



Minors Practice Plan

Example: 12:00 pm - 2:00 pm scheduled practice

**Highlighted should also be your game day warm-up and game Day closing*

**Highlighted is for Game Days Only*

- **(11:45am) Gear Up / Set Up** - Players arrive and get ready. Have them help with the setup of bases, pylons, and other equipment until all players have arrived. **Players arriving before the Coach, should help unload and carry equipment from Coach's vehicle to the dugout.*
- **(12:00pm) Jog** - From starting point in front of dugout, have the team jog along the inside of the fence to opposite foul pole (if your dugout is on 1st base side, jog to Left Field foul pole - if on 3rd base dugout, jog to Right field foul poles and back). **Players are to jog in a group - THIS IS NOT A RACE. If they do not stick together, then have them do it again. This is an important reminder of the team concept - even better if they do this in file lines of two abreast. The first time they do this, many will sprint and finish well ahead of other slower kids, who may slow and walk after sprinting out of the start and tire quickly. MAKE THEM REPEAT, AND DO IT RIGHT. The objective by repeating until they do it together is to establish that they all need to find a pace where the slower kids can feel encouraged to not quit and walk, while the faster kids can relax and pace themselves to the rest of the team. If at any time during the season they fail to jog in a cohesive group, make them repeat it until it is done correctly. Be Consistent!*
- **(12:05pm) Stretches** - Warm ups are an important part of preparing to play. Begin with a short session of static stretches - Start from the top and work to the bottom (Neck rotations, arm pulls, shoulder circles, waist bends, side and front lunges, ankle rotations, or down to the ground for deep leg stretches or butterflies). Next move into dynamic stretching. There are many different variations of dynamic stretches to incorporate into your routine, and all of them require movement to get muscles activated and blood flowing. Make sure you are incorporating dynamics that address targeting all areas of the body (from legs to arms). Some examples are: Leg Sweeps, Butt kicks, High Knees, Lunges (with Trunk rotations), Frankensteins, Field Goals, Arm Crosses, and Crossovers. You can finish with a set of sprints (one at a 50% pace, one at 75% pace, and finally one at 100%). **Before you start these dynamics, kids should line up their gloves on the ground along the baseline behind the base closest to your dugout, near where they will be doing their warm up catch session (next).*
- **(12:10pm) Catch** - Pair up players to spend 10 minutes of catch to warm up their arms (one player with heels on foul line). The focus needs to be on repeating proper throwing techniques, and hitting the target of their partner in front of them. Objective should be for each player to go through the session without a ball hitting the ground, or throwing past their partner. **Make sure to have a coach monitoring that they are not letting bad throwing habits leak into their warm-up (keep them consistent with their throwing motions). Have them gradually extend their distances apart to a distance that tests the limits of their arm strength without causing strain - graduate them throughout the year until they are from the foul line to center field. Have them throw at max distance once or twice, and then slowly walk back together, continuing to throw as they shorten their distances again.*
- **(12:20pm) Dailies** - As soon as the team comes back together from their long toss, they will go into their dailies - from a distance between 5 to 10 feet, each player will do a quick routine of grounders and one-hops to their partner. 5 grounders to the outside of their partners left



foot, 5 grounders to the middle of their stance, and 5 grounders to the outside of their right foot. Repeat with one-hoppers. Make sure players are using proper fielding technique for each (working through the ball).

- **(After Catch Session)** Send starting Pitcher & Catcher to Bullpen to Warm up.
- **(12:25pm) Water break** - Let the team take water, and interact with their teammates for a couple minutes.
- **(12:30pm) 1st Skill Drill** - Practice any drill for no more than 20 minutes (SET A TIMER) this keeps things fresh and keeps the players engaged and not bored. The objective is to work on certain skills and situations so that the players understand the principles of how to do it right - not to practice it until they get it perfect. Make corrections along the way addressing the entire team to what needs to be corrected.
- **(12:35pm) 2nd Skill Drill** - Move into the 2nd Drill, using the same format. The first 2 Skill drills, you want to work on as a team. Choose drills that are specific to areas your team needs improvement and to learn for the first 2 drills, and repetition type drills for last two improving on what the team already has learned)
- **(12:55pm) Take Water** - Let the team take water, and interact with their teammates for a couple minutes again.
- **(1:00pm) 3rd Skill Drill** - After taking a 2nd water break, and brief rest, their heart rates have likely gone down again. This is a good time to do some base running or sliding drills. You can make these situational and include fielders.
- **(1:18pm) 4th Skill drill** - Fielding / Hitting Practice - Coach pitch from mound / or front toss behind screen. Have players in the field rotate each time a new batter comes up, with a player from the field coming in to bat if there are no more on deck batters left. Batters once complete fill in position 1 of the field and into the rotation. *This drill will take longer than the others to complete - make sure that each child has had a chance to bat. **Reinforce that all players (even outfielders on balls hit to the infield) should move towards a hit ball, but only the closest should be fielding it - reinforce them calling for balls, and covering up behind. ***Hitters waiting on deck or in the hole can do some side toss into the backstop for additional practice - have assistant coaches or parents run 1 or 2 stations to aid in keeping the kids away from others and safe when doing so. ****Run catchers through first, and then separate them off to a bullpen area to work on blocking & receiving with another coach.
- **(12:30pm to 1:45pm)** - While other drills are ongoing, have one coach take a pitcher and a parent volunteer to catch a 10 minute bullpen session. Work on proper pitching techniques (stance, balance, hand break, fingers over the ball, follow through, and finish)
- **(1:45pm) Wrap It Up** - It is important to finish on a fun note: Have players divide up into teams and compete in a relay race, or a quick game of their choice (relay throwing drill is a good one to use here). *Jog out to far foul pole before team meeting and clean-up instead.
- **(1:55pm) Clean It Up** - Have players rake and fill any holes in the shale around home plate, mound, and bases (Coaches monitor for proper execution). Then have the players collect any equipment, put it into coaches bags, and carry it all to the coaches vehicle. Do a brief verbal recap of everything you worked on today, and ask the parents to work with their child on these in their spare time before next practice. Do a TEAM cheer, and remind everyone the time and date of your next team practice or game. Leave the field with a team & parent fist bump!



Practice/Drill Planning

Weeks 1 through 4:

- **Fielding Grounders** - Players are to split into equal groups at 1st base, 2nd, Shortstop, and 3rd base. Two coaches will hit grounders from out in front of the plate toward the left or right side of the infield (depending on their orientation - hit to the nearest side). Players are to field grounders hit to them, and throw back to 1st base (or drop into a nearby bucket). After 5 minutes, rotate groups. *Note: This drill will take at least 20 minutes.
- **Outfield (Fly Balls, Liners, and Grounders)** - Split into equal groups in the outfield (as many as you have coaches. One group to practice catching fly balls, the other to practice getting behind and receiving/blocking liners (bouncing balls), and the other to practice scoops on grounders. Rotate every 5 to 7 minutes.
- **Pitching** - Use Parents to supplement available catchers if necessary in the bullpen(s). Start teaching from the Stretch (or Side Position). Start in a ready position with back foot on or touching marked "rubber" (you can use cones to mark distance). Progress through step moving through balanced position, breaking of the hands, Lead foot down and out, keeping the fingers on top of the ball through windup, transfer of weight from power leg through glove leg, release and follow through, and finally ending in a good fielding position.
*You should separate and practice these steps individually in a group before attempting to practice putting them all together at once. Breaking down and committing to muscle memory each individual step is important to getting the right complete technique.
**Reinforce the 4 seam grip, as well as introducing them (if necessary) to a 2 seam grip, as well as changeup / palmball grip.
- **Catching** - While all players should during the season at least try taking a turn at catcher, due to the time it takes to put on limited equipment, limit individual practice time of specialised practice to 2nd year players with advanced ability who want to play the position, and those who have asked to try. Do not put a player on the mound to pitch, or behind the plate without some practice at the position first. Failing during a game can be heartbreaking, and playing one of these positions without instruction & practice time beforehand courts failure. When you are running the hitting portion of your practice, have your catchers hit first, and then join another coach for some catcher training off to the side. Prioritize Working on blocking and receiving.
- **Baserunning / Stealing** - Reinforce instruction on proper base running and stealing to be ready for game situations. Have them learn (or improve) proper positioning on the base, and practice their lead-offs once a pitched ball crosses the plate. Practice a hard crossover and take off, running to next base. Teach them how to properly round bases, and progress to next or multiple bases.
- **Sliding** - Find a spot on grass to set up bases along a baseline about 10 feet apart. Split into equal groups, and set up cones at starting point, and start of slide point. Have players run as fast as they can from the starting point, and practice their feet first sliding into the bags. After a while you should remove the cones marking where they should start their slides, until they can determine on their own. Repeat to reinforce proper techniques (legs, arms, head).



- **Relays** - Practice Proper relays. Split into groups of 3 (or 4 if necessary). Players on the end throw to the next player in line. The next player waiting to receive the ball should have both hands in the air to show the player with the ball their target. Ball progresses down the line to the end, and back again. Players receiving the ball should catch and turn towards their glove side, learning to catch and throw in one motion - rotate players through so everyone has time playing the middle of the rows. REPEAT, REPEAT, REPEAT! Focus on instructing the players receiving the ball to move according to the throw to take the ball on their glove side, and turning the correct way. *This can be added to the end of a practice as a relay race format as a fun competition.
- **Bunting** - Demonstrate proper technique to your team, then have them split into pairs. Have them soft toss to each other from several feet away. Each group should have at least 3 balls, and practice softly laying down bunts (3 to each and repeat). Coaches to go down lines correcting and teaching proper techniques. *Add into later hitting practices to start their first at bat with 3 bunts.
- **Positioning** - In the early half of the season, it is time to start introducing the players to their positioning away from the ball. Instruct outfielders, catchers, and pitchers where they need to be on a play to first (for example), Outfielders coming in to cover missed throws or plays through the infield. Pitchers covering home on balls past the catcher, etc. The more groundwork laid here, the better the players will be set up for success later in the season and in future years.

Weeks 5 through 8 (Things to incorporate and add into the above):

- **Fielding Grounders** - Add in drills to work on turns at 2nd base for double plays, as well as flips (underhand & backhand)
- **Outfield (Fly Balls, Liners, and Grounders)** - Add in drills the necessity of throwing hard and accurately back to coach or parent from distance (NO RAINBOWS).
- **Pitching** - Continue to work your whole team through pitching drills, and incorporate PFP's (Pitchers Fielding Practice) into your routine. This means pitchers understand and learn their responsibilities on balls hit to the outfield as well as covering on throws as well as passed balls home.
- **Catching** - Same as pitching, add in drills to have catchers understand their responsibilities covering down 1st base line, as well as practicing throws to home on passed balls.
- **Baserunning / Stealing** - Continue to reinforce proper technique.
- **Sliding** - Find a spot on grass to set up bases along a baseline about 10 feet apart. Split into equal groups. Practice diving head first back into a bag. While you cannot slide head first into a bag at this level, you can dive backwards head first. Have players practice this while turning their faces away from the ball.
- **Relays / Run-Downs** - Continue relays, and expanding distances in the 2nd half of the season. Add run downs into the 2nd half of the season, and stress always running forward to take next spot in the rundown, as well as prioritizing throwing earlier to the advancing base than too late (it is always better to have a caught up base runner go back to previous base than letting them advance).
- **Bunting** - Continue using this only in the batting practice portion of drills. Have them begin to work on placing them down each baseline.



- **Positioning** - Continue to work on positioning, and begin introducing them to cuts (what they are, when they happen, how to call them out, and practicing calling them out in practices and games).
- **Signs** - Develop and teach basic signs for players to learn on offense (Bunting, Hit Away, Take a pitch), and base running.





Minors Coaches Guide / Expectations

Thank you for volunteering to coach with us this year. Without volunteer coaching, our organization would cease to exist. We understand that for many coaching for the first time, that it can be a daunting task. Whether you have experience either playing or assisting in coaching previously, stepping up and being “coach” often comes with apprehension. We understand, and will do everything that we can to make you as comfortable and successful as possible. For returning Coaches, we hope that as your child progresses in their comfort with the game, you will as well. It is our sincere hope this year, and every year; that every kid and every coach has such an enjoyable experience that it leaves them waiting to return the next year.

As a Coach, there are a myriad of experiences that you will have this year. In an effort to help you navigate them, we have prepared this document to help you succeed.

Things to know:

- **You are not alone** - There is a support system behind you. It starts with your own team, and the parents of your players. We will do our best to identify and add associate coaches to your team when it is formed to help assist you through the year, but the parents are your best asset at the Minor level. Each team may only have 3 official coaches per team that satisfies their volunteer commitments, but establishing a good relationship and paths of communication with your team parents can go a long way towards easing any issues you may encounter, and supplementing these positions along the way, as well as scorekeeping, and pitch counting, etc.
- **Your League supports you** - We want to help, and help you succeed. If you are having problems, we want to know. If at any time you have questions or concerns, your first call or email should be towards your division director. They should be your first point of contact, and will either assist you in finding a solution, or progressing the issue up the ladder. The sooner you make them aware, the sooner we can find a resolution or solution.

Resources Available:

- **Parents** - As mentioned above, a good rapport with your team parents is very important. They can help you on and off the field during games, and practices. They should be included in any communication of upcoming events given to your team, and updated on areas where their child may require additional attention for improvement. If they feel involved, they will feel compelled to work with their kids off the field as well, making your entire team better.
- **Your Division Director** - This person is responsible for the oversight of your division, and is at your disposal for assistance. Your first point of contact in case any issue arises that you are unsure of direction or protocol in solving. They can also promote issues upwards to our Director at Large, and onto our Executive if necessary.
- **Community Park** - Along with this package, we have provided in your coaches bag a few resources in regards to drills you can use in your practice plans. These give you pictorial demonstrations of how to implement and carry out these skill builders. We also offer camps



through the offseason through the Armed Forces Garrison to provide kids a chance to improve their basic skills all year long. We would love to have additional coaches come out with their kids to hone their coaching skills as well.

- **Off Season Camps** - We offer camps through our partnership with the Edmonton Garrison. These camps begin in September and run through December. After a few weeks off around Christmas/New Year, they pick up and run from January until Mid-March. These camps not only are attended by some of our best, and longest serving coaches, but are also supplemented by the Edmonton Riverhawks Players & Coaches. These are not only great places for your kids to improve, but for young coaches as well, to learn new drills, and how to teach developing skills.
- **Little League Canada / International** - There are additional coaching resources available to you at the Little League University website (- <https://www.littleleague.org/university/> -); here you will be able to find training for yourself, drills you can implement, as well as resources for your parents.
- **Online** - There are tons of videos available online just a google search away. Many are aimed directly for kids in your age group you are coaching. Some may be eye opening, while others may just give you an idea that you may want to alter and implement in a different way. No matter what the case, we all use the internet every day, why not take some time to give yourself an idea of how to make your kids better in certain areas, and watch a video that explains how?

Expectations / Obligations:

- **Availability** - Part of taking on a coaches role is understanding that it is more than fulfilling a monetary volunteer commitment. You are the tip of the arrow in forming a foundation for the youth of our community. For some kids, you may be their first experience with having a coach mentor them; not just in Baseball, but in life. We want to not just build better ball players, but better kids as well. This means knowing that their coach is there for them. Being present and leading the charge for League activities / special functions / tournaments / fundraisers, as well as planning team activities (practices / social activities), and remaining consistent with their execution. *At this level, there are additional areas that require coaches to actively participate. A mandatory event would be for evaluations of players before the season; while optional events would be taking on a summer ball team, or off-season camps.
 - **Improvement** - It is our goal not just to improve our players, and challenge them as best we can, but we hope that our coaches take that to heart as well. We expect our coaches to strive everyday to advance the training and instruction of the kids they are coaching, as well as providing them an environment where they feel comfortable.
 - **Safety** - At the start of the season our safety officer will send you information about some required courses, as well as an application for a Vulnerable Sector Check. We perform these checks with our local police services every year to ensure our membership that we are looking out for their protection. In addition, we have mandatory courses that follow up with ways to inform and educate either in regards to physical or situational safety / conduct.
- *UNDERSTANDING THE RULES - There are rules in place at the minor level and above in regards to pitch counts, as well as Catching / Pitching. These rules have been put in place in



regard to player safety. It is your responsibility that Pitchers and Catchers remain within their safety thresholds at all times and observe the proper required rest.

- **League Equipment** - At the start of the season you will be outfitted with various equipment you will need throughout the season. It is your responsibility to teach the kids on your team to treat the equipment with respect, and in good condition. You must reinforce unto them that damaged equipment may pose a significant safety risk to themselves and to others. In addition, you will be entrusted with a code for our gates and lock-ups at our Kirkness and Castledowns Diamonds. It is your responsibility to make sure that these locks have been personally checked at the completion of use.
- **Communication** - As a coach, you are the first contact and primary conduit both from the parents towards the league, and from the league to parents. While we have other communication systems in place, you will be the face to face at practices and games. Establishing a rapport with your players and parents is extremely important from the outset to hold a team meeting between coaches, parents, and players. Establish your lines of communication, boundaries, and expectations. Hold consistent through the season, and remind them that we are all volunteers - abuse of coaches, players, umpires, parents, and League Officials will not be tolerated.
- **Events** - Throughout the season there will be a small number of mandatory league events that pertain to your team. You are the Leader of your team, and it is expected that you will be available on certain dates to organise and lead your team/parents at these events. These include: Evaluations (as mentioned above), League Bottle Drive, Tournaments, Pictures, Uniform Pick-up & Return. There will also be events that may be optional, but as team leader we hope that you make your best efforts to attend as well as rally your team to attend, such as: Fun Day, Riverhawks Day, Silent-Auction, Opening Day, and any Awards / Appreciation festivities
- **Umpires** - Whether this is your first foray into coaching, or something you have done for years (in baseball, or other sports), one thing that is always held to the highest of standards is how coaches must conduct themselves with our game officials (Umpires). In many cases these are young boys and girls learning to call the game, and as coaches we expect you to treat them as if they were members of your own team. Help guide and nurture them with positive reinforcement when you can. Everyone knows that mistakes will be made, let's work together in a compassionate manner with our Umpires to get beyond them. With that in mind, there are some Do's & Don'ts in regard to how we interact as coaches with Umpires.

- DO:**
- Remain respectful at all times.
 - Introduce yourself, and try to learn the Umpire's name at the home plate meeting before the game.
 - Ask the Umpire if they prefer to be addressed by their name or by "Blue".
 - When an issue arises, call time out and ask the home plate Umpire if you may ask them a question regarding the rules.
 - Ask Rule questions in a respectful manner, presenting your side, and then awaiting their interpretation.
 - Instruct your players to always shake hands with your Umpires at the completion of a game.



- Make sure that any players, other coaches, or parents verbally abusing an Umpire are dealt with immediately, as well as addressing them as a team after the game.
- Use the QR code provided to you, and give feedback to your umpires after every game.
- Any Umpires under the age of 16 require a responsible Umpire Liaison to be appointed by the Home Coach from one of your parents. This Liaison will act as a buffer between all coaches and the Umpire in case of any dispute.

DO NOT:

- Act in the heat of the moment.
- Curse or yell at the Umpire at any time, or allow others to do so.
- Storm onto the field and act aggressively towards an Umpire.
- Continue to argue a call after a dispute, or take it back into the dugout in a negative manner. You may disagree with a call or interpretation, but how you react is being learned by the kids on your team as well.
- Pull out and read the rule book on the field, in the dugout, or at any time during a game. Leave that until after the game, and not in the presence of an Umpire.
- Hold grudges, that an official who made a bad call last inning or last game is out to get you. If you talk to them in a respectful way (to present your side of things) between innings , or after a game, it will go much farther in establishing a good rapport, and helping them learn the game.
- Forget that without Umpires, we have no game.
- Forget that our young Umpires are learning, and are someone else's children as well. Their parents may be at the game also, and the example you set with how they are treated resonates to everyone.

It is our desire to provide our valued members with a great year. Every season provides the potential to make memories for our kids that will last them their entire lives, lessons that will shape and mold them into adulthood, and friendships that endure far beyond the field. We thank you for being a part of that, and helping us provide these experiences to our kids. These kids will always remember their experience; you will help decide if that experience is positive, or negative.

A Good Coach Can Change a Game... A Great Coach Can Change a Life!