



Methuen West Baseball **Beginners Scrimmage Outline and Rules**

This will guide coaches as to what is expected of them during the first 2 weeks of the season when we have only scrimmages scheduled.

You should plan for about a 1 _ hours to 2 hours for each Practice-Scrimmage session.

Part 1: Structured Practice / Clinic

The first part should be broken up into 3 -4 stations. You should spend anywhere between 15-20 min per station.

Part 2: Instructional Scrimmage

The second part is an actual scrimmage where the coaches are allowed to stop play and let kids know what the right thing to do is in certain situations.

If coaches would like help in setting up the first set of stations, please see a board member. We can have someone come down and help you out.

These sessions were created so that coaches can have some additional time to help instruct the children on proper mechanics. This is the age level where focus on fundamentals is key. If they learn how to throw, field and bat properly at this age, the game will be more fun for them. If they do not learn at this age, correcting mechanics becomes much harder as they mature.

Prior to this, the children were 'rushed' into games without enough practice time or instructional time on proper techniques. This age level is critical. What they learn here will impact their growth dramatically. The scrimmage gives coaches time to instruct while playing so kids can learn the game.

STATIONS

The Head Coach for the team identified as Home Team in the schedule is responsible for dividing up the teams (mix kids from each team at each station), deciding what stations to have and how many, and assigning coaches from both teams to the run each station.

Suggested Options for Stations (you may have your own favorites)

Hitting:

You can use the area behind the backstops – or just in front of the backstops.

Focus first on proper mechanics. Watch for positioning of elbows, try to keep them from 'sweeping'. Have them focus on driving the butt of the bat through the strike zone. Watch their feet and teach them to squish the bug without 'over-striding' or dropping down. This is the age to teach the right mechanics. It is very hard to correct as they get older.

Make sure that they hold the bat lightly and don't squeeze – they should tighten only at the point of impact with the ball. Many kids think holding tight will have them hit it harder and it creates the opposite affect.

After focusing on mechanics – you can side toss to them and have them hit into the fence. This frees up the field for other activities.

Throwing:

1 Knee Drill - break down the throwing motion into sections – and then have them put it all together

Make sure they hold the ball across the seams lightly and don't choke the ball too hard

Make sure the kids aim with the glove hand to the target

Make sure that they can see their fingers when they look back
(should see their fingers holding up a number 2)

Make sure they follow through with the throw over their thigh
(As you have kids opposite each other – you can also teach the kids how to set up a target and catch with 2 hands)

Standing up to each other

Then have them stand up – throw to each other focusing on stepping to the target and finishing the throw

As the time is about to end – have them throw to each other and eliminate the team that drops the ball. After every catch have them take 1 step back and throw again.

Infield:

Have the kids line up in the field without their glove.

Show them the proper position to field a ball (hands in front – form a triangle – keep the butt out)

Teach them to start with hands out wide and as the ball rolls to them to form an alligator

With gloves off – roll the ball and have them field it without their gloves
Watch for the hands to come together in an alligator.

After going through this a round or two – teach them to bring the ball up into the chest after catching – have them hold for 3 seconds so they can focus on it - do a round or two.

Then add them popping up from the ball-in-chest position to full throwing position.

Then have them put it all together with the gloves on – hit them grounders
To field and throw back to your catcher

You can have them do a round-robin – put a child at first base. Have them line up by third. Hit them a grounder throwing to first. Have them run to short and field a ball, run to second field a ball. They then replace the first baseman to field a ball. First baseman goes to the back of the line at third and the player who just ran the field stays at first. (keeps them moving and you can see arm strength)

Outfield:

The reality is – they won't catch many fly balls in the outfield – but you can use this space to do this drill.

Regardless, they need to learn how to catch fly balls in the infield anyways!

You can focus on a few things here:

- 1 – how to field a ground ball into the outfield so it doesn't go by them. (Down on 1 knee – chest up – glove to the ground)
- 2 – how to catch a fly ball – two hands – get under the ball
- 3 – how to run to a spot (a little more advanced)

Mid-season you can focus during your practices on the cut-off –

During the first 2 weeks this is a bit advanced.

If you have tennis balls and a racket – it is preferred – many don't and so you should try to throw it to them. (again, later in the season – you can have them focus on hitting it to them when you are more sure about the various talent levels you have.

Pitching / Catching:

A separate station could be held to the side to determine which children have the ability to pitch and which ones might like to catch.

Teach the pitchers to follow through so that they don't hurt their arms.

Early on, you are looking to help them with mechanics – but mostly are looking for those who can throw accurately so that you can help them with the mechanics.

For catchers, help teach them to drop down, don't EVER turn your head as it is how you could get hurt. Even toss the ball into the mask so that they gain confidence in it. Show them how to block balls in the dirt by turning their glove down. Also, they should keep their throwing hand behind their back so as to not take a foul ball off it.

Running:

One thing you can do at the start or end of the scrimmage is to have all the kids run the bases. If you have time, teach them to watch for the third base coach's signs. Otherwise, as 1 kid gets to first – send the next one. Most kids just love to run it and it is a good way to get them going!

The above are just thoughts for you to think about. In the end, the focus should be on learning the basics and the fundamentals. This is really the age where it can make a difference.

Guidelines for Scrimmage Games

1. The rules during game play are the same as Little League Rules and the Home Rules. Little League rules provide the baseline – Home Rules take precedence where we have identified specific rules that override.
2. The Head Coach from the HOME team is responsible for having one of his coaches do the Balls/Strikes. This can be done from behind the pitcher.
3. The Head Coach from the AWAY team is responsible for having one of his coaches handle umpiring of the base-paths.
4. During the first week of scrimmages – coaches should pitch. (Coaches pitch to their own team.)
5. During the second week of scrimmages – kids should pitch. A different player should pitch each inning. The goal is to use this time to develop pitching.
6. Walks are not allowed. During the second week – when the pitcher gets to 4 balls on a batter – a coach from the team at bat should step in and finish that batter. You do not need to remove the pitcher. This just allows you to get more activity in vs. watching ball after ball be thrown.
7. For scrimmages, play swinging strikes only (no called strikes). It helps to keep the ball in play, or at least get the kids to strike out swinging. Coaches should remind the kids that in the near future they will need to swing at that pitch. It keeps kids from punching out on 3 pitches and encourages them to swing the bat.
8. Any coach is allowed to call “time” at any time to instruct a player or the team. Again, the goal here is to try to teach the children game situations. You can let them know what base to throw to, instruct them on what base they should have thrown to, correct something in their mechanics, or help them to figure out how to back each other up on throws. We added these two weeks in this format so that we can give the coaches an opportunity to really do active instruction.