



Ridgefield Little League
2010 Coaches Handbook
T-Ball, Pee Wee, Minors, Majors,
Softball

Ridgefield Little League – Coaches Code of Conduct

Baseball and Softball embody the discipline of teamwork. They challenge players to improve skills, and bring into play the excitement of strategy. Every player will eventually strike out, or is on the losing end of the score, but baseball always gives another chance for success in the next at-bat or game. With this in mind, the Ridgefield Little League expects each manager and coach to follow the following Code of Conduct:

Sportsmanship –

- I will promote good sportsmanship, teach good baseball skills and have fun in the process
 - I will not overemphasize the value and importance of winning
- I will respect the coaches, players, and spectators of the opposing team before, during, and after the games, win or lose
- I realize, accept and will practice the principle that a team and leagues reputation is built not only on its playing ability but also in its sportsmanship, courtesy and manner.

The Parents and the League

I will maintain open communication with players and their parents. When approached by parents to discuss any issue, I will interact and respond in a courteous manner

I will support in fundraising efforts, field improvement efforts, and concessionaire assignments along with other duties that may be assigned to teams from time to time.

The Team

I will conduct practices in an organized manner, with a planned agenda that focused on skill development appropriate for the skill level of their players

I will maintain open communication with players and parents to inform them of practices, games, and other responsibilities in an efficient timely manner.

Guiding Principles for Ridgefield Little League Coaches

Baseball and Softball are fun!

The main objective is to improve every player on your team, not to win games.

“Games won or lost are soon forgotten, the type of person you are will not” –
Pete Doumit

If you are successful in improving the skill level of All your players, you will be successful at coaching (the winning will take care of itself) – John Wooden

Publicly praise and encourage. Keep constructive criticism and correction for private individual conversations.

No one knows better than the player that just made a mistake. Encourage them to get ready for the next ball and save the instruction and correction when they come back to the dugout. Keep in mind that, as a Little League coach, you are one of the most influential people your players will ever have in their lives. Don't fall into the trap of always criticizing failures without recognizing achievement and effort. If a kid is giving something his all, recognize that fact, even if he is failing. Support him, and he may amaze you - and himself - with what he can do.

Be inventive, and reward your players.

Turn drills into contests - give points to different teams within your squad, and watch the intensity level rise. Raise the stakes by offering a small reward; a stick of sugarless gum will motivate a player like you wouldn't believe.

Keep them busy!

- Plan practices that keep things moving
 - Minimize lines and lecture
- Use small group stations to maximize involvement
- Batting practice not reserved for 1 player hitting and 11 others standing

Teach Safety – to be aware of swinging bats, thrown balls, how to get out of way of pitched ball (See Defensive Roll in handbook)

Ridgefield Little League – Planning and running practices

Objective of practice – have clear objectives for what you want to accomplish in each practice

Equipment – know ahead of time what special equipment you will need and when you will need it.

Time – Establish a timeline for the practice and follow closely as possible

Routine – have a standard routine for each practice (example: warm up, throwing/catching) so the players always know what to expect

Skills – know what skills you want to teach and how you plan to teach them

Small Group Work – the best way to keep the players busy is to utilize small groups. Engage assistant coaches or willing parents and divide the team into 2 or 3 smaller groups to work with on skills.

Game Situations – build practices around actual game conditions. This allows players to perform the skills under pressure of the game.

Closure – End practice on positive note – Ask players to review what they learned in today’s practice. Let them know what to expect for the next practice or game.

Example Sample Practice

Warm up – dynamic – run around bases, be creative

Throwing and Catching – This time is very important in the development of your teams. Have players pair up according to skill level and toss to each other. One partner should be on the foul line and the other in the outfield.

Skills – Start Simple, Create success based on individual skill level

Game situations/Small Group Sessions Hitting

Closure – Re-emphasize throwing skills and fielding with two hands. Give players tips for practicing at home and set up next practice time.

Ridgefield Little League Point of Emphasis

Teaching players how to avoid getting hit by pitched ball.



The hitter stands frozen, bat glued to shoulder, afraid to move.

Getting "plunked" by the pitch has to be the number one reason hitters don't hit. If he doesn't freeze, he steps in the bucket, to get as far from the pitch as possible.

Fear of being hit by the pitch has taken over, and coaches must not fail to recognize how difficult a problem this can be for some of their players.

It can't be turned into a heroic act by telling them to "take one for the team". It can't be minimized by telling them it doesn't hurt — it does. The pain is real; the potential for serious injury is real; and your challenge is not to remove fear from the batter's box, but to give them proper techniques for reducing the risk.

Defensive Roll to Avoid Serious Injury - The safest method starts by turning with the pitch, away from the pitcher. This takes the face, hands, ribs, elbows and knees — all the exposed bones — away from the inside pitch. If it hits you it will be on the more "padded" backside.

Scrunch your head down, too, as tucked into your shoulders as possible — so the helmet protects the neck (a deeper tuck than the illustrations if you can.) And pull the bat down also — otherwise the ball could hit it which would count as a foul ball at best, or create a pop up or even accidental fair ball.

Ridgefield Little League T-Ball

Throwing Mechanics – turn body so that the front shoulder points toward the target; keep elbow above the shoulder, step toward the target with non-throwing foot and release

Catching – follow ball with eyes into the glove, whether on the ground or in the air, use two hands to catch and field; try to catch the ball in front of your body

Learning Positional Play – If the ball is hit to your buddy let him or her field it

Hitting – how to hold and swing a bat, batting safety; hitting off tee; hitting softly tossed balls

Baseball Skills to teach

- Play to have some fun
- Follow the instructions of the coaches
- Learn to be a part of a “team” respecting other players, coaches and parents
- Identify the bases and the order in which they should be touched
 - Identify the nine field positions
- Throw infield ground balls to first base, throw outfield ground balls to second base
 - Make solid contact with the ball when hitting off the tee
 - Run straight through the first base bag – No little league turn
 - Warm up in outfield grass prior to game
 - Proper throwing technique
 - Catching the baseball

Ridgefield Tee Ball Practice #1

Main Objectives – Fielding, Throwing, Hitting

Warm up – (5 minutes)

Tour of the bases – gather the players at home plate, have them take imaginary swings and run the bases. This can be used to teach base identification. Have player call out bases as they pass them.

Throwing – (10 minutes) players pair up and throw to each other. Quickly identify player's skill level and pair accordingly.

Fielding Ground balls – teach and demonstrate fielding a ground ball using two hands – start with not gloves and force the action of two handed fielding – graduate to gloves

Hitting – Players practicing mechanics of swing as whole group – players practicing hitting off tee or soft toss,

Game Situation – (balance of practice) set up a regular defensive infield. Have players as base-runners Coach hits ground balls to various positions to simulate game conditions. Rotate players around regularly

Closure – Re-emphasize throwing skills and fielding with two hands. Give players tips for practicing at home and set up next practice time.

Ridgefield Tee Ball Practice #2

Run the bases

- Explain that first is the only base you can run past.
- Explain that you must touch the bases in order or be called out
 - Play Follow the leader

Stretch – Quick and Simple

Practice in Stations – 7-10 min per and rotate

- Hitting off tee and tossed balls
 - Fielding and catching
 - Throwing

Play a scrimmage or other instructional game

Run the bases and review skills and baseball concepts

Re-emphasize throwing skills and fielding with two hands. Give players tips for practicing at home and set up next practice time.

Pee- Wees

7-8 Year Olds

Learning basic rules – force outs, baserunning (knowing when you don't have to run; not running past teammates on the bases)

Throwing Mechanics - turn body so that the front shoulder points toward the target; keep elbow above the shoulder, step toward the target with non-throwing foot and release; introduce the four seam grip point the shoulder, step and throw introducing the concept of momentum toward a target.

Catching and Fielding – thrown and hit balls – fingers up versus fingers down

“Ball high, fingers to the sky” “Ball down, fingers to the ground; fielding with two hands – teach drop and cross-over steps

Hitting – choosing the correct bat, proper grip, stance,

Baseball Skills to Teach

- Play to have fun
 - Follow the instructions of coaches
- Learn to be part of a “team” respecting other players, coaches, and parents
 - Identify bases and order in which they should be touched
 - Identify and play the nine field positions
 - Understand the “Force Play”
 - Fielding Ground Balls with two hands
 - Catch ball in the air with two hands, fingers to the sky

- Run straight through the base at first on infield hits
- Take a turn at first base on outfield hits, watch and listen to first and third base coach
- Slide into bases (exception being 1st base) on close plays – teach proper sliding technique
 - Warm-up in outfield grass prior to a game
 - Make contact with a pitched ball
 - Catching the baseball
- Safety – Learn how to “Defensive Roll” out of the way of a pitched ball

Ridgefield Pee-Wee Practice Plan

Dynamic Warm Up – skipping, high knee jogging, backwards running

Base-running – controlled follow the leader

Stretching – Quick and simple

Throwing and Catching

Stations

- Hitting – Tee work, soft toss, pitched ball
- Infield and throwing – rolled ground balls with throwing after the catch
 - Outfield – throw fly balls
- Controlled game, game situations, or teach rules

Base-running drills – Emphasize running hard – be creative and make it fun!

Re-emphasize throwing skills and fielding with two hands. Give players tips for practicing at home and set up next practice time.

Minors

Baseball Skills to Teach

- Play to have fun
- Follow the instructions of coaches
- Learn to be part of a “team” respecting other players, coaches, and parents
 - Identify bases and order in which they should be touched
 - Identify and play the nine field positions
 - Understand the “Force Play”
 - Fielding Ground Balls with two hands
 - Catch ball in the air with two hands, fingers to the sky
 - Run straight through the base at first on infield hits
- Take a turn at first base on outfield hits, watch and listen to first and third base coach
- Slide into bases (exception being 1st base) on close plays – teach proper sliding technique
 - Warm-up in outfield grass prior to a game
 - Make contact with a pitched ball
 - Catching the baseball
- Safety – Learn how to “Defensive Roll” out of the way of a pitched ball
- Cut-offs and Relays, basic bunt defense, basic 1st and 3rd defense
 - Underhand flip and double plays
- Infield/Outfield communication and priorities

Ridgefield Minor Practice Plan

Warm-up

Throwing and Catching skills

Technical Skills – split players into two groups each and rotate between:

Situations such as force play – Set up various situations and see that players can identify force play versus tag play

Review basic fielding techniques for ground balls/fly balls

Small Groups – Hitting

Game Situations

Close – Review practice – Reflect on what players may have learned during practice today. Re-emphasize throwing skills and fielding with two hands.

Give players tips for practicing at home and set up next practice time.

(Majors)

Baseball Skills to Teach

- Play to have fun
- Follow the instructions of coaches
- Learn to be part of a “team” respecting other players, coaches, and parents
 - Identify bases and order in which they should be touched
 - Identify and play the nine field positions
 - Understand the “Force Play”
 - Fielding Ground Balls with two hands
 - Catch ball in the air with two hands, fingers to the sky
 - Run straight through the base at first on infield hits
- Take a turn at first base on outfield hits, watch and listen to first and third base coach
- Slide into bases (exception being 1st base) on close plays – teach proper sliding technique
 - Warm-up in outfield grass prior to a game
 - Make contact with a pitched ball
 - Catching the baseball
- Safety – Learn how to “Defensive Roll” out of the way of a pitched ball
- Cut-offs and Relays, basic bunt defense, basic 1st and 3rd defense
 - Underhand flip and double plays
- Infield/Outfield communication and priorities

Majors Practice Plan (Indoor)

(@ Elementary School, with no level surface, so no ground balls)

- 6:15 to 6:25pm – warm up jog, stretches, rocket arm drills (10 throws each of Phase 1, 2, & 3), standard throwing warm ups
- 6:25 to 6:30 – hotbox drills w/ no runners; three groups of 4 players – “follow the ball”)
- 6:30 to 6:35 – hotbox competition (3 or 4 runners w/ helmets; remaining on defense; rotate after 2 times running; soft core balls)
- 6:35 to 6:45 – fly balls, including drop step drills (two groups)
- 6:45 to 6:55 – 1st & 3rd or tag up situation drills (runners w/ helmets; soft core balls)
- 6:55 to 7:30 – 3 batting stations
 1. Coach #1 –2 batters alternating - soft toss plastic golf balls (*other nights use tee with wiffles*) – 10 each with right hand (tee ball bat), 10 with left (tee ball bat), 20 with both hands (regular bat) - - first 10 same pitch speed; second 10 with some tossed higher to mimic change ups. Special coaching instructions (*coaches need to communicate the same message*):
 - All batters – back foot perpendicular to plate, NOT pointed backward toward catcher (this is the most common power leak). Overcorrect w/ Manny Ramirez-type pigeon toes, if necessary.
 - All – keep weight on instep of back foot during stride for increased power
 - All – consider slightly wider stance and shorter stride to keep head steadier and help with adjustment for off-speed pitches
 - All – every swing is important, so strive to improve on each! Don’t rush through - - balanced stance to start and full follow through on each swing
 - Jimmy & Johnny – tend to fall back on heels and upper cut. Extra round of single hand swings. Focus on hitting to right field with full swings.
 - Billy & Bobby – choke up – their bats are too long for them. Choke 1 inch for Billy; ½ inch for Bobby
 2. Coach #2 – 5 batters & fielders - live BP, including curve balls and change ups – 3 bunts and 10 swings – run last one out
 - Foam trick balls for curves
 - Soft core for straight pitches
 3. Coach #3 - 5 batters & fielders – close in faster pitching - 3 bunts and 10 swings
 - Tennis balls or wiffles for safety

- 7:30 to 7:45 – If time, play Thunderball or other (if time is short, run bases for five minutes) **Re-emphasize throwing skills and fielding with two hands. Give players tips for practicing at home and set up next practice time.**

Outfield Skills

Outfield Skills – Each Outfielder has somewhere to be on every play!

- Teaching the ability to track the ball – This is the number one skill and is one of the most difficult. Teach them how to move with a ball in the air (simple) and progress to thrown ball with gloves (difficult) teach players to run to the point where the ball will come down.
- Grip – Hold the ball across the seams when throwing – 4 seam grip provides help with accuracy and carry.
 - Catch every fly ball above the eyes.
 - Hit your cut-off man

Preparation:

- A. Each inning check wind direction by throwing grass in the air
- B. On sunny days, always have sun glasses with you. Check sun in path with home plate
- C. Keep all outfielders gloves together in the dug out!

Stance:

- A. Have shoulders and feet square to the batter
- B. Hands off knees and take a creep step when pitcher releases the ball

Fly Balls:

- A. Call – Mine Mine Mine
- B. Always try to catch the ball on throwing arm side in order to get off throw more quickly
- C. Track ball all the way into the glove
- D. Always throw to cut off unless it is a short distance throw

Backing Up:

- A. Anticipate a bad throw on every play and sprint to your appropriate location

- B. Left Field: - back up any plays at 3rd base or a throw from the right fielder to 2nd base
- C. Centerfield; Back up any plays at 2nd base
- D. Right Field: - back up any plays at 1st base

Rundowns – Basic Rules

The ultimate goal of a rundown is “One throw at the right moment!”

Rules for the Thrower

- Make runner commit
- Establish a throwing lane
 - Avoid ball fakes
- Arm up and out in front – throws like a dart
- Stay out of the runners way to avoid interference

Rules for the receiver

- Call for baseball by saying “Now”

Drills

Play rundown catch everyday as a part of throwing warm up

Two line drill to work on mechanics with no runners

Game situations on the field

Throwing Mechanics

- Two finger grip across the wide seams (across where seams form a C
 - Loose wrist, fingers on top of the ball
 - Point lead shoulder, step straight to target
- Ball in throwing position when lead foot hits the ground

Catching Mechanics - “All defense is, is playing catch well.”

- Ball above the waist – fingers up; ball below waist-fingers down
- Catch everything out in front of body whenever possible – fly balls over throwing shoulder; ground balls inside glove side foot with glove below the ball

- 1-2-3 rhythm; 1 – ball hits glove at same time glove side foot hits the ground; 2 – step through to get throwing leg under the ball is being brought to throwing position; 3 – lead foot hits the ground and ball is released
- Always try to catch the ball in best possible position to throw it where you need to throw it
- See fielding the ball as “changing the direction of the ball rather than catching and throwing; this instills quickness and anticipation in the fielder.

Baserunning

Running Mechanics

- A. Teach players to run on balls of feet “run like a Cadillac” (smoothly)
- B. Run with loose hands and loose jaw
- C. Elbows stay close to your body; hands don’t cross past center of your body – “don’t run with Popeye arms”
- D. Lift knees high and land on toes

Base-running Rules

- A. Run all balls out hard; don’t assume the defense will make the play
- B. Great base runners (great players) learn to anticipate a play ahead of time; know the possibilities and take advantage of opponent’s mistakes
- C. Run through first base not to first base

Sliding

1. Sliding is a controlled fall designed to do three things; stop on a base, avoid a tag, avoid collision with fielder or ball
2. Sliding Fundamentals; kick yourself in the fanny, slide on bent leg shin and back pocket, keep hand above when sliding to avoid jamming them, glide into the landing giving yourself room to slide into the base and slow down, turn your head away from the direction of the ball

Hitting Mechanics

(Portland Pilots Hitting Camps)

1. Stance

- Balanced, athletic, relaxed
 - Grip = middle knuckles of top & bottom hand should be almost lined up (draw a line on top pinky and bottom index finger for younger players)
 - Back foot perpendicular to plate, NOT pointed backward toward catcher (common power leak). Overcorrect w/ pigeon toes, if necessary.
 - Elbows down (back elbow is NOT lifted up); hands inside the back foot to begin
 - Equal flex in the knees – not stiff
 - Head halfway between the shoes, lined up with belly button
- Turn head to view pitcher with both eyes, not just one eye
- Bat lifted approximately 2 to 4 inches off back shoulder

2. Stride

- As batter takes a SMALL stride toward the pitcher, batter loads (“walks away”) from his/her hands
 - Front shoulder and hip "headlights" are directly on the pitcher
 - Bat angle at this point: imaginary laser beam comes out of the bottom of bat & points at catcher’s feet
- As swing begins with a slightly descending blow - not an upper cut - back foot completely rotates and heel aligns above the toe (aka, “squash the bug”)

3. Contact

- Hands are palm-up (back hand) / palm down (front hand) at contact - - back arm not quite fully extended until follow through
 - Hips rotate fully - - belt buckle should be facing pitcher
 - Imaginary vertical “power line” from back knee up through head
 - Weight on balls of feet, NOT on heels
 - Extend arms after contact with full follow-through finish
 - Player should finish balanced and ready to run
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BATTING NOTES

- Bat selection: a good rule of thumb is “lighter is better.” Use the 20 second rule (player should easily hold bat out at shoulder length for 20+ seconds)
- Bat types – composite bats should not be used in cold weather (usually below 60 degrees)
- Utilize multiple stations during batting practice
 - Goal = maximize player participation - minimize standing around!
 - Do not confuse the kids with over-correction! Do your best to work on only one or two swing ideas per session.
 - Communicate between coaches so all are on same page
- “Dry” swings as a group: (1)Stance – (2)Stride – (3)Contact
- Tee (A-Rod hits 100+ balls per day off tee)
- Soft toss
- Batting practice
 - Use tennis balls or soft core balls, especially on cold days, to build confidence and reduce bat sting; wiffle balls (or badminton birdies) are good if space is limited

Twenty Five Most Common Little League Mistakes

Throwing

- *Failing to square lower body and shoulders to the target*
 - *Little or now arm swing*
 - *Shortened Follow Through*

Catching

- *Catching the ball off to the side of body and not centering the ball.*
- *Not catching the ball with two hands (door frame concept – everything inside the door frame, catch with two)*

Hitting

- *Poor balance in stance*
- *Stepping in the bucket – stepping away and out of the batter’s box*
 - *Being afraid of being hit by the ball*
 - *Dropping the rear shoulder (uppercutting)*
 - *Lunging or reaching for the baseball*
 - *Over striding*

Pitching

- *No balance*
- *Fingers under the ball*
- *Rushing the delivery*
- *Lack of trunk rotation*
- *Incorrect placement of stride foot*

Fielding

- *Poor Set-up position*
- *Fielding the ball under legs not out in front*
 - *Fear of the baseball*

- *Back-peddling to catch fly balls*
- *Outfielders taking first step in*
- *Catching the ball above head*
- *Not fielding with two hands unless one handed catch is required*

Coaching Resources

Web Ball – www.webball.com – great site with lot of information for all levels of baseball coaching -

Youth Baseball Knowledge Base – <http://infosports.net/baseball/kb.htm>

Over 1300 articles compiled from over 75,000 submissions by our visitors grouped by categories. Lots of ideas.

QCBaseball – <http://www.qcbaseball.com>

Good site for detailed instructions on the fundamentals of all aspect of the game of baseball. Instructional tips are organized by skill category. Also includes section with plenty of drills also organized by skill category. Site includes good coaching tools for planning and organizing practices.

Barton's Youth Baseball – http://www.homestead.com/youthbaseball_e_zine/

A site where coaches, players and parents can get information, tips, drills about playing this great game of baseball. Tips and drills available for throwing, catching, pitching, fielding, and hitting.

Hit 2 Win – www.hit2win.com

Mainly a site to promote the sale of baseball training products but includes a section of free coaching tips and drills, most of which are hitting tips and drills

T-Ball Coaching - www.t-ballcoaching.com

Strictly devoted to coaching T-Ball

The Coaching Corner – www.thecoachingcorner.com

The coaching corner sports instruction areas contain information and resources on the basics of the sport, skills & drills, team strategies and bulletin boards as well as tips from experts and other youth team coaches. In addition to skills and drills, the site includes some good coaching resources.

Books – Coaching Youth Baseball the Ripken Way by Cal Ripken Jr.

Little League Drills and Strategies by Ned McIntosh