

About Blastball

A fun and exciting T-Ball league for 4–5 year old boys and girls!

What is Blastball?

Blastball is an excellent introduction to T-Ball and baseball for young boys and girls, known for the base that makes a distinctive "HONK!" when kids jump on it. The game is fast-paced and full of action, perfect for the shorter attention span of youngsters.

Blastball is very safe because players use a foam bat and ball. It teaches fundamentals such as hitting, throwing, and fielding while emphasizing the importance of teamwork and sportsmanship.

How is the game played?

- Two teams of around five players each alternate between batting and playing the field, just like T-Ball and baseball.
- Kids do not have formal field positions, so they'll get a chance to catch and throw the ball often with guidance from their coach.
- Everyone gets a turn at bat.
- After hitting the ball from a batting tee, players run to the blastbase and jump on it to make the distinctive "HONK!"
- When the ball is stopped by a fielder, he or she holds the ball up high and shouts "BLAST!"
- If the fielder yells "BLAST!" before the batter "HONKS!" the base, the batter is out. If not, the batter scores a run!

BLASTBALL

Blastball is played with a maximum of 6 players per team. A smaller number, such as 2 or 3 players per teams works equally well.

The defensive players take an infield or outfield position. A Blastball is placed on the Blast Tee and the first batter hits the ball and runs to the BlastBase. If the batter reaches the Base (the only base used) before a defensive player either catches the BlastBall in the air (an automatic out) or fields it and yells "BLAST", he scores a run. If the ball is caught or fielded and "BLAST" is yelled before the runner gets to the BlastBase, then the runner is out.

You end the inning by batting once around the line-up. No score needs to be kept.

The BlastBase is audible, emitting a loud "HONK" that the kids love whenever the runner stomps on the base. When fielded, the defensive player can throw the BlastBall back to another player, an adult or a SportsNet positioned near home plate (safely away from the Tee).

Gloves/Mitts are not needed because of the softness and size of the Ball. The fear factor of being hit is eliminated from the game altogether. While batting helmets are not needed because the BlastBall is not being pitched or thrown to make the out, for optimum safety helmets are recommended.

Field Set-Up

- In an open area, position your BlastTee/home plate so that hitting allows you a safe area of play. Like a regular ball diamond, from the Tee pace off 30 feet to the right and position your BlastBase. This establishes your fair/foul line to the right.
- To the left of the Tee and perpendicular to your BlastBase line, pace off an equal distance and position your cone. This establishes your fair/foul line to the left.
- Now pace off 15 feet directly in front of the Tee and lay out your Line Marker running between the (hypothetical) first and third base lines. This becomes the fair/foul line for play. If a ball is hit inside of that line it is foul and should be re- teed for another try. If it goes beyond the line, either in the air or on a roll it is considered in play.

Variations of game play include having defensive players pass the Blastball hot potato style, or over-under until the last defensive player completes the play and shouts 'Blast'.

About developing ball skills:

The following material is excerpted from a six day physical education unit posted on the web from: School District: Livonia Public Schools, School Name: Holmes Middle School, School City, State, Zip: Livonia, MI, 48154

Note that: Completely irrelevant sections were deleted.

The material is valuable because it lists the criteria to assess proper technique – hence provides a guide as to what that looks like.

Targeted State Frameworks/Content Standards/Benchmarks:

1. Students will participate in an activity they can play for the rest of their lives. Slow pitch softball is a sport that you can play in leagues in until you physically cannot anymore.
2. Students will demonstrate fundamental object control by throwing and catching the rubber softballs throughout the unit.
3. Students will have a cognitive test on the rules, positions, and terms of softball.
4. Students will be socially engaged during this activity and will demonstrate proper sportsmanlike characteristics during the unit.

Student Objectives/Learning Outcomes:

Day 1 – When students are on the grassy field south of the track, given a rubber softball and a partner, students will **demonstrate proper throwing technique** 80% of the time

1. Students will aim their opposite (non-throwing) shoulder at their target
2. Students will bring their throwing arm back so their upper body is in the shape of the letter "T"

When students are on the grassy field south of the track, given a rubber softball and a partner, students will **demonstrate proper catching technique** 80% of the time.

1. Students will be in a proper athletic position when their partner is throwing the ball to them
2. Using two hands, students will receive the ball with their fingers up if the ball is above their waist and fingers down if the ball is below their waist.

Day 2 – When students are on the grassy field south of the track, given a partner and a rubber softball, students will **demonstrate the proper ready position for fielding ground balls** 75% of the time

1. Students will be in a proper athletic stance before the ball is grounded to them
2. Students will have their hands close to the ground anticipating the ball

When students are on the grassy field south of the track, given a partner and a rubber softball, students will **demonstrate the proper technique for fielding a fly ball** 75% of the time.

1. Students will be in an athletic stance before their partner tosses them the ball
2. Students will use two hands to catch the ball

Day 3 - When students are in their squads, given proper space to practice the students will **demonstrate a proper hitting stance** 100% of the time

1. Students will demonstrate a proper grip, holding the bat with their dominant hand on top and their non-dominant hand on the bottom of the bat.
2. Students will aim their target shoulder at the pitcher.

When students are in their squads, given proper space to practice the students will **demonstrate a proper hitting swing** 75% of the time

1. Students will take a step toward the pitch when it is delivered
2. Students will maintain a strong swing by following through on their swings.

Given the opportunity to play a game on the ball diamonds, students will demonstrate locations for positions 100% of the time

1. Infielders will play off the bases, not directly on them.
2. Outfielders will be spread out, not standing next to each other.
3. Students will hustle out to and back from the fields.
4. Students will hustle to and from their positions in the field.

Also: **Students will congratulate others** when someone gets a good hit or makes a good defensive play regardless of which team the student is on.

Player Progression Baseball – as a point of comparison

Cribbed from an American source ... it seems standard for 'hardball'

Little League has several levels organized around age and skill in order to help develop players from ages 5 through 16. The progression of a child will vary based on the age at which the child starts playing organized baseball and the amount of time the child practices at home and school. Parents spending the time to practice with their child and a child's own athletic ability play a large role in how a child will progress through the levels.

Each child is different which is why there are age ranges that overlap between levels. For children starting later than age 5 or 6, or for those children who have not successfully demonstrated the required baseball skills, it is best to let the child play down a level to gain confidence and have fun rather than place the child in a situation where he or she is playing below the skill level of their teammates.

Whatever the progression, it is important to make certain that a child is not pushed too fast where he or she is not given enough time to learn, practice and master the fundamentals of baseball. Remember most children will not play professional baseball, but by learning how to play the game and having fun while doing it, we continue the tradition of this great American past-time for the next generation.

Placement Guidelines by Player Age for Ages 5-9

League Age is the child age on April 30th. For example, a child born between May 1, 1997 and April 30th, 1998 would be League Age 8 for the 2006 baseball season.

- Age 5 – All children Age 5 will play T-Ball.
- Age 6 – Most children Age 6 will play T-Ball. Those children at age 6 that have played T-Ball at age five AND are comfortable catching, throwing, and swinging at a pitched ball may request to play 7/8's.
- Ages 7 & 8 – Most children Age 7 and 8 will play 7/8's. A player is ready to advance out of 7/8's when the player is starting to catch the ball with the glove "up" (at face level) as opposed to basket catches with the glove "down". The player will be successful putting the ball in play in most coach-pitch at bats. A ball thrown or hit at a 7/8's player's head will usually result in the player making the effort to catch the ball with periodic success.
- Age 9 – Most children Age 9 will play Farm. The player is eligible to participate in the draft at this age for selection to Farm level and above.

Baseball – as a point of comparison

Note that most of the skills listed apply to softball.

PLAYER PROGRESSION - Baseball Tee Ball (Ages 5 - 6)

Any child who will attain the age of 5 or 6 years old on or before April 30th of the current season shall be eligible to play Tee Ball.

This division is primarily for 5 and 6 year olds who are just starting to play organized baseball. All 6 year olds must have played one year of Tee Ball in North Bothell Little League before advancing to the 7/8's level.

Tee Ball is generally the first introduction to organized baseball for most players. The primary objective by the end of the season is to ensure that each player has a "positive experience" with baseball, desires to play again the following year, and has successfully demonstrated the skills listed below.

- **Warm up techniques**
- **Names of defensive positions**
- **How to execute a throw (proper grip)**
- **Proper fielding position (down and ready)**
- **How to hold a bat properly**
- **What to do after the ball is hit (as a batter and a runner)**
- **Knows how, why and when to run to the next base**

7/8's (Ages 7 - 8) Any child who will attain the age of 7 or 8 years old on or before April 30 of the current season shall be eligible to play 7/8's.

At the 7/8's level, all games will be coach-pitch for all innings. A safety ball will be used at 7/8's since this will be the first-time children will be pitched to versus hitting off of a tee.

This division is primarily for 7 and 8 year olds who have successfully demonstrated all of the Tee Ball skills. As with Tee Ball the primary objective at this level is to ensure that each player has a "positive experience" with baseball, desires to play again the following year, and has learned the skills listed below.

- **TEAM concept**
- **Warm up techniques**
- **Number of outs per inning**
- **Fielding techniques (proper down and ready position)**
- **Uses both hands to catch the ball vs. one handed or trapped catches**
- **Understands where to make the defensive play**
- **Proper Batting position**
- **Proper base running (on the ground vs. in the air)**
- **Good Sportsmanship (End each game with a High Five)**

Baseball – as a point of comparison

Farm Baseball (Ages 8 - 10)

Any child who will attain the age of 8, 9 or 10 years old on or before April 30 of the current season shall be eligible to play Farm. A player must have played one year at the 7/8's level (previously Farm) to be eligible for Farm.

This division is primarily for 8 and 9 year olds who have successfully demonstrated all of the 7/8's skills. This division is also for 10 year olds who were not drafted to the Minors level.

At the Farm level, all games will be player-pitch and will use a hard ball for all innings.

The Farm level is where the players should recognize situations and understand "HOW BEST" to make certain plays. As with 7/8's the primary objective is to ensure that each player has a "positive experience" with baseball, desires to play again the following year and has learned the skills listed below with the emphasis on "HOW BEST".

- **Advanced warm up techniques**
- **The ball is always "LIVE"**
- **Ground ball fielding techniques**
- **Where to make the play**
- **Relaying the ball from the outfield to the infield**
- **Batting stance (closed, open)**
- **Pitching mechanics**
- **Bunting**
- **Infield Fly Rule**
- **Communication (calling for a fly ball)**
- **Backing up plays**
- **Pitcher position**
- **Difference between a Force Play and a Must Tag**
- **Good Sportsmanship**

Baseball – as a point of comparison

Minors Baseball (Ages 9 - 12)

Any child who will attain the age of 9, 10, 11, or 12 years old on or before April 30 of the current season shall be eligible to play Minors. A player must be selected by a manager through the player review and draft process in order to play at the Minors level.

The primary objective at the Minors level is the same as the previous levels with emphasis on preparing players for advancement to the Majors level. The Minors level is both competitive and instructional with more emphasis on instructional than competitive during the regular season.

It is critical that the managers and coaches of this division provide sound training and good balance of playing time and position rotations for all players. Besides building upon the skills taught to them at the preceding levels, players should successfully demonstrate the following skills:

- **Coming on time to practices and games prepared to play baseball**
- **Competence in batter's box positioning**
- **Proper grip of the bat**
- **Acceptable level of determining ball vs. strike**
- **Passing the bat through the strike zone**
- **Proper base running techniques including:**
 - **Stealing after the ball crosses the plate**
 - **When to tag up**
 - **How and when to slide**

- **Correct pitching mechanics and baseball grips (fastball, change-up)**
- **Proper footwork to field and throw quickly**
- **How to go back on a fly ball**
- **Sacrifice situations**
- **How to rundown a base runner (pickle)**
- **Covering bases and backing up positions after a hit**
- **Always show good Sportsmanship on and off the field (no bad mouthing other players)**

Baseball – as a point of comparison

Major Baseball (Ages 11 - 12)

Any child who will attain the age of 11 or 12 years old on or before April 30 of the current season shall be eligible to play Majors. A player must be selected by a manager through the player review and draft process in order to play at the Majors level.

The Majors level is both competitive and instructional with admittedly more emphasis on the competitive aspects of the game than at the Minors level. Managers focus on fielding a competitive team while also providing the players with a fun learning experience.

Players should focus on refining their baseball skills with a strong emphasis on consistency. Often the difference between an average player and a good player is the ability to consistently execute the required skills.

Players in the Majors level should:

- **Come on time to practice and prepared for practice or games (including safety equipment)**
- **Show proper batting stance, bat position, and swing execution**
- **Reasonable competence in making contact with the ball**
- **Know the difference between bunting for a base hit and a sacrifice bunt**
- **Demonstrate proper base running techniques including:**
 - Exploding off the base after the ball crosses the plate
 - When to tag up vs. going half way
 - Proper sliding techniques
- **Execute proper pitching motion (can throw 50 - 70 pitches without experiencing noticeable arm discomfort)**
- **Use Catching skills (blocking the plate with the ball, blocking wild pitches, throwing out runners)**
- **Cover bases correctly when receiving a throw or fielding a ball**
- **Understand how to go back on a fly ball**
- **Properly execute a double play**
- **Execute a run down - both as a runner and a fielder**
- **Know what can happen after a ball is caught in foul territory**
- **Use the relay man from out field or throw home if needed**
- **Cover all bases and backs up other players after a hit**
- **Always show good Sportsmanship on and off the field (no bad mouthing other players)**

RMMSA 2017 Skill Development

The table demonstrates progression as older players require more skill to succeed on the diamond. Time spent practicing is key. The small groups of kids who take gloves and a ball to the park are more adept on the field. The single thing many players can do to improve their game is to run. Practice walking, running, and jogging. Do some sideways crab walk steps to improve agility and make the sideways run to that fly ball more comfortable.

Table 1: RMMSA Skill Development by Division

Skill	BlastBall	T-Ball	5-Pitch	Mite	Squirt and older
Hitting	Grip bat, approach T, swing through strike zone w T, Blastball and Blastbat	Grip bat, approach T swing through strike zone w T, and baseball T-ball ball and bat, Drop the bat and run	Grip bat, approach batter's box, swing through strike zone w Coach pitch, 11" indoor training ball and Official Softball bat Shift weight from back to front foot Run and drop the bat	Grip bat, approach batter's box, swing through strike zone w opponent pitch, 11" softball and Official Softball bat Open or close stance Swing to try to connect with iffy pitching Judge balls and avoid being hit	Grip bat, approach batter's box, swing through strike zone w opponent pitch, 11" / 12" softball and Official Softball bat Open or close stance Bunt Swing to try to connect with iffy pitching Judge balls and avoid being hit

Skill	BlastBall	T-Ball	5-Pitch	Mite	Squirt and older
Running	Overrun the blast base	Overrun 1 st base	Overrun 1 st base Stick on other bags	Trust the base coach Learn to lead-off	Trust the base coach Lead-off Get down the line
Fielding	Thumbs together (ball in air above waist) Pinkies together (ball in air below waist) Palms up (ball on the ground)	Thumbs together Pinkies together Palms up Call your ball Play your place	Thumbs together Pinkies together Palms up Call your ball Play your position Control the ball and then throw it in	Use proper form for where the ball is Play your position Shift to cover Control the ball and then throw it in Get a live ball to the pitcher	Use proper form for where the ball is Play your position Shift to cover Control the ball and then throw it in Get a live ball to the pitcher

Skill	BlastBall	T-Ball	5-Pitch	Mite	Squirt and older
Throwing (Overhand)	Look, point, throw	Point shoulder at target, extend throwing arm to make a T, step to pivot shoulders, release.	Point shoulder at target, extend throwing arm to make a T, step to pivot shoulders, release.	Increasing distance, speed and accuracy Fast underhand slingshot or windmill Pitching, and Catching	Increasing distance, speed and accuracy Fast underhand slingshot or windmill Pitching, and Catching
Knowledge of the game:	Names of positions	Names of positions	Names and roles of positions	ROS local rules 5 runs per inning, all innings	ROS local rules Run max does not apply to the last inning
Rules	Out/score		Hustle on and off the field	Stealing, throw to cut-off, position shift left or right	Peewee's can run on a dropped third strike.
How it's played	Hustle on and off the field	Hustle on and off the field	After 5 pitches the batter walks to first	Live ball/ returned to Pitcher Hustle on and off the field	Knowing the fielding play, executing what was practiced. Hustle on and off the field
				As per the Little League list	