

Spring Sports Program

Junior Kindergarten T-Ball Manual

Message from the Bridlewood Community Association (BCA):

Thank you for taking part in the Spring Sports Program and making it a success year after year. The Spring Sports league is one of the programs of the Bridlewood Community Association (BCA), a not-for-profit community organization whose mandate is to work together with our community to make Bridlewood a great place to live, work and play. The BCA is committed to making sport in our community a positive and rewarding experience for everyone and has designed the Spring Sport Program to give children aged 5 – 14 an opportunity to have fun, learn new skills, get exercise and enjoy the beautiful parks of Bridlewood. It is a non-competitive league where the values of excellence, fun, inclusion and fairness dominate the game. On our fields, everyone is a winner.

Overall Objectives of the Spring Sports Program:

- Emphasize safety and, above all, have fun!
- Help young athletes develop coordination, a sense of teamwork and teach the fundamentals of the sport.
- Recognize the important contribution that sports can make to our children and our community.
- Afford families a chance to get to know other Bridlewood families in a relaxed, fun, outdoor setting. Make new friends!
- Reinforce the True Sports Principles as part of the culture supported by the BCA, the City of Ottawa and local schools.

Coaching Philosophy:

As a volunteer coach, your most important job is to ensure that your athletes have fun, learn new skills and make new friends. As this is an entirely volunteer-run program, all parents are expected to participate in some way, this includes asking parents to help out both on and off the field! Remember that the entire Spring Sports team is there to help you as well.

Requirements to be a coach:

- You enjoy working with children.
- You encourage and are able to organize children.
- You are available for weekly practices and games.
- You may have some experience with the sport. This coaching manual will provide rules, suggestions for warm up and drills and tips to help you teach the sport.

Expectations of Coaches:

- Arrange for equipment pick up as organized by the convenor. If you are not available, delegate it to another parent on your team.
- Communicate information to team regarding schedules, location, expectations for both players and parents, etc. or arrange for team manager to do so.
- Arrive on time for weekly practice with the equipment or designate someone to take your place for the warm up if you will be delayed.
- Be prepared – plan the warm up, drills and game plan or delegate to your assistant coach or manager.
- Explain and/or demonstrate skills, rules and positions to the team.

- Ensure all children have an equal opportunity to play and try out different positions.
- Respect all participants including players and coaches from both teams.

Expectations of Players:

- Arrive on time for practice with all necessary equipment, proper footwear and water. No sandals or jewellery.
- Respect all participants including players and coaches from both teams.
- Pay attention to coaches or managers.
- Always be aware of what is happening on the field.
- When not actively on the field focus on the game, encourage your teammates and use only positive comments.
- Work with everyone on your team, not just your friends.
- Shake hands with opposing team after the game.
- Help the coach assemble all equipment after the game and clean up after yourself.

Expectations of Parents:

- Have child at the field on time and ready to play every week.
- Assist coach in whatever capacity they need – snacks, supervising children not on the field, with game, etc.
- **CRITICAL:** Ensure that your child is supervised at the field. If you cannot attend, please have another trusted adult supervise your child.
- Communicate any absences to coach in advance whenever possible.
- Respect all participants including players and coaches from both teams.

Getting Ready to Coach:

- Review this manual in its entirety – contact springsports@bridlewood.ca if you have any questions, concerns or are missing any equipment.
- Contact your team with information about dates, times and location of your sessions. Recruit parents to act as team manager or any other function you may require.
- Pick up your t-shirts, coaching manuals, equipment, etc. as directed by the Spring Sports Coordinator. If you are not available, please arrange for someone else from your team to attend in your place.
- To help you learn the children's names, and make t-shirt distribution easier, write their name on masking tape and attached to the front of each shirt before you hand them out.
- Select a team manager to prepare snack schedules, manage the children on the bench when you are on the field and contact parents with any schedule changes or other information.
- Don't be afraid to add a bit of silliness to the drills or practices – keep it fun!

Logistics:

In the JK T-ball program, each child will have an adult (or older sibling – 12+) with them at all times to work with them at each station. There are 2 teams per field and 4 stations each week (batting, running, catching and throwing) as well as warm up and a 1 inning game. Each coach will be responsible for bringing the provided equipment and setting up 2 of the 4 stations. The batting station will be located behind the backstop, towards the backstop, the base running will be located in the infield. The catching and throwing stations will be located in the outfield. The teams will be split in 2 for the stations. The Coach will lead one half and the Assistant Coach will lead the other half. They are responsible for leading the children (and their companions) to the various stations and explaining the drill/exercise at each station. The coach will then practise the drill(s) with their child for the duration of that rotation.

Each week:

- Review your station equipment requirements for that week and ensure you have all necessary equipment to run your station(s).

JK T-BALL MANUAL

- Plan a 10-minute warm up session using the suggestions at the end of this manual.
- Review all 4 activity stations prior to the game so that you will be ready when you arrive at that station. Share that week's activities with the parents in advance so that they can prepare as well.
- Arrive at the field a few minutes early in order to set up your stations.
- Talk to the other coach and decide who will do the outfield stations first and who will do the infield.
- For the 1 inning game, decide which team will bat first. Each child will bat from the tee and run to 1st base. Children in the field will be retrieving the ball and throwing it in to home. As other batters hit, children on base will advance 1 base at a time. The final batter (and all other children on base as that time) will finish running around the bases to home. Repeat with the other team batting.

Tips for getting the parents ready:

- It's important to note that for many, this may be their child's first "organized" sporting event, so setting the right example can help them get them off to a good start. Please see the following page for a sample email to send to parents. Let parents know what help you would like from them.
- Share the weekly station activities with your parents in advance, if you wish.
- If you are unable to contact a parent and they do not show up for the first session, please contact springsports@bridlewood.ca to verify contact information.

Sample note to parents (to be sent out prior to first game):

Hello t-ball parents,

I hope your little ones are excited about participating in our new JK t-ball program this year. We will be playing on ___DAY__ starting on May ___DATE_ from 6 pm to 7:30pm. Due to the very young age of your child and the interactive aspect of our program, it is imperative that a parent or guardian be present at all times. If you have a question about this requirement, please contact the BCA President Margaret Kellaway at pres@bridlewood.ca.

Once again, the Bridlewood Community Association (BCA) is committed to True Sport, a national movement that promotes positive values in sport, helping to ensure that we provide a quality sport experience for everyone. Here's what you can expect for our team during our 8 weeks together:

Schedule: 6:00 – 6:10 pm

Warm-up by coach for their own team. Please show up on time or early so the children can get properly warmed up.

Activities: 6:10 – 6:50 pm

There will be 4 teams per field. Parents are active participants and will shadow their child. They will also keep track of when each team needs to move to the next station. Each team will spend 10 minutes at each of the 4 stations on the field.

6:50 – 7:10 pm (approximate)

Once through all the stations the teams will play 1 inning of t-ball with each child batting once and in the field once.

7:10 pm Snack Time – for most children the favourite station! Each week, a different parent will bring a snack for their team.

- **Keeping it fun:** while it sounds obvious, let's remember that this is about the kids and the main objective is for them to have a great time on the field.
- **Stay healthy:** in this day and age, getting kids off the couch and onto the playing field is no small feat. You've already shown a commitment by getting your children involved in a community sport programme. Our goal is for the kids to enjoy moving, running, and playing so much that they'll want this to become a lifelong habit.
- **Respecting others:** using this short time together to instil a respect for the game, their teammates and competitors. We all have a role to play in that regard and as parents, we need to demonstrate this on and off the field of play
- **Giving back:** teach the children to give back to their community by picking up all snack garbage and leaving the field cleaner than when they arrived.
- **Go for it:** encourage your child to focus on doing the best that they can.
- **Play fair:** follow the rules, take turns and encourage each other.
- **Include everyone:** each child will have a chance to try out the various positions and will have equal playing time for the season.

And finally, in order to bring True Sport to life for our children, visit truesportpur.ca to learn more about this program. If you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact me or the Spring Sports Coordinator at springsports@bridlewood.ca.

Signed: COACH NAME, COORDINATES (phone or email – whatever you are comfortable with)

WEEK #1 –

Station #1: Throwing

Equipment required: a small soft ball for each child

Give the child a small soft ball and let them get used to the feel of it and decide which hand the ball feels most comfortable in. If they can't decide which hand is more comfortable, try the drills with each hand and see which looks more natural. Try to get them to hold the ball loosely with their thumb and 2 (or 3) fingers (not the pinkie), and not pressed tightly into the palm. Stand behind the child and have them bring the hand with the ball (hand is behind the ball) up a few inches from their ear (the forearm should be pointing straight up). Have them move the arm forward slightly and then push the ball forward with their wrist and release the ball. It should go straight out from the hand, not up into the air. Be encouraging. Retrieve the ball and stand behind them, helping them get in the correct position for each throw.

Continue to have them practice the proper position to hold and release the ball. Do not try for any distance or accuracy, just the forward motion of the ball, without arcing.

Goals:

1. Child decides which ball feels most comfortable to hold the ball. If they can't decide, let them practice with both hands.
2. Child holds the ball lightly with the fingers.
3. Child learns where to position the arm and ball before releasing and how to push the ball forward in a straight line, not an arc, using the arm and wrist.

Station #2: Catching

Equipment required: a small soft ball for each child

Have the children sit on the ground and give each child a soft ball. Have them feel how soft it is and hold it in both their hands. Ask them to gently throw the ball a few inches in the air and then catch the ball with both hands (pinkies together – like a bowl). They should be closing their hands around the ball as they catch it. Have them do this a few times but not throwing the ball very high. Adult takes the ball and sits or kneels 3 or 4 feet away from the child. Ask the child to keep their eyes on the ball as you move it slowly from side to side and up and down. Feel free to be a bit silly with the ball – balance it on your head or hide it behind your back, etc. Once the child is following the ball with their eyes, gently throw the ball towards their lap and ask them to catch it with both hands (pinkies together). Make sure they squeeze the ball in their hands when they catch it. Retrieve the ball, be encouraging. Throw the ball again. When the child is consistently catching the ball, try moving another foot apart and do it again.

Goals:

1. The child learns to keep their eyes on the ball at all times and track it as it moves towards them.
2. The child gets used to catching balls below the waist with both hands, pinkies together, while sitting.
3. The child gets accustomed to squeezing the ball in their hands when they catch it.

Station #3: Base Running

Equipment required: helmets and bases (distance between bases should be about 15 paces/yards)

Have the child put on a helmet. Explain that the helmet must be worn at all times when batting and base running. While holding the child's hand, walk to home plate. Have the child jump on home plate and yell "Home". Walk with them to 1st base and have them jump on first base yelling "first base". Walk with them to 2nd and repeat. Do the same with 3rd base. Finally, walk together to home plate and have the child jump on it and yell "Home". Next have the child start at home (jumping on base and yelling its name) then run as fast as they can to 1st base, 2nd base, 3rd base and home. At each base, they jump on the base and yell its name. In the time remaining alternate between running a base and walking a base being sure to jump on each base and yell out its name.

Goals:

1. Child learns to wear a helmet while on the bases.
2. Child learns the names of the bases and the direction to run.

Station #4: Batting

Equipment required: batting tee, bat, 2 whiffle balls and helmet for each child

Have the child put on a helmet and explain that the helmet must be worn at all times when batting and base running. Ask them to pick up a bat, move away from other people. Have the child hold the bat with both hands together. The bat should be held tightly enough that it does not slip out of their hands when the swing. Bats should never be thrown after hitting. Have them swing the bat a couple of times from either side to determine if one swing feels more comfortable and natural than another. If no difference, have them practice swinging from both sides as they bat. Set up the tee at about their waist height and have them stand next to the tee, facing it and perpendicular to the backstop. When they hold the bat straight out with arms extended, the top third of the bat should cross the top of the tee. Put a whiffle ball on the tee and ask them to try to hit the ball towards the backstop. Tell them to watch the ball as they swing the bat. Repeat as many times as you can in the time allowed.

Goals:

1. Child learns to wear a helmet while batting and not to throw the bat.
2. Determine which side, if any, the child is most comfortable batting.
3. Have child learn to hold the bat with hands together and to watch the ball when they swing.

WEEK #2 –

Station #1: Throwing

Equipment required: a small soft ball for each child

Review the proper technique from last week – holding ball lightly, bringing hand and ball up near the ear and moving the arm forward and pushing the ball with the wrist, straight, not arcing. When they remember this from last week, kneel a few feet apart from each other, facing each other. Put your hand, palm facing out, in front of your chest at their eye level and have the child release the ball trying to push it hard enough so that it gets to your hand in a straight line (not up in the air). Check their arm position with each throw and make sure they are looking where they want the ball to go. Return the ball to them and have them try again. If they have enough strength, move slightly farther apart after each successful throw.

Goals:

1. Child continues to work on proper throwing technique – loose grip, bring ball to ear level and push the ball forward in a straight line, not an arc, using the arm and wrist.
2. Child learns to look at where they want the ball to go.
3. Doing this drill on their knees makes them focus on their arm movement and not on what their feet are doing.

Station #2: Catching

Equipment required: a small soft ball for each child

Start off with the ball again and remind the child how soft it is. Let them hold it in their hands and then gently toss it into the air and catch it with both hands, pinkies together (like a bowl). They should be squeezing the ball in both hands when they catch it. After a few minutes, have the adult take the ball and stand a few feet away from the child. Have the child follow the ball with their eyes as the adult moves it slowly from side to side and up and down. When the child is ready and watching the ball, have them put their hands together at about waist height with their pinkies together (like a bowl). Tell them to get ready to catch and throw it gently towards their cupped hands. If the child is successful, try throwing the ball from different angles (up, down, left side, right side). Make sure the child is following the ball with their eyes before you throw it and squeezing it in their hands as they catch it. Be encouraging. If the child is catching the ball, move a step apart and try it again. The goal is for the child to keep their eyes on the ball at all times and to follow it with their eyes as it comes towards them.

Goals:

1. The child learns to keep their eyes on the ball at all times and track it as it moves towards them.
2. The child gets used to catching balls below the waist with both hands, pinkies together, while standing.
3. The child gets accustomed to squeezing the ball in their hands when they catch it.

Station #3: Base Running

Equipment required: helmets and bases (distance between bases should be about 15 paces/yards)

Have the child put on a helmet. Explain that the helmet must be worn at all times when batting and base running. While holding the child's hand, walk to home plate. Have the child jump on home plate and yell "Home". Walk with them to 1st base and have them jump on first base yelling "first base". Walk with them to 2nd and repeat. Do the same with 3rd base. Finally, walk together to home plate and have the child jump on it and yell "Home". Next have the child start at home (jumping on base and yelling its name) then run as fast as they can to 1st base, 2nd base, 3rd base and home. At each base, they jump on the base and yell its name. In the time remaining skip or hop around the bases – yelling the name of each base as you cross it.

Goals:

1. Child learns to wear a helmet while on the bases.
2. Child learns the names of the bases and the direction to run.

Station #4: Batting

Equipment required: batting tee, bat, 2 whiffle balls and helmet for each child

Have the child put on a helmet and explain that the helmet must be worn at all times when batting and base running. Ask them to pick up a bat, move away from other people. Have the child hold the bat with both hands together. The bat should be held tightly enough that it does not slip out of their hands when the swing. Bats should never be thrown after hitting. Set up the tee at about their waist height and have them stand next to the tee, facing it and perpendicular to the backstop. When they hold the bat straight out with arms extended, the top third of the bat should cross the top of the tee. Have the child pull the bat back in preparation to swing. Check that the hands are together, the hands should be pulled back to almost the back shoulder and the back elbow should be down, the front elbow up. Have them practise that swing a few times watching for their technique. When it seems comfortable, put a whiffle ball on the tee and ask them to try to hit the ball towards the backstop. Tell them to watch the ball as they bat. Repeat as many times as you can in the time allowed.

Goals:

1. Child learns to wear a helmet while batting and not to throw the bat.
2. Child learns proper hand and arm position when batting and to watch the ball when they swing.

WEEK #3 –

Station #1: Throwing

Equipment required: a small soft ball for each child

Review the proper technique– holding ball lightly, bringing hand and ball up near the ear and pushing the ball forward, straight, not arcing. Start again from a kneeling position a few feet apart. Put your hand, palm facing out, in front of your chest at their eye level and have the child release the ball trying to push it hard enough so that it gets to your hand in a straight line (not up in the air). When the child's technique is good and they are able to reach you with their throws, have them place the foot (opposite from the throwing arm) on the ground, keeping the other knee in position. This will help them remember which foot to step forward with when they throw from a standing position. Continue having the child throw the ball to you from this position. You should be kneeling so that they can throw straight towards your lower chest.

Goals:

1. Child gets used to which foot should be forward when throwing
2. Child continues to work on proper throwing technique – loose grip, bring ball to ear level and push the ball forward in a straight line, not an arc, using the arm and wrist, looking at their target.

Station #2: Catching

Equipment required: a small soft ball for each child

Have the children practice the hand position for catching a ball above the waist. They should have their fingers facing up and thumbs together, making a “butterfly” with their hands. Their hands should be just below their chin and the fingers should be pointed towards the chin. Using the soft ball, gently drop the ball into their hands from just above. Have them squeeze the ball with both hands as they catch it. Make sure they are always following the ball with their eyes. If they catch the ball, drop it from a little higher. Get them used to trapping the ball in both their hands. If they are successful at catching the ball when dropped straight down, step a couple of feet away and gently lob the ball, aiming for their hands. Try to keep aiming the ball for your child's upper chest, have them catch it with their hands in the butterfly position and squeeze it with both hands.

Goals:

1. The child learns to keep their eyes on the ball at all times and tracks it as it moves towards them.
2. The child gets used to catching the ball above the waist with both hands, thumbs together, while standing.
3. The child gets accustomed to squeezing the ball in their hands when they catch it.

Station #3: Base Running

Equipment required: helmets and bases (distance between bases should be about 15 paces/yards)

Have the child put on a helmet. Explain that the helmet must be worn at all times when batting and base running. While holding the child's hand, walk to home plate. Have the child jump on home plate and yell "Home". Walk with them to 1st base and have them jump on first base yelling "first base". Walk with them to 2nd and repeat. Do the same with 3rd base. Finally, walk together to home plate and have the child jump on it and yell "Home". Next have the child start at home (jumping on base and yelling its name) then run as fast as they can to 1st base, 2nd base, 3rd base and home. At each base, they jump on the base and yell its name. In the time remaining, try walking the bases like a duck or other animal – have fun with it.

Goals:

1. Child learns to wear a helmet while on the bases.
2. Child learns the names of the bases and the direction to run.

Station #4: Batting

Equipment required: batting tee, bat, 2 whiffle balls and helmet for each child

Have the child put on a helmet and explain that the helmet must be worn at all times when batting and base running. Ask them to pick up a bat, move away from other people. Have the child hold the bat with both hands together. The bat should be held tightly enough that it does not slip out of their hands when the swing. Bats should never be thrown after hitting. Set up the tee at about their waist height and have them stand next to the tee, facing it and perpendicular to the backstop. Their feet should be about hip distance apart. Ask them to pretend they are a tree and plant their feet into the ground. When they swing, the feet should remain stationary – they should not twirl with the bat. When they hold the bat straight out with arms extended, the top third of the bat should cross the top of the tee. Have the child pull the bat back in preparation to swing. Check that the hands are together, the hands should be pulled back to almost the back shoulder and the back elbow should be down, the front elbow up. Have them practise that swing a few times watching for their technique. When it seems comfortable, put a whiffle ball on the tee and ask them to try to hit the ball towards the backstop. Tell them to watch the ball as they bat. Repeat as many times as you can in the time allowed.

Goals:

1. Child learns to wear a helmet while batting and not to throw the bat.
2. Child learns to plant feet and keep them stationary when swinging.
3. Child learns proper hand and arm position when batting and to watch the ball when they swing.

WEEK #4 –

Station #1: Throwing

Equipment required: a tennis ball for each child

Give the child a tennis ball. It is a bit larger and heavier than the ball they used before. Stand behind them and help them remember the proper technique for holding and throwing the ball. Kneel a few feet apart from each other with your hand, palm facing out, in front of your chest at their eye level. Have the child release the ball trying to push it hard enough so that it gets to your hand in a straight line (not up in the air). Repeat this a few times. Next, have them put the foot opposite the throwing arm on the ground while keeping the other knee to the ground. Practice throwing from this position.

Goals:

1. Child gets used to a slightly larger, heavier ball (tennis ball).
2. Child continues to work on proper throwing technique – loose grip, bring ball to ear level and push the ball forward in a straight line not an arc, using the arm and wrist, looking at their target.

Station #2: Catching

Equipment required: a tennis ball for each child

Show the child a tennis ball. Move it around slowly and have them watch it all of the time. Give the child a tennis ball and let them feel it. It is a little bit harder than the toy but still very soft. Have the adults toss the ball gently to the child a few times with their hands below the waist, pinkies together. Always aim for the child's hands and be encouraging. Make sure the child is squeezing the ball with both hands when they catch it. Step apart a foot or so if they are doing well. Don't get more than about 6' away from the child. Move back together and have the child practice putting their hands together with thumbs touching, just below their chins. Toss the ball gently to the child with their hands in this position, stepping apart slowly as they gain confidence.

Goals:

1. The child becomes accustomed to catching a tennis ball both below and above the waist.
2. The child keeps their eyes on the ball at all times and tracks it as it moves towards them.
3. The child gets accustomed to squeezing the ball in their hands when they catch it.

Station #3: Base Running

Equipment required: helmets and bases (distance between bases should be about 15 paces/yards)

Have the child put on a helmet. Explain that the helmet must be worn at all times when batting and base running. While holding the child's hand, walk to home plate. Have the child jump on home plate and yell "Home". Walk with them to 1st base and have them jump on first base yelling "first base". Walk with them to 2nd and repeat. Do the same with 3rd base. Finally, walk together to home plate and have the child jump on it and yell "Home". Next have the child start at home (jumping on base and yelling its name) then run as fast as they can to 1st base, 2nd base, 3rd base and home. At each base, they jump on the base and yell its name. Close your eyes and ask your child to take you by the hand the walk you around the bases.

Goals:

1. Child learns to wear a helmet while on the bases.
2. Child learns the names of the bases and the direction to run.

Station #4: Batting

Equipment required: batting tee, bat, 2 whiffle balls and helmet for each child

Have the child put on a helmet and explain that the helmet must be worn at all times when batting and base running. Ask them to pick up a bat, move away from other people. Have the child hold the bat with both hands together. The bat should be held tightly enough that it does not slip out of their hands when the swing. Bats should never be thrown after hitting. Set up the tee at about their waist height and have them stand next to the tee, facing it and perpendicular to the backstop. Their feet should be about hip distance apart. Ask them to pretend they are a tree and plant their feet into the ground. When they swing, the feet should remain stationary – they should not twirl with the bat. When they hold the bat straight out with arms extended, the top third of the bat should cross the top of the tee. Have the child pull the bat back in preparation to swing. Check that the hands are together, the hands should be pulled back to almost the back shoulder and the back elbow should be down, the front elbow up. Check that the swing is flat and that the child continues to follow through the swing after hitting the ball. Have them practise that swing a few times watching for their technique. When it seems comfortable, put a whiffle ball on the tee and ask them to try to hit the ball towards the backstop. Tell them to watch the ball as they bat. Repeat as many times as you can in the time allowed.

Goals:

1. Child learns to wear a helmet while batting and not to throw the bat.
2. Child uses a flat swing and follows through after hitting the ball.
3. Child learns proper hand and arm position when batting, plants feet and keep them stationary when swinging and to watch the ball when they swing.

WEEK #5 -

Station #1: Throwing

Equipment required: a tennis ball for each child

Give the child a tennis ball. Stand behind them and help them remember the proper technique for holding and throwing the ball. Have the child stand facing you with their feet about hip distance apart. Have them pretend that they are a tree and that their legs are roots and their feet are stuck in the ground. Kneel a few feet apart from each other with your hand, palm facing out, in front of your chest at their eye level. Have them look at your hand while throw the ball towards it. If they have any difficulty, have them kneel for a few throws and then put the foot opposite the throwing arm on the ground. Continue having them throw the ball to you, moving apart slightly if they are showing proper form and reaching you easily with the ball.

Goals:

1. Child gets used to throwing while standing.
2. Child continues to work on proper throwing technique – loose grip, bring ball to ear level and push the ball forward in a straight line, not an arc, looking at their target.

Station #2: Catching

Equipment required: a tennis ball for each child

Show the child the tennis ball and have them follow it with their eyes as you move it around. Have the child show you both hand positions for catching the ball (pinkies together below the waist and thumbs together above the waist). Tell the child if you are going to throw the ball low or high (for low pinkies together and for high thumbs together). Have the child get their hands ready and gently toss the ball to them. Make sure they are following the ball with their eyes and that they squeeze the ball as they catch it. Do this a number of times, changing from low to high and stepping slightly away from them as they are successful. Remember to be encouraging. Count out loud together each time they catch the ball.

Goals:

1. The child becomes accustomed to catching a tennis ball both below and above the waist.
2. The child keeps their eyes on the ball at all times and tracks it as it moves towards them.
3. The child gets accustomed to squeezing the ball in their hands when they catch it.

Station #3: Base Running

Equipment required: helmets and bases (distance between bases should be about 15 paces/yards)

Have the child put on a helmet. Explain that the helmet must be worn at all times when batting and base running. Point to each base and ask the child to tell you the name of that base. Ask the child to show you how to run around the bases – stopping at each one and yelling out its name. Have the child chase you around the bases. If they catch you, they take the lead running the bases. If you catch them, you lead again, etc.

Goals:

1. Child learns to wear a helmet while on the bases.
2. Child learns the names of the bases and the direction to run.

Station #4: Batting

Equipment required: batting tee, bat, 2 whiffle balls and helmet for each child

Have the child put on a helmet and explain that the helmet must be worn at all times when batting and base running. Ask them to pick up a bat, move away from other people. Have the child hold the bat with both hands together. The bat should be held tightly enough that it does not slip out of their hands when the swing. Bats should never be thrown after hitting. Set up the tee at about their waist height and have them stand next to the tee, facing it and perpendicular to the backstop. Their feet should be about hip distance apart. Ask them to pretend they are a tree and plant their feet into the ground. When they swing, the feet should remain stationary – they should not twirl with the bat. When they hold the bat straight out with arms extended, the top third of the bat should cross the top of the tee. Have the child pull the bat back in preparation to swing. Check that the hands are together, the hands should be pulled back to almost the back shoulder and the back elbow should be down, the front elbow up. Check that the swing is flat and that the child continues to follow through the swing after hitting the ball. Have them practise that swing a few times watching for their technique. When it seems comfortable, put a whiffle ball on the tee and ask them to try to hit the ball towards the backstop. Tell them to watch the ball as they bat. After they hit the ball, have the child drop the bat next to the tee. Repeat as many times as you can in the time allowed.

Goals:

1. Child learns to wear a helmet while batting and to drop the bat after hitting the ball.
2. Child uses a flat swing and follows through after hitting the ball.
3. Child learns proper hand and arm position when batting, plants feet and keep them stationary when swinging and to watch the ball when they swing.

WEEK #6 -

Station #1: Throwing

Equipment required: a tennis ball for each child

Have child stand with their feet about hip distance apart. Have them hold a tennis ball in their throwing hand. Ask them to take 1 medium step forward with the foot opposite the throwing hand, so that the back heel lifts slightly. Stand beside or behind them to help them get the correct motion. Repeat a number of times until they are comfortable. Kneel a few feet in front of your child. Have them put the hand in ball in the position to throw (at ear level). As they step towards you with their foot, have them push straight out towards their target (your hand at their eye level in front of your chest). Continue to practice the step with the throw.

Goals:

1. Child learns how to step forward while throwing the ball.
2. Child continues to work on proper throwing technique – loose grip, bring ball to ear level and push the ball forward in a straight line, not an arc, looking at their target.

Station #2: Catching

Equipment required: a tennis ball for each child

Warm up with the child for a few minutes by throwing the tennis ball from a few feet away. Warn the child if it will be low or high and make sure that they are putting their hands in the correct position to catch the ball. The child should be watching the ball at all times and squeezing it when they catch it. After a few minutes, teach them how to catch a “ground” ball. Drop to one knee; hold your hands fingers down and pinkies together with the fingers just touching the grass and between your knee and your foot. Help your child to get into this position. Standing a few feet away, roll the ball towards their hands. As the ball rolls into their hands, have them pick it up and squeeze their hands around it.

Goals:

1. The child becomes accustomed to catching a tennis ball both below and above the waist and on the ground.
2. The child keeps their eyes on the ball at all times and tracks it as it moves towards them.
3. The child gets accustomed to squeezing the ball in their hands when they catch it.

Station #3: Base Running

Equipment required: helmets and bases (distance between bases should be about 15 paces/yards)

Have the child put on a helmet. Explain that the helmet must be worn at all times when batting and base running. Point to each base and ask the child to tell you the name of that base. Ask the child to show you how to run around the bases – stopping at each one and yelling out its name. Have the child stand on home plate, yell “1st” and have them run as fast as they can to 1st base. They must keep only 1 foot on first base and be ready to run to 2nd base when you yell “2nd”. Repeat with 3rd base and Home plate. After a brief rest, do it again.

Goals:

1. Child learns to wear a helmet while on the bases.
2. Child learns the names of the bases and the direction to run.
3. Child learns to keep only 1 foot on base and be ready to run to next base.

Station #4: Batting

Equipment required: batting tee, bat, 2 whiffle balls, 1 stuffed toy and helmet for each child

Have the child put on a helmet and explain that the helmet must be worn at all times when batting and base running. Ask them to pick up a bat, move away from other people. Have the child hold the bat with both hands together. The bat should be held tightly enough that it does not slip out of their hands when the swing. Bats should never be thrown after hitting. Set up the tee at about their waist height and have them stand next to the tee, facing it and perpendicular to the backstop. Their feet should be about hip distance apart. Ask them to pretend they are a tree and plant their feet into the ground. When they swing, the feet should remain stationary – they should not twirl with the bat. When they hold the bat straight out with arms extended, the top third of the bat should cross the top of the tee. Place a small stuffed toy about 10-15 feet from the base in the direction of where 1st base would lie. Have the child pull the bat back in preparation to swing. Check that the hands are together, the hands should be pulled back to almost the back shoulder and the back elbow should be down, the front elbow up. Check that the swing is flat and that the child continues to follow through the swing after hitting the ball. Have them practise that swing a few times watching for their technique. When it seems comfortable, put a whiffle ball on the tee and ask them to try to hit the ball towards the backstop. Tell them to watch the ball as they bat. After they hit the ball, have the child drop the bat next to the tee and then to run and pick up the stuffed toy. Repeat as many times as you can in the time allowed.

Goals:

1. Child learns to wear a helmet while batting, to drop the bat after hitting the ball and to run towards 1st base.
2. Child uses a flat swing and follows through after hitting the ball.
3. Child learns proper hand and arm position when batting, plants feet and keep them stationary when swinging and to watch the ball when they swing.

WEEK #7 -

Station #1: Throwing

Equipment required: a tennis ball for each child

Stand beside or behind your child and remind them how to hold and throw the ball. Have them stand slightly at an angle with the non-throwing arm and leg in front. When they are ready, kneel few feet in front of them and hold your hand at chest level as a target. Have them step forward with the front foot as they throw with the opposite hand, looking at the target (your hand). If they are throwing at the target consistently, move a little bit farther away.

Goals:

1. Child adjusts position slightly sideways so that throwing arm and foot are in front.
2. Child continues to work on proper throwing technique – loose grip, bring ball to ear level and push the ball forward in a straight line, not an arc, looking at their target.

Station #2: Catching

Equipment required: a tennis ball for each child and a glove (supplied by the parent)

If the child has been successful at catching the ball with their bare hands, you can try to introduce the ball glove. Determine which hand the child is most comfortable throwing with and purchase a glove for the other hand. Using the tennis ball, make sure the child is watching the ball at all times. Start with the child's hands below the waist, pinkies together. Stand only a couple of feet away and gently throw the ball into the glove side. Have the child use their free hand to trap the ball in the glove. Repeat a few times until the child is successful catching the ball in the glove and then trapping it with the other hand. If you have time, practice above the waist catching. The child should have both hands just under their chin and thumbs together. The hands should be tilted so that the fingers are pointed at the chin. From overhead, gently drop the ball into the glove hand. Have the child use their free hand to trap the ball in the glove. As they gain confidence, move a step or 2 away and continue to toss the ball gently into the glove hand.

Goals:

1. The child becomes accustomed to using the glove to catch the ball both above and below the waist.
2. The child keeps their eyes on the ball at all times and tracks it as it moves towards them.
3. The child gets accustomed to trapping the ball in the glove with the free hand when they catch it.

Station #3: Base Running

Equipment required: helmets and bases (distance between bases should be about 15 paces/yards)

Have the child put on a helmet. Explain that the helmet must be worn at all times when batting and base running. Point to each base and ask the child to tell you the name of that base. Ask the child to show you how to run around the bases – stopping at each one and yelling out its name. Have the child stand on home plate and ask them to hold a pretend bat, ready to hit. When you yell “1st”, have them swing at a pretend ball on a tee, drop their imaginary bat and then run as fast as they can to 1st base. They must keep only 1 foot on first base and be ready to run to 2nd base when you yell “2nd”. Repeat with 3rd base and Home plate. After a brief rest, do it again.

Goals:

1. Child learns to wear a helmet while on the bases.
2. Child practices swinging and then running.
3. Child learns to keep only 1 foot on base and be ready to run to next base.

Station #4: Batting

Equipment required: batting tee, bat, 2 whiffle balls, 1 stuffed toy and helmet for each child

Over the past few weeks, your child have learned all of the proper techniques – now all they need to do it practice, practice, practice. Here is a recap of what they have learned: Have the child put on a helmet and explain that the helmet must be worn at all times when batting and base running. The bat should be held tightly enough that it does not slip out of their hands when the swing. Bats should never be thrown after hitting. Set up the tee at about their waist height and have them stand next to the tee, facing it and perpendicular to the backstop. Their feet should be about hip distance apart. Ask them to pretend they are a tree and plant their feet into the ground. When they swing, the feet should remain stationary – they should not twirl with the bat. Place a small stuffed toy about 10-15 feet from the base in the direction of where 1st base would lie. Have the child pull the bat back in preparation to swing. Check that the hands are together, the hands should be pulled back to almost the back shoulder and the back elbow should be down, the front elbow up. Check that the swing is flat and that the child continues to follow through the swing after hitting the ball. Tell them to watch the ball as they bat. After they hit the ball, have the child drop the bat next to the tee and then to run and pick up the stuffed toy. Repeat as many times as you can in the time allowed.

Goals:

1. Child learns to wear a helmet while batting, to drop the bat after hitting the ball and to run towards 1st base.
2. Child uses a flat swing and follows through after hitting the ball.
3. Child learns proper hand and arm position when batting, plants feet and keep them stationary when swinging and to watch the ball when they swing.

WEEK #8 –

Station #1: Throwing

Equipment required: a tennis ball for each child and a stuffed toy (supplied by child)

Review the proper technique for throwing the ball – non throwing leg and arm forward, turned slightly sideways, loose grip on ball, bring ball to ear level, move arm forward and push ball with wrist, while looking at target. Place a stuffed toy on a bench, lawn chair or balance in your hand at their eye level. From a few feet away, ask them to throw the ball and try to hit the stuffed toy. If they hit the toy have them move 1 small step backwards and try again.

Goals:

1. Child works on throwing technique while aiming at toy target.

Station #2: Catching

Equipment required: a tennis ball for each child and a glove (supplied by the parent)

With the child using a ball glove (if they were successful with it last session), warm up with the child for a few minutes by throwing the tennis ball from a few feet away. Warn the child if it will be low or high and make sure that they are putting their hands in the correct position to catch the ball. Always aim for the glove hand. The child should be watching the ball at all times and trapping it with their free hand when they catch it. After a few minutes, teach them how to catch a “ground” ball. Drop to one knee; hold your hands fingers down and pinkies together with the fingers just touching the grass and between your knee and your foot. Help your child to get into this position. Standing a few feet away, roll the ball towards the glove hand. As the ball rolls into their hands, have them pick it up and squeeze their hands around it.

Goals:

1. The child becomes accustomed to using the glove to catch the ball both above and below the waist and on the ground.
2. The child keeps their eyes on the ball at all times and tracks it as it moves towards them.
3. The child gets accustomed to trapping the ball in the glove with the free hand when they catch it.

Station #3: Base Running

Equipment required: helmets and bases (distance between bases should be about 15 paces/yards)

Have the child put on a helmet. Explain that the helmet must be worn at all times when batting and base running. Point to each base and ask the child to tell you the name of that base. Ask the child to show you how to run around the bases – stopping at each one and yelling out its name. Ask your child to think of their silliest walks. Have them walk around the bases using silly walks and change to a different silly walk at each base. Finally, Have the child stand on home plate and ask them to hold a pretend bat, ready to hit. When you yell “1st”, have them swing at a pretend ball on a tee, drop their imaginary bat and then run as fast as they can to 1st base. They must keep only 1 foot on first base and be ready to run to 2nd base when you yell “2nd”. Repeat with 3rd base and Home plate.

Goals:

1. Child learns to wear a helmet while on the bases.
2. Child practices swinging and then running.
3. Child learns to keep only 1 foot on base and be ready to run to next base.

Station #4: Batting

Equipment required: batting tee, bat, 2 whiffle balls, 1 stuffed toy and helmet for each child

Over the past few weeks, your child have learned all of the proper techniques – now all they need to do it practice, practice, practice. Here is a recap of what they have learned: Have the child put on a helmet and explain that the helmet must be worn at all times when batting and base running. The bat should be held tightly enough that it does not slip out of their hands when the swing. Bats should never be thrown after hitting. Set up the tee at about their waist height and have them stand next to the tee, facing it and perpendicular to the backstop. Their feet should be about hip distance apart. Ask them to pretend they are a tree and plant their feet into the ground. When they swing, the feet should remain stationary – they should not twirl with the bat. Place a small stuffed toy about 10-15 feet from the base in the direction of where 1st base would lie. Have the child pull the bat back in preparation to swing. Check that the hands are together, the hands should be pulled back to almost the back shoulder and the back elbow should be down, the front elbow up. Check that the swing is flat and that the child continues to follow through the swing after hitting the ball. Tell them to watch the ball as they bat. After they hit the ball, have the child drop the bat next to the tee and then to run and pick up the stuffed toy. Repeat as many times as you can in the time allowed.

Goals:

1. Child learns to wear a helmet while batting, to drop the bat after hitting the ball and to run towards 1st base.
2. Child uses a flat swing and follows through after hitting the ball.
3. Child learns proper hand and arm position when batting, plants feet and keep them stationary when swinging and to watch the ball when they swing.