

T- Ball

**Richmond Munster Minor  
Softball Association.**

**Little League**

***T- Ball***

***Coaching Handbook***

# *The League:*

The Richmond Munster Minor Softball Association provides opportunity for children in the community to participate in team sports in a safe and fun atmosphere.

As Coach, your objective is to ensure every child on your team (and throughout the league) derives enjoyment and feelings of accomplishment from their participation.

The children you'll coach are in the formative period of their lives. Since sports play influences each child's character development, your role as coach is of utmost importance within the league.

How you perceive your role with your players will affect the quality of your leadership and the positive results experienced by all of the players. The kids who have coaches who are positive, understanding, encouraging and fair, will reap untold benefits throughout their lives. The attitudes you foster towards team sports and cooperation may last a lifetime.

Your behaviour sets the standard as a role model, through strong and positive leadership. Remember your emphasis must be on cooperation and participation, rather than a "win at all costs" attitude.

- A good coach should strive to develop the whole person, not just those talents which may benefit the team.
- A good coach sees team play and fun as primary goals, game skills as a key focus and winning merely a bonus.
- A good coach is primarily dedicated to teaching wholesome attitudes and practices as positive life skills.

All Richmond Munster Minor Softball coaches have the responsibility to reflect and uphold this coaching philosophy.

# Coaching Notes

These notes have been put together to help you prepare – modify, adapt to your style.

## SEASON'S START - COACHING CLINIC

At the beginning of the season there is a coaching clinic, which must be attended by at least one coach from each team. If you can't make it, arrange for another team coach or parent to come. This is the only time you can pick up team uniforms (t-shirt & hat), equipment (team ball and bat) coaches' handbook and copies of the rules for team parents.

The clinic will feature a brief session on coaching, organization, the rules and the league's philosophy, with a question period following.

## TEAM PHONE CALLS

You will receive by e mail your team list and game schedule. The players do not receive team lists in the mail. The team lists will be posted on [www.rmmsa.org](http://www.rmmsa.org) by May 1<sup>st</sup>. First games for Little League commence during the same week. Please call your teams to introduce yourself. You need to make sure each player is called before the first game.

Please go over the following with each child's parent or care giver:

1. Parents' names, tel. numbers (home & work & cell) and e-mail, in case of rain.
2. Ask about the child's ability, experience, and any special needs (i.e. allergies)
3. Review the date and location of the first game (or practice). Parents should arrive 15minutes before the first game so you can hand out team uniforms, and review rules,etc.
4. Discuss location of the various fields and parking.
5. Parents are responsible for their children and **must remain** at the field during the game. Remind to arrive (at least 10 to 15 minutes) & "check-in" with you.
6. Confirm each player has their own baseball glove. Canadian Tire has low priced options.
7. The team uniform (hat & t-shirt handed out at the first game) are mandatory. Team t-shirt must be worn over any other garments. The hat must also be worn. Kids might want to bring sweat pants/shirts in cool weather.
8. Running shoes are mandatory footwear. (spike baseball shoes are not permitted in the Little League.)
9. Snack participation. Advise each parent that they are responsible for bringing snack to at least one game during the season. (See "Snack Notes" below) Ask for a parent volunteer to organize a list of snack dates and volunteers (and follow-up weekly).
10. Ask parents to help with coaching. Most will with a little encouragement and support.

## THE FIELDS & EQUIPMENT

### Richmond Munster Minor Softball Association

- **Richmond Public School – Ball Diamond:**

The ball diamond is located behind the school. Access the park from Martin Street or Colonel Murray Street. Map is attached. Street. Parking is available on both streets.

- **Munster North – small diamond :**

This ball diamond is located past the stop sign at Macs Milk Convenience store on Munster Road. (Map is attached)  
Parking is available either in the parking lot (shared with soccer parents) or on the street. Please note that the street is a very busy one with lots of traffic.

- **Munster Community Park :**

This ball diamond is located before the stop sign at Macs Milk Convenience store on Munster Road. (Map is attached)  
Parking is available either in the parking lot (shared with soccer parents) or on the street. Please note that the street is a very busy one with lots of traffic.

## EQUIPMENT

### T Ball

The most obvious difference in T-Ball is that there is no pitcher. An adjustable batting tee is set at home plate to hold the ball for the batter to swing at. The batter is allowed to swing as many times as possible (at the umpire's discretion) in order to hit a fair ball. Every player on the offensive team is allowed to bat before that team's turn at bat ends.

The portable T's are stored with the equipment bags, but NOT in the bags. A small, safety ball is used. It is slightly spongy.

### 5-Pitch

We use a special safety ball which is much softer than a regulation softball, and the younger kids use a smaller bat. Please take care of all equipment and return it to its proper location at the end of the season.

Each equipment bag includes: Helmets for each batter and base runner, extra bats, home plate, 1st plate safety base, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> plate bases and catcher's gear (mask, chest protector and shin guards). Shin Guards are optional but the mask and chest protector should be worn.

# T- Ball

## Batting

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### Bat Selection

The starting point for any hitter is finding the right bat size. Have the player grip the bat at the end of the handle and lift it with one arm, fully extended, straight out from their body. They should be able to hold it level with the ground for three seconds without wobbling or shaking. If not, find them a lighter bat.

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### Safety First

Young players don't pay attention to others around them when they swing a bat. For the safety of your players, set a rule during the first practice that no player is to pick up a bat unless instructed to do so by a coach and then enforce the rule. Also remind your players to never go near another player who is holding a bat.

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### Proper Stance

A good training aid at practice can be useful in helping a beginning batter learn the proper stance in the batter's box. Try using a flat piece of rubber approximately 19' long and 5' wide, like the flat pitching rubber that is included with many throw-down practice base sets. Place the aid in relation to the tee where you want the toes of the batter. This will allow the player to assume the proper batting position with minimal assistance.

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### Pivot Foot

Let the batters practice pivoting their back foot by pretending to "squish a bug". By pivoting the back foot during their swing, the batter will generate more power using their hips and have fun learning how.

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### Bat Safety

Many young players get excited and throw their bat after a hit. That can be dangerous for the other players if not corrected. An easy remedy is to place a glove near the tee during practice and have the batter drop their bat on the glove when starting to first base. After a few repetitions they will do it without being told. J. Hamilton

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## Throwing

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### Nose, Toes and Throws

For beginning players, it is helpful to use a rhyme to help the players remember the proper throwing motion. Say "Nose, Toes and Throws" as they practice throwing. "Nose" is for looking at the target before throwing. "Toes" is for stepping toward the target with their glove-side foot and "Throws" is for throwing the ball. It works! Have them begin their throwing motion with their glove-side shoulder facing the target to force them to turn their shoulders as they throw.

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### Accuracy Counts

To develop accuracy, use a fun drill that will make them want to practice. Take a 5-gallon bucket and lay it on the ground with the open end facing the player. Have them practice throwing into the bucket using their throwing technique (Nose, Toes and Throws). You will see a huge difference in their accuracy. The best part is, it's a lot of fun. The kids won't even know their practicing.

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# T- Ball

## Fielding

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### Starting Right

With groups of three or four, teach beginners how to field by showing them the proper hand and body position for fielding grounders. With their gloves off, have them hold their hands in front of them and place their pinkies side-by-side, in a cupped position. Next, demonstrate for them how to bend their knees and get their hands near the ground while keeping their pinkies together. Remind the players to keep their backs straight as possible. With their gloves still off, hand roll grounders to them from eight to ten yards away. Roll it as slow as necessary for them to be successful. By starting this drill without gloves, it allows the players to see the correct hand position during fielding. Let them have several turns and then try it with their gloves on, using the same hand positions.

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### Speed Ball

To help young players develop quick hands and learn to hustle for a past ball, use a fun drill that encourages speed. Have three or four players line up side-by-side with enough space between them that they can't touch each other with their arms out. From about ten yards away have a coach hand-roll balls to each one, in order, as many times as possible in one minute. Do it again and try to increase the number each time you do it. Have them run for past balls and make it fun.

## Running Bases

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### Starting Point

Remember that beginning players will not know to run to first base when the ball is hit. Try something very simple that teaches base running. At the end of every practice, line up all the players on the first base side of home plate. During their first practice just let them take one turn running to first base, all the way around the bases and back home without stopping. Make sure the players in line at home plate are not blocking the runners path as they finish. With each practice, add something new like base coaches at first and third stopping the runners randomly at different bases. This will get the players to watch their coaches for instruction and reinforce the need to be on a base when they stop. Later, let them hold a bat before they start and be sure they drop it at the plate when they run. Make them start over if they sling the bat more than three feet from the batters box.

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### Run Through First

One sure way to get runners in the habit of running through first base after an infield hit is to have a base coach give the runner a hand signal. The coach should give the signal while the player is running toward first base after a hit. The signal could be something simple like holding one or both arms straight up in the air. Have the base coach stand about four feet past first base and give the runner a "high five" as they pass. Have the player run seven or eight feet past the base.

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### Body and Mind Warm-up

Line your team up on the first base side of home plate for a base-running drill. Before each player runs, ask them where a different base or field position is located. For example, ask the player "where is center field"? After a correct answer, or a simple point of the finger, let the player run the bases. Let each player have one or more turns. This will help them remember where all positions are located and that will make it easier to get them in the right spot during games. They think running bases is fun.

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1. Snack time is a good tool for keeping the kids interested in what you're saying. After each practice and game have one parent bring a drink and snack. Take turns.

Snack time is at the end of practice. Just before that we always played a game of "Duck, Duck, and Goose." Kids loved it. Never once did they ask if they could do a certain drill but every practice I was asked whether or not we were going to play duck, duck, and goose and have a snack.

2. Let parents coach the base runners during a game. It helps to have someone telling them when to run while you're helping the hitters.
3. Make it fun.

### **Things You'll Need:**

- Patience
- Patience
- Patience
- Patience

### **Step 1:**

Your first practice is vital. Be prepared - first impressions are important, especially with 4-6 year old kids. A good way to begin is by making introductions. Keep in mind, some kids might be nervous, and making sure you know everyone's name could help them relax. Also, at this age you will have boys and girls of all sizes and ability. Start with some very basic exercises, such as running the bases. This will help release some of the nervous energy while giving you an opportunity to see each child's athleticism.

### **Step 2:**

Solicit help, and lots of it. Hopefully you will have some parents who want to get involved and help on the field. This will allow you to split the kids into smaller groups of 4 or 5. One group can practice hitting while another practices catching and throwing. Ideally you as the coach will oversee all of the drills and rotate from group to group. Your league should have a policy for doing background checks on all coaches. Make sure you and your coaches comply with the league rules.

### **Step 3:**

Spend your first several practices working on the fundamentals. Remember, many of these children will be playing baseball for the very first time. Nothing is too basic for this age group. Start with soft baseballs so that the kids don't get hurt.

### **Step 4:**

Attention span at this age is a big factor. Too much standing around and waiting will cause your players to lose interest. Close each practice with a contest such as racing around the bases. This will keep them interested and give you a motivational tool should you need it.

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### Step 5:

As you approach the first game, review the rules. Do a lot of base running drills with base coaches in place simulating real game conditions. This will save you a lot of outs as the season continues. If possible, set up a scrimmage against another team.

- Put all your kids in their positions on the field. Take a bag of flour or draw your boundaries around each player. This is where they stay. They cannot leave their circle and can catch any ball hit to them.
- Switch positions every 4 or 5 batters. About 90% of action occurs from the pitchers mound to first base. The kids playing shortstop to third base see very little action. After 3 or 4 batters the daisy picking begins so rotate the fielders to keep them involved in the game.

### Tips & Warnings

- Involve all parents who want to help. They will be the key to your success.
- If your own child is on the team, coach him or her as you would any other player. Try not to play favorites, or be too demanding.
- You must be responsible for the safety of all your players.

### Batting Order

You may want a clipboard for your team list, batting order, rules, etc. However, the best batting organizer is a bunch of clothes pegs. Start with your clipboard or a paint stir stick. Attach a coat hanger wire through the hole at the top and hang the clipboard or stick from the batter's cage. Write the names of each of your players on their own clothes peg. Clip the pegs on the side of the board/stick in that day's batting order, with the first batter at the top. You'll find this tool indispensable, as the kids can now read their batting order without having to ask you. Change the batting order at each game so that all children have a chance to bat first or last. Easy formats include alphabetical from A to Z, from Z to A, and numerically by T-shirt number, forward and backwards and from the middle on.

### Field Positions

It is extremely important for the kids that field positions be rotated. This can be slightly more difficult to organize, but not unmanageable. First of all, every child should have a chance to play most positions. Fundamentally, those who play infield one inning should play outfield the next. (Understanding that with higher numbers of players on a team, there can be some overlap). Some coaches use a table to keep positions organized week to week. You might want to do up your own list.

## **PARENTAL HELP**

Ask parents to help. There is much to organize with this age group, and you will appreciate any and all help. Particular areas for help are:

### Batting & Line-up

You will need a coach to organize the rest of the team when you are at bat. This coach will ensure all team members stay behind the batter's cage and that no one holds onto or climbs the batters cage (thrown bats break fingers). He or she will coordinate the batting order and make sure the next batter is ready with their helmet on, and ensure that the team is quiet and respectful of their teammate currently at bat. This coach should ensure that only the batter in the batter's box has a bat in hand.

Batting demands the most attention, and should be coached by someone who knows:

- A. How the bat is held.
- B. How the feet are positioned
- C. How the swing is made
- D. What to do with the bat after hitting the ball. (Don't throw it!)

Ensure everyone, including spectators, are standing clear.

### Base/Fielding Coaches:

When your team is at bat, you are allowed to have coaches at 1st and 3rd bases. These coaches help the runners to know when to run and when to stop.

When your team is in the field, you are not allowed to have any coaches on the field.

### Umpire:

The umpire's job has more to do with ensuring safety and general organization than with the rules. He or she also has to keep track of the number of pitches, outs and the overall score. This is an important job as the umpire's calls are final. Each team is responsible for providing an umpire for the opposite team. (You may use the same umpire, however both coaches must agree)

## **DISPUTES**

Baseball has lots of opportunities to question calls and plays, but in this league there will be no disputes. This makes it simple for the umpires to run the games and makes sure that all the kids will have lots of opportunity to play and have fun. Don't waste time disputing line calls. It also keeps the focus where it belongs, with the kids learning to play and building their confidence throughout the season.

**Parents, kids and coaches have been told that verbal abuse of any kind will NOT be tolerated, in particular towards; the kids, volunteer coaches, and umpires.**

If there are any abusive situations, or behaviour that is not in keeping with league philosophy, please contact your convener.

## **SNACK:**

One of the highlights for the kids at each game, is a snack, organized by the coaches (or a volunteer parent), but brought by alternating parents. Coaches should bring snack for the first game and arrange for different parents to bring snack for each of the season's games. Good things to bring are cut-up oranges, apples, water and juice (in juice boxes). Cookies, fruit roll-ups, and pop are popular options. If bringing anything messy, remember face clothes or wet rags, and garbage bags. Please advise parents not to bring anything with **peanuts**, so as to avoid this allergy issue.

## **RAIN:**

If it's raining heavily in the morning, and stops in the afternoon, you should still play. The fields will drain, "it almost never rains on a ball park!" History has shown that most games canceled at 3:00 p.m. end up with sun breaking through the clouds at 5:30. If in doubt go to the field and make your decision there, within 15 minutes after game start time. Safety, however, will not be compromised because of field conditions or possible thunderstorms.

If you cancel the game, call and advise all of your players. If there is any sign of lightening or thunder around game time or during a game, the game must be canceled.

We would like the players to show up at the field unless the coaches of both teams make a decision early in the day and advise their players. If you haven't called and spoken to all of your players, you should expect them to show up at the field. You must go to the field, and remain there until 15 minutes after start time, to make sure you advise anyone who shows up.

**THE END OF SEASON GAME:**

At the final season game, the league will arrange a Fun Day. (Date to be confirmed) Trophies will be provided to coaches to be handed out to each player. Hot dogs, drinks and activities will be there for all to enjoy.

**FIRST AID:**

Parents must remain at the field as they are responsible for their children. If they must leave, they must ensure that another parent will take responsibility for their child. The majority of our coaches have First aid and CPR. However since our coaches are volunteers we rely on some parents that have First Aid and CPR to assist in an emergency.

**CONVENERS:**

If you have questions about teams, scheduling, rules, anything about the league, please call the league convener. They can answer your questions directly.

**Little League Convener – Shari Crawley @ 613-838-4994 (home) or 613-724-0642 (cell) or kermittbaby2001@rogers.com**

**THANK YOU FOR COACHING !!!**

This is a volunteer run league for the benefit of the children who play. We receive much praise from parents who appreciate the time and effort you give to help their kids learn a sport in an encouraging environment. Remember, if you're having fun, the kids probably are too!

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