# Practice Plans and Drills

designed for H League – Instructional Tee Ball




LeRoy Youth Softball League H
2012

## *Coaching Tips*:

**1.Prepare for practice before you arrive to the baseball field.** Once you arrive at the practice location, you will be bombarded with kids, parents, other coaches, along with the task of setting up. Once you arrive, you will not have time to prepare activities, drills, etc.

**2.Be clear of the goals and expectations of the day and season.** Coaches quite often will assume that every player understands what they are supposed to do, and how they're supposed to act. Be sure to state the plans for the day and expectations as practice starts. This is also important to address at the beginning of the season when addressing the coaches, players and parents.

**3.Ask for help.** Be sure to invite others to be assistant coaches. This will be valuable for practices and games. The players will enjoy there experience and will get better instruction, if they can split up into small groups to run the drills. I recommend having a total of 4 coaches. One head coach and 3 committed assistant coaches.

**4.Keep the practice moving.** Many coaches like to talk (too much). Depending upon the age group kids typically have a short attention span and will lose interest. Be prepared to quickly explain the drill and then get it started. The more the kids are moving to various stations, the less likely you'll have to deal with other issues.

**5.Focus on the fundamentals.** Always keep player development at the top of the priority list. Many coaches play to win, and often forget they have 12 kids on the team. If you work to develop every kid by the end of the year your team will be better prepared than others. If each player leaves the season better than when they arrived, you have succeeded.

**6.Encourage effort.** Practice is practice. The kids are going to make many mistakes, some more than others. The players will be trying new things and advancing in there development at different paces. The one thing they can all be good at is EFFORT. This will instill confidence in the players and provide them with a base for getting better.

**7.Don't worry about the small things.** Kids will be kids.. There is nothing you or I will do to ever change that. There should be certain guidelines for conduct, but kids being kids is going to happen. Set basic guideline, and reinforce during practice.

**8.Coaches are there for the kids, the kids aren't there for the coaches.** If you missed your chance to play pro ball, coaching youth baseball is not the replacement.

**9.Coaches are role models**. Remember to always talk positive about players, parents, other teams, and coaches. Kids look up to the coach, so it's important to provide them with a positive image. What we say, how we say it, and how we act can leave a lasting impression on a young player. Always be positive, even on those days that seem most challenging.

**10.Have Fun!** Coaching kids should be enjoyable. Try to have fun, and keeps the season in perspective.

## Practice Plans #1 –(based on 60 minute practice).

**10 minutes**–Warm Up –it is important to start each practice with a warm up. This provides the foundation for an organized practice and gets the players prepared to start the day.

- ❑ Spread out with enough room to do an exercise.
- ❑ Lite stretching exercises –touch touches, hip rotations, arm circles, etc.
- ❑ Calisthenics exercises –jumping jacks, high knees, etc
- ❑ Lite jog around the baseball field to conclude

**27 minutes**–Station Drills (focused on the fundamentals)

- ❑ Divide the team into three groups (if possible). Rotate every 9 minutes.
- ❑ Station 1 -Hitting (see list of drills)
- ❑ Station 2 -Fielding -Infield/Outfield (see list of drills)
    - ❑ The practices should focus on fielding and where to throw the ball IE: 1st base on infield, 2nd base on outfield grass
    - ❑ After a couple practices introduce the outfield, and start to combine infield and outfield into practice (i.e. throwing to 2nd base when the ball makes in into the outfield grass
- ❑ Station 3 –Throwing/Catching (see list of drills)

**3 minutes -**Water break
**20 minutes**–Batting & Infield Practice

- ❑ Team takes the field in various position
- ❑ 3 pitches per player, 3 balls on the tee –run on final ball.
- ❑ Rotate players in to bat. Recommendation -3 players batting (remainder in the field).
- ❑ Although this is batting practice, the fielders should be taught the make the correct play on the batted ball

**End**-Water break/closing comments

## The Basics of Tee Ball

**Learning the Positions:**

- ❑ Walk each player to their position
- ❑ Start with 1st Base, 2nd Base, Short Stop, 3rd Base, Pitcher, and Catcher
- ❑ Discuss important points of each position.
- ❑ Communicate name of each base and position
- ❑ Where the actual position stands in relation to the base
- ❑ Area to cover when ball is hit.
- ❑ Boundaries to cover
- ❑ Over emphasis to only cover their area.
- ❑ Important factors to teach as the year progress
- ❑ What to do if ball is hit to their position. (Assume the play is throw to first base –other situations will come later)
- ❑ What to do if the ball is “not” hit to the player. What do they do? Where should they go?
- ❑ Importance of always paying attention to the batters and runners
- ❑ Return back to position after each play.
- ❑ Where to go when runners are running
- ❑ When to hold the ball

**Discuss the basic concept of baseball:**

- ❑ Team on Defense –Team in the field
- ❑ Objective is to stop the batting team from scoring runs.
- ❑ Various ways to get outs
- ❑ Team on Offense –Team batting
- ❑ Objective is to hit the ball so the defense can’t get

- ❑ Get to the bases before the defense gets you out
- ❑ Importance to running fast to the bases, and staying on the base
- ❑ Review basic rules (including local league rules) that are specific to your league

## Fielding Technique and Practice Drills

**Proper stance:**

- ❑ Feet shoulder width apart
- ❑ Knees bent -weight should be forward on the balls of feet
- ❑ Their head is up facing the ball.
- ❑ Keep eyes on the ball until ball is in the glove.

**Proper glove/hand position:**

- ❑ Glove hand should just be touching the dirt at a 45 degree angle.
- ❑ Throwing hand should be above the glove with the palm facing the ball.
- ❑ Once the ball reaches the glove the top hand should cover the ball inside the glove.

**Infield Grounder Drills**
**Basic Grounder Drills**

- ❑ Form one line just behind shortstop position
- ❑ Have one player at a time step up into the SS position.
- ❑ Roll grounders to the player and have them field ball and throw back to you.
- ❑ Emphasis the importance of proper stance, keeping glove on the ground, and making a quick but accurate throw back.

**Side to Side Grounder Drills**

- ❑ Same as Basic but roll the balls left and right of the player to make him move to get in front of the ball.
- ❑ Emphasis the importance of moving to get in front of the ball instead of reaching out with the glove.

**Hands Drills**

- ❑ Put the glove down and have the kids field the ball with their bare hands
- ❑ Roll the ball them have them focus on using their hands to get the ball
- ❑ Using a softer ball or tennis ball usual works great

**Alligator Drill**

- ❑ Roll grounders to the kids and have them make an alligator out of the arms.
- ❑ Bottom arm with glove is the jaw and the top arm without glove is the head.
- ❑ When the ball rolls in have them the act like the alligator is biting or eating the ball.
- ❑ Both arms come together.

**Triangle Drill**

- ❑ With 2-4 player have them form a quarter circle.
- ❑ Each player should stand with their feet just outside shoulder width.
- ❑ In the dirt draw a triangle using their feet as the base.
- ❑ Have them put their hands together and extend out in front of them touching the dirt. This will create the triangle.
- ❑ You roll a ball to each player and have them field the ball and toss back to you. Keeping the triangle intact (feet in place with hands in front)
- ❑ Attempt to roll the ball quickly and request a quick return.
- ❑ Continue around the group for about 5 minutes.
- ❑ Finish with everybody fielding correctly and throwing correctly.
- ❑ Speed this drill up as the players advance.
- ❑ Note: You can play a game to see which players fields the most correctly.

## Throwing Technique and Practice Drill

**Proper Throwing Motion**

- ❑ Players start by facing the target.
- ❑ The foot of the glove hand should be closer to the target with the foot of the throwing hand back in the stance.
- ❑ Reach back with the throwing hand with elbow bent hand up and wrist straight.
- ❑ Glove hand should be in front of the body (and move forward around the body as the ball is thrown).
- ❑ Once in position to throw the ball the glove hand foot should take a step toward the target and the back foot should pivot.

- ❑ Release the ball at the point the arm reaches extended point.

- ❑ After release the body should bend forward, with the throwing arm following through to the outside of the glove hand knee. The back foot should step forward as the throw is complete leaving players square to the target.

- ❑ It is real important that the player sees the target, gets into proper throwing position, makes the throw toward the target while still keeping eyes on target, then continues with follow through.

**Proper Form Drill**

- ❑ Without a ball –have the players get into throwing position and talk them through each step.

- ❑ Repeat with the ball. Do not be to concern where the ball goes. During this drill the form is most important

**Throwing Drill #1 –Helmet Drill**

- ❑ Use a basic grounder drill, but set up a t-ball T with a helmet on it. Once the player fields the ball have them make a solid throw to hit the helmet.

- ❑ The helmet is used because it gives the player a small target at their level which helps with their accuracy.

**Throwing Drill #2 –Kids Throwing to Coaches**

- ❑ Get a bucket of ten balls and have the player stand with the bucket

- ❑ Start at 10 feet away and have the players throw all tens balls to the coach. The coach should reinforce the proper technique during this drill. The goal is get the player to throw a straight ball toward the coach.

- ❑ In order or importance. Technique, on target versus left or right, straight versus lobbed. Eyes on target is very important

- ❑ Extend the distance based on skill level

**Throwing Drill #3 –Kids Throwing To Kids**

- ❑ This is a great drill to do as the players improve. This provides them with experience both catching and throwing the ball from other players.

- ❑ Have the players start at distances which they can be successful. 10 feet away is a good starting point

- ❑ Tennis balls work well when starting

**Throwing Drill #4 –Fielding Grounders and Throwing**

- ❑ Line up a small group of players facing the coach –pick a distance that is suitable for the group

- ❑ One at a time have the players receive a grounder and stand up and make a proper throw.
- ❑ Roll 3 balls to the player before rotating
- ❑ The player should work on the proper technique while throwing.
- ❑ Extend the distance as the players improve
- ❑ Increase the pace of the drill as players improve

## Batting Technique Basics

### Proper Stance

- ❑ Feet -shoulder width apart,
- ❑ Square the feet to home plate –you can draw a line in the dirt to show the players where to stand
- ❑ Bend the knees slightly
- ❑ Grip the bat with the fingers, not tightly with the palm of hand. A relaxed grip is preferred
- ❑ Square the shoulders to the feet, chin should be closer to the front shoulder.
- ❑ Elbows should be slightly bent with the hands just outside the back armpit.

### Proper Swing Motion

- ❑ Load and transfer -Begin the swing with a little to no step toward the pitcher. Do not pick the foot up high. It's a very subtle lift and move forward.
- ❑ The stance should remain closed –do not step out towards third.
- ❑ Throw hands toward the ball, bringing bat through the hitting zone to hit the ball.
- ❑ Squash the bug. As the hands come through, turn hips at the same time. The player should turn on the ball of back foot. Squashing the bug
- ❑ Eyes should remain on the ball through impact.
- ❑ Proper stance and swing should be balanced.

### Hitting From the "T"

- ❑ Tee should be belt high

- ❑ Kids should not hit up on the ball
- ❑ Hit through the ball –driving the ball toward the pitchers feet

**Fence Drill**

- ❑ Place T Ball stand 4’ from the back stop
- ❑ Line up players so they would hit the ball into the back stop
- ❑ Place a ball onto a tee ball T
- ❑ Have the batter drive the ball into straight into the fence
- ❑ Focus on fundamentals of the swing
- ❑ Good stance, proper hand position, good swing through contact and correct finish
- ❑ You can use wiffle balls or tennis balls
- ❑ Set up 2 or 3 stations to allow multiple batters at once

**Dot on the Ball**

- ❑ Draw a DOT on the ball about the size of a quarter
- ❑ Place the ball on the T so that the DOT is pointing straight back but visible by player
- ❑ The player should be able to see the DOT on the ball
- ❑ When batting have the player focus on hitting the DOT while driving the ball forward
- ❑ This drill can be done either facing a face or in the standard baseball field

**Directional Hitting**

- ❑ This drill is done in the baseball field
- ❑ Once the players have progressed and are making good swings direction is the next step
- ❑ Have the player line up to the plate (T) with proper stance
- ❑ Provide the batter with a direction to hit the ball –3rdbase, 1stbase, etc
- ❑ Make sure they rotate their body around the plate and square their hips and should to the direction they are hitting

- ❑ Have the player hit to each position once before rotating

**The Cone Contest**

- ❑ Game/Contest to help improve batting while having FUN!
- ❑ Place 4 cones at 4 different positions in the field
- ❑ First Cone –At just in front of the pitchers mound –1 Point
- ❑ Second Cone –At the front grass just before the dirt in the infield –2 Points
- ❑ Third Cone –At the back of the infield dirt –3 Points
- ❑ Fourth Cone -Ten yards past the Third Cone. -4 Points
- ❑ Each player gets 4 hits and records their score based on the point system.
- ❑ The player with the highest total wins
- ❑ This can also be played in a team format -record points from each player –use team total to declare winner

**Batting / Infield Practice**

- ❑ Each player takes a position on the field –with remain players going to bat –need 4 batters
- ❑ One batter makes 4 hits –on the fourth hit the batter will run to first.
- ❑ Next batter comes up and completes his/her at bats and runs to first (player at first runs to second)
- ❑ Continue with the batters until the first batter comes in to home
- ❑ Once complete the batter which just came home will rotate into the infield at pitcher. The pitcher will move to first base, first to second, second to short, short to third, third to LF, LF to C, C to RF and RF into the batting lineup.
- ❑ These drills gives all the players a chance to bat and play a different position

## Catching Technique and Drills

**Proper Catching Position**

- ❑ Players start by facing the target.
- ❑ The foot of the glove hand should be closer to the target with the foot of the throwing hand back in the stance.
- ❑ The glove hand should be eye level and out in front of the body.

- ❑ Fingers up and palm facing the target
- ❑ Elbow should be bent slightly and arm should be in position to make a full circle in front of the body
- ❑ Other hand should also up and close the glove to close the glove once caught
- ❑ Earlier stages of Tee Ball the player will want to catch the ball with the palm up and fingers down this ok as they develop.
- ❑ The goal is to practice with the palm face the target
- ❑ Balls thrown to players above the belly should be caught with fingers up, below the belly fingers down.

**Proper Form Drill**

- ❑ Without a ball –have the players get into catching position and talk them through each step.
- ❑ Show the players by making a full circle in front of your body with your catching hand
- ❑ Have the players copy you.

**Coach to Player Catch**

- ❑ With younger players it is important to start slowly with catching. Confidence is key to the kids developing into good catching players
- ❑ Have player stand in the proper stance about 10 feet from the coach
- ❑ Line up 2 or 3 players per coach.
- ❑ Coach throws ball at the glove and the player is asked to watch the ball into the glove
- ❑ With a successful throw and catch –plenty of congratulations is needed. Encourage the players.
- ❑ Important for coach to throw accurately. Tennis ball can also be used.

**Soft Toss Catch**

- ❑ Players start by facing the target with out a glove.
- ❑ Coach softly toss a ball to player which attempts to catch with bare hands
- ❑ The player should attempt to catch with two hands away from the body
- ❑ Fingers up and palm facing the target
- ❑ This drill is done at close distances

- ❑ After a few successful tosses and catches, conclude this drill with a grove on.
- ❑ Encourage player to catch as they did without the glove
- ❑ Drill can also be done with a tennis ball

## Base Running

### Base Running –Home to First

- ❑ Runners should learn to run as fast as they can when running from home to first.
- ❑ They can over run the base and should turn toward the fence when returning to first
- ❑ Players should learn to run through the base
- ❑ The should not slide –no matter what the circumstances are.
- ❑ Players should be taught to touch the bag every time.

**Runner to First Base for a Single**

- ❑ Line up the players at home plate
- ❑ With a bat (no ball) have the players take a swing and run to first
- ❑ Make sure they do not throw the bat
- ❑ The should place the bat down and run as fast at they can to first base
- ❑ Make sure they run through the base and return to first properly.

**Runner to Second for a Double**

- ❑ Line up the players at home plate
- ❑ With a bat (no ball) have the players take a swing and run to first
- ❑ Coach at first base will instruct player to turn and run to second
- ❑ Player should start to angle outside the runner lane so they can properly turn to second without slowing
- ❑ Make sure to step on base at first
- ❑ Player may slide or stop on second base.

- ❑ Make sure they do not run through base.

**First to Third Base**

- ❑ Runners leaving first base should start to look at the third base coach at 2/3's the way to second.
- ❑ The coach will indicate to stop (hands up) or continue to third (large circles with arm.
- ❑ Players will need to learn to look for coach and react accordingly

**First to Third Base Drill**

- ❑ Line up the players at first base
- ❑ Coach at home plate with hit ball into field
- ❑ Runner should start toward second and begin to look at third base coach
- ❑ Coach will use either command and runner will react accordingly
- ❑ Continue to run players around to home using same concept.
- ❑ Player will return to first base and get back in line to run again.
- ❑ Coaches will work to ensure players understand the signals and are executing accordingly

## Equipment

*All equipment (bats, helmets, gloves, balls, etc) MUST be kept outside the fenced practice swing area to avoid injury.

## Goals and Objectives:

Familiarize players with the game of baseball
- Where to Run, Run on contact, Bases & Positions

Teach them basic fundamentals on Positions, Hitting, Catching, Base Running
Teach them the proper way to hold the bat with their hands
- Line-up Knuckles, Hans Touching, Etc.

Teach them the proper way to swing
- Back Elbow up, Hands just above shoulder, Swing thru the ball, hands first then arms