



**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

T-BALL COACHES MANUAL

3-5 year olds

YMCA OF METROPOLITAN DENVER



PRACTICE OUTLINE

YMCA YOUTH SPORTS PRACTICE SESSION PLANS 3-5 year olds

Warm-up (5 minutes)

Fitness component (5 Minutes)

Skills Drills (15 minutes)

Game / Play (15 minutes)

Team Circle (10 minutes)

YMCA YOUTH SPORTS PRACTICE SESSION PLANS

WEEK 1

Warm-Up (5 Minutes)

Station an adult at each of the four bases. Line the players up at home plate and start each one running to first having 5 seconds between each player. As each player arrives at each base, they should make contact with the base with their right foot and yell out the name of the base. If the player fails to touch the base, make them come back to the base before proceeding to the next base.

Fitness Component (5 Minutes) GENERAL FITNESS

Following the warm-up, gather your players and briefly discuss the fitness concept for that practice. In this first practice your fitness topic will be more general, but in future practices you will often discuss more specific concepts and issues such as safety, flexibility, healthy habits, and more.

Key Idea: General Fitness

Gather children into a group. "Everyone jump 10 times. Our muscles help us jump. When you use your muscles a long time without getting too tired, it improves your endurance, which means you can run and play longer without getting tired. Now run really fast to second base and stay there." Wait for them to all get there. "Running strengthens your heart and lungs. Now touch your toes; try to keep your fingers there while I count. Stretching makes you flexible, like a rubber band. When we play t-ball, our bodies run, throw, and move. It makes our bodies stronger and improves our fitness, which means we can run and play longer and faster. Having good physical fitness is important for t-ball and for being healthy. Every practice we will talk about fitness in our fitness circles."

Following the fitness circle, get the kids playing a game. Follow this with a question and answer session (you asking, kids answering) that pertains to the game and the skills and tactics they need to learn to be successful.

WEEK 1

Skills/Drills (15 Minutes) FIELDING AND HITTING

Split players into two groups. One group will work on fielding and the other will work on batting. They will then switch halfway through.

Fielding a Ball—Players should spread out within the infield. Explain where each position is and the importance of staying in the general area. Players should be down and ready to field the ball. Coach will toss, or hit the ball to each infielder. When player catches it, they will throw it to the first baseman and they will step on first base. Rotate positions so each player to get them all involved.

Tip: Have an adult standing by first baseman to retrieve wild throws. Adult will throw it back to other coach at home plate.

Coaches' Cue:

"Get in ready position."

"Move your feet to the ball."

"Put your glove on the ground."

"Catch and cover." - Cover the ball with the ungloved hand.

Hitting off a Tee— Player will face tee with legs slightly bent and shoulder width apart. Players will hold the bat firmly with hands together. Bat should be held up on shoulder and player should swing level bringing the bat through the center of the ball. Eyes should be down when contact is made. Have players run to first base and remain there until all players have hit. On next hit, have them run to second base and so on.

Tip: Remind players to drop the bat—not throw it!

Game/Play (15 Minutes) SCRIMMAGE

Evenly split up the two groups and have them scrimmage against one another. Set up cones (main positions) in the infield to show players where to stand. Ensure that all players get to field and bat at least once. Feel free to rotate players in the field periodically. Use this time to talk about proper form for batting, fielding, catching, and throwing.



WEEK 1

SAFETY (10 Minutes)



TEAM CIRCLE

Key Idea: Safety

Gather the players in a circle. "What are the easiest ways to get hurt while playing t-ball?" Wait for answers (hitting someone with a bat, slipping and falling, tripping, getting hit in the head or face with the ball). "What's the best way to keep from getting hurt? How do we prevent these accidents from happening?" Point out that while no sport is injury free and that their risks of being hurt are much less when they follow the rules and care about each other. Don't forget to discuss rules regarding batting and the safety rules to ensure everyone is safe.

WEEK 2

Warm-Up (5 Minutes)

Have players partner with an adult and stand across from one another. Encourage players to watch the ball as it lands in their glove. Once caught, use second hand to secure ball. Players will then throw the ball back to adult. Ensure players' arm is back and up, and has front shoulder turned toward the target. Player should release the ball in front of body and follow through towards partner.



Fitness Component (5 Minutes) CARDIO

Key Idea: Cardiorespiratory Fitness

Children gather into a group. "Everyone hold one hand up and make a fist. Squeeze your fist tightly, and then let go. Keep tightening and letting go." Children continue for 10 counts. "Your heart is a special muscle that tightens and relaxes just like your fist is doing. Your heart is about the size of your fist. Let's put our fists over our chests. Every time it tightens, or beats, your heart pumps blood all over." Children continue for 10 counts. "When you run during t-ball, your heart beats faster. The beat slows down when you slow down. Let's run with high knees for 15 counts while we count together. Stop and feel your heart beat by putting your hand over your chest." Model for players. "Running strengthens your heart and lungs and improves your fitness."

WEEK 2

Skills/Drills (15 Minutes) **FIELDING AND BATTING**

Split players into two groups. One group will work on fielding and the other will work on batting. They will then switch halfway through.

Gator Chomp—Have players spread out in a line facing the coach. Roll the ball to one player at a time. Players should have knees bent and their glove on the ground. Once the ball rolls in the glove, the player should have second hand “gator chomp” on the ball. Player should then toss the ball to the coach.

To increase difficulty, coach can toss the ball to the left or right of them forcing them to move to stop the ball.

Hitting — Set up two batting stations. Position them within five feet of a fence, with two-three players at each tee. Have one adult present at each tee. The first player at each tee will work on striking the ball off the tee, hitting it against the fence. Put a glove or cones on the ground 10-15 feet behind the tee and have the partners stand behind the glove or cones until it is their turn. Each player should hit five times in a row, and then switch places with his or her partners. Continue working on proper form discussed in week one.

Coaches' Cue:

“Get in ready position.”

“Watch the ball on the batting tee.”

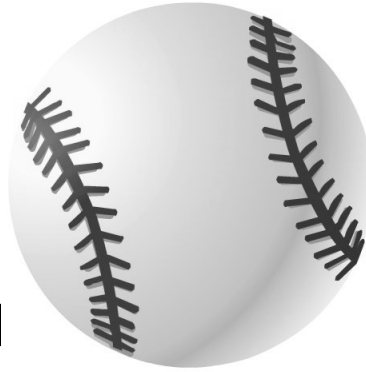
“Step and swing fast.”

Game/Play (15 Minutes) **SCRIMMAGE**

Evenly split up the two groups and have them scrimmage against one another. Set up cones in the infield (main positions) to show players where to stand. To help players learn to stay in their own area, draw lines in the dirt, use cones, or other markers, to separate the field into ‘slices’ like pizza and have it correspond with one of the positions in the field. Explain that they must stay in their own ‘slice’ and they cannot go into a teammates’ ‘slice’ to steal the ball. Ensure that all players get to field and bat at least once. Feel free to rotate players in the field periodically. Use this time to talk about proper form for batting, fielding, catching, and throwing.

WEEK 2

INTRO TO VALUES (10 Minutes)



TEAM CIRCLE

Key Idea: YMCA Four Core Values

Gather players into a circle. "This season we'll talk about the four values of the YMCA. These are values that all good people and teammates have. Number One is CARING. Tell me how you can show caring to others? By helping someone when they fall? Great! Number two is HONESTY. How can you show that you're honest? How about if you tell your parents about something that you accidentally broke? Good! Number three is RESPECT. Do you know what respect is? One way to show respect is by listening to adults when they speak to you, just like you're doing now. Number four is RESPONSIBILITY. If you're responsible, you will pick up after yourself if you make a mess. Don't wait for others to pick up after you." Ask them to share ways that they show the four values in their lives. "Good teammates show these values to each other. We'll talk more about these values during the season."

WEEK 3

Warm-Up (5 Minutes)

Line up players behind home plate and identify the first player as the Road Runner and the second player as the Coyote. Send the first player running toward first base. Depending upon the speed of the two players, send the second player after the first, when the first runner is a sufficient distance to make the race close. If the Coyote tags the Road Runner, they both return to home plate. Ensure players are not pushing when tagging one another.

Fitness Component (5 Minutes) MUSCLE STRENGTH/ENDURANCE

Key Idea: Muscular Strength & Endurance



Gather children into a circle. "Everyone find your own space so you don't bump your neighbor. You are going to run in your own spot for 30 seconds, then stop. Ready? Go!" Time children and verbally let them know the time remaining; stop them at the end of the time. "What part of the body did we just use the most when we ran?" Encourage their responses. "When we play t-ball, which part of your body do you use the most?" Wait for their responses. "Muscles in our body help us move our arms and legs. Playing t-ball will help our arm and leg muscles get stronger and grow bigger."

Skills/Drills (15 Minutes) THROWING AND BATTING

Split players into two groups. One group will work on fielding and the other will work on batting. They will then switch halfway through.

Bounce to the Bucket—Have players line up in one single file line. Have a large bucket placed right in front of them. Have players try to throw the ball into the bucket. Give them 3-5 throws before they return to the end of the line. Create a point system if you wish to motivate them: 10 points for throwing ball in bucket, 5 points for hitting the bucket, 1 point for the nearest bounce. Increase distance between players and bucket to increase difficulty.

Drill— Player will focus on their stance and make sure shoulders and feet are square to the ball. When the player hits the ball, the coach will yell out a base. Player must then run to that base and stop. They will remain there until the next player hits and runs to the appropriate base.

WEEK 3

Game/Play (15 Minutes) SCRIMMAGE

Evenly split up the two groups and have them scrimmage against one another. Set up cones in the infield (main positions) to show players where to stand. Ensure that all players get to field and bat at least once. Feel free to rotate players in the field periodically. Rather than having them throw it to first base each time, switch up which base they will need to throw it to. Let them know which base to throw it to before the player hits the ball. Use this time to talk about proper form for batting, fielding, catching, and throwing.



Coaches' Cue—Fielding:

"Get in ready position."

"Watch the ball on the batting tee."

"Step and swing fast."

Coaches' Cue—Throwing:

"Bring the ball WAY back."

"Step with the opposite foot."

"Follow through to the target."

WEEK 3

RESPONSIBILITY (10 Minutes)



TEAM CIRCLE

Key Idea: RESPONSIBILITY

Gather players into a group. "I want us all to pretend we are eggs. Eggs have shells that can break. What would happen if we bumped into each other if we were eggs? Right. We would all crack and break. Let's move around the field and still pretend we're eggs. Try not to bump into each other or you'll break!" Continue this activity for about one minute. "We were all good and careful not to bump into each other! So our shells didn't break! That was awesome! You were in charge of your self, or responsible for yourself, when you were moving around. When we are careful not to bump into each other, we are showing responsibility for our space and other players' space. This shows responsibility during practices and games." You are responsible to your team and to yourself to be a part of the team."

This is a great time to remind kids not to fight over the ball.

WEEK 4

Warm-Up (5 Minutes)

Line up players in threes or fours and have them throw the ball to the person next to them. Once they get the hang of it, have them race the other group or team. The first team to finish throwing to the end of the line will win. If you do not have enough players, have all players line up in one row. See how many times they can throw and catch the pass without dropping it.

To increase difficulty, have players throw the ball to the end of the line and throw it back to the player who started with it. Increase the amount of times they have to do it. If they drop it, they must restart from the beginning.

Fitness Component (5 Minutes) SAFETY EQUIPMENT

Key Idea: Safety Equipment & Rules

Gather children into a circle. "What are the easiest ways to get hurt while playing baseball?" Wait for their responses. What's the best way to keep from getting hurt? How do we prevent these accidents from happening?" Point out that while no sport is injury free, their risks of being hurt are more reduced when they follow the rules, use proper equipment, and care about each other.



WEEK 4

Skills/Drills (15 Minutes) **FIELDING FLY BALLS AND LINE DRIVES**

Split the players into groups of threes or four players per coach/adult. Coaches/adults should throw fly balls or line drives to players, who are in positions in the infield. The players field the ball, and throw it back. Encourage players to “call” the ball. Discuss terminology such as “fly ball, line drive, and grounder.” Discuss how to field a fly ball and how many outs a team gets before they switch with the team in the field.

Coaches’ Cue—Fielding Fly Balls:

- “Get in ready position.”
- “Move your feet to the ball.”
- “Watch it come in.”
- “Catch the ball in front of your forehead.”
- “Use two hands, extend your arms.”

Coaches’ Cue—Fielding Line Drives:

- “Ball above waist; fingers point up.”
- “Ball below waist; fingers point down.”

Game/Play (15 Minutes) **SCRIMMAGE**

Evenly split up the two groups and have them scrimmage against one another. Set up cones in the infield (main positions) to show players where to stand. Ensure that all players get to field and bat at least once. Feel free to rotate players in the field periodically. Rather than having them throw it to first base each time, switch up which base they will need to throw it to. Let them know which base to throw it to before the player hits the ball. Use this time to talk about proper form for batting, fielding, catching, and throwing.

Coaches’ Cue—Fielding:

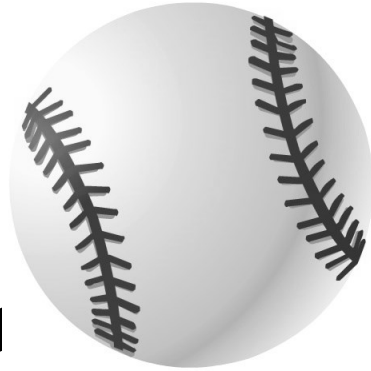
- “Get in ready position.”
- “Watch the ball on the batting tee.”
- “Step and swing fast.”

Coaches’ Cue—Throwing:

- “Bring the ball WAY back.”
- “Step with the opposite foot.”
- “Follow through to the target.”

WEEK 4

RESPECT (10 Minutes)



TEAM CIRCLE

Key Idea: RESPECT

Gather players into a single file line near two cones about 10 feet apart. "I am going to walk down the line two times. Remember how it feels each time I pass you." Walk down the line and nod to each player. Repeat this, but now tell each player "good game" or "way to play today" or shake their hand. "Which time that I passed by made you feel better?" Ask the players to stand near a cone that represents their answer. "Shaking hands and/or saying "good game" are important traditions that show we appreciate our opponents' play in the game. It shows respect for your opponents." Divide the team in half and have them practice an end-of-game "respect ritual."

WEEK 5

Warm-Up (5 Minutes)

Players will find a partner and line up across from one another. Ensure that all partners are standing the same distance apart. They will throw the ball back and forth between each other. Last pair that has not dropped the ball wins. Increase distance as you seem fit.

Fitness Component (5 Minutes) HEALTHY HABITS

Key Idea: Healthy Habits

Gather children into a circle. "When your body doesn't eat healthy foods and get enough sleep, it moves slowly. Let's pretend we have no energy to move because we didn't eat enough healthy foods or get enough sleep." Begin to move slowly and encourage children to follow. Move extremely slowly. "Everyone stop. Now I am going to fill your bodies up with healthy foods." Act out giving them foods. "Pretend we're sleeping. When I say 'Wake up!' you can move faster because you have enough energy and enough rest. Wake up and move faster. Stop! What are some other healthy habits you have learned?" Examples: daily exercise, brushing teeth, saying no to drugs, no smoking.



WEEK 5

Skills/Drills (15 Minutes) **FIELDING AND BASE RUNNING**

Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to cover second base on a force play and how to start and stop properly when advancing from first to second base. Tell players that to cover a base on a force play, they should keep the foot opposite their glove hand on the edge of the base that is closest to the play (where the ball is coming from).

Practice covering second base on a force play and starting and stopping properly when advancing from first to second base.



Coaches' Cue—Runner Advancing to next Base:

- "Take off when the bat hits the ball."
- "Run hard."
- "Lean back with your weight on your heels."

Coaches' Cue— Runner Stopping on a Base:

- "Lean back."
- "Keep your weight on your heels."
- "Bend your legs and ankles to absorb the force."
- "Hold the base—Keep your foot on the base at all times."

Coaches' Cue— Fielding from a Base:

- "Get yourself between the ball and the base."
- "Put your foot opposite of your glove hand on the outside edge of the base."
- "Make a good target—Keep glove at shoulder level facing player throwing the ball."

WEEK 5

Game/Play (15 Minutes) SCRIMMAGE

Evenly split up the two groups and have them scrimmage against one another. Set up cones in the infield (main positions) to show players where to stand. Reiterate to the players that they must stay in their 'slice' on the field. Ensure that all players get to field and bat at least once. Feel free to rotate players in the field periodically. Rather than having them throw it to first base each time, switch up which base they will need to throw it to. Let them know which base to throw it to before the player hits the ball. Use this time to talk about proper form for batting, fielding, catching, and throwing.

Coaches' Cue—Fielding:

- "Get in ready position."
- "Watch the ball on the batting tee."
- "Step and swing fast."

Coaches' Cue—Throwing:

- "Bring the ball WAY back."
- "Step with the opposite foot."
- "Follow through to the target."



WEEK 5

HONESTY (10 Minutes)



TEAM CIRCLE

Key Idea: Honesty

Gather the team into a group near two cones about 10 feet apart. "What happens when a player is running and you run into them and they fall? What if it's an accident and nobody saw you? Those of you who think it's okay to bump or push the other player down, stand by this cone. Those who think it's not okay, stand by this one." Wait for the children to choose. Ask them why they chose the cone they did. Explain that pushing or bumping into another player, even if it's an accident, is against the rules. "What should you do if this happens? Those of you who think you should just keep playing, stay at this cone; those of you who think you should stop and help the other player get up, go stand by that cone." Wait for everyone to choose. "It's important to be honest. If you bump into another player, even if nobody sees it, stop and help the player get up."

WEEK 6

Warm-Up (5 Minutes)

Have players pair up with a coach, or a parent. Each player will take turns fielding grounders, line drives, and fly balls. If needed, correct their actions and forms. Players will then properly throw the ball back to their partner.



Fitness Component (5 Minutes) FLEXIBILITY

Key Idea: Flexibility

Bring a rubber band to use as a prop. "This rubber band is like our muscles. When I pull it, it stretches; when I let go, it pulls back to its original shape." Demonstrate with the rubber band, stretching it out and back, using a gentle, slow action. "Your muscles work the same way. When you reach and stretch, your muscles are stretching just like the rubber band. When your body comes back, your muscles go back to their original shape. Everyone reach down to the ground with your arms slowly, and then bring your arms back up." Have children repeat three times. "Your leg and arm muscles need to stretch because you use them a lot in t-ball; stretching makes your leg muscles more flexible. When muscles are flexible, it keeps them from getting hurt and makes the muscles feel good."

WEEK 6

Skills/Drills (15 Minutes) **FIELDING AND BASE RUNNING**

Tag the Runner: Have one line behind second base (base running) and one line behind short stop (fielding). The coach will roll the ball to the player at short stop. As soon as the coach tosses it, the runner on second base will run to third. The player at short stop will field the ball and try to tag the runner out. Have players switch lines. Remind players not to push when they are trying to tag the runner out.

Game/Play (15 Minutes) **SCRIMMAGE**

Evenly split up the two groups and have them scrimmage against one another. Set up cones in the infield (main positions) to show players where to stand. Ensure that all players get to field and bat at least once. Feel free to rotate players in the field periodically. Rather than having them throw it to first base each time, switch up which base they will need to throw it to. Let them know which base to throw it to before the player hits the ball. Use this time to talk about proper form for batting, fielding, catching, and throwing.

Coaches' Cue—Fielding:

"Get in ready position."

"Watch the ball on the batting tee."

"Step and swing fast."

Coaches' Cue—Throwing:

"Bring the ball WAY back."

"Step with the opposite foot."

"Follow through to the target."

WEEK 6

CARING (10 Minutes)



TEAM CIRCLE

Key Idea: Caring

Gather the players into a circle. "Let's pretend we are playing a t-ball game. Watch what I do with the ball." Let a child in the group know that you are going to throw the ball to them. Make a bad throw. "That throw was not very good, was it?" As children respond, toss a ball to each player who makes a supportive comment. If players make unsupportive comments, encourage them to change their words to become more supportive; after they have changed the words, toss them the ball too. "It is very important to support your teammates, especially when they make mistakes. Saying something that makes someone feel good, shows that you care!"

WEEK 7

Warm-Up (5 Minutes)

Line up players behind home plate and identify the first player as the Road Runner and the second player as the Coyote. Send the first player running toward first base. Depending upon the speed of the two players, send the second player after the first, when the first runner is a sufficient distance to make the race close. If the Coyote tags the Road Runner, they both return to home plate. Ensure players are not pushing when tagging one another.

Fitness Component (5 Minutes) MUSCULAR STRENGTH / ENDURANCE

Key Idea: Muscular strength & Endurance

Gather children into a group. Show children the differences between a throw with minimal effort and one with close to maximum effort. "Watch how far the ball goes when I throw it two different times." Show both throws to the children. "Let's line up, and you show me how you would throw the ball. Show me an easy throw... Now show me a hard throw." Highlight the ball going farther in the second throw. "You can throw the ball farther when your muscles in your arms are strong. Your muscles in your arms get stronger when you practice throwing."



WEEK 7

Skills Drills (15 Minutes) **FIELDING**

Split players into two groups. Both groups will work on fielding, however this will allow players more opportunities.

Crab Drill—Player is in a basic fielding set position stance. Coach will hit or toss the ball to the left or right of the player. The crouched player will then move left or right to field the ball. Encourage players to have glove open and down on the ground. As ball approaches, “gator chomp” the ball. Players should take two or three steps as the coach rolls the ball.

For more experienced players, toss the ball at faster speeds, or make players move more to field the ball.

Game/Play (15 Minutes) **FAST FINGERS**

Players will work on charging the ball to get to it quickly. Line the players up in four single file lines along the first or third baseline. The coach will stand out in front of them about 15-20 feet away. The coach will point to one of the lines and then roll or hit the ball to them with a slow grounder. The player needs to run up to the pick up the ball and then settle themselves down to throw back to the coach. Correct the players if their form is not correct. Once the coach tosses the ball, they will count 1001, 1002, 1003, etc. until the ball gets back to the coach. Have each line take a turn and the team who throws it back the quickest, earns a point. Keep track for each round.

WEEK 7

FAITH (10 Minutes)



TEAM CIRCLE

Key Idea: Faith/Believe in Self

Gather the players into a circle. Explain to the players that to have faith is to believe that they can do anything they set their mind to do. Give them an example of the little train that kept saying "I think I can, I think I can..." over and over until he eventually did what he set out to do.

Now separate the players into an offensive and defensive group. Have one player hit the ball, while the other player is in the field. Tell the fielder to stop the ball. As they go into action, tell them to say out loud, "I think I can" before they start. Tell them they should think this in their mind while they are playing in games or at home with their family and friends.