



# COACHING T-BALL/8U PLAYERS

## FEATURES OF THIS AGE GROUP

- Developing self-concept
- Learning social skills and how to interact with peers
- Starting to understand the rules of a game or sport
- Fine-muscle motor skills NOT developed
- Limited ability to react quickly to stimulus
- The primary method of learning physical skill is an repetition

## PRINCIPLES

- Focus on large muscle and simple motor skills
- Emphasize the development of confidence, self-esteem, teamwork, and cooperation
- Emphasize having fun and making 100% effort
- Focus on primary, fundamental skills
- Simplify the rules
- Focus on developing good practice/learning habits

## MENTAL PREPARATION

- Expand on the basic rules of the game
  - How to score a run
  - How to get an out
  - Start talking about force outs and tag outs
  - Fair/foul
- Focus on the importance of teamwork (usually takes two players to get an out)
- Focus on sportsmanship
  - Appreciation of opponents and officials (cheers and analogies opponents and umpires)
  - Support of teammates (no put-downs)
- Teach why and how to practice
- Introduce and practice the concept of focus
- Introduce the importance and techniques of warming up, general fitness, and nutrition
- Develop the ability to give 100%

# SOFTBALL SKILLS – PHYSICAL

**Focus on the most fundamental skills in softball:** throwing and catching the ball and running. Hitting should deal with the basic technique, focusing on the development of hand-eye coordination and ensuring bad hitting habits are not developed (e.g., swinging up.) Try to teach the whole motion of a skill. Break down the components only to correct a specific problem.

## THROWING

- Focus on “full motion” (body rotation, big “C” or “pet the dog” with the arm)
- ✓ Check the following:
  - Pivot step with the correct foot
  - The lead shoulder at the target
  - Stride foot pointing to the target
  - Elbow higher than shoulder
- Show glove to target and pull glove side elbow to the body as throwing arm moves forward towards the target
- Eyes on target - Throw at a specific target, not just towards it (e.g., at the receiver’s glove or chest)



## CATCHING A THROWN BALL

- Focus on safety and confidence (they go hand in hand)
- Work without gloves frequently (tennis ball a good options also)
- ✓ Check the following:
  - Facing the thrower (square)
  - Using both hands
  - Never point fingers at the ball (glove should always be perpendicular to the path of the ball)
  - Move to the ball, trying to catch it in the vertical centerline in front of the body

## FIELDING

- Demonstrate and practice the basic fielding “ready” position. Glove down and knees bent
- ✓ Check the following:
  - Good throwing mechanics
  - Eye following the ball into the glove (or hands)
  - Ready to field on every pitch



# SOFTBALL SKILLS – PHYSICAL

## RUNNING AND BASE RUNNING

- Practice running for speed over short distances (e.g., home to first)
- Emphasize “fast feet”(feet touching the ground for the least amount of time)
- Introduce proper sliding technique - figure 4 slide

✓ Check the following:

- Running in a straight line to the target
- Arms moving back and forth
- Arms in sync with legs
- Push with toes

## HITTING

- Focus on developing hand-eye coordination (contact rather than power) and emphasize watching the ball all the way
- Develop a desire to hit

✓ Check the following:

- Smooth swing directly to the ball (no hitches or dropping of hands)
- “Level” swing to produce line drives (avoid swinging up)



## FITNESS

- Develop flexibility skills (how to stretch)

# SOFTBALL WORKOUT

