun. However, the key to a successful program is getting the kids to want to play another year. The following have been designed to not only teach fundamental baseball skills, but to also keep the youngest kids interested in baseball.

Pick Up the Pace

Let's face it, baseball has some slow and boring parts which make it hard to keep a young child's attention. Keep in mind the following.....

- 1) During games, get the kids through the batting order as quickly as possible. Have one coach pitching, another near home plate helping with batting stance, putting the ball on tee, etc. and another coach/parent keeping the kids organized on the bench preparing to bat.
- 2) Keep the kids active. Work in small groups at practice. Rather than have 1 large group waiting in line to bat, divide the team into 3 or 4 smaller groups where they are all doing something different (catching, throwing, batting off of a tee, batting off a pitcher, etc). More groups means more help needed from adults. **GET THE PARENTS OFF THEIR SMARTPHONES!!!** Don't be afraid to ask the parents to participate. The majority of parents, even with no baseball experience, will be happy to come onto the field and help (you may have to do some 'coaching' of the parents).

Batting

- 1) First step – focus on the feet
 - a. Instruct the kids on where to stand in relation to home plate. Make it easy.....draw a line in the dirt for where to place their feet or even spray paint circles for where to place each foot
 - b. Toes should be facing straight ahead towards home plate. This is the easiest way to teach balance to the youngest kids (many kids will not even understand the word 'balance' at this age).
- 2) Hands
 - a. Each child will be different. Find the place where they look comfortable.
 - b. As kids get more comfortable teach them to swing hard. Reinforce the fact that it is OK to miss, it's just part of baseball.
- 3) Drills
 - a. Tee hitting
 - b. Underhand soft toss
 - c. Bubble hitting – have a parent/coach kneel in front of the player and blow bubbles and let the child try to hit them with the bat. This is not only fun but also teaches the skill of hitting a moving target.
 - d. Hitting water balloons.....because it's just fun.
 - e. To instruct players to not throw the bat after they swing, have a 'cone' or other object to show them exactly where to put the bat after they hit the ball.

Throwing and Catching

- 1) First Step – again, focus on the feet
 - a. Feet should be lined up to where they intend to throw
 - b. Knees should be slightly bent
 - c. Small step towards the target (reminder for which foot to step with.....when your hands are down at your side, the leg that your glove is touching is the foot to step with)
- 2) The skill and coordination will vary greatly at the tee ball level. Simply lining up and having the kids play catch can be extremely inefficient. Kids will spend more time chasing the ball than throwing or catching. Consider the following:
 - a. Have a target for the kids to throw at (hula hoop tied to the fence, box, bucket, etc.). The child can get many more repetitions doing this than the traditional tee ball 'throw and chase'. It also gives the child a feeling of success when they hit the target.
 - b. Catching group – have a small group line up and a parent/coach softly toss them the ball. Again, this increases repetitions. Repetitions are the key to developing hand/eye coordination.
- 3) Fun Drill – 'Free Shot at the Coach'
 - a. Using a tennis ball, have a coach turn their back to the players (who are in a single file line). The players can demonstrate what they have learned by getting a 'free shot' to hit the coach in the back with the ball. Probably one of the most popular drills you can use.

Baserunning

While there are NO Outs in tee ball, players can still learn how to run the bases (in the proper direction). A good warmup drill is to run the bases. Have each child shout the name of the base as they step on it. For more advanced groups you can teach them the meaning of 'single', 'double', 'triple' and 'home run' and have them run to the corresponding base.

Other Drills/Suggestions:

1. Assign baseball 'homework'. Have each player get a ball at home and toss the ball and catch it for 25 reps. You will be surprised at how many of the kids enjoy this and keep track of how many they can catch. The more advanced they get, the higher they can toss the ball. An easy way to develop hand/eye coordination.
2. Teaching Outs – teach the kids how to get an opposing player out by tagging them. The ball must be in the glove. Play a game of 'Baseball Tag' where 2 or 3 players have a ball and glove. The players will learn the ball must be in the glove, and to tightly squeeze the ball, in order to get another player out. To get another player Out, he/she must be tagged with the ball in the glove. The ball cannot be dropped during the tag.
3. Goalie Drill
 - a. Set up 2 cones (or gloves). The coach rolls grounders between the cones, and the player tries to stop the ball with his glove before it gets behind him, just as a hockey goalie would stop a puck. Award a 'point' each time the ball is stopped. Set a 'team goal' for points and reward a piece of candy if the team reaches the goal.