



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.

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DEVELOPING SKILLS & FUNDAMENTAL MOVEMENTS

Focus on teaching basic skills and fundamental movements.

At this age, children are developing their motor skills, so it's important to introduce a variety of movements and basic techniques - here's how.

»»»» INCORPORATING FUNDAMENTAL MOVEMENTS



CORE MOTOR SKILLS

Young children need to develop their core motor skills and co-ordination.

Try incorporating different forms of activity into your sessions like: hopping, jumping, closing one eye, catching with one hand games to assist this development.

Example: Warm up game - Follow the leader around the bases (coach led). Have players hop to first base, skip to second base, walk backwards to 3rd base and sprint home!



OTHER GAMES TO DEVELOP

The end goal is to be able to throw a baseball, however a multi sport approach at your training sessions can be beneficial.

Make sure to communicate this to parents, and then round the training back to Baseball - it is a baseball training, after all.

Example: Try incorporating different sports into your training to help teach skills. Dodgeball, cricket, volleyball, pickleball and other sports can all help in developing co-ordination and increasing skill.



EQUIPMENT

Incorporating different equipment into your training sessions can be a fun and unique way for kids to learn the fundamentals.

Using equipment like Velcro Discs and Spikeball sets can be great examples of learning tools to help kids develop co-ordination skills.

Example: Use Velcro Discs instead of gloves for a training session to get kids used to the contact of the ball hitting their hand + correct hand placement while receiving a catch.



BACKYARD CATCH

Encourage parents, during free time to take out their children and practice catching in the backyard or park.

Remember, as the coach you see the kids a maximum 2 hours per week. Parents can help speed the skill development process up by practicing in their spare time.

Example: They will need encouragement from you, as the coach. Set a plan out with parents to dedicate 20 minutes each day practicing and watch your team skyrocket!

➤➤➤ POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

Use positive reinforcement to build confidence and self-esteem. Encourage and praise children to motivate them and build a positive self-image



REWARDS

- To increase positive behaviour and reinforcement, the coach can use rewards such as small rewards, stickers or stamps to help praise effort.
- Try to choose your players that receive these awards based more on effort than performance and be sure to share around the love so all your players get recognised.
- You may also choose to reward your players or team by finishing with a game of their choosing. This really motivates kids if they know they can finish with something fun.

SPECIFIC AND POSITIVE FEEDBACK



- At this age group, it's your role to be CEO (Chief Energy Officer).
- Provide constant and positive feedback on how the kids are going throughout the training.
- Put yourself in their shoes, its nerve-wracking doing this while mum/dad is watching on. They need all the support they can get - that's where you come in.
- Seemingly little things like, 'Nice throw Johnny' or 'Great running Lisa' will help kids gain confidence.
- Even if the kids are making mistakes, it's your job to find something positive and communicate that aloud to them and the group.



ENCOURAGE MISTAKE CULTURE

- The culture of a team largely depends on the coach. Kids are going to make plenty of mistakes - communicate regularly to the group that mistakes are a part of how we learn and grow.
- Having an environment like this will help build emotional safety and provide kids the best opportunity to learn and grow.

INCLUSION & PARTICIPATION

Inclusion and participation are important in youth sports because they promote equality, build confidence, and teach essential life skills, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to benefit from the positive experiences and lessons sports can provide.



PROMOTE EQUAL PLAYING TIME

- Create a rotation system that ensures each player gets an equal amount of time in different positions on the field.
- Focus on development over winning.
- Set clear expectations and communicate with parents.



CREATE A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

- Greet each child warmly by name when they arrive and introduce them to their teammates
- Facilitate fun - if you see a child in your team isolated or not joining in, get some of your players to go over and invite them to play with them



CELEBRATE EFFORTS AND PROGRESS

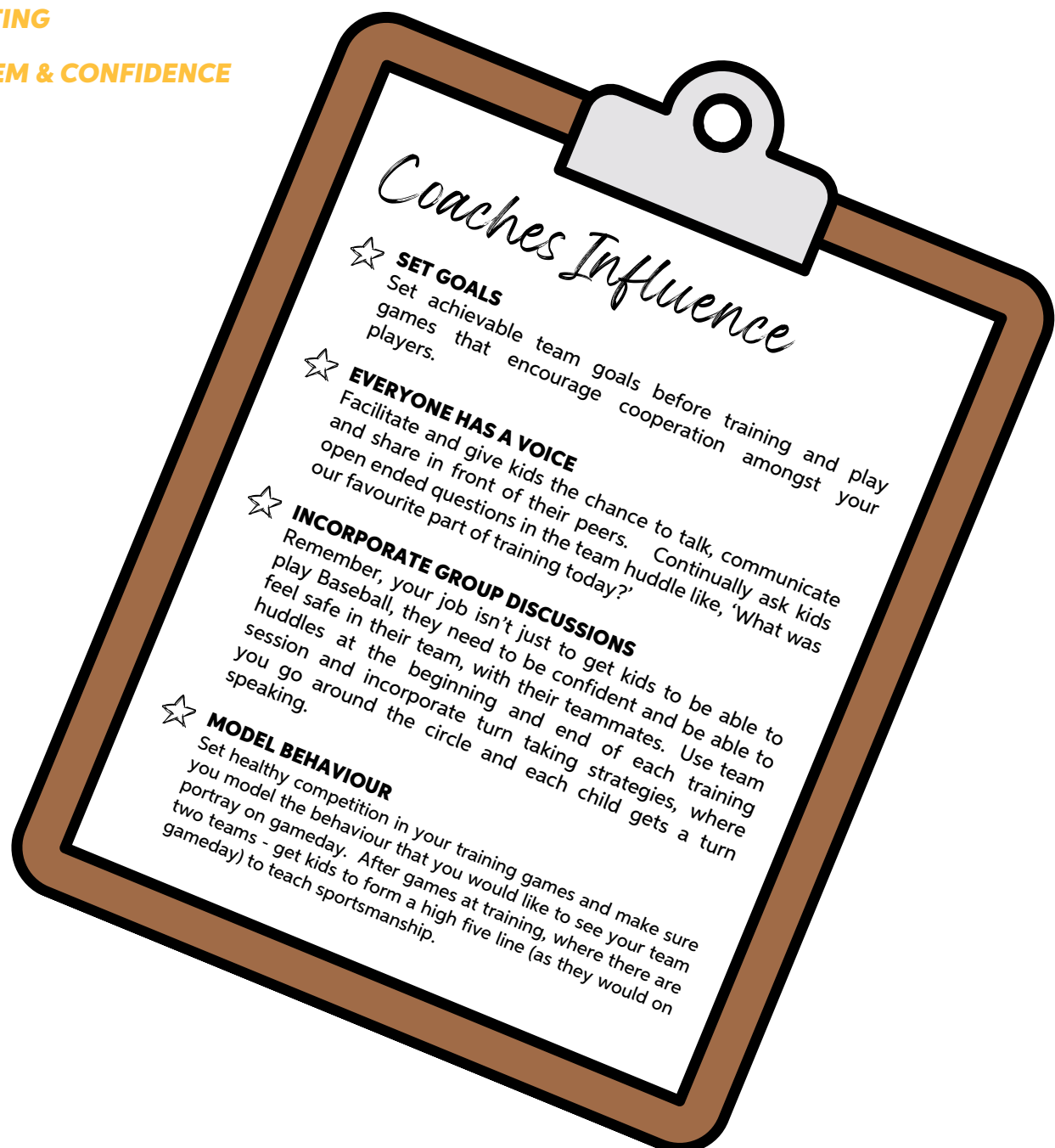
- Specific Feedback: Instead of just saying 'Good job', highlight what they did well, like 'Great hustle running to first base'
- High Fives & Fist Bumps: Physical gestures of encouragement like high fives & fist bumps can be a great way to celebrate small wins and make the players feel appreciated

»»» BUILDING LIFE SKILLS

Here are some ways you can boost building life skills with your team.

Sport naturally builds life skills through:

- **TEAMWORK & COOPERATION**
- **COMMUNICATION**
- **DISCIPLINE & RESPONSIBILITY**
- **RESILIENCE & HANDLING FAILURE**
- **RESPECT & SPORTSMANSHIP**
- **HEALTHY COMPETITION**
- **GOAL SETTING**
- **SELF ESTEEM & CONFIDENCE**



AGE-APPROPRIATE LEARNING

Coaching kids can be one of the most rewarding, yet challenging experiences.

Lots of junior coaches tend to lean more towards making sure their team is perfect and a well oiled machine on game day.

Instead try focusing on creating connections, enjoyable experiences and measure your success from smiles.

Here are some ways you can facilitate your coaching style to suit your age group.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Short Attention Spans

Young children have limited attention spans, so activities should be brief and varied.

Need for Movement

Kids at this age are energetic and need plenty of opportunities for physical activity. Try to plan your sessions around games that have plenty of running, tagging and movement.

Learning Through Play

Children learn best through play and interactive activities.

Concrete Thinking

Technical concepts can be difficult, they understand better through hands-on experiences.

Boundaries

Clearly define and set out boundaries for your games/activities, kids respond best when boundaries are clearly set with colourful cones and equipment.

Fun

This should be your primary objective. Don't stress too much if your team didn't learn what you set out at training, or your worried about what the team you're playing on the weekend will think. If your team have smiles on faces, laughing and having fun - your role as a coach will be successful.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Engaged parents can contribute to a positive team environment, support the coach, and help the kids have a more enjoyable experience. Here are some tips from a coach's perspective on getting parents involved:

1. COMMUNICATE EARLY AND OFTEN

INITIAL MEETING

At the beginning of the season, host a brief meeting with the parents. Explain the goals for the season, your coaching philosophy, and how they can help.

REGULAR UPDATES

Send regular updates via email or a messaging app. Include information about practice schedules, game times, and any team events. Keeping parents informed makes them feel more connected and involved.

2. ASSIGN ROLES

TEAM PARENT

Designate a "team parent" who can help organise things like snack schedules, game day logistics, or communication.

GAME DAY HELPERS

Invite parents to assist during practices. Even if they don't have baseball experience, they can help with simple tasks like organising drills, setting up equipment, or managing groups of kids.

ASSISTANT COACHES

Assign parents to roles during games, such as helping with equipment, keeping the dugout organised, or cheering on the kids.

3. ENCOURAGE POSITIVE SUPPORT

CHEERING SECTION

Encourage parents to be a positive presence on the sidelines. Explain the importance of positive reinforcement and cheering for all kids, not just their own.

PARENT-KID CHALLENGES

Incorporate parent-child activities into practices, such as friendly competitions or skills challenges. This allows parents to actively participate and bond with their child through baseball.

4. CREATE A COMMUNITY FEEL

SOCIAL EVENTS

Organise simple social events, like a team BBQ or end-of-season celebration. These gatherings help build camaraderie among parents and make them feel more invested in the team.

CARPPOOLING AND SUPPORT

Encourage parents to connect with each other for things like carpooling to practices or games. Building a supportive parent network can make the season smoother for everyone.

5. EDUCATE PARENTS

UNDERSTANDING THE GAME

Offer brief explanations of the game rules, especially if some parents are new to baseball. This helps them understand what's happening on the field and how to support their child.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Share insights on what to expect from 4 to 8-year-olds in terms of attention spans, skills, and emotional needs. This can help parents set realistic expectations and focus on effort and enjoyment rather than just performance.

6. INVITE FEEDBACK & INVOLVEMENT

OPEN COMMUNICATION

Encourage parents to share their thoughts, concerns, or suggestions throughout the season. This can create a collaborative environment where parents feel valued.

VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

Let parents know if you need help with specific tasks, like organising team photos, managing equipment, or coordinating snacks. Giving them clear ways to contribute can increase their involvement.

7. CELEBRATE TOGETHER

MILESTONES

Involve parents in celebrating milestones, whether it's a child's first hit, a great team effort, or just getting through the season with smiles. Acknowledging these moments together strengthens the bond between parents, kids, and coaches.

END-OF-SEASON AWARDS

Consider holding a simple award ceremony where parents can participate in recognising the kids' efforts. This could be anything from "Most Improved" to "Best Teammate" awards, ensuring every child feels celebrated.

8. BE APPROACHABLE & AVAILABLE

OPEN-DOOR POLICY

Make yourself approachable by being open to discussions before or after practices. When parents see that you're willing to listen and engage, they'll be more likely to get involved.

UNDERSTANDING THE AGE GROUP

Coaching 3 to 8-year-olds requires short, varied activities to match their brief attention spans, using simple language and plenty of positive reinforcement. Make sessions fun by incorporating playful, imaginative games and social interaction, while progressively challenging them at their own pace.

Patience, enthusiasm, and celebrating small successes will keep them engaged and motivated.



ATTENTION SPAN



USING IMAGINATION & STORYTELLING



LANGUAGE TO USE

➤➤➤ USING IMAGINATION & STORYTELLING

Using imagination and storytelling in junior baseball coaching, especially for 3 to 8-year-olds, is a powerful tool to enhance engagement, build relatability, and make learning fun. Kids at this age are highly imaginative, and tapping into their creativity can make drills and exercises more enjoyable and effective.

Here are some strategies and examples of how to incorporate imagination and storytelling into your sessions:



1. TRANSFORM DRILLS INTO ADVENTURES

Instead of just running bases, turn it into a "Quest to Save the Treasure." The bases can represent different islands where the kids have to collect treasures (e.g., cones or small objects) while dodging obstacles (coaches or cones acting as barriers).

How it Helps: This turns a simple base-running drill into an exciting adventure, making it more engaging and motivating for the kids.



2. THEMED GAMES

Example: Introduce a game called "Escape the Ogre" instead of a regular tag game. In this game, the coach or a designated player is the "Ogre," and the kids have to avoid being caught while moving from one base to another.

How it Helps: The concept of an "Ogre" adds a fun element and keeps the kids focused on avoiding the tag. It also encourages strategic thinking and quick movement.



3. ANIMAL THEMES

Example: In a drill where the kids have to run to different positions on the field, tell them they're all different animals in a jungle. Maybe they're "cheetahs" racing to first base, or "monkeys" swinging from tree to tree (bases).

How it Helps: By associating different movements with animals, kids get to embody their favourite creatures, making the drill more fun and memorable.



4. STORYTELLING BEFORE DRILLS

Example: Start a session by telling a short story related to the drill. For example, "Today, we are explorers in the jungle, and we need to navigate our way through to find the hidden treasure. But beware, there are obstacles!"

How it Helps: A brief story can set the tone and context for the entire session, getting the kids excited and ready to play.



5. PERSONALISE THE STORY

Example: Use the kids' names in the stories. For instance, "Billy the Brave is on a mission to defeat the dragon by catching the fireball (ball)."

How it Helps: Personalising the story makes each child feel special and more connected to the activity.



6. TIPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Use Enthusiastic Language: Be animated in your descriptions. Kids will respond better to your energy.

Encourage Participation: Let the kids add to the story. Ask them what kind of creatures they want to be or what obstacles they need to overcome.

Balance Fun with Learning: Ensure that the imaginative elements still reinforce the skills you're trying to teach.

LANGUAGE

1. USE SIMPLE, CLEAR INSTRUCTIONS, KEEP IT SHORT

Break down instructions into one or two simple steps. For example, instead of saying, "Run to first base, then second, and then come back," you can say, "Run to first base. Ready? Go!"

Avoid Over-Explaining: Too much detail can be overwhelming. Focus on the most important actions and use simple words.

2. BE POSITIVE AND ENCOURAGING

Praise Effort: Use positive reinforcement like "Great job!" or "You're doing awesome!" Kids respond well to encouragement and will be more motivated to try their best.

Use Affirmative Language: Instead of saying, "Don't miss the ball," say, "Try to catch the ball." Focus on what you want them to do rather than what they shouldn't do.

3. USE VISUAL AND PHYSICAL CUES

Show, Don't Just Tell: Demonstrate what you want the kids to do. At this age, children often understand better by seeing an action rather than just hearing about it.

Use Gestures: Pointing, clapping, or using hand signals can help reinforce your instructions.

4. BE ENTHUSIASTIC AND ANIMATED

Vary Your Tone: Speak with energy and excitement to keep the kids engaged. A lively tone can make even simple instructions feel like fun.

Use Facial Expressions: Smile, nod, and use expressions that match the mood of the activity. This helps communicate emotions and keeps the atmosphere positive.

5. GET DOWN TO THEIR LEVEL

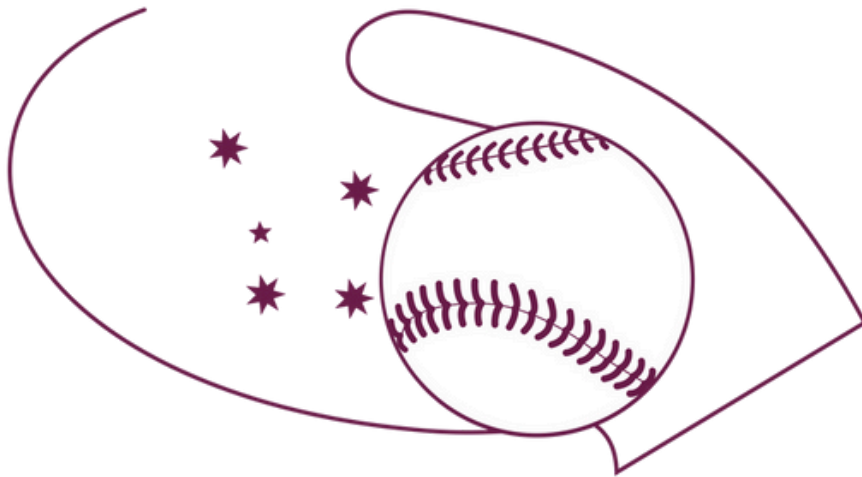
Make Eye Contact: When giving instructions, kneel or squat so you're at eye level with the kids. This makes communication feel more personal and helps ensure they're paying attention.

Speak Calmly and Gently: A calm, reassuring tone helps build trust and keeps kids from feeling overwhelmed.

6. USE FUN, RELATABLE LANGUAGE

Incorporate Imagery: Use metaphors and imagery that kids can relate to. For example, instead of saying, "Run fast," you can say, "Run like a cheetah!"

Give Instructions in a Playful Way: Make instructions part of a game or story. For instance, instead of saying, "Catch the ball," you could say, "Pretend the ball is a flying superhero—catch it!"



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