

MANCHESTER ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

Tee-BALL SKILLS AND DRILLS

Our goal with Tee-Ball is to provide a fun and challenging atmosphere where the kids will learn the very basic skills.

At this age, all drills to be simple to understand, run in an organized manner, no longer than 15 minutes (4-5 year olds have the attention span of a hamster), and if more than 5 kids, split into groups of 4-6 so that no child is standing for any long period of time during the drills.

Praise them. This is a key development for their psychological development as well as physical. They aren't pro ball players, they are little kids. Make sure they are having fun and encourage them often.

SKILLS TO PRACTICE

Practice EACH SKILL using a 15 minute time limit

HITTING

Batting -- the stance, swing and follow-through

- Adjust the tee with ball set even to the hitter's waist.
- Face tee with feet spread shoulder-width apart.
- Bend knees, body in slight crouch.
- Weight on balls of feet.
- Grip bat; hands together above knob.
- Hold bat firmly; don't squeeze.
- Bring bat up and away from the body.
- Keep shoulders level; bat and head steady.
- Eyes on the ball.
- Short step with the front foot at start of swing.
- Swing level and bring the bat through the center of the ball.
- Watch bat hit ball; keep head down.
- Weight shifts to front foot; back foot stays on the ground.
- Extend arms and follow through; swing around.
- Drop the bat; do not throw it

Key points:

- eyes on the ball
- no cross-handed hold
- position of feet
- stride [weight shift]
- rotation
- the swing

FIELDING

Eyes on the ball. Watch the ball go into the glove. Cover the ball with the other hand

Ground Ball

Stand legs apart, shoulder-width or wider. Bend knees. Get low. Lean forward. Run to the ball. Keep body in front of ball. Glove low to the ground. Scoop or catch the ball and cover it.

Fly Ball

Run to where the ball is going. Call for the ball: "I've got it." Stop and wait for the ball. Hands together, fingers up, shoulder high or over the head. Watch ball into the glove and cover.

Thrown Ball

Bend knees slightly. Watch the ball. On a ball thrown to player above the waist: Hands together facing out; thumbs up. Catch and cover. On a ball thrown below the waist: Hands together facing down; little fingers touching. Catch and cover.

THROWING

Grip and motion

Thumb under the ball. Two or three fingers on top. Don't worry about the seams. Eyes on the target. Legs apart; foot on throwing arm side behind the body. Arm back and up, front shoulder turned toward target. Step toward target with foot opposite the throwing arm. Right-hander with left foot; left-hander with right foot. Push off on back foot as throw begins; end with weight on forward foot. Release the ball in front of body and follow through.

RUNNING

Base running

Run on the balls of the feet. Pump arms back and forth. After the ball is hit Run behind the tee, unless left-handed. Look at first base, not where the ball has gone. Run outside the foul line. Run straight through first base; don't jump on it or slow down. Watch and listen to coach for instructions. When on base Keep one foot touching the base until the next batter hits the ball. Lean forward; when ball is hit, push off base. Know where the ball is. When passing a base, try to touch it on the side without stopping.

Sliding

[not recommended for the youngest players] Start about four to five feet from the base. Arms up, fingers bent, chin down. Bend one leg under the other. Lower leg hits the ground, then the butt and back. Top leg [the extended one] touches the base. No head-first sliding.

DRILLS

- DRILLS SHOULD BE NO LONGER THAN 15 MINUTES IN LENGTH

Bounce to the Bucket. Large basket or cooler put on a base. Outfielders try to throw and bounce the ball into the open container.. Can be done as a game with 10 points for getting the ball in, 5 for hitting the bucket and 1 point for the nearest bounce, no matter where the ball ends up. This drill/game teaches throwing from the outfield to a base.

Catch. Two or more players play catch. Keep score of the number of successful catches.

Catching Contest. Players are in pairs and throw the ball back and forth between each other. Last pair that has not dropped a ball wins.

Catching Flies. Hit or throw fly balls to fielders by using a soft baseball, rubber ball or tennis ball. Repetition and practice are the key to success.

Catch the Coach. Coach runs from home plate to first base. After a few steps, coach shouts "tag me" to a player holding a ball, who runs after the coach and tries to tag him out. Coach to decide where/when/if the runner is successful.

Catch the Players. Coach starts four or more players about 10 seconds apart from home plate to circle the bases. Coach starts last, trying to tag the players [alternate: snatch off their caps.]

Crab Drill. Player is in basic fielding set position stance, crouched forward with glove open and down. Player takes three or four steps as coach rolls the ball.

Crow Hop. Classic throwing drill. Player takes a short step and a hop in the direction of the intended throw.

Distraction. Coach rolls the ball to a fielder, but another player runs in front of the fielder and tries to break the fielder's concentration on catching the ball.

Dive. Coach throws or hits ball to one side or the other of a fielder, who has to dive to make the catch. Then, throw to 1st base.

Just Block It. Coach hits ball directly to a fielder. Emphasis is on stopping the ball from getting through to the outfield. OK to just block the ball; [better, of course, to catch it.] Can be a game with a point scored from every block, two for a catch and zero if the ball is not stopped

One and Two. Two players play catch. Thrower scores 2 points if ball is caught at or above the shoulders. 1 point if caught between waist and shoulders. No points if caught below the waist or not caught. First player to score 10 points wins.

Run Down. Two fielders and a runner, who tries to run from one base to another without getting tagged out. Participants rotate positions.

Scoop or Pick-up. Two players [or two rows of players] line up about 10 feet apart. From kneeling position, one player rolls the ball to the other. Repeat 10 to 15 times.

Track Meet. Two players at home plate. At the "start", one runs to 3rd base, the other to 1st base. They continue running [in opposite directions] around the bases. First one to return to home plate wins.

Note: to avoid collisions, instruct the runner that begins via 1st base to touch 2nd base from the outside corner; the other runner, coming from 3rd base, touches the inside corner of 2nd base.

COACHING BY POSITION

- These can be reinforced by assistant coaches throughout practice and games.

One of the most frequently asked questions that we receive by phone or e-mail is: "I am a new coach. Can you help me teach my players what to do." The following checklist outlines instructional actions by position that should be repeated in practice sessions during the tee ball season. It is equally valid as a reference for experienced coaches.

First base

Show where 1st baseperson is to stand when no runner is on base and when one is on the base. Practice fielding plays; ball thrown to 1B by infielders.

Second base

Position player in place, anticipating action. Practice fielding plays; such as, tagging a runner out.

Shortstops

Show positions: one between 1B and 2B; the other between 2B and 3B. Practice action; such as, fielding balls and throwing to 1B or 2B for an out.

Third base

Show position, anticipating action. Practice action; such as, player diving to knock down ball.

Pitcher

[Stands in pitcher's area but acts as an infielder.] Practice action; such as, fielding ball and throwing to 1B.

Catcher

[Stands behind and away from home plate until ball is hit] Demonstrate: after ball is hit, adult removes tee and bat; catcher moves up to cover plate. Practice actions: catcher tagging baserunner out, catcher throwing to 1B.

General infield activity

Staying behind Playing Line until the ball is hit. Catching short fly balls. Field balls and throwing to a base or to home plate. Tagging runners on the basepath. Relaying a ball from an outfielder to a base; to the catcher at home plate

Outfielders [there may be five or more]

Position players. Practice catching fly balls in a crowd. "I've got it" Practice catching ground balls and throwing to infield. Have one outfielder receive relay from another and throwing to an infielder.

Batter

Give basic hitting instructions. Practice hitting ball, then dropping bat properly and running to first.

Base Runners

Instruct actions at 1B [Coach at 1B signals to run past base or to turn and go on to 2B] Instruct that forced runner on base must advance. non-forced runner can hold position on base. player on base watch what next batter does; where the ball goes. Instruct sliding.

Bench

Team sits in batting order, encouraging the batter. Coach talks to team: Listen for instructions. Play fair; follow the rules. Have fun.

Coach talking to team, after the game

Summarize team's activity. Specifics, not generalities. Recognize progress. Note any humorous thing that happened. No public criticism; as necessary, take player aside. What's next [practice at home, next team practice and game schedule; tell parents] Other comments, as appropriate.