

VBC Youth Baseball Coach's Playbook

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT AND GOALS FOR ACHIEVEMENT

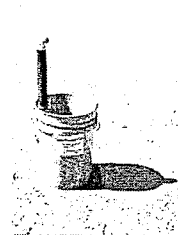
Following is a guideline for the mental, physical, and social development of the youth league baseball player. It contains goals specific to each level. The coach should incorporate these skills in designing his or her practice and game plans. Strive to teach players all of these aspects (within a level) by the end of the season. Of course, each player varies in their cognitive, physical, and social development. Some players may exceed these stages while others may need more time to comprehend the skills.

The skill sets listed below are described in much greater detail in the *VBC Complete Baseball Coach's Handbook*. You will also find **Developing Skills** videos and picture slide shows at www.VirginiaBaseballClub.com

TEE-BALL (age 5)

EQUIPMENT

- Bucket tees (at least 2)
- Lots of Safety balls (be sure to get "Level 1" safety balls - the very soft ones. Some are harder than others)
- Plenty of tennis balls, wiffle balls, sponge balls
- Velcro paddles
- Throw-down bases



SAFETY (Review with players before each practice and games – ask players what the safety rules are).



- 1) Never pick up a bat unless instructed to by the coach.
- 2) Use cones to create a designated area for on-deck where players can swing bat. or elect to not have an on-deck batter at all.
- 3) Have a parent play first base and another parent to monitor home plate area.
- 4) Have a parent monitor the dugout, keeping the batting order.
- 5) Never throw a ball to a person unless the person has a glove and is looking at you.
- 6) The on-deck batter should stay in the on-deck area when his team is at bat until the play is over.
- 7) Do not "pile-on" or grab for a ball that a teammate is fielding. (like telling dogs not to chase cats - we were most successful with this when telling the kids of this age to stay on their feet at all times when fielding the ball)
- 8) Never throw the bat after hitting, always place it on the ground (place on towel).

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MENTAL ASPECTS:

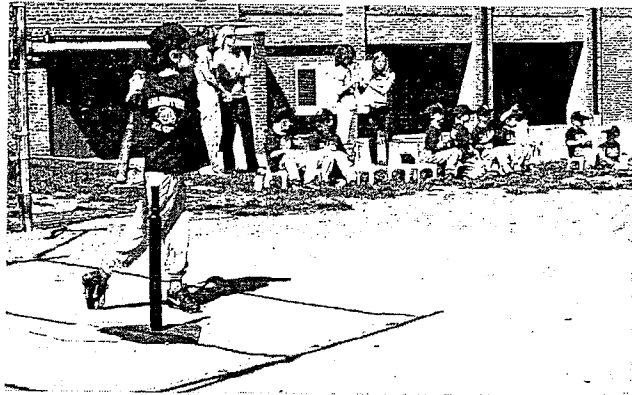
- 1) Ability to sit on bench during team at-bat, pay attention to game, cheer for teammates, and know when it is their turn to hit.
- 2) Ability to pay attention in the field and consistently see ball off bat.
- 3) Know to throw the ball to 1st base when it comes to them (or designated pitcher/parent).
- 4) Know each base by name.
- 5) Know each position by name.
- 6) Know the names of teammates and coaches.
- 7) Know the following baseball terms: foul line, fair ball, foul ball, dugout, single, double, triple, home run, on-deck.

SOCIAL ASPECTS:

- 1) Cheer for teammates when they are at bat. *Choose team captains each game to lead cheers from dugout.*
- 2) Acknowledge good plays by teammates and players on opposing team.
- 3) Shake hands with opponents after game.
- 4) Do not tease or taunt players on opposing team.
- 5) Acknowledge that they, not others, are in complete control of their actions, so do not over-react to teasing or taunting if it does occur. This should be taught at every level, that you are not a puppet for other people. Also, learn to use resilient phrases like: "That's OK, get 'em next time," "Shake it off, make the next play."
- 6) Thank coaches after practice and games.

PHYSICAL ASPECTS:

- 1) **Hitting**
 - a) Consistent stance: in relationship to home plate, wide (yet comfortable) stance. Bat at 45-degree angle.
 - b) Level swing-path through the ball.
 - c) Ability to make consistent contact.
 - d) Hold on to bat with both hands throughout swing, finish balanced with hands high.
 - e) Ability to keep balance throughout swing.
 - f) Lay down the bat after hitting (does not throw the bat)
 - g) NOTE: Coaches, make sure Tee is placed in front of the plate. Most tees are designed with the stem in the middle of the plate, which is the incorrect point of contact. Players will have much more success if the tee is placed three inches in front of their front foot before they stride to swing.



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2) **Base Running**

- a) Know the names of the bases.
- b) Run to first base after hitting the ball.
- c) When on base, run to the next base when the batter hits the ball.
- d) Know that they must step on the base before going to the next base.
- e) Know to run full speed and all the way to base. This is one that has to be worked on – seems about 5% of kids run full speed
- f) Learn to not pass runners in front of them.

3) **Fielding**

- a) Ability to catch a ball thrown by a coach from 20'-30'. (Note: players will begin to catch all balls with fingers pointed down, palm up. They will develop catching balls above the chest with finger up at around age 7 or 8, depending on how much practice they have with this).
- b) Ability to field easy ground balls – start by teaching players to move feet so that ground ball rolls between feet, then put glove to the ground.

4) **Throwing**

- a) Learn to rotate glove side shoulder to target before the throw. Start by standing sideways, instead of facing target
- b) Step toward target with glove-side foot
- c) Consistently make accurate throws from 20'-30'.

COACH PITCH (Ages 6-8)

Prior to the season review the stages of development for T-Ball (including safety). You may want to dedicate the first few practices to review. We recommend that coaches/leagues begin to teach pitching and catching to players at this age during practice. Hold special weekly practices (or pre- or post-practices) for players who would like to learn how to pitch or catch.

EQUIPMENT

- One bucket tee
- Safety balls (be sure to get "Level 1" safety balls - the soft ones. Some are harder than others).
- Plenty of tennis balls, wiffle balls, sponge balls
- Throw-down bases



SAFETY (Review with players before each practice and games – ask players what the safety rules are).

- 1) Never pick up a bat unless instructed to by the coach.
- 2) Use cones to create a designated area for on-deck where players can swing bat or elect to not have an on-deck batter at all.
- 3) Some leagues have a parent play first base to take throws
- 4) Have a parent monitor the dugout, keeping the batting order.
- 5) Never throw a ball to a person unless the person has a glove and is looking at you.