



Rookie Practice Plan

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

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

- **(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.
- **(12:00pm) Jog** - Pick a target at your practice field for the team to jog to and touch (or circle around), and then come back to your starting position. **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 a beginning and an important reminder of the team concept. 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. 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.*
- **(12:05pm) Dynamic Stretches** - Warm ups are an important part of preparing to play. This will be their introduction 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 pile up their gloves on the ground near where they will be doing their warm up catch session (next).*
- **(12:10pm) Catch** - Pair up capable players with capable players, or players with parents to spend 5 minutes of catch to warm up their arms. 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 instruct proper grip (some may be able to now use a 2 finger grip if their hands are large enough).*
- **(12:15pm) Water break** - Let the team take water, and interact with their parent(s) for a couple minutes.
- **(12:18pm) 1st Skill Drill** - **Bring parents onto the field with their child** Take a couple of minutes to explain your first drill (what you are going to be doing, and why you are doing it - explain the objective and why it is important). Then implement and begin. Show an example using one or more of the parents to simulate what you are asking them to do. This engages the parents as well, and makes them feel included on the field, and able to work with their player off the field at home. Practice any drill for no more than 15 minutes (SET A TIMER) this keeps things fresh and keeps the players engaged and not bored. Have the players perform the drill with their parents. Go from child to child to ensure they are doing it correctly - their parents will monitor and ensure continuity of instruction to execution as you go from child to child.
- **(12:35pm) 2nd Skill Drill** - Move into the 2nd Drill, keeping the parent and child dynamic the same. **At this level, we still want parents to be active with their child during both practices and games; however, as kids progress in their skill level, positional awareness, and ability to pay*



attention (follow coaches direction independently) you can taper the amount of parent involvement gradually. The players who have played a year or two of T-Ball will likely progress faster in this regard, while first timers will still need their parents to help bridge the gaps. Make sure to take a couple of minutes before each drill to explain not just the drill, but why it is important and how it will translate into how they play the game.

- **(12:55pm) Take Water** - Let the team take water, and interact with their parent(s) 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 baserunning drills. Have parents time them using their phones, and have them try to improve their times each time they do it. Practice running through 1st base, as well as rounding and running to second. You can transition into having them go from 2nd to 3rd (as well as 2nd to home, 3rd to home, etc), as you progress in their understanding. At this level it is important to begin to teach proper techniques on the bases. After they have reached a base (either properly running through 1st and curling out), or safely into 2nd or 3rd in your drill, make sure to work on how to properly be ready on base, how to stand, how to leave the base on a hit ball, and where they are going next once the ball is hit.
 - **(1:18pm) 4th Skill drill** - Mock Fielding / Hitting Practice - Have parents take their players to fill positions in the field. One player will hit by taking soft front toss from a coach (any additional players will be on-deck ready to hit) with other players attempting to field the ball. This is where first time players begin to understand the concepts of the games and the different positions, while reinforcing these concepts into returning players. 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 - begin to teach 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.
 - **(1:45pm) Wrap It Up** - It is important to finish on a fun note: Have players divvy up into teams and compete in a relay race, or quick game of their choice.
 - **(1:55pm) Clean It Up** - Have the players collect any equipment, and put it into coaches bags. 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!
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Practice/Drill Planning

Weeks 1 through 4:

- **Throwing for Distance & Accuracy / Receiving a thrown ball** - Teach players to throw with their glove side facing the direction they want to throw. *Hold the ball at chest level. *Lift glove leg (no more than a foot). *Break the hands (throwing hand goes back with fingers on top of the ball while the glove points towards the target). *As they step down with their glove leg, the foot will point toward the target and complete the throw. *REPEAT, REPEAT, REPEAT! Have half the kids stand behind at the Pitchers position, and the other half behind 1st. One player at a time, have them field a rolled ground ball and complete a throw to 1st base. After 7 minutes, switch groups. *Split coaches between the pitcher's position and 1st base, instructing the kids in the proper way to field/throw, as well as receive/block/catch at 1st base. **Next practice, do the same from 2nd base position, the next week from the shortstop position, and the next week from 3rd base.
- **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 a parent stationed near their coach (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.
- **Hitting from Tee** - Set up Multiple Tees 5 feet away from backstop. Divvy into groups to practice hitting into the screen. More swings the better, but limit swings to 5 for each kid up to the tee. Players not hitting must stay with parents well away from potential swing path (and not swing the bat away from the tee).
 - *Start at the ready position and away from the tee in a way that they are making contact with the ball out in front of their lead foot.
 - *Next step before swinging is setting their grip - you can have the child find the right grip by either drawing a line with washable marker across their 2nd knuckles on each hand and lining them up when holding the bat, or using their pointer fingers and aligning them so they point the same direction when gripping the bat.
 - *From the ready position, now that the grip is set, have the player bring their hands back and ready to swing. *Do not enforce the "back elbow up" myth* they should be relaxed. Have players focus on the ball through their swing. Watch their heads to make sure that even after they have made contact, that they are still looking at the spot of the tee where the ball was. Make sure they keep two hands on the ball throughout their swing, and do not throw or lose grip of the bat.
- **Hitting from Tee / Hitting from Toss** - Incorporate both into your hitting portion of your practice. It is much better to have a child working off of a tee rather than just waiting around on deck before their chance to hit. Keep one nearby in case the player practicing their hitting from toss is struggling to hit from toss (use a Tee if they miss 5 straight). Have players assume



regular fielding positions to attempt to keep all balls in front of them. *Make sure players are setting up with the same steps they use when doing Tee work.

- ***Playing Scrub*** - This is a way of making practice fun, while having a chance to explain the situations of the game. *Incorporate the element of trying to make a play at 1st base for your fielders to get an out. During your “Mock Fielding / Hitting Practice”, once a batter has had 5 hits, make the last hit “LIVE”. Announce it to all players, and when the hitter puts the ball into play, the fielders try to make an out. The batter plays it as a game situation and tries to advance as if it was a game. This gives a chance to coaches and players to point out to the kids what the objectives are next.

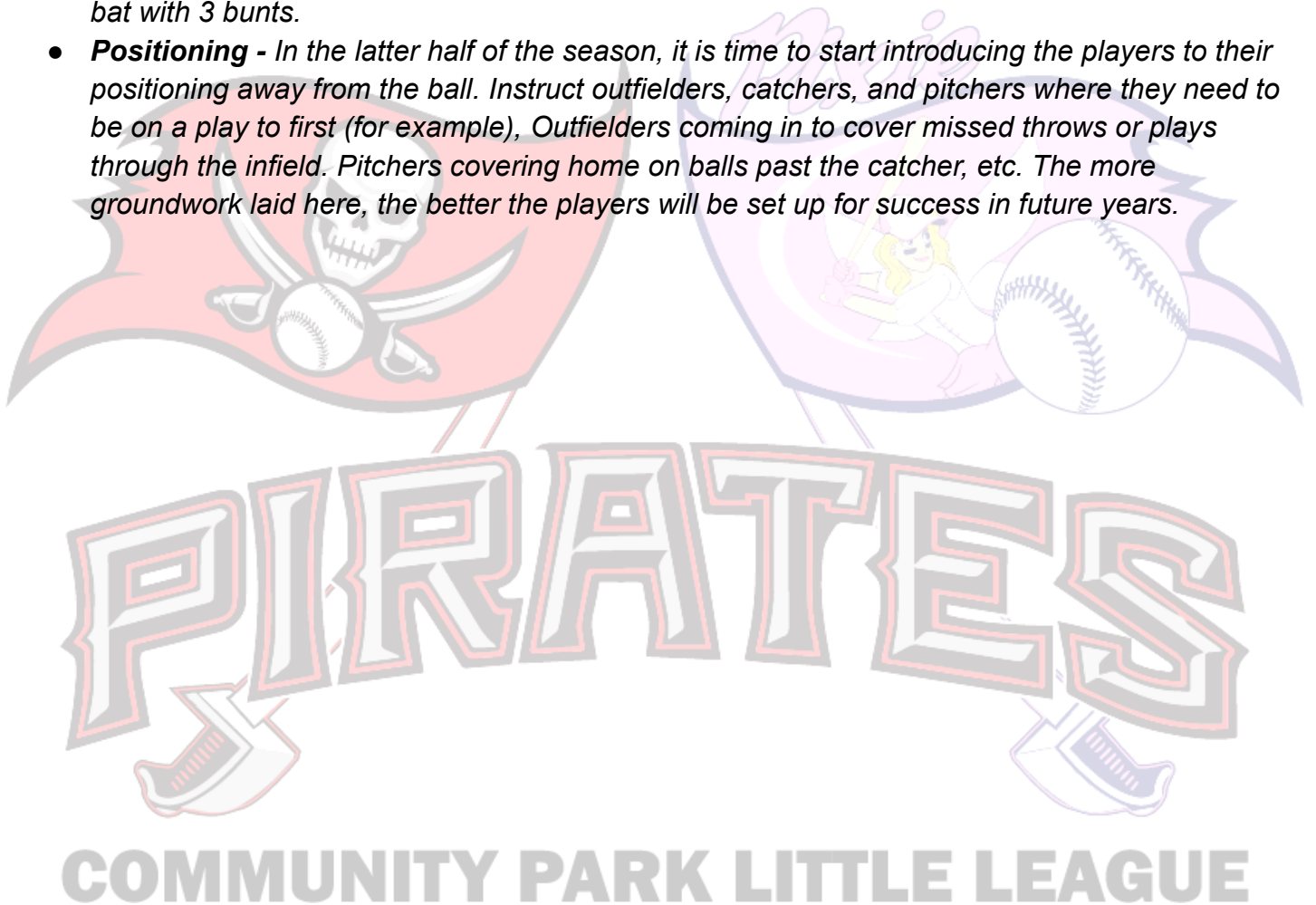
Weeks 5 through 8 (Things to incorporate and add into the above):

- **Pitching** - Use Parents to supplement available catchers if necessary. Practice pitching from each side of the backstop, from a marked distance of 46 feet. 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 to a 2 seam grip, as well as changeup / palmball grip.
- **Catching** - While all players should spend time during the season taking a turn at catcher, due to the time it takes to put on limited equipment, limit individual practice time for specialised practice to 2nd year players (graduating to Minors next year) or advanced ability players. 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** - Some of your kids will be graduating into Minors (Kid Pitch) next year. We need to give them instruction on proper base running and stealing to be ready for their next step. Have them learn 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 latter 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 in future years.





Rookie 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 Rookie level, we believe that parents should be on the field with their kids as much as possible to start the year, and gradually have them step back as their children grow more comfortable with their abilities on their own.. Each team may only have 3 official coaches per team that satisfies their volunteer commitments, but a good relationship with your team parents can go a long way towards easing any issues you may encounter, and supplementing these positions along the way..
- **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 the field during games, and practices, and should be included in any instruction given to your team. 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.
- **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.
- **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, and other parents 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: 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

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!

COMMUNITY PARK LITTLE LEAGUE