

Orleans Little League Baseball

T-Ball Program

5-6 years old players

Practice Guide & Plans



Introduction

➤ **T-Ball is the starting point for baseball**

By hitting the ball from a tee, the young players have the opportunity to develop hand-eye coordination and swing technique without the fear of being hit by a pitched ball. With a ball being in play with every batter, players in both the infield and the outfield are given more opportunities to develop fundamental fielding skills while placing an emphasis on total team participation and involvement. The main objective at this age is to grow their enthusiasm for the game.

The focus of the T-Ball program should be on the following:

- 1) **SKILL DEVELOPMENT:** Baseball fundamentals and a better understanding of the rules at a younger age
- 2) **COACHING DEVELOPMENT:** Through a new coaching program that involves mentoring, clinics, ongoing support and a group practice structure
- 3) **GROUP PRACTICE STRUCTURE:** To ensure all players work through the same curriculum of baseball fundamentals

The OLLB T-Ball program will introduce young baseball players to the fundamentals of baseball (throwing, catching, fielding, hitting and running). Our goal is to begin developing the fundamentals and teaching the rules of baseball through weekly games and practices. OLLB will continue to work hard so everyone has fun and improves their baseball skills.

➤ **Make it fun**

One of the basic philosophies of teaching baseball is to make it fun. On the surface that means that we should let the kids play games, which is important from both an enjoyment and a developmental standpoint. Still, when it comes to developing young baseball players, the importance of practice cannot be underestimated. Games give the kids something to look forward to each week, which helps maintain their interest. However, even though baseball games lend themselves to a certain amount of standing around and downtime (between pitches, between innings, when your team is hitting and so on), games do not usually offer an atmosphere that is conducive to teaching. A lot of excitement, energy, tension, interference, and distractions surround baseball games, making it extremely difficult to communicate any type of lessons to a player.

Practice gets a bad reputation, especially in baseball, for being boring and tedious. So many fine motor skills must be mastered to play the sport—throwing, catching, hitting, running and so on—that fundamental skill development is a must. Remember, baseball is a very simple game. Whether you are a budding youth player or a Major League player, you have to be able to throw the ball, catch the ball, and hit the ball to be successful. And, whether you are a novice or a pro, to be successful you should follow the exact same fundamental approaches.

This guide has been prepared by Eric Louis-Seize, baseball coach within OLLB, and Bernie Hughes, Vice-president of Baseball Operations within OLLB, to help any T-Ball coach plan and run efficient practices. You'll find drills on baseball fundamentals organized according to different aspects of the game and also the practice plans for the whole spring season.

Calendar of practices

With games starting at 6:30pm, the pre-game practices should be scheduled for 5:45pm and run until 6:25pm. Here is the calendar of practices followed by the pre-game practice plans for the whole spring season. These practice plans will ensure all players work through the same curriculum of baseball fundamentals related to both defensive (throwing, catching, fielding) and offensive (hitting, base running) aspects of the game.

Week	Practice Plan	Practice Date	Practice Focus	Comments
1	Practice Plan 1		Introduction meeting Throwing and catching	
	Practice Plan 2		Hitting	
2	Practice Plan 3		Throwing and catching Ground balls	
	Practice Plan 2		Hitting	
3	Practice Plan 4		Throwing and catching Running the bases	
	Practice Plan 5		Throwing and catching Hitting	
4	Practice Plan 6		Throwing and catching Fly balls	
	Practice Plan 2		Hitting	
5	Practice Plan 3		Throwing and catching Ground balls	
	Practice Plan 5		Throwing and catching Hitting	
6	Practice Plan 4		Throwing and catching Running the bases	
	Practice Plan 2		Hitting	
7	Practice Plan 6		Throwing and catching Fly balls	
	Practice Plan 2		Hitting	

Practice Plan 1

The first practice will be used to welcome players and parents. Coaches will also assess the players in order to better organize the practices from week 2 until the end of the spring season.

5:45 – 5:55 (10 minutes)

- Welcome players and parents in a quick team meeting
- Introduce everyone and outline expectations from the coaches, parents and players
- Communicate the importance of players being at the park for 5:45 on game day
- Equipment: Each players should wear an athletic cup, running shoes or cleats, baseball glove and hard helmet
- Communicate to players the team rules (when coach talk players listen, respect coaches and teammates, etc.)
- Communicate the practice plan to the players

5:55 – 6:00 (5 minutes)

▪ **Team: Warm-up**

Some suggestions...

- Forward jogging (1 minute)
- Skip running knees up (30 – 40 feet)
- Running with knees up (30 – 40 feet)
- Running with butt kicks (30 – 40 feet)
- Forward lunges (30 – 40 feet)
- Jumping jack (15 reps)
- Sprint (30 - 40 feet)

6:00 – 6:25 (25 minutes)

▪ **Short distance throwing / catching – Station location: outfield**

- 10-15 feet between players
- Option: Start with tennis balls for players who are afraid of the hard baseball
- Focus on the proper throwing techniques (5 steps)
 - 1- Sideways
Feet, hips and shoulders perpendicular to target
 - 2- Shift
Transfer weight to back leg (throwing arm side)
 - 3- Swing
As shifting back, break hands and swing arms in a pendulum down and out to ready position (back arm stretched out with ball facing the ground with knuckles to the sky, front arm pointing at target)
 - 4- Step
As the weight is transfer from back leg to front leg, step directly towards the target pointing with your front toe and your glove
 - 5- Throw

From ready position throw ball to target, do not drop elbow, and follow through, throwing arm should hit your front quad muscle

- When throwing make sure the elbow is above the shoulder (to avoid future injuries)
- Player receiving presents a target (chest) every time to the player throwing
- Player receiving puts himself in front of the ball (centreline of body)
- Option: Put targets on the fence and have players throw the ball on the target with the focus on the proper throwing techniques.

Practice Plan 2

5:45 – 5:50 (5 minutes)

- Welcome players
- Communicate the practice plan to the players

5:50 – 5:55 (5 minutes)

▪ Team: Warm-up

Some suggestions...

- Forward jogging (1 minute)
- Skip running knees up (30 – 40 feet)
- Running with knees up (30 – 40 feet)
- Running with butt kicks (30 – 40 feet)
- Forward lunges (30 – 40 feet)
- Jumping jack (15 reps)
- Sprint (30 - 40 feet)

**Separate the team into the 2 groups defined during the assessment sessions (groups A and B)
Each group will spend 15 minutes per station**

5:55 – 6:15 (30 minutes)

▪ Station 1: Basic swinging techniques – Station location: infield

Here are the key elements when swinging the baseball bat

- Basic stance...
 - Feet positioning – both feet pointing the base of the Tee
 - Feet shoulder width apart with knees slightly bent
 - Both hands together with knocking knuckles lined up
 - Both elbows down
 - Hands back over back foot at player's ear level
 - Slight bend at waist, shoulders and feet in straight line at pitching mound
- The swing...
 - Quick step (3-5 inches) toward the pitching mound
 - Do not point foot, hands stay over back foot at ear level
 - Head down as you swing, throw hands forward toward the front toe, not looping or out
 - Swing through / full swing
- Have players practice their stance and swing by following the proper techniques

▪ Station 2: Hitting off the tee – Station location: outfield

- While one player hit off the Tee, the other players field the ball
- Focus on the basic swinging techniques

Practice Plan 3

5:45 – 5:50 (5 minutes)

- Welcome players
- Communicate the practice plan to the players

5:50 – 5:55 (5 minutes)

- Team: Warm-up

Some suggestions...

- Forward jogging (1 minute)
- Skip running knees up (30 – 40 feet)
- Running with knees up (30 – 40 feet)
- Running with butt kicks (30 – 40 feet)
- Forward lunges (30 – 40 feet)
- Jumping jack (15 reps)
- Sprint (30 - 40 feet)

**Separate the team into the 2 groups defined during the assessment sessions (groups A and B)
Each group will spend 15 minutes per station**

5:55 – 6:25 (30 minutes)

- Station 1: Short distance throwing / catching – Station location: outfield

- 10-15 feet between players
- Option: Start with tennis balls for players who are afraid of the hard baseball
- Focus on the proper throwing techniques (5 steps)
 - 1- Sideways
Feet, hips and shoulders perpendicular to target
 - 2- Shift
Transfer weight to back leg (throwing arm side)
 - 3- Swing
As shifting back, break hands and swing arms in a pendulum down and out to ready position (back arm stretched out with ball facing the ground with knuckles to the sky, front arm pointing at target)
 - 4- Step
As the weight is transfer from back leg to front leg, step directly towards the target pointing with your front toe and your glove
 - 5- Throw
From ready position throw ball to target, do not drop elbow, and follow through, throwing arm should hit your front quad muscle
- When throwing make sure the elbow is above the shoulder (to avoid future injuries)
- Player receiving presents a target (chest) every time to the player throwing
- Player receiving puts himself in front of the ball (centreline of body)

→ Option: Put targets on the fence and have players throw the ball on the target with the focus on the proper throwing techniques.

▪ **Station 2: Fielding ground balls – Station location: infield**

- Group 3-4 players per coach
- 10 feet between the coach and the players
- Players start without their gloves
- Teach the “ready/base position” – feet apart, knees flexed, seat out and hands out front
- Teach the players to move toward the rolling ball and not just wait for it
- Coach throws soft grounder to each players who catch it using both hands
- Grounders should be thrown each side of the players to practice the side-to-side shuffling
- After about 5 minutes, have players grab their gloves
- Keep throwing grounders to players but this time using the glove and the other hand
- Make sure players always use two hands when fielding the ball

Practice Plan 4

5:45 – 5:50 (5 minutes)

- Welcome players
- Communicate the practice plan to the players

5:50 – 5:55 (5 minutes)

▪ Team: Warm-up

Some suggestions...

- Forward jogging (1 minute)
- Skip running knees up (30 – 40 feet)
- Running with knees up (30 – 40 feet)
- Running with butt kicks (30 – 40 feet)
- Forward lunges (30 – 40 feet)
- Jumping jack (15 reps)
- Sprint (30 - 40 feet)

**Separate the team into the 2 groups defined during the assessment sessions (groups A and B)
Each group will spend 15 minutes per station**

5:55 – 6:15 (30 minutes)

▪ Station 1: Short distance throwing / catching – Station location: outfield

- 10-15 feet between players
- Option: Start with tennis balls for players who are afraid of the hard baseball
- Focus on the proper throwing techniques (5 steps)
 - 1- Sideways
Feet, hips and shoulders perpendicular to target
 - 2- Shift
Transfer weight to back leg (throwing arm side)
 - 3- Swing
As shifting back, break hands and swing arms in a pendulum down and out to ready position (back arm stretched out with ball facing the ground with knuckles to the sky, front arm pointing at target)
 - 4- Step
As the weight is transfer from back leg to front leg, step directly towards the target pointing with your front toe and your glove
 - 5- Throw
From ready position throw ball to target, do not drop elbow, and follow through, throwing arm should hit your front quad muscle
- When throwing make sure the elbow is above the shoulder (to avoid future injuries)
- Player receiving presents a target (chest) every time to the player throwing
- Player receiving puts himself in front of the ball (centreline of body)

→ Option: Put targets on the fence and have players throw the ball on the target with the focus on the proper throwing techniques.

▪ **Station 2: Running from home to 1st base – Station location: infield**

Here are the key elements when running from home to 1st base:

- Staying low initially
- Run every ball out and run it out hard, never slow down
- Have each player run from home to 1st base
 - Practice running through the base

Running when on 1st, 2nd or 3rd base – Station location: infield

Here are the key elements when running from one bag to the other:

- Foot should remain on the bag until the ball is hit (no lead-off)
- Run hard on any ground balls
- Wait when the ball is hit in the air (fly ball)
 - If the fly ball is dropped, run hard to the next bag
 - If the fly ball is caught, come back or stay on the bag

Practice Plan 5

5:45 – 5:50 (5 minutes)

- Welcome players
- Communicate the practice plan to the players

5:50 – 5:55 (5 minutes)

- Team: Warm-up

Some suggestions...

- Forward jogging (1 minute)
- Skip running knees up (30 – 40 feet)
- Running with knees up (30 – 40 feet)
- Running with butt kicks (30 – 40 feet)
- Forward lunges (30 – 40 feet)
- Jumping jack (15 reps)
- Sprint (30 - 40 feet)

**Separate the team into the 2 groups defined during the assessment sessions (groups A and B)
Each group will spend 15 minutes per station**

5:55 – 6:25 (30 minutes)

- Station 1: Short distance throwing / catching – Station location: outfield

- 10-15 feet between players
- Option: Start with tennis balls for players who are afraid of the hard baseball
- Focus on the proper throwing techniques (5 steps)
 - 1- Sideways
Feet, hips and shoulders perpendicular to target
 - 2- Shift
Transfer weight to back leg (throwing arm side)
 - 3- Swing
As shifting back, break hands and swing arms in a pendulum down and out to ready position (back arm stretched out with ball facing the ground with knuckles to the sky, front arm pointing at target)
 - 4- Step
As the weight is transfer from back leg to front leg, step directly towards the target pointing with your front toe and your glove
 - 5- Throw
From ready position throw ball to target, do not drop elbow, and follow through, throwing arm should hit your front quad muscle
- When throwing make sure the elbow is above the shoulder (to avoid future injuries)
- Player receiving presents a target (chest) every time to the player throwing
- Player receiving puts himself in front of the ball (centreline of body)

→ Option: Put targets on the fence and have players throw the ball on the target with the focus on the proper throwing techniques.

▪ **Station 2: Hitting off the tee – Station location: outfield**

→ While one player hit off the Tee, the other players field the ball

→ Focus on the basic swinging techniques

Practice Plan 6

5:45 – 5:50 (5 minutes)

- Welcome players
- Communicate the practice plan to the players

5:50 – 5:55 (5 minutes)

- Team: Warm-up

Some suggestions...

- Forward jogging (1 minute)
- Skip running knees up (30 – 40 feet)
- Running with knees up (30 – 40 feet)
- Running with butt kicks (30 – 40 feet)
- Forward lunges (30 – 40 feet)
- Jumping jack (15 reps)
- Sprint (30 - 40 feet)

**Separate the team into the 2 groups defined during the assessment sessions (groups A and B)
Each group will spend 15 minutes per station**

5:55 – 6:25 (30 minutes)

- Station 1: Short distance throwing / catching – Station location: outfield

- 10-15 feet between players
- Option: Start with tennis balls for players who are afraid of the hard baseball
- Focus on the proper throwing techniques (5 steps)
 - 1- Sideways
Feet, hips and shoulders perpendicular to target
 - 2- Shift
Transfer weight to back leg (throwing arm side)
 - 3- Swing
As shifting back, break hands and swing arms in a pendulum down and out to ready position (back arm stretched out with ball facing the ground with knuckles to the sky, front arm pointing at target)
 - 4- Step
As the weight is transfer from back leg to front leg, step directly towards the target pointing with your front toe and your glove
 - 5- Throw
From ready position throw ball to target, do not drop elbow, and follow through, throwing arm should hit your front quad muscle
- When throwing make sure the elbow is above the shoulder (to avoid future injuries)
- Player receiving presents a target (chest) every time to the player throwing
- Player receiving puts himself in front of the ball (centreline of body)

→ Option: Put targets on the fence and have players throw the ball on the target with the focus on the proper throwing techniques.

▪ **Station 2: Catching fly balls – Station location: infield**

→ Group 3-4 players per coach / parent

→ 10 feet between the coach and the players

→ Teach keeping your eye on the ball

→ Teach feet apart and knees flexed

→ Teach elbows out front slightly bent

→ Coach throws a fly ball, about 6-10 feet high, to each players

→ Players must call the ball, be under it if possible and catch it with two hands if possible

→ Option: Coach can start with tennis balls