



**BASEBALL**  
QUEENSLAND



# JUNIOR

## COACHING HANDBOOK

**A STEP BY STEP GUIDE FOR BEGINNER  
AND ADVANCED BASEBALL COACHES**



*This booklet has been developed in collaboration with Autism Queensland, Sport4All and Baseball Queensland.*

# WELCOME TO COACHING

*First teach kids to love the game,  
and then teach them how to play it*



Dear Coaches,

Welcome to the exciting world of junior baseball coaching! As you step into this rewarding role, you are not only becoming a coach but also a mentor, a guide, and an inspiration to the young athletes under your care. The Baseball Queensland community is thrilled to have you join our ranks, and we look forward to the positive impact you will undoubtedly make on and off the field.

Coaching junior baseball is about much more than teaching the fundamentals of the game. It's about fostering a love for baseball in young players, encouraging teamwork, building character, and instilling values that will serve them well beyond their athletic endeavors. Your influence will help shape their attitudes towards sportsmanship, perseverance, and respect, creating lasting memories and life skills.

Baseball Queensland is committed to supporting you in your coaching journey. We offer numerous resources, including coaching clinics, instructional materials, and mentorship opportunities with experienced coaches. We encourage you to make the most of these resources to enhance your skills and knowledge.

Remember, the success of your coaching is not solely measured by wins and losses, but by the growth and enjoyment of your players. Celebrate their progress, no matter how small, and create an environment where every child feels valued and eager to participate. Your enthusiasm and commitment form the foundation of their love for the game and their development as individuals.

Play ball!

Sincerely,

Sam Cawdron

Game Development Manager, Baseball Queensland



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## 1. INTRODUCTION TO COACHING

Role of a Junior Coach	..... 4
<u>Creating a Positive Environment</u>	..... 5
<u>How to 'Teach the Basics'</u>	..... 6
<u>Working with Parents</u>	..... 7
<u>Building Social Skills and Teamwork</u>	..... 8
<u>Developing a Routine</u>	..... 9
<u>Behaviour Management</u>	..... 10
<u>Educational Play</u>	..... 14
<u>Manage your Expectations</u>	..... 14
<u>Coaching Philosophies &amp; Goals</u>	..... 15
<u>Fun &amp; Enjoyment: Best Practices</u>	..... 16
<u>Fun &amp; Enjoyment: Common Mistakes</u>	..... 17

## 2. DEVELOPING SKILLS & FUNDAMENTAL MOVEMENTS

<u>Incorporating fundamental Movements</u>	..... 18
<u>Positive Reinforcement</u>	..... 19
<u>Inclusion &amp; Participation</u>	..... 20
<u>Building Life Skills</u>	..... 21
<u>Age-Appropriate Learning</u>	..... 22
<u>Parent Involvement</u>	..... 23
<u>Understanding the Age Group</u>	..... 24
<u>Using Imagination &amp; Storytelling</u>	..... 25
<u>Language</u>	..... 26

## 3. APPLYING INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

<u>Disability &amp; Inclusion</u>	..... 27
<u>Developing a Routine</u>	..... 32
<u>Visual Supports</u>	..... 32
<u>Implementing Visual Supports in Coaching</u>	..... 35
<u>Modifying &amp; Adapting Activities</u>	..... 36
<u>Understanding Player Behaviour &amp; troubleshooting Common Scenarios</u>	..... 37
<u>Restorative Practices Resource</u>	..... 40

## 4. MY BASEBALL SEASON

<u>Equipment</u>	..... 45
<u>Season Structure</u>	..... 48
<u>Junior Curriculum</u>	..... 49
<u>Resources</u>	..... 66

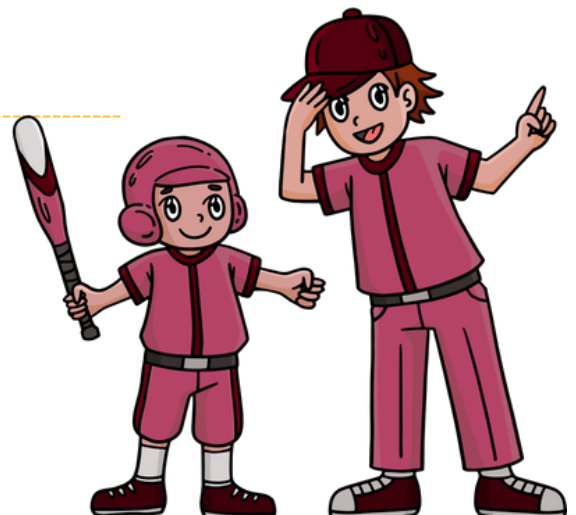
# 1 INTRODUCTION TO COACHING

## ROLE OF A JUNIOR COACH

Coaching young children, especially 3 to 8 year-olds, requires a unique approach that focuses on fostering a love for the game, developing basic skills, and ensuring a positive and fun experience.

Here's what junior baseball coaching looks like for this age group:

-  **CREATE A POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT**
-  **TEACHING BASIC SKILLS**
-  **WORKING WITH PARENTS**
-  **BUILDING SOCIAL SKILLS & TEAMWORK**
-  **DEVELOPING A ROUTINE**
-  **BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT**
-  **EDUCATIONAL PLAY**
-  **MANAGING YOUR EXPECTATIONS**



# **CREATING A POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT**



## **ENCOURAGEMENT AND SUPPORT**

Young children need constant positive reinforcement. Praise their efforts, not just their successes, to build confidence and a sense of achievement.

### **CELEBRATE MILESTONES:**

Recognise small achievements, like catching the ball for the first time or running to first base correctly. This helps build confidence and excitement for the game.

### **INDIVIDUAL ATTENTION:**

Spend a few moments with each child to ensure they feel seen and valued. This can be as simple as a high-five or a word of encouragement.



## **FUN AND ENJOYMENT**

The primary goal is to make sure the children enjoy playing baseball. Use games and activities that are fun/engaging and allow children to engage and participate in authentic ways.

### **GAME-BASED LEARNING:**

Incorporate games like "Duck, Duck, Goose" but with a baseball twist (e.g., "Ball, Ball, Bat"). This makes learning the basics fun.

### **SILLY DRILLS:**

Use playful drills such as "Cross the Lava" where they throw over a imaginary stream of lava. This helps them practice throwing while having fun.



## **SAFETY FIRST**

Ensure the playing environment is safe. Always prioritise the physical and emotional well-being of the children.

### **EQUIPMENT CHECK:**

Regularly check all equipment to ensure it's safe and appropriate for their size and skill level. Use soft balls to reduce the risk of injury.

### **FIELD SAFETY:**

Ensure the playing area is free from hazards. Explain safety rules clearly, such as not swinging bats near others and always wearing a helmet.

### **EMOTIONAL SAFETY EXAMPLE:**

During a T-Ball session, the coach notices a quieter child hanging back and gently invites them to help demonstrate the next activity, offering praise and a high-five to build confidence and ensure they feel included.



# >>>> HOW TO 'TEACH THE BASICS'

How do you teach basic skills to young children? Here are some good methods and teaching tips.



## VISUAL DEMONSTRATIONS

Use examples that involve the coach before you start an activity. If the game involves running around tagging a player with a ball, have a player try tag you and show the group.



## SHORT INSTRUCTIONS

Young children have short attention spans. Keep explanations brief and to the point. You have 30 seconds to 2 minutes to explain your game or drill. Instructions should be verbal and visual, use kids to walk through the activity first.



## HAVE A PLAN

Use BQ session planning tools to ensure you've got an easy flowing session. Utilise multiple stations, focusing on different fundamentals and rotate the group through these to keep them engaged.



## GAME BASED ACTIVITIES

Try to stay away from 'drills' and anything involving long lines. Keep learning activities fun by using games.



## SHORT, SHARP GAMES

Keep games short to maintain attention and energy levels. switch activities every 10-15 minutes.



## BE FLEXIBLE

Be aware and accept that if a game or activity is not working with the group, change it. Don't be afraid to stop and move to a different activity - These are learning opportunities as a junior coach.

## WORKING WITH PARENTS

Creating a supportive and encouraging community is not easy.



Here are some ways to engage parents and have them add value to the team:

### ►► CLEAR COMMUNICATION

Keep parents informed about training schedules, game times and any changes via emails, texts or a team app.

### ►► TEAM MEETINGS

Hold a meeting at the beginning of the season or as necessary to establish relationships, discuss what you need from parents and identify potential parent assistance for you.

### ►► VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Offer parents various volunteer roles, such as team manager, scorekeeper or snack coordinator. This involvement will help create a stronger sense of community.

### ►► ASSISTANT COACHES

You're going to need help. Invite interested and knowledgeable parents to assist in trainings and on gameday. Ensure you have them buy in to your coaching philosophy. One team, one dream.

### ►► PARENT EDUCATION

Establish that parents are responsible for their child developing, just as much as the coach is. Teach them how to talk to their children after games, after losses and after wins.

### ►► PARENT BONDING

Organise informal social gatherings for parents to get to know each other. It's your role as the coach to facilitate and create a supportive environment and community.

## **BUILDING SOCIAL SKILLS AND TEAMWORK**

Creating friendships and increasing social skills among young baseball players is essential for their development and enjoyment of the game.

Here are some strategies for fostering these important aspects:



### **TEAM BUILDING**

Dedicate entire sessions to team building activities and games, particularly at the start of your season. Help kids get to know each other and their peers' names.



### **NAME GAMES**

Activities where kids say each other's names often help with learning names and feeling more connected.



### **ART PROJECTS**

Let kids work together on creating a team banner or drawing of their favourite baseball player. Your team is bigger than just what happens on the field.



### **STORY CIRCLES**

Have a circle time where kids share stories about their week or a fun fact about themselves.

They will be shy at first in a new setting, it's your job as the coach to facilitate and make this environment a safe space for each player.



### **CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

It's your role and responsibility as coach to ensure there's harmony in the team. Make sure to deal with any potential issues early.



### **NO TOLERANCE FOR BULLYING**

Establish a zero-tolerance policy for bullying and address signs early. You should be the facilitator of fun, but also exemplify boundaries of what is acceptable. Bullying can be an abstract concept for many children - practice emotional safety and regular check in with individual players.



## **DEVELOPING A ROUTINE**

Having a consistent training approach will allow players to feel safe and comfortable. Here are some good tips on ways to develop a routine.



### **YOUR STYLE**

Find ways to add your coaching style to the sessions. Starting every training with a team huddle, player of the training awards and use fun and positivity as a focus for your sessions.

### **ARRIVAL ACTIVITIES**

If kids get there early, brilliant! Have activities and games which require minimal supervision set up so they can play, learn and interact while you're getting ready for the session. Simple catch and throw stations can be easy arrival activities - make sure it's set up and visually appealing, then instruct the kids what the game is and let them play!

### **KEEP IT CONSISTENT**

Change the games and activities each week, but try not to change the format or style. Kids react better when they can envision what training will be like and allow them to get excited.

### **REFLECTIONS**

It may not seem like much, but allow for 5 minutes at the end of the session to come together as a group and discuss the training. This will help boost learning outcomes and allows kids the chance to express what they enjoyed, while giving you real time feedback.

For further information on developing a routine, see:  
[3.0 Applying Inclusive Practices: Developing a Routine](#)

## BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

### SET RULES EARLY

At the beginning of the season, establish simple, clear rules that are easy for children to understand. For example, 'Listen when the coach is talking' & keep your hands to yourself'. You can also co-create rules with the group - allow input from players on what they think is acceptable at trainings and gameday

### RESTATE RULES EACH TRAINING

To start each training, begin by reminding kids what the rules are and have them tell you. 'Does anyone remember what our rules are we set out last week, hands up - who can tell me?'

### POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

Use positive reinforcement to help the group understand the expectations. For example, 'Jimmy did some great listening last week and he's going to be the first shark/tagger for this next game.'

### RESET

While setting clear expectations around behaviour is important, it's equally our responsibility as coaches to remember that every child is different, and every situation is unique.

If a reset is needed, it's important how it is framed and communicated, and also how it's perceived by each child.

Rather than using terms like "time-out" or "sitting out," refer to these moments as "resets." A reset provides a short break away from the group or activity, giving the child time to reflect on their behaviour.

Resets should be used as a last resort—only after other strategies have been attempted—or in response to more serious behaviours such as punching, biting or spitting.



### REJOINING

When a reset is needed, it's important to frame it up properly in a calm, one-on-one conversation:

- Clearly explain what the behaviour was
- Let them know how long the reset will last (a brief - two minutes is usually a good guide).
- Explain when and how they can rejoin the group.
- Be clear about what will happen if the behaviour occurs again.

By using resets in this way, you're not only helping the individual child understand boundaries, but also reinforcing expectations for the whole group.

## **BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT**

### **UNDERSTANDING BEHAVIOUR**

Understanding behaviour starts with taking the time to listen. When a child acts out, ask open-ended questions to help uncover what they were feeling or thinking in that moment.

For example, if John punches Ryder because Ryder took the ball, acknowledge John's feelings and explain that while Ryder shouldn't have taken the ball—and you'll speak to him—punching isn't an appropriate response. Instead, work with John to come up with a better plan for next time, such as coming to tell the coach.

Involving the child in finding a solution helps them feel heard and builds their skills to handle similar situations more positively in the future (See Understanding Behaviour on page 14).

### **PARENT SUPPORT**

If behaviour continues, bring the parent into the conversation during or after training (depending on the situation). Explain that the child's behaviour is disrupting trainings and work a solution out together on ways forward.

Encourage three-way conversations between the child, coach, and parent to ensure consistent communication and that everyone is on the same page (see Parental Support on page 15).

### **CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

Conflict between children is normal and can be a valuable learning opportunity when guided calmly and constructively. The goal isn't just to stop the conflict—it's to help children learn how to manage it better next time.

### **CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

Begin by creating a safe, calm space where the child feels comfortable to talk. Give each child the opportunity to share their side of the story without interruption, using open-ended questions to guide the conversation (e.g. "How were you feeling when that happened?"). Acknowledge their feelings and gently help them consider the other person's perspective.

This can take place as a one-on-one conversation or with both children present, with you acting as the coach and mediator.

Once everyone has had a chance to speak, support them in finding a resolution. This might involve an apology, agreeing on how to share equipment, or talking through how they could respond differently next time. Involving the children in creating the solution helps build understanding, responsibility and ownership of their actions.

### **EXAMPLE**

*For example: If John and Ryder are in conflict because Ryder took the ball and John responded by punching him, acknowledge both sides. Let John know you'll speak to Ryder about taking the ball unfairly, but also explain that punching isn't okay. Work with John to develop a better response—such as telling the coach—if it happens again.*

*Encourage a "reset" if needed, but always come back to the conversation. Teaching conflict resolution in this way helps build emotional awareness, empathy and better social skills in the long run.*

### **BEHAVIOUR IS DEEPER THAN WHAT WE SEE**

There are many reasons a child may display challenging behaviour, and while the following practices provide a helpful guide for junior coaches, it's important to remember that every child is different. Each situation may require a slightly different approach based on the individual needs of the child.

As coaches, our top priority should always be the physical and emotional safety of the children in our care. Refer to Section 3.0: Applying Inclusive Practices for more guidance on understanding player behaviour & trouble shooting common scenarios.

As community coaches, it's our role to learn about our playing group and adapt our approach to meet the needs of all participants. Coaching junior sport is about more than just drills and what happens on the diamond—it's also about creating a positive, inclusive environment where every child can thrive.



# BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

## UNDERSTANDING BEHAVIOUR



### ABOVE THE ICE BERG - VISIBLE BEHAVIOURS

- Refusing to participate
- Running away or hiding
- Meltdowns or crying
- Yelling or talking over others
- Disrupting drills or games
- Not following instructions
- Avoiding eye contact
- Hyperactivity or restlessness

### BELOW THE ICE BERG - POSSIBLE UNDERLYING FACTORS

#### Neurological & Sensory Needs:

- Sensory overload (noise, lights, textures)
- Difficulty processing instructions
- Motor planning or coordination challenges
- Executive function struggles (memory, organisation, shifting tasks)

#### Communication:

- Difficulty understanding or expressing needs
- Non-verbal communication barriers
- Delayed processing time

#### Emotional & Social:

- Anxiety or fear (of failure, judgment, unfamiliar situations)
- Previous negative experiences
- Trouble with social rules or group dynamics
- Fear of being left out or misunderstood

#### Environmental or External Factors:

- Fatigue or hunger
- Changes in routine
- Lack of structure or unclear expectations
- Overstimulating or unpredictable environments

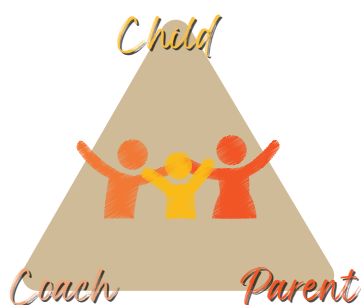
## REMEMBER

- 🏈 Behaviour is a form of communication
- 🏈 Connection before correction
- 🏈 Check in with the child, their parents, or a support contact
- 🏈 Seek understanding, not just compliance



# BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

## PARENTAL SUPPORT



**3 WAY CONVERSATION:**  
*Child, Coach & Parent*

### CREATE A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

- Choose a calm moment (after training or during a quiet break).
- Ensure the conversation is private and not in front of peers.
- Use a positive, non-judgmental tone to keep the child engaged.

### LEAD WITH EMPATHY, NOT ACCUSATION

- Start by acknowledging the child's strengths.
- Use phrases like:
  - "I've noticed..."
  - "Can we talk about what's been happening lately?"
  - "How are you feeling during training?"

### BE CLEAR, BUT KIND

- Clearly explain the behaviour that's affecting training.
- Focus on how the behaviour impacts the team or learning environment (not labelling the child).
- Example that comes from both the coach and parent: "Punching is not allowed and we need to find a solution together"

### INVITE INPUT FROM EVERYONE

- Ask the child how they've been feeling or why they think the behaviour might be happening.
- Ask the parent to have input: "When we get frustrated, we need to take a breath, like we've been practicing at home and then come tell me or the coach"

### COLLABORATE ON A WAY FORWARD

- Work together to develop simple strategies or adjustments.
- Offer support: "We can try giving short breaks" or "Would visual reminders help?"
- Agree on consistent expectations across home and sport.

### FOLLOW UP

- Check in regularly to review progress.
- Let the child know you're proud of their efforts.
- Keep parents updated on any improvements or ongoing challenges.

## WE'RE HERE TO HELP

As part of Baseball Queensland's ongoing support for local coaches, if you're regularly facing a behavioural challenge and are unsure how to approach or coach the situation, please don't hesitate to reach out to [behavioursupport@baseballqld.asn.au](mailto:behavioursupport@baseballqld.asn.au).

Baseball Queensland has a network of trained coaches, educators, and deliverers with expertise in junior development and managing a wide range of behavioural situations. We're here to support you.



CONTACT US

For more information: [behavioursupport@baseballqld.asn.au](mailto:behavioursupport@baseballqld.asn.au)



## **EDUCATIONAL PLAY**

There is great power in unstructured play in terms of player development and defining core motor skills.

Here are some ways you can incorporate educational play into your sessions:

### **PLAY TIME**

Kids learn through trial and error, allow kids time at the start and finish of training sessions to have unstructured play and practice what works for them. Throwing and catching is a good example, supervise the play and allow kids to learn in a low pressure environment.

### **FREE TIME**

Setting up free time or unstructured play may seem like a lazy coaching style, but stay involved with the group. Play catch with them, join in on different groups and help out where you can. Make sure to explain to the parents the reasoning behind giving your team free time to minimise any frustration.

### **SOCIAL BONUS**

Educational Play also allows kids the chance to socialise and play with their friends. This will help add to your team dynamic and community.

### **SET UP EQUIPMENT**

Your first priority is to make sure it is safe, but ensure to set up equipment for kids to practice and play with. Make sure there are plenty of gloves and balls out so that everyone has the chance to participate. Encourage different games, like who can throw the furthest or who can catch a high ball with different groups.

## **MANAGE YOUR EXPECTATIONS**

Coaching T-ball goes beyond teaching the game's fundamentals. It's about fostering a love for baseball, encouraging teamwork, building character, and instilling lifelong values.

Your influence will shape their attitudes towards sportsmanship, perseverance, and respect, creating lasting memories and life skills.

### **COACHING EXPECTATIONS "IT'S NOT BASEBALL"**

As a t-ball coach, we are putting ourselves through a great deal of frustration and disappointment if we enter the season believing we will be coaching baseball

### **REALITY**

As coaches, we need to treat the season as what it is—a time to spend with our child and their friends, watch them run around, laugh, and practice skills like throwing, catching, and hitting.

### **VIEWPOINT OF THE CHILD**

Children go to the park with the idea that they are playing, run around and visit their friends. It is important to consider the activity from the viewpoint of the child, manage and instruct them from that perspective, and acknowledge that practice activities won't always resemble baseball.

### **KEEP REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS**

With the kids on your team, aim for half to understand the game well by season's end. Don't expect a perfectly tuned team; focus on teaching key skills, developing players, and ensuring safety.

## »»» COACHING PHILOSOPHIES & GOALS

Coaching philosophies and goals change dramatically when you're coaching young children, compared to adults or what we see on TV. Your goals should be aligned to ensuring kids are enjoying your training sessions and seeing slow progress in activities and understanding.

Here are some good philosophies, mantras and goals to align yourself and your team for success.

- and remember, the success of your team doesn't mean wins and losses. How you frame up success with your team is completely up to you.



**FUN & ENJOYMENT**



**BUILDING LIFE SKILLS**



**FUNDAMENTAL MOVEMENTS**



**AGE-APPROPRIATE LEARNING**



**POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT**



**PARENT INVOLVEMENT**



**INCLUSION & PARTICIPATION**

## **FUN & ENJOYMENT**

### BEST PRACTICES

Every junior coach goes out with the intent to make their sessions fun. However often we get caught up in some simple mistakes that for kids, do not make trainings enjoyable.

Here are some things to help with making your trainings actually fun and enjoyable for players.



INVOLVE KIDS	VISUAL & DEMONSTRATIVE TEACHING	CREATE A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT
Involve children in decision making - Let them choose some activities or games	Show rather than just tell; kids learn well through visual cues	Involve parents. Set times when parents can be involved in your sessions
Have kids think of new rules or progressions on your activity	Use demonstrations to explain new skills or games	Ensure every child feels included and valued
Have kids help you set up games or activities, this helps kids feel like they're a part of the process	Chose well behaving kids as a reward to help demonstrate the new game with you	Use games to promote teamwork and achieving a common goal
INCORPORATE GAMES & PLAY	CREATIVITY & EXPLORATION	ENTHUSIASTIC & ENERGETIC
Use a mix of drills, games and free play to keep sessions engaging	Allow kids to experiment with different ways to perform skills	Your energy and enthusiasm are contagious and will help keep kids excited
Use games where everyone is moving and interacting	Allow and encourage time before and after training for practice	Show genuine interest in their progress and enjoyment
Adapt traditional playground games to include elements of the sport or skill you're coaching	Positive reinforcement, praise effort, not just success	Get involved in the session! Kids react positively when they're chasing around the coach

## »»» FUN & ENJOYMENT

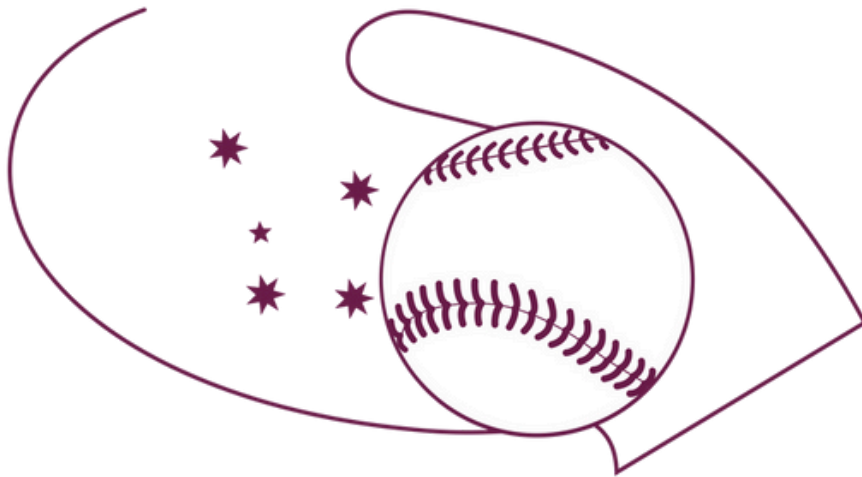
### COMMON MISTAKES

Every junior coach goes out with the intent to make their sessions fun. However often we get caught up in some simple mistakes that for kids, do not make trainings enjoyable.

Here are some things to avoid to ensure your trainings are fun and enjoyable.



FOCUSING SOLELY ON WINNING	EXCLUDING OR ISOLATING CHILDREN	FITNESS
Don't measure your success as a coach or team on how many games you've won	Avoid drills or games that have long lines or wait times	Avoid having fitness as an outcome for this age group
Avoid drills or games that put excessive pressure on kids to perform perfectly	Avoid criticising or even critiquing players if they make a mistake, especially in front of the group	Avoid 2 laps around the diamond for warm ups
Measure your success on smiling faces and player retention each week	Use games with maximum involvement	Incorporate a ball, games or skills into any running activities
UNCLEAR INSTRUCTIONS	LANGUAGE	SESSION PLANS
Avoid talking for too long, kids attention spans are short	Avoid talking your players like athletes	Avoid trying to cram in all of the skills into one session
Avoid overcomplex instructions, use simple language paired with demonstrations	Avoid long winded team talks where the coach analyses and describes everything that went wrong	Avoid training for over an hour with this age group
Avoid criticising players when they make a mistake, especially in front of the group	Use simple language and positive reinforcement to achieve outcomes	Kids need time to learn - use repetitive games and change the rules slightly each week to keep it engaging



**BASEBALL**  
QUEENSLAND

**JUNIOR**  
*COACHING HANDBOOK*