



**5-PITCH
COACHING HANDBOOK**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	3
ABOUT THE LEAGUE	3
ROLE OF THE COACH.....	3
PREPARING FOR THE SEASON.....	4
COACHES MEETING	4
TEAM LISTS, FIRST TEAM COMMUNICATION	4
FIELD LOCATIONS	4
EQUIPMENT.....	4
<i>Additional optional equipment/materials.....</i>	<i>4</i>
WEEKLY PLAN	5
COMMUNICATION WITH THE TEAM	5
STRUCTURE OF THE WEEKLY SESSION	5
WEEK 1 PLAN	5
PRACTICES.....	7
PARENTAL HELP	7
BATTING & LINE-UP	7
BASE/FIELDING COACHES.....	7
SNACKS.....	7
WEATHER ISSUES	7
CONVENOR	8
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES	8

Introduction

About the league

The Richmond Munster Minor Softball Association (RMMSA) provides an opportunity for children in the community to participate in team sports in a safe and fun atmosphere. It is important to note that RMMSA is run by volunteers, and we do our best to bring quality softball programs to the community.

5-pitch is a non-competitive program focused on having fun, learning foundational softball skills, and learning how to be part of a team.

Working together as a coaching team, we will present a 5-pitch program that is designed to provide players with an introduction to the game that is grounded in positive encouragement, learning the fundamentals, and having a lot of fun.

There are three big things to work on this season:

- **HAVE FUN** – When we enjoy what we’re doing, we usually do it better.
- **WORK HARD** – Let’s agree to give our best effort at every practice and game.
- **BE A GOOD SPORT** – Being a good sport means we treat all players, coaches, and officials with respect.

Role of the coach

As a coach or assistant coach, your objective is to ensure that every child on your team (and throughout the league) feels safe, feels welcome, and derives enjoyment and feelings of accomplishment from their participation.

The attitudes you foster toward team sports and cooperation can last a lifetime, and can influence players’ confidence and decisions about participating in the future. Your behaviour should set the standard as a role model, through strong and positive leadership.

A good coach should be:

- **Positive**
- **Understanding**
- **Encouraging**
- **Fair**
- **Patient**

Parents, coaches and players are expected to be respectful. If you encounter any situations or behaviour that do not follow the league’s philosophy, please contact your convenor.

THANK YOU FOR COACHING! Parents, players and the association appreciate the time and effort you give to help the kids learn a sport in an encouraging environment. Remember, if you’re having fun, the kids probably are too!

Preparing for the season

Coaches meeting

The Little League Convenor will schedule a meeting with the coaches and assistant coaches prior to the start of the season. This will include a discussion on coaching, the organization, the rules and the league's philosophy. If possible, a coaching clinic may also be scheduled, which would encompass demonstration and participation in some of the stations that will be used during the season for skills development.

Team lists, first team communication

Team lists will be provided to the coaches by email at least 2 weeks prior to the start of the season, if possible. Coaches are responsible for communicating with their team as soon as possible to provide the parents with key information to prepare for the season. The following information should be included:

- Welcome message and introduction of coaches/assistant coaches
- Date/time/location of first game
- Schedule for the season
- Location of the fields and parking information
- Confirm equipment needed
 - Comfortable clothing to suit the weather
 - Running shoes (no sandals, no spiked metal cleats)
 - Baseball glove
 - Bottle of water
 - Note team shirt will be provided, and should be worn each week
- Advise that parents must remain at the field, and that their participation is encouraged (where appropriate)
- Request for volunteers for bringing healthy snacks

Field locations

Field locations may vary from year to year, based on availability. Please refer to the RMMSA website for current field locations and parking information -

http://www.rmmsa.org/little_league_diamond_locations.htm

Equipment

Each team will be provided an equipment bag containing the following:

- Batting helmets (4-6 helmets of various sizes)
- Balls suitable for 5-pitch (1 for each player + 1 for each coach)
- Bats (3-4 bats)
- Bases (safety base, 2nd base, 3rd base)
- Catcher's equipment (mask, chest protector and shin guards)

Additional optional equipment/materials

Coaches may opt to bring additional equipment or materials to assist with skills development stations. This is NOT required, and is at the discretion of the coach.

Weekly Plan

Communication with the team

Coaches should send out a team email the day before a scheduled game to confirm the field location, and the parent who volunteered to bring the healthy snack.

Structure of the weekly session

Each week, coaches should follow the same general plan for the structure of the session. The focus of the skills development can vary from week to week, but maintaining a consistent structure provides some stability for the players, which is important with this age group. The following is the recommended weekly plan:

1. Welcome the players
2. Warm-up
3. Practice/skills development
4. Game
5. Final words, healthy snack

Note that coaches should arrive at least 15 minutes early to set up stations (as applicable) and welcome the players.

Week 1 Plan

Materials to bring:

In the first week, it is recommended that the coaches bring the following (in addition to equipment):

- Name tags for kids and coaches
- Team list
- Healthy snack for after the game
- Snack sign-up sheet

The First Game:

At the first game, you need to arrive early to hand out team uniforms (team t-shirt and hat) to each child. While some of the players may have played before, others will be playing for the first time. Please review key softball rules and organizational strategy (your rules) with the whole team. Some players at this age probably haven't played before and will need some extra coaching in batting and fielding.

Arriving at least 10-15 minutes before game time allows you to organize field positions and batting order. Players (and other coaches) prefer a coach who lets them play for a full hour. **PLAN AHEAD!** Upon arrival at the field, introduce yourself to the other coach and plan when you'll start the game, ideally after 20 minutes of warm up/skills and drills, allowing 60 minutes of game time followed by snack and wrap-up.

If you go over that time that is fine as long as each player has a turn. Don't cut the game short because of the time.

For 5-pitch, the umpire is one of the coaches or a parent volunteer.

Ask a parent to help out. It doesn't matter from which team.

If your team is in the field first, you need a parent to help the catcher put on their equipment, while you organize field positions.

If your team is batting first, and for that matter, whenever your team is at bat, make sure the ball is not put into play until the umpire has signalled ready.

Make sure that if kids want to practice batting or swinging a bat, they do so under supervision and away from everyone, for safety.

First at Bat:

In 5-pitch, one of the coaches of the team at bat or a parent pitches to the team. This is a most critical part of the game, because, if you can't pitch, you'll strike out all of your own players. You should decide who will pitch, or take turns. Don't be shy about asking a parent to help if they can pitch. The players appreciate a good pitcher. Each batter should take a few practice swings. Gauge the height of their swing so you can adjust your pitching height.

- Each batter is allowed 5 pitches to make contact with the ball.
- A foul ball counts as a strike. Discretion is allowed, so if a coach wants to give a player that needs help or encouragement an extra pitch this is ok **BUT IT SHOULD NOT BE ABUSED OR DONE ALL THE TIME.**

At the beginning of the season, the coach remaining at the batting cage should watch the batters' swing. This will allow you to correct their grip (hands should be touching each other with forward arm hand at the bottom of the bat), stance (feet should be parallel, shoulder width apart, and at right angles to the direction the ball should go), and position (players will have a tendency to stand too close to the plate).

When the ball is hit, the batter should drop the bat and run to first base. Note that players at this age will sometimes throw the bat (make sure they understand the rule on bat throwing). Ensure that all players not in the field and all spectators are safely out of any thrown bat's reach. The runner may overrun first base.

When the runner is heading home from third base, they **must not touch** home plate, but rather **run across** the "Home Plate Line" (see applicable rule). Again, this is for safety reasons, to avoid collisions.

First in the Field:

When the first ball is hit, many of the fielders may run for it. You will find this an opportunity (continuing all season long) to coach the players on playing positions and backing up each other. As throwing is starting to be successful for many at this age, we encourage players to make a play (throwing the ball to 1st base, as an example) as it follows the true spirit of softball. Where possible, try and have able catchers playing at 1st base. Players who chose to make a play (throw the ball to 1st base, as an example) may find they overthrow, or the base player will not catch the ball, and the runners will be allowed to move forward one base. You may find it safer not to make a second play after an error.

After the game all coaches and players shake hands.

Practices

During the warm-up period before games, you can practice various skills, such as throwing, batting, catching, and fielding.

There are no other formal practices arranged. However, if your team wants extra practice time, contact the convenor for diamond availability.

Encourage the parents to practice both batting and catching with their kids at home. It only takes a 5-minute practice a few times a week to have a significant impact on their children's' progress.

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.

Snacks

One of the highlights for the kids at each game is a snack. Coaches should bring snack for the first game and arrange for different parents to bring snack for each of the season's games (send a reminder on the day prior). Healthy choices are recommended such as cut-up watermelon, oranges, apples, goldfish crackers, water and juice (in juice boxes). If bringing anything messy, remember face clothes or wet wipes, and garbage bags. Please advise parents not to bring anything with **peanuts**, so as to avoid this allergy issue.

Weather Issues

Any cancellations due to weather will be posted to the RMMSA website and also communicated by the convenor to the coaches by email. It is expected that the coaches contact parents of all players by email or phone to notify of the cancellation. 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 there is any sign of lightening or thunder around game time or during a game, the game must be cancelled.

Convenor

If you have questions about teams, scheduling, rules, anything about the league, please call the league convenor. They can answer your questions directly. The contact information for the convenor is posted on the website (www.rmmsa.org).

Additional Resources

The following are additional resources that may be a good source for ideas for practices and developing fundamental skills:

- Little League Coach Pitch main page: <https://www.littleleague.org/play-little-league/coach-pitch/>
 - o **12-week coach-pitch program** (PDF Guide with weekly guides and drills): <https://ll-production-uploads.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/2017/12/Coach-Pitch-12-Week-Program.pdf>
- FUNDamentals softball skills – Softball Australia:
<http://assets.softball.org.au/dl/sal/Coaching/Resources/FUNDamentals/FUNDamental%20Skills.pdf>
- How to coach-pitch to children (*article*) – Forbes.com:
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/bobcook/2011/05/17/how-to-coach-pitch-to-small-children/#56259e474a27>