

Tee Ball Program

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| August 20Sanford Youth Sports |



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# Program Overview

## Introduction

Sanford Youth Sports’s vision is to create a pipeline for varsity baseball and softball. A big part of this is creating a safe, fun, enjoyable program in which participants can gain sportsmanship, baseball and softball ability, and interest in advancing in within the sport. To that end, SYL believes that “It Start with Tee Ball.”

Our tee ball program is viewed as a learning and developmental program. Safety, Fun, and Learning are our top priorities. Our goal is to have the participants grow their ability, confidence, and knowledge throughout the course of the season in a fashion that creates an interest in the sport for years to come.

## Coaches Expectations

First and foremost, we thank you for volunteering your time and commitment to SYL and to the young players. For many, you will create the first impressions of the SYL Program and baseball / softball as a sport.

* Tee ball is a developmental division. It is expected that you will develop all participants to the best of your (and their) abilities.
* Conduct a parent and player meeting at the beginning of the season to set expectations.
* Follow the practice and game formats outlined in this document. These formats are designed to keep the participants engaged and learning at each practice and each game.
* Complete a player evaluation for each player at the conclusion of the season.
* Reach out to the division representative or SYL Board with questions or concerns as they arise.

## Player Expectations

* All players should learn the safety of the game. When and where to swing a bat safely. Being in a ready position in the field or when executing throwing, fielding, catching drills, etc.
* All players should be introduced to good sportsmanship. They will line up properly at the end of each game to shake hands. They should be aware of how to use positive encouragement with their teammates.

Upon Completion of the tee ball season all players should:

* Be able to identify the bases by name.
* Be able to run the bases in order.
* Know where to stand in the batter’s box.
* Have a proper hitting stance.
* Be able to hit off a tee.
* Demonstrate the proper form ready position.
* Demonstrate the proper form for fielding, throwing, catching (e.g. underhand glove for a grounder instead of overhand).
* Understand the concept of making an out (batter or runner).
* Running hard through first base.

Players who will transition to Coach Pitch in the following season players should:

* Hit from a coach pitching.
* Understand rounding first base.
* Take direction from first-base coach and third-base coach before and during a play.
* Understand the concept of “tagging up.”

# Program Schedule

The Sanford Youth Sports tee ball program will run a total of eight weeks. The team will gather twice per week. The first part of the program will focus on practicing, the latter part of the program will focus on playing the game, and the bulk of the program will be a combination of practicing and playing.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |
| Week 1 | Practice | Practice |
| Week 2 | Practice | Practice |
| Week 3 | Practice | Game |
| Week 4 | Practice | Game |
| Week 5 | Practice | Game |
| Week 6 | Practice | Game |
| Week 7 | Game | Game |
| Week 8 | Game | Game |

# Player Evaluation Process

Player evaluations at the tee ball level will serve as the player baseline for future SYL participation. This will give coaches in the following seasons an indication of areas of strength as well as areas of potential development.

* Because tee ball is the first experience for many of the participants, evaluations should be conducted at the end of the season rather than the beginning.
* An evaluation must be completed for each player and returned to the Tee Ball Rep and the conclusion of the season.
* The evaluation shall consist of a scoring of the player’s ability to throw, field, catch, and hit.
* A formal “evaluation practice / date” is not required. Coached should be able to assess as a result of the season of practices and games.

Below is an example evaluation based on the evaluation form found in the Appendix.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Player Info | Throwing | Catching | Fielding | Hitting | Comments |
| NameJohn SmithBats: R or LThrows: R or L | Mechanics1 2 3 4 5Strength1 2 3 4 5Accuracy1 2 3 4 5 | Mechanics1 2 3 4 5Confidence1 2 3 4 5 | Mechanics1 2 3 4 5Confidence1 2 3 4 5 | Mechanics1 2 3 4 5Contact1 2 3 4 5Confidence1 2 3 4 5 | Good fielder (grounders and “fly balls”). Very accurate throwing. Good hitting off the tee. Loses confidence with coach pitching. |


# Practice Format

Practices should be kept to roughly 1 hour as tee ballers attention spans are not all that long. The players will learn more and retain more by keeping the practices fun and engaging.

**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.
* Light stretching exercises – touch touches, hip rotations, arm circles, etc.
* Calisthenics exercises – jumping jacks, high knees, etc.
* Light 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 first couple practices should be focus on infield only. After a couple practices introduce the outfield, and start to combine infield and outfield into practice (i.e. throwing to 2nd base, backing up 1st base, etc.)
* Station 3 – Throwing/Catching (see list of drills)

 **3 minutes - Water break**

**20 minutes – Batting & Infield Practice**

Team takes the field in various position.

* 10 pitches per player – 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 batted ball

 **End - Closing comments**

# Game Format

The purpose of the tee ball game is transfer practiced skills to real game situations in a safe, fun, and learning-enabled environment.

## Overview

SYL tee ball games are limited to 4 innings or 1 hour and 15 minutes, whichever comes first. No inning shall be started after 1 hour from start of the first inning. Any inning not completed at the 1 hour mark will be completed so that each batter on both teams gets the same number of opportunities. This means some games may only last 2 or 3 innings.

## Coach Pitching

* Coach pitching shall be allowed only in weeks 7 and 8.
* Each batter will get 3 pitches to hit the ball. If the batter does not hit the ball, the tee is to be used.
* Coaches shall use discretion to determine if a batter is able to hit without a tee. If a batter is not ready for coaches pitching (often first year tee ball players), a tee may be used immediately.
* Pitch overhand for boys and pitch underhand for girls. Pitch from your knee / sitting on a bucket so that the ball stays at the players level throughout the pitch.

## Offensive Play

* Each player will get one at bat per inning.
* If the ball is hit to the grass (outfield) the batter may advance to first and second base on the same play. This will aid batters in learning how “run bases” with base coach instruction.
* Base runners may advance 2 bases during a single play. For example, if a runner is on first base, and the ball is hit the runner may advance to second as well as third base. This aids the runners in learning to run bases and focus on the base coach.
* No stealing is allowed.
* If the batter / runner is out due to a defensive play, the batter / runner must leave the field.
* Offensive Play ends when the last batter hits the ball.
* Batting order should be rotated each inning.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Inning | Lead-off Batter | Last Batter |
| 1,3 | Batter #1 | Last Batter On Team |
| 2,4 | Last Batter on Team | Batter #1 |

## Defensive Play

* Fielders should attempt to make an out. If an out is made, the batter / runner must leave the field of play.
* Rotating players during the inning on defense is a great way to keep them engaged. An effective way to do this is to divide the playing ﬁeld into 2 or 3 zones, assigning a coach to each zone, and rotating players within each zone after every batter (or after a predetermined number of batters). The following sample defensive rotation divides the ﬁeld into 3 zones and ensures that every player gets to play an inﬁeld and outﬁeld position every inning.
* The catcher should stay in position for the entire inning due to the need to wear catcher’s equipment.



# Practice Drills

## Fielding Technique

 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.

Plays at First - Grounder Drills Form one line just behind 2nd base Have one player at a time move into the 2nd base position, and have a coach/parent stand on 1st base. Roll the grounder to 2nd base. The player should field the ball and make throw toward 1st base.

Plays at First - Side to Side Grounder Drills Have one player at a time move into the 2nd base position Have a coach/parent stand on 1st base. Roll the balls left and right of the player to make him move to get in front of the ball. The player should field the ball and make throw toward 1st base. Emphasis the importance of moving to get in front of the ball instead of reaching out with the glove.

Plays at Second - Grounder Drills Form one line just behind shortstop position Have one player at a time step up into the SS position. Have another player in the 2nd base position. Roll grounder to the player at SS and have them field ball and make throw to 2nd base. Make sure the player at 2nd base moves to the base to make catch.

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

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.

## Throwing Drills

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

Proper Stance  Feet - shoulder width apart,  Square the feet to home plate, batter’s front foot should be lined up with the middle point of the 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. The batter’s back elbow (Right elbow for a righthander batter) should be slight down. The front elbow should be slightly up. For right handed batters, the handle should be pointed toward first base.

For left handed batters, the handle should be pointed toward third base. This stance allows the young hitters to quickly “throw” their hands to the ball in a single motion and will translate very well to more advanced hitting techniques as the players get older and stronger.

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 Drills

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 – 3rd base, 1st base, 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 pitcher’s 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.  This drills gives all the players a chance to bat and play a different position

## Catching Technique

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.

## Catching Drills

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

# Appendix

## Appendix A: Player Evaluation Form

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Player Info | Throwing | Catching | Fielding | Hitting | Comments |
| Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Bats: R or LThrows: R or L | Mechanics1 2 3 4 5Strength1 2 3 4 5Accuracy1 2 3 4 5 | Mechanics1 2 3 4 5Confidence1 2 3 4 5 | Mechanics1 2 3 4 5Confidence1 2 3 4 5 | Mechanics1 2 3 4 5Contact1 2 3 4 5Confidence1 2 3 4 5 |  |
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